

April 2007

JOURNEY

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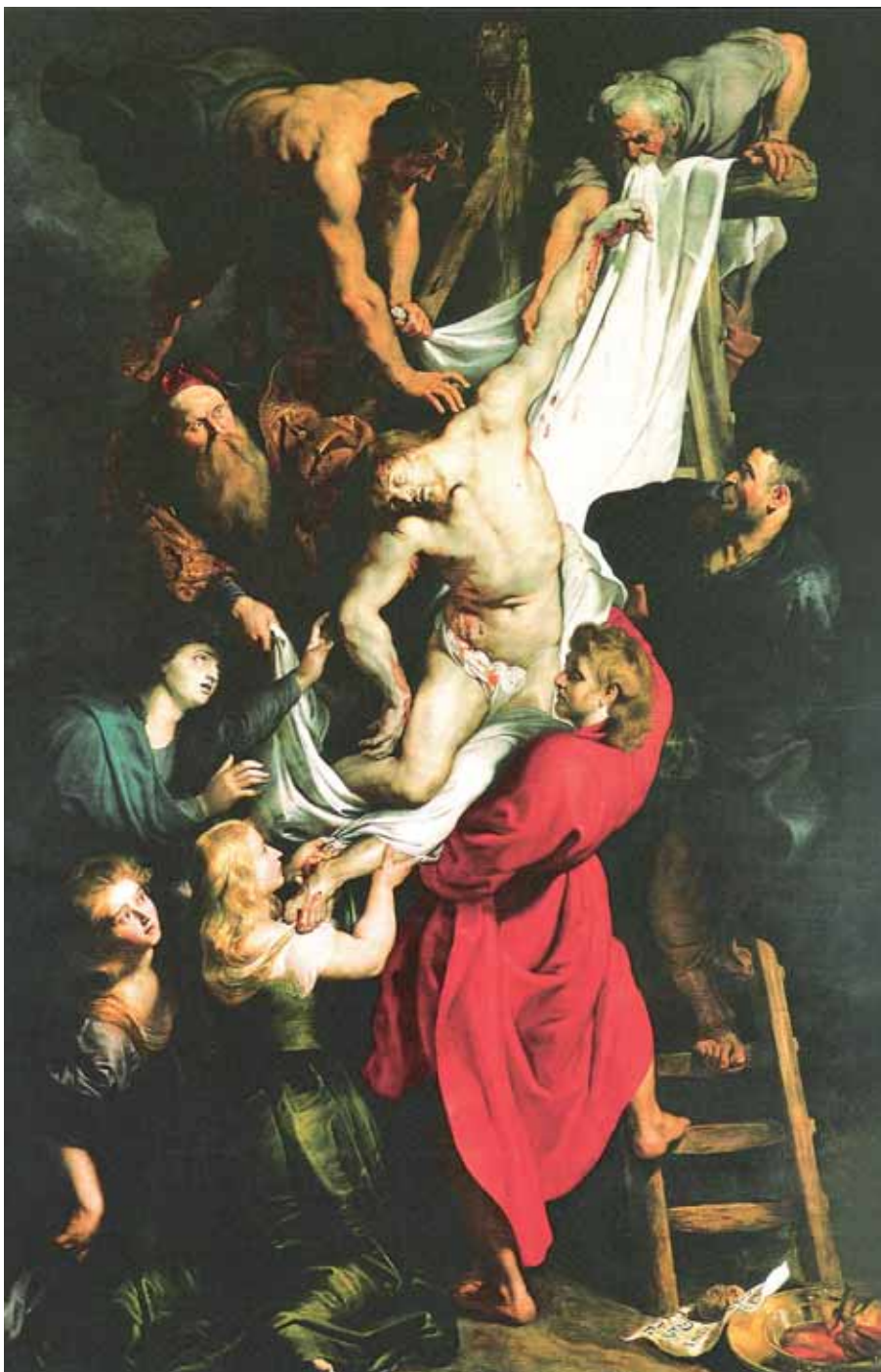
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retires again

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It is finished... NOT



Late in the afternoon, since it was the Day of Preparation (that is, Sabbath eve), Joseph of Arimathea, a highly respected member of the Jewish Council, came. He was one who lived expectantly, on the lookout for the kingdom of God. Working up his courage, he went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Pilate questioned whether he could be dead that soon and called for the captain to verify that he was really dead. Assured by the captain, he gave Joseph the corpse. Having already purchased a linen shroud, Joseph took him down, wrapped him in the shroud, placed him in a tomb that had been cut into the rock, and rolled a large stone across the opening.

(Mark 15:42-46)

Easter reflections

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Living the resurrection

THE GOSPEL records tell us that the encounters the disciples had with the risen Jesus were life-changing experiences.

John, in his Gospel record, describes how the fear that gripped the disciples was transformed into joy, and how the doubt that engulfed Thomas was converted into faith, as Jesus appeared amongst his followers and restored their hope and confidence.

Then, as we know, Jesus went away again. He was no longer with them. There was no more seeing, touching or face-to-face conversation!

The potential for post-Easter depression was very real. They might have been excused for asking, "Is there life after Easter?"

All kinds of preposterous ideas have been advanced in relation to the death and resurrection of Jesus. What can't be denied is the transformation of the disciples from fearful individuals hiding away in locked rooms, to courageous public witnesses, boldly testifying to the living presence and power of Christ!

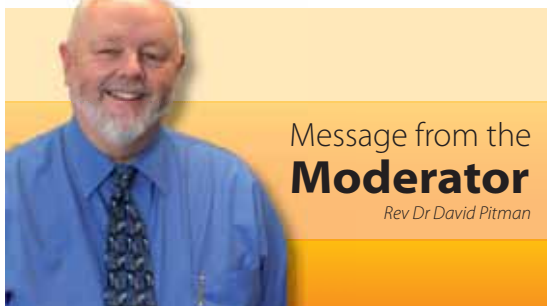
Inevitably, there is a strong element of mystery in the resurrection of Jesus. It is not something we can really understand. Rather, it is a reality we experience and therefore believe and celebrate!

So to the question, "Is there life after Easter?", the response of Christians for 2000 years has been a resounding "Yes!"

The witness of the gospel stories reminds us in a compelling way that the church did not create the idea or message of Easter.

It was out of the experience of Easter that the church was born because the followers of Jesus sensed his continuing presence amongst them and committed themselves to live as he had lived, and to pass on to others what he had taught them.

The church that grew up around that little group of men and women



Message from the Moderator

Rev. Dr. David Pitman

was a new creation. The fact that it survived is a miracle and it's a miracle that we are here today.

A multitude of forces have threatened to tear the church apart and destroy it on numerous occasions since Jesus appeared to his disciples on that first Easter Day long ago.

The church survived during all that time because Christ breathed his Spirit into it; because it is

“As followers of Jesus we are called to be bearers of good news and embody the good news in our own lives.”

Christ's church, not ours; and because the grace of Christ is stronger than any of our human foibles and factionalism!

It has survived because of all those followers of Jesus who have understood that the Christian life is not about power, but pilgrimage; not about being served, but serving others.

It has survived because there have always been enough Christians who have been committed as disciples of Jesus to share the good news of his life, death and resurrection with others.

The resurrection stories in the Gospels contain frequent references to this ministry of witness.

The women at the tomb were told to go and tell the good news that Christ was alive and the risen Jesus commissioned his disciples to go into the world, sharing the good news and baptising those who believe.

John concludes his Gospel record with the statement that everything he has written about Jesus is motivated by his deep desire to give others the opportunity to hear the story and believe for themselves that Jesus is the Son of God and Messiah. (John 20:31)

We live in a society that is fed a constant diet of bad news and it is in this very social context that as followers of Jesus we are called to be bearers of good news and embody the good news in our own lives.

As a good news people we communicate the love and grace of God in both word and action.

We are a resurrection people!

We are a good news people!

Let us live who we are in faith, hope and love.

Thoughts on Easter

Believing that Jesus was crucified is easy... it fits with what we know about punishment and treatment of criminals at the time. We can look to history to give us similar accounts of a death on a cross. But the resurrection is another kettle of fish! It is a big claim; it is a mystery; and it takes a leap of faith to believe it... I believe it is both an event which happened and mystery which we cannot fully understand. But living with that mystery has shaped my life.

Rev Kaye Ronalds

So often we walk with Mary towards that tomb expecting death and decay. We look out on the suffering of life. We stare death in the face as Good Friday hangs heavily on our hearts. But as Christians we can be encouraged that war, that racism, that disease, that suffering, that death – are not the end words. Rather we can have hope that our walk will take us with Mary to the empty tomb, to the place where we will encounter the risen Christ and he will call us by name.”

Rev Peter Lockhart

From the Editor

I guess it will be on television here soon.

The documentary *The Lost Tomb of Jesus* produced by Hollywood film maker James Cameron claims a 2000-year-old tomb found in Jerusalem may hold the remains of Jesus of Nazareth, Mary his mother, Mary Magdalene, said to be his partner, and Judah, said to be their son, together with other members of his family.

So, as yet another storm has broken out over the story that Christians hold so dear, I reflect on why I never went to see Mel Gibson's celebrated movie *The Passion of the Christ*.

Apparently it was filled with excessive violence and, anyway, I knew how the story ended because I'd read the book.

But basically, when I go to the movies I don't want to be depressed, I want to be entertained and while the resurrection is the denouement, wading through the Good Friday stuff is really quite discouraging.

Truth be known, I am a simple Protestant who likes the cross to be empty and the story to have a happy ending and Gibson, I fear, is essentially a Catholic who likes the crucifix and wants to dwell on the sacrificial nature of Jesus' death.

I want to be a resurrection Christian not a crucifixion Christian.

I long for a story with a happy ending. I want to draw my energy from the life of Jesus not the death of Jesus.

I want to be inspired by his stories, wisdom and interactions with sinners, disciples, women and children, not by his gruesome, violent and painful suffering at the hands of cruel and barbaric torturers.

Come on Pentecost! Lent has gone on long enough and I'm ready to be uplifted and inspired in John 10:10 discipleship.

"I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."

Yeah Jesus!

Bruce Mullan

Descent from the Cross 1612-14 oil on panel by Peter Paul Rubens.

Perhaps Rubens' best-known painting and a classic of Christian art *The Descent from the Cross* is the centrepiece of a triptych commissioned by the Arquebusiers (civic guard) for their altar in the Antwerp cathedral.

A very sensual work in which Jesus' body is twisted for dramatic effect the 4210mm x 3110 mm panel arouses the emotions through its movement and colour.

The body has obviously been pierced by the spear and death is apparent in the colour of the flesh and the posture of the head.



Rubens' portrayal of Jesus is both tender and loving. Rubens completed the work at the age of 37.

Sign of the Times



This month's mathematical church sign comes to us from Windsor Uniting Church in Brisbane

Send your Sign of the Times to journey@ucaqld.com.au.

JOURNEY

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Synod meeting: a new venue and big changes

By Bruce Mullan

THE NEWLY extended conference facilities at Alexandra Headland on the Sunshine Coast will be the venue for the 26th meeting of the Queensland Synod in May.

"Dare to discover, dream, design and deliver" is the theme chosen by Moderator Rev Dr David Pitman for a gathering which will make some key decisions about the future of Synod leadership and theological education for lay and ordained people.

The Synod will also appoint a new General Secretary and elect the next Moderator who will commence duties when Dr Pitman's term finishes in the second half of 2008.

Dr Pitman says he has observed "a new spirit alive in our church".

"It is most apparent in the



New conference facilities at Alexandra Park will be the venue for the 26th Synod. Photo by Ian Edgar

determination of ministers and congregations to be focussed and intentional about those things that declare the reign of God," he said.

Dr Pitman explained the choice

of the theme. "To dare is to risk for God in faith; to discover is to discern the mind of Christ for the mission and ministry of the church: to dream is to engage all our faculties to imagine the possibilities

of being a Jesus-centred people; to design is to pray and plan for an intelligent and effective response to all the opportunities available to us to share the Good News in word and action; and to deliver is to engage in ministry and mission with passion and determination.

As Moderator Dr Pitman reports that his visits to congregations have been a real source of encouragement to him.

"There are so many situations where growth is evident, where all the generations are well represented, where the worship is thoroughly prepared and competently led, and where there is ample evidence of congregations taking their mission and outreach seriously."

He has also observed close relationships between many congregations and UnitingCare agencies.

Synod decisions to be made will include the appointment of members to a newly established Synod Multi-Cross Cultural Committee and a re-established Finance, Investment and Property Board, and the creation of positions for an Associate General Secretary and an Executive Officer to the Synod Schools' Commission.

A report from the Council of Synod recommends greater separation, realignment and enhancement of the functions of the Finance, Investment and Property Board (oversight function) and the Department for Financial and Property Services (service function).

It proposes greater emphasis on and co-ordination of resources and strategic planning through the Synod Leadership Team and the roles of the General Secretary and

Moderator with the support of a revamped Finance, Investment and Property Board.

This report will also propose extending moderatorial appointments to six years.

A report from the Theological Education Task Group first established by the 23rd Synod in 2002 will be proposing one new integrated institution to incorporate both Trinity Theological College and a new learning community to provide educational opportunities including continuing education for lay and specified ministries.

The Synod will also recognise seven new ordinations, 12 lay workers commissioned, 20 retirements and 14 deaths of ministers since the 25th Synod.

The new Alexandra Park facilities have added 360 square metres to the size of the main auditorium.

The room can seat 500 but has the flexibility to be divided into two rooms.

Mission Support Enterprises Manager Mr Mark Lee said the new facilities featured high quality fittings and placed Alexandra Park Conference Centre at the top of the industry standard for this kind of facility.

"We will open the auditorium through to the dining room allowing all 400 Synod members to be seated at round tables in the one room and provide the very latest in audiovisual and technological support," Mr Lee said.

Synod reports will be available in April from the Synod website www.ucaqid.com.au on the Synod page.

Living Waters puts it in a tank



Rev Mark Dewar (left) and Church Council Chair Mike Kolln with the new rainwater tank. Photo by Sue Kolln

By Bruce Mullan

IN A BOLD ecological move that sounds like a bad pun Living Waters Uniting Church congregation in Brisbane's outer south-western suburbs has installed a 200,000 litre rainwater tank on their church property.

Church Council Chairperson Mr Mike Kolln said the tank will help alleviate Brisbane's water crisis by using rainwater in the toilets of their short term emergency accommodation building, The Shack, and by irrigating the church gardens and lawns.

Mr Kolln said Living Waters was an eco-friendly congregation and had received a water grant from stage one of the Federal Government Community Water Grants scheme to help fund the project.

"We were and still are very concerned about the drought and lack of water," Mr Kolln said.

"It did not fit right with our faith that we were allowing the rainwater from our large church roof area and from The Shack to run out into the street. To us this was extremely poor stewardship of a resource supplied by God.

The tank currently has almost one metre of water in it.

"The pump, irrigation system and water to flush the toilets in The Shack are up and running. The pump has a water meter on it so that we can easily advise the government how much town water we are saving."

Mr Kolln said collection of greywater had been investigated but the amount generated by a church property was small and the cost could not be justified.

"Our overall thinking was that by having the tank we would be making a very positive contribution to reducing our dependence on town water and would be good stewards of God's rain."

Signage has been installed to tell people about the project and, as the church is located in a prominent corner position and used by many community groups, Living Waters Uniting Church believe their initiative will help to increase water conservation awareness in the area.

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Pancake Day proves flipping good fun

CLAYFIELD RESIDENT and cricketer Michael Kasprovicz exchanged his Queensland Bulls uniform for a chef's hat and apron on 20 February to raise thousands for dollars for the disadvantaged in Australia on Pancake Day.

He was helped with pancake flipping duties by St Andrew's chaplain Rev Robyn Kidd.

At the annual fundraising event at St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital, Bulls player Kasprovicz, a former patient, was more than happy to help raise funds for those living in poverty by getting in the hospital kitchen and tossing a pancake or two.

The St Andrew's event was just one amongst the six hundred Pancake Day events that occurred across Queensland.

The annual Corporate Breakfast was well attended and included a pancake flipping relay. The team headed up by Brisbane Lions player Anthony Corrie (last year's pancake flipping champion) proved too strong for the team led by Hockeysroos captain Nikki Hudson, despite a valiant effort.

The 2006 Pancake Day raised in excess on \$600 000 so hopes are high for that figure to increase this year.

Mardi Lumsden



Brisbane Lions player Anthony Corrie shows his winning pancake flipping form to Hockeysroos captain Nikki Hudson. Photo by Mardi Lumsden

Shalom developing sports stars

WITH SUPPORT from AFL Queensland, Shalom Christian College has officially launched its Academy of Sport program.

The academy will develop the skills of young Indigenous sportspeople and build students' self-esteem and competence in literacy and numeracy.

Shalom Christian College principal Chris Shirley said having natural sporting ability was not enough and students would be expected to demonstrate improvement in their studies in order to remain members of the academy.

"They have to attend all their classes and improve their numeracy and literacy levels to maintain their position in the academy," Mr Shirley told the *Townsville Bulletin*.

AFL Queensland regional manager Richie Lyons supervised the selection process to fill 20 available positions.

Students were required to pass various fitness tests from sprints to long-distance endurance.

The Shalom Academy of Sport will offer positions in AFL, rugby league and basketball.

The first member of the Shalom Academy of Sport program is Brandon Roughsey from Mornington Island who has been selected for the Queensland Country AFL team.

Shalom Christian College is a Uniting Church coeducational school located in Townsville.

The school's student population of approximately 320 comprises entirely Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.



Photo by Latvian photographer Alexander Abolins

Climate debate rocks US evangelicals

By Bruce Mullan

A FIRESTORM has broken out in US evangelical circles after prominent Focus on the Family leader James Dobson and other leaders of the religious right wrote to the National Association of Evangelicals claiming attention to climate change was a distraction from "the great moral issues of our time".

The letter singled out the "relentless campaign orchestrated by a single individual" naming National Association of Evangelicals vice president of government relations Richard Cizik.

While acknowledging the existence of global warming the letter writers were not convinced that there is conclusive evidence about why it is happening and what should be done about it.

The letter says the signatories have observed Cizik and others "using the global warming controversy to shift the emphasis away from the great moral issues of our time, notably the sanctity of human life, the integrity of marriage and the teaching of sexual abstinence and morality to our children".

Leader of US justice group Sojourners Jim Wallis hit back at the letter claiming this particular statement was the foundation for a real debate.

"Is the fact that 30,000 children will die globally today, and every day, from needless hunger and disease a great moral issue for evangelical Christians?" asked Wallis.

"How about the reality of three billion of God's children living on less than \$2 per day?"

"I happen to believe that the sanctity of life, the health of marriages, and teaching sexual morality to our children are, indeed, among the great moral issues of our time. But I believe they are not the only great moral issues, and Dobson says they are."

Wallis challenged Dobson and fellow letter writers to a "real debate on whether climate change is, indeed, one of the great moral issues of our time".

Particular criticism in the letter was directed to Cizik's pronouncements on population control.

"We ask, how is population control going to be achieved if not by promoting abortion, the distribution of condoms to the young, and, even by infanticide in China and elsewhere? Is this where Richard Cizik would lead us?" the letter asked.

Popular author and speaker Brian McLaren praised "the courageous and important work of Christian leaders like Richard Cizik" and has hit out at Dobson's claim that nothing good can be done about overpopulation.

"Fortunately, their unanswered question can draw attention to some very good answers, including improving education and employment opportunities for poor women, improving health care for poor children [and] helping

poor families earn a liveable wage so they can provide for their own retirement expenses."

Cizik says the climate change crisis is not something humankind can wait to address.

"Climate change is real and human induced. It calls for action soon. And we are saying action based upon a biblical view of the world as God's world," he said.

Cizik said his commitment to environmental issues came after he met influential, evangelical Christian scientist Sir John Houghton, one of the drafters of the *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* document.

"I couldn't shirk, shrug, rationalise or escape my Biblical responsibility to care for the environment. It changed me.

"I had, as John Wesley would say, a 'warming of my heart'... a conversion to a cause which I believe every Christian should be committed to."

Cizik then talked to his wife Virginia and said, "Ginny, we're gonna have to change some things."

"The first thing we did was sell our recreational vehicle. I decided it just wasn't a good use of resources. And it was a gas guzzler, besides. So we bought a Prius, a hybrid."

"God doesn't intend to ask me 'Rich, how did I create the Earth?' He won't ask me that. He'll say 'Rich, what did you do to protect that which I created?'"

Research Notes: Attracting newcomers

A COUPLE with growing children decides to try going to a church somewhere at Easter and stay. But how often does that happen?

A study of church attenders in four countries, USA, England, Australia and New Zealand, offers substantial information on newcomers to church, the National Church Life Survey reports.

Newcomers come to church because someone they trust invited them. For Australians, the most common catalyst was an invitation from a friend or family member.

Contact with a minister, proximity to home or a link with the local church of their former denomination

were also helpful ways of reconnecting.

Less common entry points were contact through church activities, or links through rites of passage, such as weddings, funerals and baptisms.

A critical key to attracting newcomers appears to be the influence and importance of trusted friends and relatives.

People become open to new beliefs through relationships rather than through a process of weighing costs and benefits.

People are willing to change their habits and try new religious activities on the recommendation of those they trust.

Law graduate steps up to the challenge

TRAINED IN law and information technology, a career in the Church was not exactly what young Queenslander Andrew Johnson had in mind at the conclusion of his studies at the University of Queensland.

After part-time service in the role, Mr Johnson is now full-time as the Queensland Synod's Justice and International Mission Advocate and is excited about taking up the challenge.

"Working in the role for nearly two years prior to commencing full-time I learnt a great deal about the church, the community groups we work with and many different justice issues."

Mr Johnson is particularly interested in working alongside congregations and presbyteries on social justice issues and is energised

by the international mission side of his work.

"I had not been exposed to the international mission work of the church but I have discovered the enormous breadth of work in which we participate in South-East Asia and the Pacific.

"I am particularly excited by the Global Walking project we are involved in at the moment."

Mr Johnson will continue the policy research and advice work he has been undertaking.

"This research is important for supporting our advocacy work to both the government and through the media."

Andrew Johnson, Justice and International Mission Advocate, can be contacted by phone on (07) 3377 9911 or by email at andrew.johnson@ucaqld.com.au.



The Queensland Synod's Justice and International Mission Advocate Andrew Johnson. Photo by Osker Lau

Young adults move forward on retreat

"WE REALLY were on about retreating in order to advance the Kingdom," Glen Smith from West End said about the Young Adults Retreat at Alex Park Conference Centre in March.

Retreat organiser and Synod Young Adult Ministry Coordinator Tom Kerr said 47 participants from each of the three Brisbane Presbyteries and some friends from other churches had been set a challenge to be disciplined in working on having a well balanced spiritual diet.

"We enjoyed the good will of the people and we were also reminded that we are called to be on a mission for God beyond the church," Mr Kerr said.

"It was a retreat, but we were also on about growing apostles."

Amy Butler from Aspley said, "Our Church Council supported the young adults from our church attending and kindly offered to refund us for the amount paid to YACMU for our registrations."

Mr Kerr said many of the participants needed a break from service in their local church to reflect on their own faith.

"They need to be on the receiving end of ministry and just by encouraging our young adults to come on retreats like this, the Church is being supportive."

Cameron Todd from St David's Coopers Plains said it was beneficial to spend the weekend with likeminded people.

"I like the fact that many of the people attending were worship leaders or similar in their own churches but didn't have to do any work on the weekend for the retreat."

Michelle Jenkins from The Gap said it was the opportunity to rest and revive that she appreciated.

"It was a great opportunity for me to just empty my mind of all the daily clutter and allow God to speak to me in some new ways."



Cameron Todd from Coopers Plains Uniting Church takes a quiet moment to do business with God. Photo by Tom Kerr

For more information on camps, retreats and activities run by the Youth and Children's Ministry Unit (YACMU), visit their website www.yacmu.com.au

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Advertising and editorial deadline for May Journey Friday, 13 April

Uniting Church cares for traumatised students

THE TRAGIC death of a 14-year-old student from Coffs Harbour during an excursion to the Glasshouse Mountains at the end of February prompted a quick and compassionate response from Uniting Church leaders.

The school group had been staying at the Margate Uniting Church Conference Centre and the Synod office quickly contacted Rev Peter Armstrong from Redcliffe Uniting Church who mobilised a local response team.

Mr Armstrong reported that between his contacts and the Police they ended up with Redcliffe Uniting Church Youth Worker Simon Jockel, two Youth Workers from the Redcliffe Area Youth Space, Mr Armstrong, a Police Chaplain, and four Guidance Officers from Education Queensland at the Margate Centre.

"We were able to help the staff

and students enough once they got back to camp to get them going back home to Coffs just after 5pm," Mr Armstrong reported.

"The young student's brother was actually part of the school group as well so everyone was pretty traumatised.

"The team did well and the staff at Margate and the Synod were excellent. They were flexible, accommodating and supportive of all the support people."

Mr Armstrong was particularly complimentary about the work of Uniting Church Mission Support Enterprises Manager Mark Lee who, because they were not expected back for dinner, saw that the group was provided with a McDonald's feast.

"Mark did a great job of seeing that the whole school group was catered for. This enabled them to head home well fed and well cared for."

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Moreton Bay Boys' College
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Supporting a partner in Fiji



Queensland minister Rev Brian Lee. Photo by Bruce Mullan

By Meera Atkinson

WITH ITS idyllic crystalline waters, friendly locals, and close proximity, Fiji has always been a favourite holiday and honeymoon destination for Australians.

But for one Uniting Church member, a recent visit to the troubled island was for an entirely different reason.

Retired Queensland Uniting Church minister Rev Brian Lee visited Fiji on behalf of Uniting International Mission (UIM) to investigate and report back to the church in Australia on the situation following the December 2006 coup.

Since Mr Lee's visit the Methodist Church in Fiji, a partner church of the Uniting Church in Australia, has come out in opposition to the coup.

Fiji has a history of coups, with four in the past two decades. Religious tension between the ethnic Fijians and Indian Fijians has played a significant role.

The majority of ethnic Fijians belong to the Methodist Church and the majority of Indians are Hindu.

The new National Director of UIM Rev Kerry Enright pointed out that the reasons for this most recent coup are thought to stem more from internal Fijian conflict than racial tension despite the fact that coup leaders took power claiming a religious framework and inspiration.

In the midst of this sensitive situation the purpose of Mr Lee's visit was to be a "listener".

"People asked me if I'd preach on Sunday," he said, but he declined.

Having worked in Fiji for

several years Mr Lee was an ideal choice to spend time in the country, meeting with leaders of the Methodist Church, including people in the Indian division, a minority but significant part of the church community.

It was an assignment that required a degree of diplomacy.

The Methodist Church was closely related to the ousted government and most of the military are members of the Methodist Church.

"You can understand that there are some differences of opinion, differences of stance (and differences of loyalty) and some tensions within the life of the church in this present situation," he said.

Meanwhile, life goes on as normal in Fiji.

"People are still going to church, the churches are still functioning. Unlike in Australia, most people in Fiji belong to the church.

"Fifty years ago most Fijians belonged to the Methodist Church. There are other churches now and some thousands belong to those churches, but the Methodist Church is still very strong.

"You would go to many areas in Fiji where all are members of the Methodist Church. It seems to me that the ministers I talked to and met with are very deliberately not introducing political things into their sermons."

The person-to-person support was appreciated and Rev Lee was quick to point out that the Fijian people appreciated that the Uniting Church sent a person and not just another letter.

"I think it's important for people to go, not necessarily as representatives of the Uniting Church, but if Uniting Church members go there and introduce themselves as Christian brothers and sisters who want to share with people, that's good.

"And in our prayers we need to remember to pray for those who in good conscience believe that the coup was wrong and that something should be done to bring it to an end, and those who in good conscience believe that the coup was a good idea and hope that its aims are accomplished."

Moderator sees prison from the inside

By Bruce Mullan

BOTH AFFIRMATION for the work of prison staff and ongoing concerns were expressed by the Moderator of the Queensland Synod Rev Dr David Pitman and Justice and International Mission Consultant Andrew Johnson after their recent visit to Queensland prisons.

As guests of the Deputy-Director of Correctional Services Mr Neil Whittaker, the two person delegation visited the Wolston maximum security prison which houses 600 male prisoners and the adjacent Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre which houses 270 female prisoners.

Dr Pitman found the staff they spoke with were very committed to their roles.

"The senior personnel of the Department speak with considerable passion about their work and their vision for the future and I was impressed with much of what I saw and heard," he said.

"However it is clear that Correctional Services personnel are to some extent the 'meat in the sandwich' between the politicians on the one hand and the judicial system on the other.

"I was able to affirm this to the Deputy-Director and prison staff and also identify a number of ongoing concerns, most of which they acknowledged as valid."

Dr Pitman believes there are still too many people in prison who would benefit more if they could be kept with their families and active in the community while ensuring that the issues that brought them into the judicial system are properly addressed.

"Those guilty of minor offences, or suffering from mental illness, or captive to substance addiction and not guilty of violent crimes are amongst those who should be kept out of the prison system. They need constructive help, not punishment.

"Not only would these folk benefit greatly, but we would no longer need to build more and bigger prisons, and prison staff could focus their energy where it primarily needs to be."

Mr Johnson was particularly interested in the diagnosis of mental health issues.

"Mental illness in prison is described primarily in terms of risk to staff, other inmates and self-harm," he said.

"The diagnosis of mental illness also needs to be seen in terms of seeking to treat and manage mental illness in order to aid rehabilitation and limit re-offending, not just minimise risk."

Dr Pitman was also concerned about the alarming degree of recidivism in Queensland with 31% of those released returning to prison within a two years period.

"This tells us that there are still fundamental community issues that need to be addressed in a very proactive manner because the chances of prisoners re-offending continue to be significant when the social and economic environment to which they return remains the same.

"We spoke with two men who have participated in the sexual offender's rehabilitation program.

"They were quite honest about the challenges they knew they would face at the time of their release."

This transition back into the community also concerns Mr Johnson.

"While we were given an extensive explanation of the prison reception process there was limited explanation of the process of transition into the community.

"Offenders who have been in prison for extended periods need significant help in readjusting to life in the community."

A more detailed report of the visit can be read at www.journeonline.com.au.

THE UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA
QUEENSLAND SYNOD



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Easter: Is it salvation or cosmic abuse?

By Bruce Mullan

INTERPRETING THE meaning of Easter can be a dangerous activity as UK Baptist minister and author Steve Chalke found out when he published *The Lost Message of Jesus* in 2004.

Chalke's book provoked uproar from conservative Evangelicals when it questioned the theological understanding of "penal substitution" – the idea that God punished his own son, Jesus, by sending him to the cross.

Sometimes referred to as

"substitutionary atonement" this theory explains the Easter story by saying that we humans, having broken God's holy law, are deserving of a penalty which is death, but that Jesus died in our place, paying the penalty and setting us free.

People are thus invited to respond in repentance, turn from their sins, and receive forgiveness because they have been pardoned.

Chalke's suggestion that the idea of a vengeful and vindictive God was at odds with the revelation of Jesus Christ in the gospels and led former colleagues and friends to

question whether he had become a liberal and turned his back on truth.

London-based organisation the Evangelical Alliance published a statement which said, "We do not believe that penal substitutionary atonement can be rejected... as Steve has persisted in rejecting it."

"While affirming the many gifts which Steve has to offer, we urge him, as a much-loved brother in Christ, to reconsider both the substance and style of his recently expressed views on this matter."

This followed a debate in

Westminster attended by almost 1,000 people in which Chalke was asked to publicly respond to his critics.

It was virtually a modern-day heresy trial and the newspaper *Evangelicals Now* also questioned whether Chalke could be considered an "Evangelical" any longer, in light of what he had written.

Chalke questioned a description of God whose anger against sinners and demand for justice can only be appeased through bringing about the violent death of his Son, claiming it was incompatible with the Christian understanding of the character of God.

"God says love your enemies but then doesn't love his until he's got blood – how can God run on a different ethic to the way he's asked his people to live?"

The use of provocative imagery such as likening God to a "cosmic child abuser" shocked many evangelicals only because, said Chalke, "It is a stark unmasking of the violent, pre-Christian thinking behind such theology."

General Director of the Evangelical Alliance Joel Edwards said that the Alliance's statement of faith implied an acceptance of penal substitution.

"If anyone looks at clauses three and four of our basis of faith; there is a very clear implicit relationship between Jesus' work of substitution and penal substitution."

Chalke was calling for a bigger view to be had of the cross. "I think it is like the emperor's new clothes and when someone stands up and asks questions people get scared."

There was popular support for Chalke's book and applause for his statements during the debate.

An uneasy truce has since been

adopted by both sides and, in a 2005 statement, Edwards said the Evangelical Alliance welcomes the fact that Chalke has "affirmed [his] willingness to continue creative engagement with penal substitutionary atonement, and to work alongside its proponents in the cause of the gospel."

Queensland Vision for Mission Advocate Rev Duncan Macleod said that since the Apostle Paul there have been many doctrinal models developed to explain the death and resurrection of Jesus, and that penal substitutionary atonement was just one of them.

"Becoming familiar with the depth of meaning in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus will lead to more effective sharing of faith."

While most Christians see belief in the physical death and resurrection of Jesus as essential tenets of the Christian faith, member of the Progressive Spirituality Network (PSN) and retired minister Rev Ray Richmond said some understand "that the resurrection of Jesus was a typical act of human imagination; historical but not factual".

"Our apparent intention is to build up the numbers of the church with exacting consent to propositions in the clothing of previous world-views."

Mr Richmond calls for the church to "get out of the resurrection box we have built".

So, is Chalke a heretic or just another Christian trying to determine what the Easter story really means?

It seems we are only just beginning to comprehend the complexity of God's saving work through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Commissioning challenges Edmonton congregation



Community Minister Marcia Cowen cuts her celebratory cake with congregation members. Photo by Peter Blackman

FRIENDS, FAMILY and members of the North Queensland Presbytery joined the Edmonton Uniting Church congregation in Cairns at the end of February for a special service to commission Marcia Cowen as a Community Minister.

Mrs Cowen has ministered to the Edmonton congregation since moving to Cairns with her husband John in 1996 taking full leadership responsibilities at Edmonton in early 2004.

North Queensland Presbytery Chairperson Rev Bruce Cornish spoke of God's call to Samuel and encouraged all those present to hear God's call on their own lives.

Congregation member Val Davies said they welcome Mrs Cowen's commissioning and value the confirmation of her three year appointment.

"It was a day where the power and challenges of the commissioning were not confined to the congregation's leader," she said.

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Resurrection doubts keep rising up

By Bruce Mullan

THROUGHOUT RECENT Christian history debate has raged about the historical accuracy of the biblical resurrection accounts and whether literal belief in the resurrection of Jesus is essential to the Christian faith.

Proponents of the literal resurrection typically cite four "proofs" for the fact that Jesus rose from the dead after being crucified and buried in a tomb.

These are based on the accounts that the body of Jesus was actually dead and buried, that the tomb was discovered empty on the third

day, that Jesus made a number of appearances to people following the resurrection, and on the convincing strength of belief in the resurrection demonstrated by the early disciples.

This way of seeing the historicity of the resurrection is represented by eminent British scholar N.T. Wright who said, "As an historian, I cannot explain the rise of early Christianity unless Jesus rose again, leaving an empty tomb behind him."

However various alternative explanations of the resurrection have been proposed including suggestions of conspiracy, hallucination and the

possibility that Jesus' death was only apparent.

Much of the debate comes down to the nature of history and its scholarship.

Historians seek to establish as best as possible what happened in the past and the accuracy of such history is usually assessed on the basis of the number of eye witness accounts and how independent these were.

Academic historians are dubious about any collaboration between authors or if the sources are biased towards the subject matter. This is

a problem for many who see the biblical resurrection accounts in the Gospel sources as less than adequate historical records.

Added to this is modern scientific scepticism about miracles which makes believing in the bodily resurrection of Jesus a long stretch for some people.

Cynicism towards the biblical accounts has been popularised again by the recent documentary film *The Lost Tomb of Jesus* produced for the Discovery Channel.

Hollywood documentary film maker James Cameron claimed

a 2000-year-old tomb held the remains of Jesus of Nazareth, Mary his mother, Mary Magdalene, said to be his partner and Judah said to be their son, along with other members of his family.

Biblical scholar Stephen Pfann from the University of the Holy Land in Jerusalem was dismissive of the claims.

"I don't think that Christians are going to buy into this," he said. "But sceptics, in general, would like to see something that pokes holes into the story that so many people hold dear."

At the other end of the spectrum are those who seek proof for the resurrection in historic relics such as the Shroud of Turin.

The Shroud is a single piece of linen cloth which many believe is bloodstained and shows faint front and back images of a person who would appear to have been crucified and some look to it hoping to find evidence for Jesus' resurrection which can accommodate the realities of scientific thought.

Former Queensland Moderator Rev Don Whebell believes the Easter story is about celebrating the irrational.

"The resurrection is a highly irrational reality which always defies the wisdom of the world," he said. "And right from the beginning the church has proclaimed that."

So most Christians find themselves sitting comfortably between the extremes when it comes to the resurrection story and resonate with the conclusions of the Hon Justice Peter W Young, Chief Judge in Equity of the Supreme Court of New South Wales and General Editor of the Australian Law Journal.

"Just as we cannot be absolutely certain of anything, or at least, almost anything, so we would not normally let little doubts or remote possibilities cloud our view of what probably happened, so we must assess the evidence for the resurrection in the same way," he said.

Broadwater Road Minister Rev Bruce Johnson is one who concluded that the resurrection has to be taken on the basis of faith, not just on the basis of proof.

"I decided that despite not understanding all that this mystery contains, I would put my faith in Christ," he said. "I would take the little I did understand and live it out."

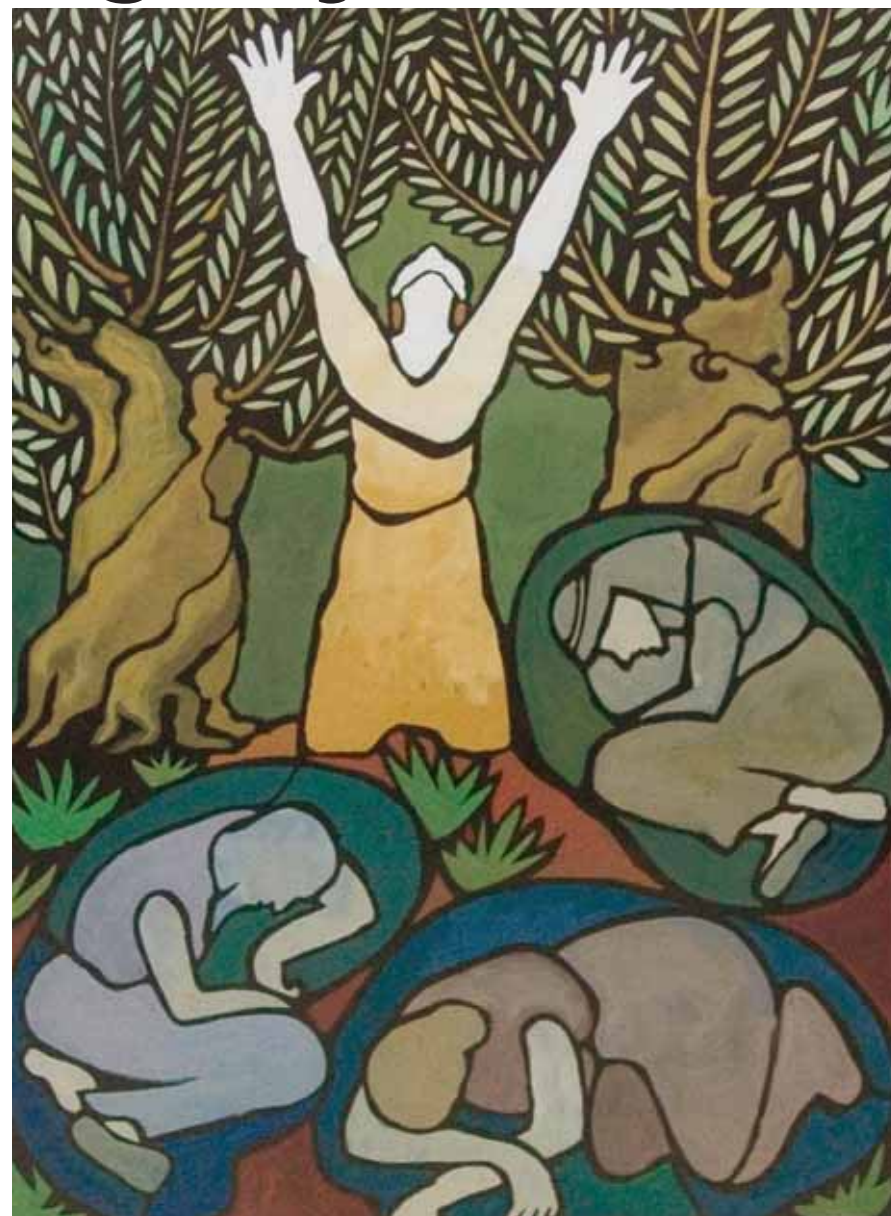
"I didn't want them to look very gruesome. I don't think that is the point. I think the point is suffering, indeed, but it is not a Christ to which you say, 'yuck, I don't want to look at that'. It could be an inviting Christ."

The result is an image that truly captures the power and humbleness of Christ on the cross.

As an artist Mr Sliedrecht said he had great respect for historical religious art. He also appreciated having a subject so inspiring.

"I felt very blessed that I could do this," he said.

Agony in the Garden



"Agony in the Garden" by Rev Geraldine Wheeler is a work which took some years to develop.

"I was aware of how several famous European artists had depicted the story of Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane after the last supper, just before his arrest, trial and crucifixion," Ms Wheeler said.

"I was also aware of how an artist like Munch had depicted human suffering in 'The Scream'."

Ms Wheeler said it was only after a trip to Israel in 1993 and seeing the place thought to have been the Garden of Gethsemane, and observing the gnarled olive trees there which were well over 1,000 years old that she came to understand how she wished to depict Jesus praying in the garden.

"I had already pictured the disciples cocooned in sleep and ignorance, blind to the way Jesus had to take. I could feel how such agony might be expressed in dance."

"When I saw those old olive trees, with the branches curving upwards,

I had a glimpse of the non-human creation in agony with Jesus, in a parallel way to the psalmist declaring that creation offers God praise."

Ms Wheeler said her image was not meant to be a photo-real depiction of what the scene might have looked like.

"I aim to express feeling and theological insight into the story as I would, in a different way, when preaching on the same story."

Ms Wheeler has been trying to make visual images which complement the telling and interpreting of the biblical story in words for over twenty years.

Her work is primarily print making, either linocuts or stencils on which she paints onto black card or paper in gouache, a thick, water-based paint.

"A major artistic influence for me was no doubt the Christian Japanese printmaker, Sadao Watanabe."

"I have also been keenly aware of the rejection of pictures in the churches by the Reformed tradition at the Reformation and for some centuries following, and have sought to understand a role for images, in books and in churches, within this theological tradition."

"Images, as I understand in this tradition, are to be 'read', rather than used as a medium for prayer."

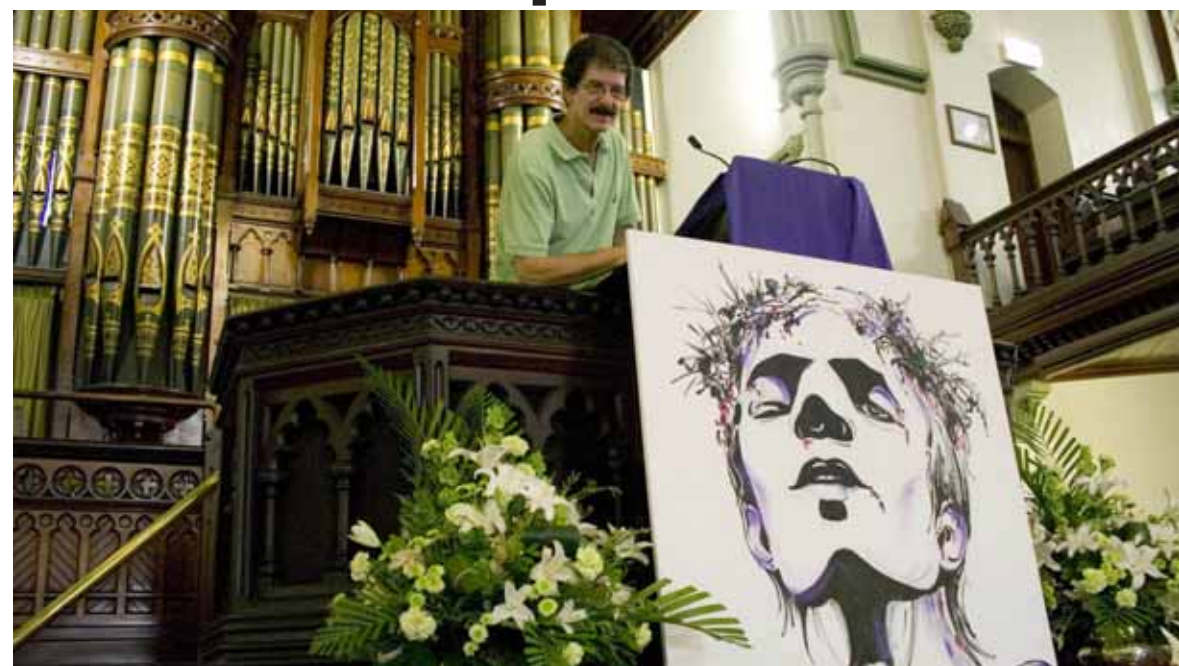
Peter Armstrong is minister at Redcliffe and reflected on the Easter story.

Jesus put all of his eggs into the one basket...the basket of Calvary! By entering the city of Jerusalem as a King he had provoked the Priests, the Princes and Pilate. They had to take action, an action that Jesus was expecting and prepared for. Jesus had put all of his hope and faith into the hands of death and into the hands of God. For Jesus there was no turning back... It is at the point of death that Jesus said, "It is finished!" Whatever happens from here on is in the hands of God...

Rev Bruce Johnson ministers at Broadwater Road Uniting Church in Wishart and offers a challenge from the Good Friday story.

Good Friday only becomes Good Friday for each of us as we come to the point of embracing all that Jesus' death on the cross means for us. It becomes Good Friday when we come to Christ in gratitude and faith, believing that he is there for us even through the deepest darkness, and knowing that there is now nothing that can separate us from the love of God our Father.

Easter art inspires at Albert St



Cees Sliedrecht looks over the face of Christ at the front of Albert Street Uniting Church, Brisbane. Photo by Mardi Lumsden

WORSHIPPERS AT Albert Street Uniting Church in Brisbane city have been treated to an even more beautiful church than usual with the addition of one member's Lent inspired paintings.

Around three years ago artist Cees Sliedrecht was asked by the then minister at Albert St, Rev Dr David Pitman, to paint some works for the church in the lead up to Easter. The final product was six

paintings depicting the Stations of the Cross that are displayed in the church.

From concept to finished artwork the Stations of the Cross paintings took four to five months.

"The preparation takes most of the time. It is really trying to visualise what I am going to do," said Mr Sliedrecht.

"It is quite difficult because you have to think of composition,

balance, the clothing of the people, what they look like, does one person look at another person or do they turn away or look at Christ?"

Another four paintings are displayed on Good Friday. These large black, white and purple paintings are stark in contrast to the 'Stations' images and have quite a modern look about them.

The first is of the face of Christ and is placed at the Communion

Table. The second is of the blessing hands of Christ and is placed on the left side of the church. The pierced hands of Christ are placed to the right and the pierced feet are placed in the rear of the church making the congregation the body of Christ.

"I really wanted Christ to stand in this day's society. He is not a Christ of yesterday, he is a Christ of now."

"I didn't want them to look very gruesome. I don't think that is the point. I think the point is suffering, indeed, but it is not a Christ to which you say, 'yuck, I don't want to look at that'. It could be an inviting Christ."

The result is an image that truly captures the power and humbleness of Christ on the cross.

As an artist Mr Sliedrecht said he had great respect for historical religious art. He also appreciated having a subject so inspiring.

"I felt very blessed that I could do this," he said.

St John Passion - JS Bach (1685 - 1750)

Throughout history, the celebration of Easter has inspired many great works of art and music, one of the best known and most performed being JS Bach's cantata St John Passion.

Written for Good Friday vespers the St John Passion was first performed in 1724. The text is taken mostly from the Gospel of John chapters 18-19,

but does include text from other biblical and non-biblical texts. Bach made several revisions to the score before producing the final version in the 1740s, although it is the 1724 version that is closest to what is performed today.

Bach was a lover of numerical symbolism. The work was written in 40 movements (corresponding to the 40 day of Lent) but is

often renumbered. He also features music themes, or motifs, based around the number 13 symbolising Jesus and his 12 disciples. After the betrayal by Judas, Bach uses the number 12 and then after the crucifixion the number 11 is used. The fugue subject enters 10 times to symbolise the 10 Commandments.



Shroud of Turin

How we do Easter

Easter

The name Easter comes from the pagan figure called Eastr (or Eostre) who was celebrated as the goddess of spring by the Saxons of Northern Europe. Her earthly symbol was the rabbit, which was also known as a symbol of fertility. Early Christians linked pagan and Jewish festivals (Easter being linked to Passover) to similar events in the Christian calendar. The festival of Eastr occurred at the same time of year as the observance of the Resurrection of Christ.

Shrove Tuesday

Shrove Tuesday is the day before Lent begins (Ash Wednesday). It is a day of penitence, to clean the soul, and a day of celebration as the last chance to feast before Lent. On Shrove Tuesday early Christians would finish all the butter, eggs and sugar in the house before the beginning of lent. Of course, the best thing to make with those ingredients is pancakes! It also gave way for the term Mardi Gras (or Fat Tuesday). These days Shrove Tuesday is commonly known as Pancake Day and in Australia is UnitingCare's biggest event of the year raising thousands of dollars for charity.

Ash Wednesday

In the Western church, Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent and the seventh Wednesday before Easter. Its name comes from the Old Testament practice of placing ashes

on the foreheads of worshippers to symbolise repentance and mortality. In the Orthodox Church, Lent begins on a Monday rather than on Ash Wednesday.

Lent

Lent is the period of time between Ash Wednesday and Easter Saturday. Traditionally Lent is a time of fasting for 40 days (not including Sundays) to symbolise patience, preparation for Easter and reflection. In 325, the Council of Nicaea discussed a 40-day Lenten season of fasting. It is unclear whether its original intent was just for new Christians preparing for Baptism, but it soon encompassed the whole Church.

Maundy Thursday

Also called Holy Thursday, Maundy Thursday is the Thursday before Easter and commemorates the Last Supper. The four events

commemorated on Maundy Thursday are the washing of the Disciples' feet by Jesus, the Last Supper, the agony of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, and the betrayal of Christ by Judas.

Up until the death of King James II, the English Monarch would wash the feet of selected poor people on Maundy Thursday.

The word Maundy, used only in this context, is generally explained as derived from the Latin word mandatum, which is the first word in the phrase "A new commandment I give unto you".

Tenebrae

The Latin word for shadows, the Tenebrae service was originally held on Good Friday but is now more commonly held on Maundy Thursday. It re-creates the emotional aspects of the passion story and is a solemn service of scriptural narratives interspersed with time for reflection often through the

use of music. During the service candles are extinguished to leave the congregation in darkness to await the one true light of Easter Sunday.

Eggs

The act of giving decorated eggs at the beginning of Spring has been celebrated for many years prior to Christianity adopting the symbol. Originally symbols of new life, in the Christian tradition eggs also represent the stone rolled away from the tomb of Jesus.

Polish folklore tells a story of the Virgin Mary giving eggs to the soldiers at the cross. She begged them to be less cruel and as she wept her tears fell on the eggs, spotting them with dots of brilliant color.

Decorating and colouring eggs for Easter was the custom in England during the Middle Ages. In Royal households eggs were often covered in gold leaf.

The Last Temptation of Christ...

The gospel according to Scorsese

By Scott Stephens

IN HIS infamous essay *Why I am Not a Christian*, Bertrand Russell remarked that the word Christian “does not have quite such a full-blooded meaning now as it had in the times of St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas.

“In those days, if a man [sic] said that he was a Christian it was known what he meant... Nowadays it is not quite that,” he said.

This comment reflects the state of atrophy in which Christianity now finds itself: a steady process of being alienated from its own essence and growing increasingly vague and indistinct.

Yet it is one of the strangest aspects of our time that shards of a lost authenticity can be found in some of the most anti-Christian of sources.

The offensive strangeness that the Christian message historically embodied is frequently more discernable in sources other than the impotent expressions of official Christianity.

Karl Marx said it best. “Shame on you, Christians, both high and lowly, learned and unlearned, shame on you that an anti-Christian had to show you the essence of Christianity in its true and unveiled form!”

So perhaps one of the paradoxical tasks given to us is to encounter the truth in the likes of Andres Serrano’s photograph of a plastic crucifix immersed in his own blood and urine; or buried deep in the pages of Darwin’s scientific notebooks; or even amid the moving images of Martin Scorsese’s *The Last Temptation of Christ*.

Scorsese received one of his

six Oscar nominations for best director for this 1988 film, not least for his sheerchutzpah and long-term commitment to this project in the face of intense opposition, but, as on every other occasion until recently, he missed out.

Drawing inspiration from Nikos Kazantzakis, *The Last Temptation of Christ* presented a radically different version of the Jesus story than other more sanitised depictions.

Played by Willem Dafoe, Scorsese’s Jesus, like all his protagonists, is a tortured soul haunted by a divine vocation that brings with it not enlightenment, but darkness, confusion and oppression.

Jesus’ experience of God as an expansive, entirely free presence can no more be apprehended by the young Galilean’s marginalised psyche than it can by the temple in Jerusalem.

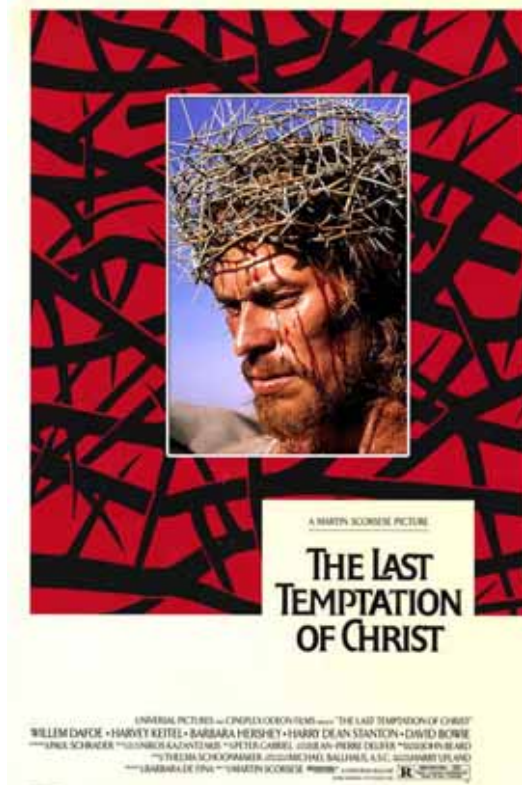
Thus, the psycho-spiritual journey of the film is not toward some deep sense of Jesus’ ‘secret identity’ and a clearer realisation of who he is and what he must do, but rather away from any such security.

He is plunged into the divine void and needs only to be willing to resign himself to it to find salvation and sanity.

This is where the film’s near fatal weakness lies. It reduces Jesus’ message to an anti-establishment spiritualism or even vulgar pantheism, over and against the rigid formality of Jewish ritual.

As Scorsese’s Jesus puts it at one point in the film, “God is an immortal spirit who belongs to everybody; to the whole world.”

By casting God as an all-embracing life spirit rather than some tribal deity, the film locates



the critical opposition as being between Jesus’ free spirituality and Judaism’s stale religion.

The Last Temptation of Christ is undeniably wrong here. In the Gospels, Jesus sets the conflict within Judaism itself, between the holiness code and prophetic traditions.

But the film in equal measure gets something remarkably right. A strong temptation did bedevil Jesus his entire life. It was a temptation as much domestic and familial as it was national and political.

And while this temptation wasn’t purely internal (an ‘illness of

the soul’, as the Puritans used to put it), neither was it entirely external. It went to the heart of Jesus’ self-understanding.

Take Luke’s account of Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness. What is missed in our usual readings of this account is that the expectations and birthright of the messiah – condensed into allusions to Psalms 2 and 91 – are presented as temptations, and from the devil’s own mouth, no less!

The effect of this outrageous assertion is that one is forced to reinterpret Mary’s and Zechariah’s hallowed songs, both of which

Church vs. Australian uranium mine

THE CATHOLIC Commission for Justice and Peace in Malawi has condemned the country’s government for granting a mining licence to the Paladin Resources Company of Australia to start mining uranium.

The commission said the government granted mining permission despite calls from church and civil society organisations not to let mining go ahead.

Mining opponents argued that an environmental impact assessment report issued by Paladin was unscientific and did not address health issues including how the company would protect people working on the mine and those living in surrounding areas from radiation.

“Those charged with protecting Malawi citizens, do not want to listen to cries from the people,” said the statement.

Pope reaffirms communion bans

POPE BENEDICT XVI has reaffirmed a strict ruling forbidding eucharistic concelebration with ministries of non-Roman Catholic churches, while at the same time giving priests the go-ahead to revive Latin as the main language used during the church service known as the Mass.

“The celebration and worship of the Eucharist enable us to draw near to God’s love and to persevere in that love,” Benedict said

The Pope also restated his strong opposition to Catholics remarrying, and also asks priests to refrain from celebrating the Mass during weddings or funerals attended by non-practising Catholics.

“Only in exceptional situations, for the sake of their eternal salvation, can individual non-Catholic Christians be admitted to the Eucharist, the sacrament of reconciliation and the anointing of the sick,” said the pontiff.

eagerly anticipate the coming deliverance of Israel from its Roman oppressors, as almost ‘satanic utterances’.

Jesus’ refusal to submit to this temptation was an absolute rejection of the notion of ‘messiah’, and thus of his family, his nation, and ultimately of that God known as ‘Yahweh’.

This implication was perfectly captured by Scorsese’s Jesus when he cries, “God is not an Israelite!”

The prophetic path on which he then embarked was one of urgent warning: that the nationalised structures of holiness and insurgence will not lead to deliverance but to the destruction of Jerusalem itself.

It was this protest – which entailed an altogether different conception of God, one that is defined by mercy but whose dark purposes include Jesus’ own death – that was burned indelibly into Jesus’ self-understanding.

His crucifixion – a form of execution reserved exclusively for insurgents and rebels against the Roman occupation – was the final warning that further revolt would end in national catastrophe. Or, in Jesus’ own words, “If they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?”

At this point, Scorsese is unique among cinematic depictions of Jesus’s life. He accurately connects the necessity of Jesus’ crucifixion with the impending destruction of Jerusalem.

If the ‘last temptation’ of Jesus was to succumb to the weight of national and familial expectations and thus pull back from the darkness and uncertainty of his vocation, perhaps our temptation this Easter season is to give in to the security of those all-too-familiar portrayals of Jesus, and thus miss the power of his resurrection.

Scott Stephens an author, theologian and minister at Chermiside Kedron Uniting Church is a regular contributor to *Journey*.

Churches criticise Zimbabwe silence

SOUTH AFRICAN church leaders have said their government’s silence on human rights violations in Zimbabwe is aggravating the situation there following the arrest and beating of opposition leaders at a Harare prayer rally.

The South African Council of Churches, which was at the forefront of the fight against apartheid, condemned the detention by Zimbabwean police of church and opposition leaders, as well as civil society activists and human rights campaigners, who were all participating in the public prayer meeting on 11 March.

The Rev. Setri Nyomi, general secretary of the 75 million-strong World Alliance of Reformed Churches, strongly condemned the police action.

“We are very concerned about what is happening in Zimbabwe including the arrest of leaders of the Student Christian Movement.”

THE UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA
QUEENSLAND SYNOD



MEMBERS OF FINANCE, INVESTMENT & PROPERTY BOARD (FIPB)

Nominations and expressions of interest from members of the Uniting Church are sought for five (5) positions on the newly named Finance, Investment & Property Board (formerly Finance & Property Board).

The Board will support and resource the strategic missional planning of the church by providing a framework for planning, monitoring, reporting and acting on the stewardship of assets of the Church. The Board exercises oversight in relation to Church investment strategies, audit and risk management and effective property and asset management.

The Board will have a mix of skills including an understanding of the Church, governance, finance, investment, property management, audit and risk management.

A full information pack is available via the website (<http://www.ucaqld.com.au/career.php>) or by contacting Shayne Hearley (07) 3377 9705 or shayne.hearley@ucaqld.com.au

NOMINATIONS / EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST (WITH C.V.)
CLOSE FRIDAY, 20 APRIL 2007

John Mavor finally retires

REV JOHN Mavor is finally retiring at 73 years of age after a lifetime of service to the Uniting Church in Australia.

Mr Mavor will wind up his role as project officer for the Pacific with Uniting International Mission in April to travel with his wife Rae.

Mr Mavor's multi-faceted career has taken numerous twists and turns.

He has worked extensively in the Pacific in Christian education and has served many committees, boards, and agencies.

Mr Mavor served as director of Mission and Parish Services for the Uniting Church in Queensland, then as Moderator from 1988 to 1989 and was the 8th president of the Uniting Church from 1998 to 2000.

Since his first retirement he has spent years working as a voluntary part-time project officer with Uniting International Mission before taking the helm as Acting National Director during the last 15 months.

Assembly General Secretary Rev Terence Corkin, describes Mr Mavor "as a person who fills the room with his presence and personality and his genuine interest in people."

Uniting Church President Rev Gregor Henderson, says he has "a huge heart for the gospel, for the church, for people."

"He's a big hearted fellow and a big bloke."

"His compassion and commitment to people and the church is second to none."

Mr Mavor gave his life to Jesus as a 14 year old teenager in 1948.

"The four key passions of my life have been mission, Christian education, evangelism, and ecumenical affairs."

"Everything I've done has been built around that."

Mr Henderson said Mr Mavor's life in the church has been marked by "passion for the faith," and "helping people grow in the faith."

"He's given terrific leadership in pastoral care, in going out of his way to care for people and for congregations that were hurting, and in holding the church together despite differences of opinion."

Mr Mavor maintains that for all he has given the church he has received much in return.

"I've had a marvellous life. I've faced huge challenges and tried to meet them," he said.

"There have been immense rewards. I've been to almost every Pacific country you could think of. I've got an international network of friends as a result."

Having recently been given a clear bill of health Mr Mavor is planning to step out of active ministry and into mentoring up-and-coming ministers.

He is particularly passionate about his work on the Queensland Synod's Future of Ministry Task Group which aims to recruit more people for ministry.

"This is a tremendous concern," he says.

"In Queensland this year 20 ministers will retire and five will be ordained. That's a huge challenge for the church."

Asked how he envisions his days from here on in Mr Mavor says he has a garage full of books and papers and that "my wife has a clear vision that I'm going to get something done about it".

As Mr Henderson was quick to point out John Mavor is "one of those who will keep going till the day he dies."



Natalie Denmeade from Garden City Christian Church (left) with Kerry Webber and Ruth Nicols from Bald Hills Uniting Church. Photo by Louise Edwards.

Huge turn-out for children's ministry expo

ONE HUNDRED Uniting Church leaders participated in the Ignite children's ministry training day held in March.

Youth and Children's Ministry Unit (YACMU) Consultant Paul Yarrow said people travelled from Atherton, Gladstone, Gayndah, Dalby and some people even flew from Adelaide to be part of the third annual event.

"With over 700 leaders involved in the day it demonstrates a growing passion and involvement in working with children," Mr Yarrow said.

"Churches are recognising the importance of equipping and training leaders to work with children in new ways that are relevant in the changing culture in which our children live."

"Ignite provided a chance for new leaders to hear from some of the most experienced and skilled children's workers in the nation."

UC Conference Centres was a sponsoring partner for Ignite which also provided opportunity for people to look at new ministry resources, entertainers, training programs and ministry organisations on display in the Expo hall.

Rural ministry musters courage

THE ANNUAL Rural Muster will take place from 27-29 April at the Jondaryan Woolshed.

Hosted by Oakey and District Uniting Church, the muster will place particular focus on assisting Lay ministry teams.

Coordinator Julie Savage said the church has taken up the challenge of working to support Lay people in rural communities.

"The main aim of the 2007 Rural Muster is to encourage, inspire, uplift, and equip congregational members of small rural churches in that ongoing presence," she said.

"The Muster will provide participants with resources they can adapt for their own setting."

"Each session will be practical, interactive and multi-sensory and will provide resources that participants will be able to take away and use in their congregations and faith communities."

Guest Presenter and Workshop Facilitator will be Ivan Hewitt a part-time Community Minister and lay person with a passion for encouraging people to seek out their God-given gifts and abilities, equipping them for involvement in the local congregation.

The cost of the conference includes meals, sessions and onsite accommodation.

For more information contact Julie Savage on ph 3870 2621 or email j.sava2@eq.edu.au.

By Mardi Lumsden

The Mary Valley remembers at Easter

REV IAIN Watt is minister in the Mary Valley area which has been threatened by the proposed construction of the Traveston Crossing Dam.

Almost 12 months from the day when Premier Beattie announced almost a thousand homes will have to be resumed Mr Watt sees hope in the Easter story.

"How do we pass this anniversary appropriately? We will survive but

we will be different. Christians have a wonderful way to face trials, disappointments, suffering and even death.

"To our community facing such things, the truth is always life giving and healing. For us Jesus has come, he has lived our life and died our death. At Easter we celebrate his victory and the life possible in his resurrected power. This is the truth and the truth sets free."



Rev John Mavor AM. Photo courtesy of the Uniting Church Assembly

CHAPLAINCY COORDINATOR

Wesley Mission Sydney provides a variety of services to clients and staff within child and family care, mental health, aged care, homeless persons, employment programs & disability services. We regard pastoral care as a high priority & integral to the provision of multidisciplinary care & support for our residents & clients.

We seek the services of a full time Chaplaincy Coordinator and invite Deacons and Ministers of the Word to express interest. The **Chaplaincy Coordinator** will be required to coordinate, nurture and develop the team of Chaplains and the volunteers Pastoral Care team and serve as a chaplaincy practitioner.

Preference will be given to applicants who are qualified CPE Supervisors or would be willing to obtain the qualification.

For telephone enquiries contact:

Mr. Graham Want, Director – Mission, Outreach & Pastoral Ministries: (02) 9263 5452



Written Applications to:

Mrs Meg Herbert
NSW Synod Associate Secretary (Ministry)
PO Box A2178 Sydney South NSW 1235
megh@nsw.uca.org.au

Applications close: **COB Friday 27th April, 2007**

WHAT'S ON

March 31, 6.30pm. Wesley Mission Brisbane's Centenary Dinner Dance at Brisbane City Hall. Dinner compered by Australian poet, Rupert McCall and features musical entertainment. Discount for tables of 10. For more information call the Public Relations and Fundraising Office on 07 3621 4677 or email pr@wmb.org.au.

March 31-April 7, 5-8pm. Moogerah Passion play at the Lake Theatre on the shores of Lake Moogerah, one hour south of Brisbane. Australia's only purpose-built passion play amphitheatre. Free. Food and drinks available from 4pm. Performances on 31/3, 1/4, 6/4 and 7/4. Contact Carroll Simons on 5463 5691.

April 1, 9am-2.30pm. Wesley Mission Brisbane Centenary celebration at Albert St Uniting Church cnr Albert St and Ann St Brisbane. Speaker Rev Dr David Pitman and featuring the John Stehbins Quartet and young choral trio Amanda, Alexandra and Nathan. Centenary Concert 1pm with Eternity Gospel Singers, Vocal Connection and Greg Hartay-Szabo on the pipe organ. Admission by donation. Contact Lyn Burden on 3031 3031 or email l.burden@wmb.org.au.

April 5-8. Uniting Church Easter Family Venture Camp at Stanthorpe Scout Campsite. Go camping with the whole family at Easter! For more information and to register contact John Horchner on 5496 8371 or email marjanhorchner@bigpond.com or speak with the Chaplain & Camp Director, Rev John Woodley on 5495 3360 or 0419 025 150.

April 5-9. Easter Camp at Alexandra Headland. A camp for high school and young adults - a great way to explore the Easter story and challenge your faith with speaker Tim Hodgson. Contact Louise Edwards on 3849 8548 or email edwardslj@hotmail.com.

April 21, 7am-12noon. Gigantic Garage Sale at Paradise Point Uniting Church, 126 Paradise Pde, Paradise Point. Furniture, books, plants, home-made cakes, new and pre-loved clothing, paintings, sausage sizzle, children's activities and much more! Contact Peter Alfredson on 5529 3669 or email pgaca@bigpond.net.au.

April 27-29. Rural Muster at Jondaryan Woolshed, Darling Downs. Focus on lay ministry in congregations without full-time ministers. Contact Julie Savage on 3870 2621 or email jsava2@eq.edu.au.

April 29, 12noon-2pm. The Barnabas Fellowship meeting at Oxley Uniting Church Hall. More information contact Ed Smith.

May 4-7. Round-About Arts & Crafts show at Bulimba Uniting Church. Contact Wendy on 3399 8657.

May 16. Frontier Services Auxiliary and The Gap Day Fellowship musical morning tea at The Gap Uniting Church 1050 Waterworks Rd, The Gap. Musical program. Contact Jessie Logan on 3278 1868 or Vera Buchley on 3351 3793 for more information.

May 18-23. Queensland Synod meeting at Alexandra Park Conference Centre, Alexandra Headland.

May 26, 2pm. Thanksgiving in flowers, song and dance at Sandgate Uniting Church, 116 Board Street, Deagon. Demonstration by florist Robert Manton with choral music, liturgical dance and afternoon tea. Entry \$10. Arrangements for sale. Contact Bobbie Jeays on 3269 6565 or email djeays@bigpond.net.au.

May 25-27. John L Bell visits Chermside-Kedron Uniting Church. John L Bell is a writer, composer, musician, liturgist and inspiration. Contact Sara Brunt on 3359 9642 or email mrpres@dovenetq.net.au.

May 29, 10am. Meeting of retired Ministers, their spouses & widowed members at The Gap Uniting Church 1050 Waterworks Road. Morning Tea from 10am, meeting commences at 10.30am followed by lunch at 12 noon. \$13.50/person. Guest speaker Uniting Church President Rev Gregor Henderson speaking on aspects of 'Living in our Missionary Church'. Enquiries & replies to convenors, Jim and Jill Tame, phone 3891 6462 or email jnjtame@dovenetq.net.au or jnjtame@bigpond.net.au.

May 31-June 2. Working Group on Worship (Brisbane)

June 8-10. Fijian National Conference (Brisbane)

Want to promote an event?
Go to www.journeyonline.com.au and click on 'What's On'



Brisbane band Leo Nine. Photo courtesy of www.leo-nine.com.au

Win the new Leo Nine single

By Mardi Lumsden

BRISBANE BAND Leo Nine continue to push the boundaries of popular music with the release of their new single which is only available online.

The song *Keep It Coming* is now available as a high quality MP3 exclusively from leo-nine.com for \$1.49.

Band member Caleb James said the band have been releasing music online for many years but have found some programs not so user friendly.

"We think Digital Rights Management is too restrictive. If someone buys a song from iTunes, they can't play it on any MP3 player apart from the iPod. That's crazy.

So we've avoided Digital Rights Management altogether - the buyer can do whatever they want with the song," he said.

The song has been described as an "emotionally engaging and

affecting song, *Keep It Coming* rises and rises to an anthemic ending which feels like the shackles of sadness have been left behind for something euphoric". Not bad eh?

Leo Nine have a long standing church history through members Caleb James, Simon Jockel, Jeremy Bennett and Matt Gray.

Thanks to Iron Duke Records and Leo Nine five lucky *Journey* readers can get the MP3 of 'Keep it Coming' for free!

Simply email your name and email address to journey@ucaqld.com.au

Maleny gives faith a place

LOCAL UNITING Church members provided key support for the first National Interfaith Festival held at Maleny in March.

Billed the most comprehensive interfaith event to be held in Australia an impressive display of religious life, arts and culture was showcased at the showgrounds of one of Queensland's most beautiful hinterland villages.

Musicians, artists, priests and imams shared rituals, explained customs and led workshops while dozens of stalls gave people the chance to explore faith, sample international foods and be entertained.

Among the various religious communities participating were 25 Uniting Church people who, with the support of Lutheran, Baptist, and Anglican churches, hosted a "Local Christians" tent and assisted in the general running of the festival.

Organisers claim that most Australians belong to one of the major world religions or their offshoots but given recent events and issues on the world and national stage, "we think it's the right time to have an annual National level public event dedicated to building religious harmony."

"We see value in strengthening connections by exploring both commonality and the unique distinctions between religious faiths," organisers said.

Woodford Folk Festival CEO Bill Hauritz who is on the Interfaith Festival's Board described the response to the first ever event as "unprecedented".





Heroes and Villains

By Mike Alford

Darton Longman and Todd
RRP \$34.95

In his book *Heroes and Villains* Mike Alford takes the reader through a kaleidoscopic post-modern journey skipping across rapid snippets of the pop culture comic book, TV and film heroes and villains.

As an aficionado of Sci Fi and pop culture, I was drawn to this short book. Anyone who seriously tries to deal with the underlying themes in these is worth a few points at least.

Alford tries to argue that examining the archetypal roles of hero and villain helps us to be more aware of our own culture's values and our own ethical standards.

There is a bewildering array of scenes and examples drawn upon as he strolls through his subject. Buffy is mixed with Superdude, Frodo, Harry Potter, Dr Who, Batman and their enemies.

I would have to argue against him that there is some consistent notion of hero or villain. Each, I would suggest, operates as heroes/heroines for very different reasons and on differing levels of moral strength or ambiguity.

He argues that a hero is ultimately defined in serving others interests in self-sacrifice in some form whereas villains gives in to their need for power.

He makes connections between his themes and related points made by a range of philosophers and theologians showing a knowledgeable breadth of familiarity with their work. These include Nietzsche, Sartre, Derrida, Pannenberg and Moltmann.

I would have liked a discussion of the underlying philosophical notions and theological assumptions which have been publicly admitted to underlie the works of Tolkien, JK Rowling, George Lucas and Roddenberry.

While not an easy read *Heroes and Villains* is a thought provoker and, while not at all a fan of post-modern rhetoric, this may be a useful discussion starter to bring theology to the lovers of escapist culture.

Robert Brennan is Minister at Banora Point Uniting Church

Made for Laughter

By Sheila Cassidy

Darton, Longman and Todd
RRP \$39.95

Made for Laughter is primarily the story of a spiritual journey. It tells of a childhood, a career in medicine, imprisonment and torture in Chile, work in a hospice and psychotherapy, but it is, nonetheless, about one person's spiritual journey in search of the will of God.

Sheila was born just before the outbreak of World War II. She was nurtured in the Catholic Church and has remained within it all her life. Much of her spiritual struggle arose from her attraction to the contemplative religious life on the one hand, and her deep desire to respond to the needs of the people around her on the other. The result was that she moved between the two for much of her working life.

As a young doctor she went to Chile and she was there when President Allende was overthrown by a military coup in 1973. Years of repression followed.

Sheila was caught up in the struggle when she attended to a young man who had been wounded by the police.

She was arrested, subjected to torture, and detained until international pressure and diplomacy led to her release and deportation.

Sheila resumed her medical career in England and embarked on a frenetic schedule of speaking engagements regarding the situation in Chile, but her spiritual quest continued to unsettle her. This was compounded by the onset of insomnia and depression resulting from her terrible experiences in Chile.

Through all this Sheila worked tirelessly to develop Hospice care for the terminally ill and studied to be qualified to practice psychotherapy.

Made for Laughter is a very honest and inspiring story about a unique person with a deep desire to be obedient to the will of God, an inbuilt resistance to conformity, and a passion to care for the suffering.

Once you've read it, you'll want to read her other books: *Audacity to Believe* and *Sharing the Darkness*.

David Pitman is Moderator of the Queensland Synod of the Uniting Church in Australia



REVIEWS

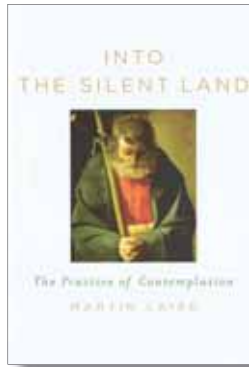
Into the Silent Land – The Practice of Contemplation

By Martin Laird

Darton, Longman and Todd
RRP \$34.95

Given the need to allocate time for family, work, study, the school P&C, hobbies, church, and the World Cup, I have always been bemused by gospel imperatives to "be still" and "receive peace" and to hear the "still small voice"... it all seemed at odds.

And I had never heard of the Christian contemplative tradition – preferring to think, as many do, that other religions reserved such



practices. But I have now heard from this book by American theologian, Associate Professor Martin Laird OSA.

The Oxford University Press promotes *Into the Silent Land* as "describing the Christian tradition of contemplation using a prayer word to focus the mind, working with the breath to cultivate stillness, and the practice of inner vigilance or awareness".

The book is small because the author stays focused on the practice of the prayer word and how to handle the mind games that are found along the way to the stillness of the prayer technique.

Some aspects of technique are repeated several times in the writing. I wondered if the repeats were necessary and decided they were. After all, the mind does rush around from one inhibition to ten distractions!

The book is focused, practical (for such a topic), easily understood and strangely relevant. I found myself being intrigued by how the author ties in the gospel notion of meeting God in the quiet.

I found a new understanding of these concepts after all these years. And while I have to admit since reading the book I still haven't tried contemplation yet (typical), Rev Desmond Tutu says on the back cover, "I tried it and it works, try it".

I'll have to come back to this book – something about the contemplative tradition as described by Martin Laird is captivating.

Michael Hewson is a member of The Hills Uniting Church



Jesus, a Primer for the Curious

By John Dickson

Blue Bottle Books
RRP \$3.95

Jesus, a primer for the curious, is a short booklet or tract written by an Anglican historian to give meaning to Christianity mainly for the non-churched.

Each page begins with a statement and then develops the reasoning for it.

For example, the first page begins with 'belief in God is common sense', seemingly taken from the meaning first posed by John Locke in the seventeenth century.

This is an interesting starting point for discussion, as it has been for many philosophers, and became the standard counter-response to scepticism.

But the meaning of 'common sense' varied widely among philosophers, so using the term without qualification seems to be weak.

The writer's second statement – the second page – follows the question 'Whose God?' and states that the God of Christians, by entering human life, is unarguably the only one to follow.

The author ignores the fact that both Jews and Muslims worship the same God.

He also asserts as his proof of the unique claim to God of Christianity, the past and current scholarly historical and theological probing into the life of the historical Jesus.

Then follow several short pages showing Jesus as Healer, Teacher and Judge, using Biblical examples.

Finally Christ as Saviour is the last point considered, leading to the pivotal statement that this Jesus was raised to life as 'Lord and God'.

The author's epilogue, 'Portrait of a Christian', concludes with a call to faith 'if all of this is true'.

Jesus, a primer for the curious is a fairly traditional look at the basic beliefs of Christianity, and considering its brevity, covers the main ground.

However, it doesn't explore the questions likely to be asked by today's curious youth in particular.

I felt it fell short of its evocative title.

Joan Cook is a member of Wavell Heights Uniting Church

Finding the Deep River Within - A Woman's Guide to Recovering Balance and Meaning in Everyday Life

By Abby Seixas

Jossey-Bass
RRP \$35.95

When I first picked up *Finding the Deep River Within* I wondered if it was going to be another self-help book centred very much on the individual self but found to my surprise that it wasn't.

Seixas remains focussed as she encourages women to recover balance and meaning in their lives and she draws on wisdom from different religious traditions, including Christianity making this book more 'spiritual' than 'religious'.

I was drawn into the very practical nature of the book – the giving of information and then the offering of some exercises to practise the concept being presented.

What Seixas offers is not new but it does make sense and is a good, clear reminder of our need to slow down in the fast-paced world of today.

As I was reading I found I made connections to time-honoured prayer practices, taking time to connect to the source of life within us (which Seixas calls the 'deep river').

Just some ways of reaching this place are through doing something we love, turning off the internal critic and allowing this place to remind us of how we are loved, making boundaries, being present in the present moment and facing what we feel instead of running away from our emotions.

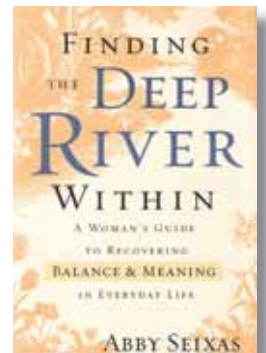
At the end of the book, Seixas reminds her readers that accessing this deep well of life within them will have flow-on effects in the rest of their lives.

Here she very clearly moves out of the centredness on self (necessary in this instance to teach the practices) to state how being centred and grounded in the 'deep river' causes us to be more compassionate and loving towards others.

For me this has strong echoes with being grounded and centred in God.

I would recommend *Finding the Deep River Within* to both men and women.

Melanie Perkins is a Minister of the Word candidate studying at Trinity Theological College



1 April:
Central Downs Parish

Central Downs Parish has two worshipping congregations, Millmerran and Pittsworth. Both congregations once had other smaller country centres such as Koorangarra and Norwin.

Over the past decade these worship centres have closed and so some of our regular worshippers have to travel up to 25 kilometres for services and meetings. Quite a number of our parish members are farmers or retired farmers, who are feeling the effects of the drought our district and many others are experiencing.

It has also made it very difficult for the church's once reliable cattle fattening fundraiser to continue.

In Millmerran, Blue Care operate from our multifunctional church building. This service is greatly supported by our local committee, made up of several of our Uniting Church members as well as other denominations and community members.

Millmerran First Girls Brigade unit continues to 'Seek and Serve' our Lord Jesus Christ within our community. The number of young girls regularly attending Brigade is encouraging to the dedicated leaders and their band of parent helpers.

Our congregation provides a Sunday school on the third Sunday of each month that is supported by our younger families. We are blessed to have some dedicated RE teachers in our community and we give thanks for these loving people and their skills.

As in Pittsworth, Religious Education is done on a co-operative basis with the other churches.

The town of Pittsworth is growing, with many young families and increasing numbers of people working in Toowoomba or at the Millmerran power station. Our congregation in the last couple of years has welcomed a number of new families, often from other church backgrounds. We have a very active, committed group of young adults who lead PUCY (Pittsworth Uniting Church Youth), as well as being involved in the worship life of the congregation.

A number of groups use our church buildings, including the Older Men's Network, Blue Care, AA, and English language classes for a group of Chinese working in a local business. These classes are organised by the congregation.

We give thanks for the rain that has been received in recent weeks, but continue to pray for more to break the drought in this area.

Pray for our young people, the children in KUCA and their leaders,

PRAYER DIARY

Our prayer is grounded in the instructions that Jesus gave us, and in his ongoing example. Prayer opens God's armoury with its superior weapons, able to overcome every obstacle and hindrance.

The limitless power of the Cross is basic to the advance of God's Kingdom. Bring your confidence in the supremacy of the Cross to your prayer life.

that many will come to know Jesus. Pray for the young adults' Bible Study that has just begun, that it will be a source of encouragement and growth for those attending.

Pray for our minister, Jackson Gill, his wife Victoria, and the Elders of the Parish, that the life of our congregations will focus on making disciples and releasing the gifts of all members for ministry.

Pray for the members of the Adult Fellowship, that their faithful service over many years will continue and that the group will continue to be a source of support and fellowship for the congregation.

Pray that God will lead us into new ways of being the church in our communities, and continue to bless our ministries and our witness.

15 April:
Moggill

Over the past 30 years the Moggill Congregation and its surrounding area has faced many changes. The area has gone from being a farming community to a very large and progressive urban community. No longer do we grow pineapples all around the church. We are growing homes and families.

We give thanks and praise for resilience in our people, as many changes have been addressed as we have moved from the rural aspects of our worship to a faster-moving suburban-style worship.

We have chosen to listen to our young married couples and are trying a 4.30pm Sunday evening service and a pot luck dinner to follow.

Praise God that this has been a success, with quite a few of our young families choosing to come at this time as it fits in with their lifestyle. Pray that we will continue to tailor our services to our community so that the Gospel reaches as many as possible.

We are also trying House Church services. These are held in a home on the first Saturday evening of the month. We commence at 5.30pm with a BBQ tea, follow with a worship time, and close by 8pm. Pray that this will give

more and more families a time of worship and fellowship that would otherwise not happen.

Please pray for each of these strategies, since our aim is to encourage our families in their living, but most of all in their worship of their Lord and Saviour.

Pray for our Kids of God group, running alongside the morning service; our largest group at the moment is the Prep to grade 5 group.

Pray for our weekly activities: intercessory prayer at the church each Thursday, Bible Study groups, and the Community centre where the fellowship is grounded in our faith walk. We walk and work by faith, not by sight. Pray for our Day Camp in the June holidays: this is a huge undertaking and is our main children's outreach for the year.

It has been going non stop for over 30 years.

Please pray that as people come and join in the activities they will be captivated by the spirit of Christ and desire to come to know him in an intimate relationship.

Pray with us in our vision for our fellowship to become again the centre of community activities, in order to be productive in bringing the seekers into a relationship with their Lord.

This is the commission that was given to us by our Lord: "Go, share with others, encouraging them to repent then be baptised in the name of the Father, The Son and the Holy Spirit".

This is our hope for the future for all Australians.

22 April:
Ipswich North

2007 brings changes to the Ipswich North area in many ways. "River Link" is a new shopping area linking the North side with the CBD.

New housing estates are taking over the farming areas which once bordered the area.

Rev Robert Heathwood has retired and Ipswich North is seeking a new placement.

Presbytery has suggested that we might form a cluster of churches, with the proposal being that we

have two full time ministerial agents to service the area.

The congregations involved are Ipswich North, Haigslea, Rosewood, Lowood, Fernvale and Walloon. Dialogue has now begun amongst these congregations. We ask for prayers for the members of these congregations, for the representatives who come together with presbytery to discuss further the structure of this move.

In February we were able to have a visit from Rev John Case of the Burke & Wills Patrol. The visit followed the donation we had sent to help in some way the area so affected by drought.

This was a special appeal that had been made to our congregation.

John was able to bring to us first hand a picture of the area and the effect that the drought was having.

Please join us in prayer for the people to whom John ministers, and that God will send the rain that is so desperately needed.

In February, we welcomed Rev Gerda Olafsen (out of retirement) to oversee our congregation until the finalisation of the proposal for a cluster group ministry.

We thank God for the witness of the church in this area and ask that we might be able to follow where He might lead us in the future.

Tanks prove a clever treat

By Mardi Lumsden

THE QUEENSLAND Synod was just one of the many places Clever Tabaziba, Director for the Methodist Development and Relief Agency in Zimbabwe, visited on his trip to Australia in March.

As head of the service arm of the Methodist church in Zimbabwe, Mr Tabaziba was interested in talking with people from all the Synods about the plight of his people and to thank the Uniting Church's Lent Event for its support of his water tank building program.

There have been almost 650 rainwater harvesting tanks built in the north of Zimbabwe by this project and Mr Tabaziba said there were many benefits already being shown from the tanks.

"Walking distances to get clean water have been reduced. Now

those with the tanks at their houses can do other things that are more profitable to them."

He said the spread of cholera and dysentery had also been reduced.

The agency fundraises for projects concerned with HIV/AIDS, environmental protection, income generating, water and sanitation, and food security.

"As an implementing agency we have got our own problems. We are operating in a very volatile political situation.

"The other problem that we face is inflation. Our inflation when I left, which would have changed for the worse, was 1200%. So it really is a problem when you get funding from outside because prices are going up every hour. You might ask for money to build 300 tanks and you might end up building 100 tanks because of inflation."



Director for the Methodist Development and Relief Agency of the Methodist church in Zimbabwe Clever Tabaziba. Photo by Osker Lau

New Chapel Lifts Spirits

WHILST MILLIONS of dollars have been spent on the latest medical technology at The Sunshine Coast Private Hospital, the spiritual needs of patients, family and staff have not been forgotten.

The opening of a Chapel was a welcome addition to the care and support provided for patients, families, staff and all visitors.

Hospital Chaplain, Rev Lloyd Beynon said, "Many of the staff and patients have commented already on how much they appreciate the Chapel. The Chapel provides a place of quiet and peace in the midst of the busy life of a hospital."

Donations were made to the Chapel by the Uniting Churches at Buderim and Mooloolaba and the Sovereign Order of St John. The Chapel was dedicated by Presbytery Minister Rev David Fanning, who emphasised that it was a place where everyone should feel welcome.



The Uniting Church relies on Luther's formula

Mr Scott Stephens' article on "God and Mammon" (*March Journey*) proves he has the gift for racy prose.

However, he was perhaps a little rash and uninformed in condemning Martin Luther's formula "simul iustus et peccator" as the root of all evil in capitalism.

Luther's formula is at the heart of the Presbyterian and Congregational Churches and is a central plank in the Basis of Union. The sentence, "The whole work of salvation is effected by the sovereign grace of God alone." [Basis of Union Paragraph 3], was inserted in the Basis of Union by the demand of the old Presbyterian General Assembly, otherwise there would not have been a Uniting Church in 1977.

This sentence distils and re-phrases what is at the heart of Calvinism, Luther's formula, "simul iustus et peccator" [the Christian believer is simultaneously a saint and a sinner].

He/she is a saint because they are clothed in all the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ in spite of the fact that in themselves they remain sinners with a corrupt and sinful nature.

The Christian ethic which dominates their lives is the powerful ethic of gratitude; in the gratitude and joy of the forgiveness of sins and in the enabling power of the Holy Spirit they seek to obey the commandments of God.

Raymond Lindenmayer
Manly West

LETTERS

Living simply

As we need to look after the environment and our earth (*February Journey*) I would like to inform readers of an excellent book I have just read - *Living Simply* by Murray Sheard.

It can be purchased through TEAR (Transformation Empowerment Advocacy Relief) who work alongside World Vision.

Books are \$3 and can also be used in a study of 10 sessions. On the back cover it states:

'Simplicity is a discipline practised by many down the ages who seek to follow Jesus' own style of life. To mouth the words of Jesus is religious - to act on them is revolutionary. This booklet will challenge you/your group to confront the accelerating pace of life, the ecological threat and uneven global development. It will challenge each member to ask important questions about their lifestyle.'

Ann Bell
Yepoon

service as I not only give myself anew with it, in Gods service.

I hope financial expediency will never seek to make this part of the worship service redundant.

Norma Mulcahy
Gympie

Money matters

I cannot always say that I enjoy reading *Journey*.

However, I must commend you on the last issue dealing with money. It was well presented and well balanced.

Donald McKay
Samford Valley

A job well done

To all the members of the International Mission Auxiliary.

We are saddened to note the end of an era, when the International Mission Aux conducted its closing meeting in November 2006.

What a wonderful contribution to Mission over the years 1913 to 2006.

Thank you to all of you who have given years of dedicated service. You have earned your retirement. You will be missed. God bless you and yours.

Mrs B Pirie
Gladstone

Editor's note: The Overseas Mission Auxiliary has not ended, but has joined with the Uniting International Mission Auxiliary and will continue the good work of these people.



Have your say

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

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Is it time?

Is it time for Synod in session to be about broad visioning and communication - inspiration and challenge - celebration and lament - and that's it?

Is it time to change the fact that proposals come with such complexity, and the synod leadership expects 300+ people to deal with them, that we might decide things differently? (We shouldn't have to ask the floor of Synod to decide on which elements of proposal 6.4.2.1 paragraphs a-g should be passed)

Is it time for us to have a shared mDNA (missional DNA - Vision, Mission, Values, Beliefs) which would let us say to the leadership councils "You know who we are and what we are on about...get on and do it...then let us know how it's gone!"?

Let the SLT or Council of Synod or the MEB decide the model of theological education and empower them to implement the strategies (or whatever area of mission and ministry which needs changing). Sure let us (Synod) know how it's gone but we trust you to do the job.

Is it time to trust - which, to me, would be an out-flowing of shared DNA?

At the moment we don't trust because we believe we have to protect / defend / justify our 'personal' position on any number of issues.

Is it time to engage and invest (read - wrestle with God and one another) in a shared DNA then everything works itself out from there (not simply, I acknowledge), but our behaviour comes out of our DNA.

It seems to me that less is more and to go faster we may need to go slower. Is it time that Synod's timetable reflects what is most important - which we had as rhetoric two Synods ago but it never appeared in action/behaviour/time tabling.

John Broere
Kuluin

Is it time for our Synod to have such a sense of urgency for the Good News of Jesus Christ, to be shared with communities living without Jesus, that we might actually change what is important and empower and equip the church to be a sign, witness and foretaste of God's life forever?

Is it time...I am not sure? So I am waiting...maybe I will end up waiting too long...Please Synod convince me otherwise.

In Christ I hope.

Peter Armstrong
Redcliffe

The real issues

In his book *God's Politics* (reviewed in *Journey* last year), the American author Jim Wallis asks when did Jesus become pro-war, pro-rich, and a selective moralist? As well, he deals with homosexuality and thinks that this "may not be as important as the deeper ethical issues of war".

He also makes reference to Duke Divinity School Professor Richard B. Hays who wrote, "In the United Methodist Church, we say nothing about the horrifying violence in Iraq, while at the same time we exhaust ourselves going round in circles debating issues of sexuality."

Orwellian doublethink is just as apparent among Australian Christians: indifference/acceptance of the war in Iraq, the treatment of Aborigines and refugees, at least one million Australians living below the poverty line and questionable political explanations.

Let us have vigorous debate about life-challenging issues.

Offering plate is still worship

While I agree with Direct Debiting for many things (March editorial), and I do use this method regularly for some payments and donations, I would not use it as long as I am able to attend worship.

To me the act of giving my offering is just as much an act of worship as any other part of the

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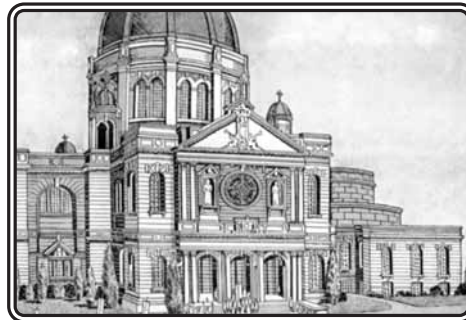
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Historically Speaking



THE CATHEDRAL WHICH NEVER WAS

It was to have seated 4,000, its Romanesque basilica dominating Brisbane's skyline. Inspired by a cathedral of the same name in Chicago, the Cathedral of the Holy Name had been the vision of Catholic Archbishop James Duhig.

The long-serving archbishop, known as James the Builder, laid the foundation stone of the cathedral in 1928. Such was his passion for the project, he was prepared to demolish his own residence, the imposing Dara, to ensure the realisation of his vision.

For many years, the city held its breath, awaiting word of the commencement of construction from within the sandstone walls. But in the late nineties, the site was sold for a multi-unit development.

All that remains of the vision are the architectural drawings for the cathedral that never was.

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JOURNEY asks...

What does the resurrection mean to you?

Peter Armstrong

When God raised Jesus from the dead, he made a statement to the world – in the end, the God who started it all gets the last word. And that word is life – Jesus is alive.

We celebrate Jesus' resurrection for one simple reason: the sin that could destroy us does not carry the day.

Jesus forgives us of our sin – personally and globally. By this I mean that in Jesus Christ our personal sin and the sin of the world will not be the ultimate determinant of life.

When we look at our lives we see powerful forces. Our mistakes shape who we are.

The terrible things done against us by others stay with us for way too long.

How we were raised, both good and bad, affects us. Uncertainty about the future stagnates us. Emptiness drains us. Meaninglessness binds us. Evil overwhelms us. Knowing that someday we will die scares us.

These forces seem to be the strongest things in the world.

But they are not. God is greater than anything we do; anything done to us; anything we've become; and even greater than the death we face.

Who is stronger, sin or God? Who lasts longer, death or God? What am I afraid of? God is greater than whatever I fear.

Resurrection faith is simple. It is the belief that no force we encounter is ever greater than God.



Photo by Bruce Mullan

When God raised Jesus from the dead, he put his stamp of victory into this world.

Resurrection faith is also the bedrock of the church. The church is completely grounded in the belief that God wins; no one

else wins; sorrow loses; injury ends; sin fails; death gets trounced.

On the last day, there is one left standing – and that one is Jesus.

I have faith that when I breathe my last

breath of Queensland air, God is not done with me because God can't help but love, forgive and give life.

Peter Armstrong is minister with Redcliffe Uniting Church Congregation.

Jenni Farquhar

I use the word journey because resurrection is what I experience after walking through Lent and the passion and the waiting.

It is a journey of strength because like Christ there are times in my life when I have to walk to the cross.

It is a journey of vulnerability because like



Photo by Osker Lau

Christ there are times when I am stripped naked of my human limitations.

It is a journey of hope because unlike Christ I can too easily forget the light - light of hope that sustains me in the darkness of the tomb until I can roll away the stone.

For me the resurrection is a journey beyond Easter; a journey of life; a journey shared.

The resurrection is also about relationship – it is relationship. And as soon as I name the resurrection as relationship, it is no longer, “for me”. It is beyond me. It is about “us” and “all”.

It is no longer about me experiencing the resurrection. It is about witnessing the resurrection in others, journeying to the cross with someone else, standing at the foot of the cross and weeping at the tomb.

It is about holding onto the light for someone when they are unable to do so and about helping to roll away stones.

And in the early light of morning, it's about having the privilege of standing in the garden and celebrating new life in Christ.

Jenni Farquhar lives in Emerald and is currently a Lay Ministry Worker in the Northern Coalfields (Dysart and Moranbah).

Rob Brennan

What does the resurrection mean to me? In a word it means hope. I don't mean hope as in “I hope it will be fine (whoops rain) tomorrow”.

“I hope it will be nice” has for me as much clout as a piece of soggy asparagus.

If the resurrection promise is to be trusted it has to affect more than what happens later. Let's face it if you can't trust Jesus on this, why trust him on anything he promises?

Resurrection hope answers mortal despair which gives me courage to live in the face of my own mortality.

While very young I was confronted with pointlessness. So much of life seemed temporary and fleeting. “Why bother doing anything if it won't last? Why bother enduring hardship or the difficult? Why risk career, family or even my life for anything?”

If now is all I have, then I can forget the pious platitudes about helping others and being altruistic.

If this is all I have then why shouldn't I make my life count for all I want and enjoy? Nothing else is logical.

So without the resurrection promise I can see no reason why I should not be a miserable selfish hedonist in a secure well paying job



Photo by Bruce Mullan

that leaves time to enjoy life's pleasures.

And if bad things happen to someone else – well I'd be glad it wasn't me.

But that isn't the case. There is more to life and living now because I have hope for the future.

Rather than fearfully consuming a life too short and fleeting, resurrection gives me hope to be able to live life now to the full.

With that hope I can face each new day to love, to care, to confront, to weep with the grieving and laugh with the rejoicing.

Rob Brennan is minister at Banora Point just over the NSW border.