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JOURNEY

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IN THE 1950s AND 1960s
we had

Billy Graham

WHAT DOES EVANGELISM LOOK LIKE IN 2007?

THIS MONTH JOURNEY LOOKS
AT HOW THE CHURCH
SHARES FAITH AND
BRINGS PEOPLE
INTO RELATIONSHIP
WITH JESUS CHRIST.



Not That Word Again!

WHEN JOHN the Baptist was in prison, he sent some of his followers to Jesus to ask him: "Are you really the Messiah?"

Jesus offered a really interesting response.

Instead of a direct "yes", he invited the disciples of John to observe his ministry and then go back to John and tell him what they had seen and heard.

That is, he suggested that they shouldn't just take his word for it, but should discern the truth about who he was through the fruits of his ministry.

St Francis of Assisi once invited a young monk to join him on a trip to town to preach. Honoured to be given the invitation, the monk readily accepted.

All day long he and Francis walked through the streets, byways, and alleys, and even into the suburbs. They rubbed shoulders with hundreds of people.

At day's end, the two headed back home. Not even once had Francis addressed a crowd, nor had he talked to anyone about the gospel.

Greatly disappointed, his young companion said, "I thought we were going into town to preach."

Francis responded, "My son, we have preached.

"We were preaching while we were walking. We were seen by many, and our behaviour was closely watched.

"It is of no use to walk anywhere to preach, unless we preach everywhere as we walk!"

Francis was undoubtedly right! However, it is essential that we do seize the opportunities that



Message from the Moderator

Rev Dr David Pitman

come our way to share our faith in words.

There are about 200 Christian Radio Stations in this country, and even more broadcasting licences have been applied for.

This proactive move to claim more space in our airwaves is motivated by one primary concern: to beam the Christian message into an ever-increasing number of Australian households.

It is a salutary thing that we find many references in the Bible relating to the deep sense of inner

“There is joy for us in the sharing of the Gospel”

compulsion that God's messengers have felt to share their faith and experience with others.

Listen to what the prophet Jeremiah experienced, "If I say, 'I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name', then there is something like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot." (Jeremiah 20:9)

When Peter and John were brought before the Jewish Council in Jerusalem and forbidden to preach in public they responded: "Whether it is right in God's sight to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge; for we cannot keep from speaking about what we have seen and heard." (Acts 4:19-20)

And John begins his first letter to the church with a bold

statement: "We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life..."

"We are writing these things so that our joy may be full." (1 John 1:1,4)

Some other ancient biblical manuscripts translate this last line: "We are writing these things so that your joy may be full."

I guess it doesn't really matter which word John actually used in the first instance.

The variation in translation reminds us that there is joy for us in the sharing of the Gospel and there is joy in the lives of those who receive it by faith.

Many years ago some men were panning for gold in Montana, and one of them found an unusual stone.

Breaking it open, he was excited to see that it contained gold.

Working eagerly, the men soon discovered an abundance of the precious metal.

Happily, they began shouting with delight, "We've found it! We've found gold! We're rich!"

They had to interrupt their celebrating, though, to go into a nearby town and stock up on supplies.

Before they left camp, the men agreed not to tell a soul about their find.

Indeed, no one breathed a word about it to anyone while they were in town.

Much to their dismay, however, when they were about to return to their camp, hundreds of people suddenly appeared, all ready and equipped to follow them.

When they asked the crowd to tell who "squealed," the reply came, "No one had to, your faces showed it!"

Remember the words of the old chorus:

If you're saved and you know it, then you really ought to show it.

When we do that with integrity we'll be surprised how often people will want us to share our faith with them!

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From the Editor

The public perception of evangelism has become associated with smooth-talking television hucksters and their extreme right-wing, anti-intellectual version of Christianity, and the "E" word is an embarrassment for many Christians.

And loyal church members are torn when asked to financially support one of the hundreds of young Christians who venture forth from secular western nations to "convert" some of the poorest but most Christian two-thirds world nations rather than evangelising their own middle-class next-door neighbours.

When the tsunami hit Southeast Asia on 26 December 2004, we were embarrassed again by some churches and aid groups descending on devastated areas not just to assist the survivors, but to convert them.

The exploitive behaviour included "missionaries" concealing their identities as church workers and pretending to be part of non-governmental organisations offering to assist in the recovery.

Significantly, in August a consultation on evangelism was jointly hosted by the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Geneva-based World Council of Churches' program on interreligious dialogue and cooperation.

Attended by Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Pentecostal and Evangelical theologians and church representatives, the meeting explored ways to map out a common code of conduct on religious conversion.

A final document setting out what are acceptable forms of mission and evangelism is expected by 2010 but, given the variety of religious, cultural and political contexts, it will not be easy to determine a common code of conduct and what "ethical" means.

Meanwhile, we are all too conscious of the decline in evangelism and wonder if liberal theology, fuzzy Christology and the fear of being seen as proselytizing has caused the decline in evangelistic activity.

While mainstream Christians attempt to recover the word evangelism from its tarnished image the most difficult challenge will be to discover a viable alternative.

Here in Australia we face an increasingly secular population who have virtually no Christian memory.

They just don't know what Christians are talking about, and we don't know how to engage with the epidemic numbers of secular, post-modern people outside our churches.

As we re-examine and re-express our conviction that Jesus is alive and present in our world through the Spirit, we will need to find ways to explain that belief to modern and post-modern sceptical people.

We will need to help them understand that the person of Jesus illustrates the nature of God better than anyone the world has ever known, and that following his way is the hope of the world.

Bruce Mullan

Sign of the Times



THIS MONTH'S Sign of the Times is the new fridge magnet for Prison Ministry. You can keep this on your fridge and keep prison ministry in your prayers. If you would like to receive one of the magnets, please contact Prison Ministry on 07 3265 9306 or send an email to Beatriz.Skippen@lccq.org.au.

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Howard, Rudd court Christians

By Bruce Mullan

IN A US-style appeal to the Christian vote Prime Minister John Howard and Opposition Leader Kevin Rudd presented their political pitch to a live web-cast audience of churches throughout Australia.

Around 200 denominational, church and para-church leaders attended the Australian Christian Lobby (ACL) event in person at the National Press Club and were given the opportunity to submit questions to both leaders.

A number of Queensland Uniting Church congregations participated in the broadcast and church members gathered to hear the presentations and pray for the upcoming elections.

During the broadcast both Prime Minister John Howard and Opposition Leader Kevin Rudd made new announcements which they claimed would benefit families.

Mr Howard announced plans to upgrade protection for families from



Internet pornography, violence and sexual predators by providing free Internet filters, increased resources for Federal Police to expand checks on Internet chat rooms to detect criminal behaviour, and partnering with technology companies to provide the option of a filtered Internet service for those who prefer this.

Mr Rudd said a Labor Government would have a family impact statement prepared for every submission to Cabinet and would assist Christian refugees fleeing Iraq by initiating a multilateral conference on how to deal with the needs of refugee communities in Syria, Jordan and beyond.

National Director for Uniting

Justice Rev Elenie Poulos expressed concern about the focus of the policy announcements made during the leaders' presentations which, combined with the way the media reported the forum, would continue to skew the public perceptions of just exactly what Christian values are.

"How good it would have been if Howard and Rudd had acknowledged that the majority of Australian Christians would probably have been happier with policy announcements around homelessness in Australia, ending global poverty, addressing climate change and ending the proliferation of nuclear weapons, landmines and cluster bombs," Ms Poulos said.

"As usual, however, it was that old hoary chestnut of so-called 'family values' which is the only thing they think will capture our votes."

National Church Segment Leader for World Vision Australia Carolyn Kitto took the informal chat opportunity with leaders after the question time to ask Mr Rudd and Mr Howard how Christians could pray for them and what should be prayed for.

Mr Howard joked, "I don't suppose I could ask you to pray that we win the election."

"But seriously, could you pray that I do the best thing for the country?"

Mr Rudd thanked Ms Kitto for asking and said, "Pray for strength, pray for wisdom (he paused) and could you pray for my family – this comes at a cost."

Queensland Uniting Church Justice Advocate Andrew Johnson, who watched the videocast later on his computer, said it was a good opportunity for the Christian community to engage the nation's leaders.

"It demonstrated the different Christian perspectives the leaders come from and was helpful in informing us how we exercise our vote from a Christian perspective."

The Australian Christian Lobby was founded in 1996 and is a lobby group pushing Christian principles and ethics in Australian government.

ACL Public Relations Manager Glynis Quinlan said according to the 2006 ABS Census, 64 per cent of Australians declared themselves as Christians.

"In a democratic country it is important that Christians have a role in helping to shape a society which is moral, compassionate and just."

Worship: not boring and not awesome

By Bruce Mullan

THAT THOSE attending Uniting Church worship services in Queensland are not bored is the good news story from the National Church Life Survey (NCLS) results from 2006.

Questions on the impact of worship on the lives of people show that fewer than 2% of Uniting Church worshippers always experience boredom.

None of those over 65-years of age report being consistently bored at church.

Less encouraging is that fewer than 6% of people regularly experience awe or mystery in their Sunday worship experience, and the results suggest that while congregations are not bored, neither are they inspired.

Synod Mission Consultant Rev Dr Graham Beattie said that there was a higher reporting of "a sense of God's presence" particularly among older church worshippers, and that this may represent a traditional liturgical understanding.

"Perhaps they feel that if we are doing worship in a way that is theologically correct then God will be present," he said.

"But the kind of awe that the NCLS seeks to assess is the kind we see with Isaiah's vision of the holiness of God in the temple, or in Peter at the miraculous catch of fish in Luke 5 when he fell on his knees before Jesus and said, 'Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!'"

"People are looking for an overwhelming revelation that they are standing before the living God."

UK evangelical leader and founder of the Oasis Trust and the Faithworks Movement Rev Steve Chalke, who visited Brisbane in August, was dismissive of those who think that God is only present when worship is "good".

"Omnipresence does have its downside.

"God is the only one who has to turn up, however bad the service is and however long it goes, for he cannot leave."

The NCLS 2006 results do suggest that there are significant age differences in how people find the sense of awe or mystery in worship.

As people age they are more likely to value the sense of awe or presence in Holy Communion.

For the 65-years and older members of the church, more than half find the sharing in the Lord's Supper a "most valued" aspect of church, while the younger the members are, the more likely it is that they will value contemporary styles of worship or music.

Worship was in the top two "core qualities" identified as relative strengths by Uniting Church members in Queensland in every age group.

While older members valued traditional music styles, to a slightly lesser extent they also valued contemporary music styles.

Younger people value the contemporary style of music and worship but seem to be less tolerant of traditional styles.

Minister of the Bayside congregation Rev Ian Lord believes that the greatest source of strength in the Uniting Church is the strength of meaningful community.

"Smaller congregations are more relational and can take a long time to die. They are very enduring," Mr Lord said.

Dr Beattie said while 'family' is not a boring place it can sometimes lack excitement.

Referring to the importance of church space and buildings he added, "There is a strong feeling of belonging and identity centred around the 'place' and it becomes

highly symbolic for a group of people with all their history and all that they've gone through."

Dr Beattie strongly encourages congregations to take a look at the NCLS Age Profiles to explore how worship can encourage a sense of awe and mystery for the various age groups.

NCLS 2006 was the largest national survey of church attenders ever to take place in Australia.

Between June and November last year, hundreds of thousands of attenders and leaders in Australia's Christian Churches completed questionnaires on church life.

Tables from the NCLS research on worship together with some questions for discussion by worship teams, Church Councils and Elders are available in UC Information



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Cashing in on good planning

YOUNG PEOPLE in Australia face a potential new level of poverty if creative ways are not found to help them take control of their financial future.

That's the belief of Young Adults Ministry Coordinator, Tom Kerr.

"There's been a lot of societal shifts and changes in lifestyle," Mr Kerr said.

"More people are getting married later in life, there's a greater proportion of people in part time jobs, and many young people tend to change jobs more often.

"For a single person who is underemployed, higher rents, higher house prices and higher loan amounts, as well as higher costs of living can all work together to present a financial crisis for today's young adults."

Mr Kerr said that it would be great for the Uniting Church to be able to come up with creative ways to help people with their financial future.

"The mission of the church is about helping people with their

human hurts and hopes, in God's name," he said.

"Whilst it's different to the absolute poverty you can encounter in developing nations, it's a crisis that's real for the young people involved.

"Cliff Cole from Tandem Toowong came up with the idea for a financial planning seminar for young adults, about making the most of your money early in life to achieve financial security."

The Young Investor's seminar was held jointly between YACMU and Tandem Financial Advice Toowong (part of the Uniting Church Investment Service) in July.

60 people with a range of life experiences and financial knowledge attended the session.

According to Tandem Financial Adviser Cliff Cole, the evening was about encouraging people to plan early for their financial future.

"It's important when you first start earning an income to learn how to put it to best use," said Mr Cole.

"A financial road map is needed to know where you want to be, and how you're going to get there.

"Starting early and investing a little bit at a time is an important responsibility that people should take advantage of while they have the ability to do so.

"Too often people wait until their last child has left home before getting a plan together, and sometimes that's too late."

Presenters from Colonial, BlackRock and ING Insurance shared their insight into gearing, superannuation, regular investing and protecting income through insurance.

People interested in attending a similar future event should register their interest at Tandem Toowong by emailing quintin.buchel@tandemadvice.com.au



Mia Rhall gets tips from Tandem Adviser Cliff Cole at the Young Investors' Seminar. Photo courtesy of Jane Moad

It's hot, mad and it's big

By Bruce Mullan

YOUTHWORKER at Emmanuel Uniting Church at Enoggera Tim Robinson is a member of management team for the all new Summer Madness youth ministry program to be held in 2008.

"Think about it," said Mr Robinson. "A couple of hundred teenagers from all over Queensland together at the beach and thirsty for God.

"Does it get any more explosive than that?"

Youth Children's and Family Ministry Trainee at Indooroopilly Uniting Church Daniel Singer is one youth leader who has committed to taking his youth

groups to Summer Madness in January.

"I've always dreamed of seeing teenagers sharing God's message, so when the concept of Summer Madness received my attention I was hooked," Mr Singer said.

"I think it will be such a great opportunity to discover their leadership qualities on all levels and use them in the future to bring forward changes in the community by having skills and confidence to share God's message openly."

Mr Kerr believes the Summer Madness program follows the strong tradition of Queensland Uniting Church youth ministry camping.

Recalling his camping experiences from the 1960s, Fitzroy North Rockhampton Uniting Church Minister Rev Bernie Jarius said he "learned the value of Christian community and was given the opportunity to share in leadership myself".

"Through this experience my commitment to Jesus was strengthened and confirmed."

Congregations throughout the state will be praying for the young people who are part of Summer Madness.

Iola Sampson from Capella in Central Queensland prayed that those participating will grow as they seek God and learn from others.

Pioneer Valley congregation member Yvonne McDonald's prayer for those participating is that their "relationship with Jesus will grow".

"That you will discover God's plans and purposes for you and that you will be a blessing wherever you go."

Summer Madness will be held at Alexandra Headland from 11 to 14 January 2008.

For more information visit the YACMU Website at www.yacmu.com.au or call 07 3377 9782



Indooroopilly Uniting Church Youth Children's and Family Ministry Trainee Daniel Singer. Photo by Osker Lau

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Roysten Sagigi (left) with Sherwood visitors Grace Branjerdorn and Ben Galloway at Red Beach, Mapoon.
Photo by Frank Thomson

City kids learn about community

By Bruce Mullan

TWELVE-YEAR-OLD James Erickson's cultural eyes were opened wide when a small group of young people from Sherwood Uniting Church in Brisbane spent two weeks living in North Queensland Aboriginal communities.

"I learned that Aboriginal people aren't very different from us," he said.

"While they may have some traditional music and dance they also do a lot of stuff like us."

Sherwood Uniting Youth Worker Andrea Robertson said her congregation was in the process of sharing, piece by piece, with the Mapoon congregation as they embark on their bridge-building exercise with an Indigenous community.

She described the program as an invitation only, discipleship-forming, faith-sharing experience.

"We participated in regular Bible studies, wrote belief statements

before we went, discussed them and revised them before we came home.

Grace (13) said she is now highly conscious of others and their different skills which she could not have learned in Brisbane.

"This experience has changed some of my attitudes such as now when I look at the sea I don't see water but water teeming with life.

"When I look at the bush I see food, and when I think of an Aboriginal community I don't think drugs, alcohol and sexual abuse but of the beautiful children I met in Mapoon."

Ms Robertson said the image of church on the verandah of the Health Clinic at Mapoon intrudes on her life back home.

"We experienced culture, faith and friendship.

"We learnt that church is about people, not buildings, and that as the creation is vast and beautiful

— so must the creator be."

Andreas (14) said the biggest surprise was the feeling of a community where everyone seemed to know each other and look out for one another.

"This trip has changed the way in which I look at Aboriginal communities and indeed my own community.

"I dream that we may be able to get the same feeling of community here as I felt about community in Mapoon."

Ms Robertson said her congregation anticipated hosting a group that would be coming south to participate in the Youth and Children's Ministry Unit Summer Madness camp.

Plans are also in the pipeline for further visits, perhaps next time involving families.

"We hope that we might engage with more of the community each time we visit."

Synod and Solomons partner in technology

By Mardi Lumsden

OVERWHELMED BY the technology and pace of the Queensland Synod, the Youth and Sunday School Director of the United Church in Solomon Islands Caleb Saiqoro is currently in Brisbane for a month long education program.

Synod Communications Unit Manager Bruce Mullan met Mr Saiqoro while visiting the Solomon Islands, saw he had a gift for understanding computer technology, and arranged for him to work with the Synod's Information Technology Services team to learn more about computer maintenance and networking.

Mr Saiqoro said Australia is very different from his home village of Munda.

"Nothing compares," he said. "Especially in the Synod office, the lifestyle, everything really.

"We have about six computers in our office and there are times when we have very simple problems, like a computer has problems booting up, but we have to ask people from Honiara to come and fix it and that costs a lot of money for the church.

"Ken [Griggs] and his team are very friendly and very open to help me. They are very generous people giving knowledge to other people.

"I thank God for what he has done for me to be able to come here and learn these things."

During his visit, Mr Saiqoro attended several workshops including the State Youth Ministry Conference.

He will also spend a week at Emmanuel College on the Gold Coast studying computer hardware and software maintenance.

The biggest challenge for Mr Saiqoro however is spending a month away from his wife and two small children.

"The hardest thing is that the tsunami has just passed and there are still fears and rumours that there could be another one."

Mr Saiqoro may be a little awed at the cultural differences between Munda and Brisbane, but is thankful for the opportunity.

"I am one of those people who was pushed out or dropped out of the education system, but I believe God has used me in this very special way. I am very glad to be here and to get this knowledge is something I don't deserve."



Synod IT guru Pete Evans shares his knowledge with Caleb Saiqoro.
Photo by Osker Lau

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Spong's Jesus: not radical enough

By Benjamin Myers

JOHN SHELBY Spong, the controversial Episcopal bishop, has always regarded himself as an iconoclast.

Throughout his long career, he has vigorously attacked Christian doctrine, and has called for "a new reformation."

The main themes of his prolific writings have now been brought together in his new manifesto, *Jesus for the Non-Religious* – a book which Spong himself describes as the culmination of his life's work.

We can appreciate Spong's desire to communicate the findings of biblical criticism to a wider audience as a vast gulf still separates scholarly biblical research from everyday devotional Bible reading – and this is one of the great pastoral crises of our time.

Spong is on the track when he tells his readers that there is a difference between the historically authentic elements in the New Testament portrayal of Jesus, and the later layers of liturgical and theological interpretation which have embellished the Gospel stories.

And he's right to point out that the Gospels give us not a straightforward historical account, but "a magnificent interpretive portrait" of Jesus.

Unfortunately, Spong's interpretation of the Gospel texts

often rests on outdated research and flawed interpretations of the scholarship and he misses the mark when he insists on a rigid dichotomy between faith and history.

For instance, he tells us that the Gospel stories are sheer "make-believe", and that the texts "are not the chronicles of a remembered history, but the proclamations of a community of faith".

But presumably the stories about Jesus were also attempts to make sense of something that actually happened.

In any case, regardless of such shortcomings, Spong's desire to promote a historically informed understanding of the Gospels is commendable.

Further, one can only admire the bishop's sheer enthusiasm for his work. He regards his own interpretation of Jesus as a uniquely radical gesture, and he is remarkably optimistic about the impact of his book.

He assures us that the book will free us from "the prison of religion" and will usher in "a renaissance and a reformation", unleashing "a new burst of energy and power that has not been seen for hundreds of years".

Such rhetoric sets readers up for disappointment since the book's entire argument amounts to this: Jesus overcomes our prejudices and stereotypes so that we can

be inclusive and tolerant towards others.

This, in a nutshell, is "the new reformation"; this is Bishop Spong's Jesus.

And for all Spong's iconoclastic claims, there is something strangely familiar about this Jesus.

A Jesus who champions inclusiveness and tolerance is a Jesus who looks suspiciously like – well, like *ourselves*.

Presumably Spong's readers will already identify with the Western liberal values of tolerance and inclusiveness.

We did not learn those values from Jesus, but, thanks to Spong, we discover subsequently that Jesus himself is also committed to the same values.

The function of Spong's Jesus is simply to maintain the social and political status quo.

He takes our own most cherished and self-evident Western values, and he provides them with a theological justification.

Thus our own values are made absolute and unimpeachable – they are elevated to the status of ideology.

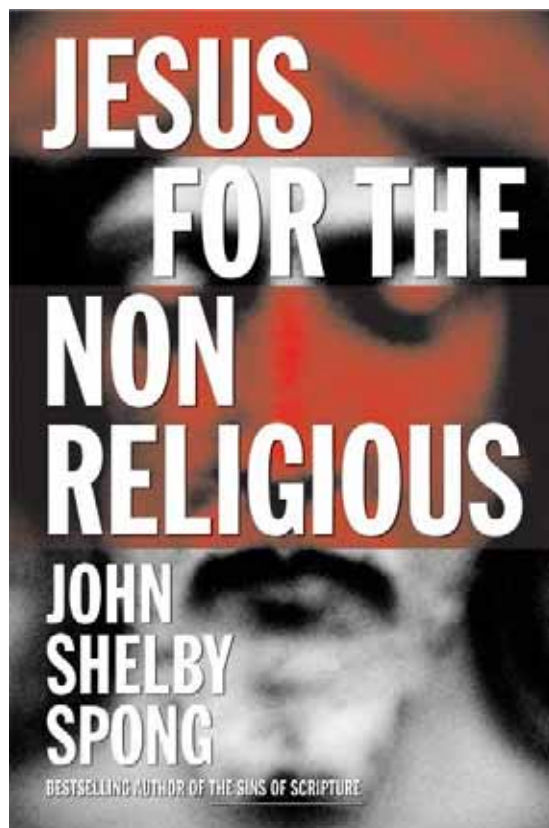
Simply put, Spong tells us that political correctness is correct, since even Jesus was politically correct.

This should give pause to any reader of the Gospels. After all, the Gospels consistently depict a Jesus who is radical and confronting and unsettling – a Jesus who challenges the status quo, who hangs out with the wrong people and antagonises the establishment, who resists every attempt to domesticate his message, refusing to allow his actions to be calmly assimilated into any existing religious framework.

And for just this reason, the Jesus of the Gospels is finally *executed*.

In contrast it is hard to imagine why anyone would be offended by Bishop Spong's politically correct Jesus.

A Jesus whose sole commitment is to tolerant inclusiveness is simply not the kind of Jesus whom anyone would want to crucify.



So, in spite of Spong's characterisation of his own book as radical, "shocking" and "audacious", the real problem is that this book is simply *not radical enough*.

The Jesus who emerges from these pages is ultimately indistinguishable from any other respectably innocuous, politically correct member of the Western middle class.

Instead of provoking a challenging political or theological response, therefore, this Jesus serves to justify our own values and assumptions.

To adopt such a Jesus is like the new tendency of consumers to purchase "carbon offsets" as compensation for their own greenhouse emissions: one makes a seemingly radical gesture precisely in order to ensure that nothing changes!

Like purchasing a carbon offset, Spong's Jesus – far from challenging us or provoking us to action – simply reassures us that all is well.

Bishop Spong's Jesus may be useful and consoling but he is not especially *interesting*, much less unique.

He poses no threat, no challenge. He makes no demands. He tells us nothing that we didn't know already.

And for just that reason, it's hard to see why "the non-religious" – or anyone else, for that matter – should have any special regard for this Jesus.

Dr Benjamin Myers is a theologian and research fellow at the University of Queensland specialising in the history of Christian theological thought and in seventeenth-century English literature



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We are seeking a person who is able to demonstrate high level skills in team building and interpersonal relationships and have a natural ability to motivate people. This person will have an exceptional ability to work effectively with people who have wide ranging views and represent different cultures. Significant experience in ministry within the Uniting Church (either lay or ordained), a passion for the mission of the church and its relationship to congregational life and giftedness in administration and mediation will be essential.

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John Shelby Spong: wrong and welcome

After a veritable deluge of letters about ads for a conference and public lecture featuring Bishop John Shelby Spong appearing in Journey, we asked the Principal of Trinity Theological College Rev Dr David Rankin to tell us where people like Dr Spong have featured in church history.

IN MY VIEW, a significant number of the theological positions espoused by Dr John Spong, retired bishop of the Episcopal (Anglican) Diocese of Newark, New Jersey (USA), are inconsistent with traditional Christian teaching and received orthodoxy as interpreted and articulated, for example, in the *Basis of Union*.

Whether some of them can even be described as 'Christian' is certainly open to question.

Indeed it would not be inappropriate to classify Spong's views on many matters of the theological substance as heretical.

Spong's views are clearly laid out in the Twelve Theses of his 1997 *A call for a New Reformation* (published in *The Voice*).

On matters such as the nature of God, the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Cross, the Resurrection and Ascension of our Lord, the place of Scripture in the life and witness of the community of faith, and prayer, he can quite properly be regarded as in error with respect to classic Christian doctrine and teaching (which Spong himself would not challenge).

My concern regarding the recent issue of *Journey* was not so much about the paid advertisement promoting a speaking engagement by Dr Spong here in Brisbane, but rather several letters seeking both to discredit the Bishop and to criticise the Editor for publishing the advertisements which only managed to draw even more attention than the advertisement itself warranted.

To suggest that the acceptance by *Journey* of the ads indicates the support of both the newspaper and the Uniting Church itself for the views expressed by Dr Spong

is wrongheaded and even perhaps dangerous.

During early church history, as the Christian Church sought to explore and define what it believed, many thinkers [such as Marcion of Pontus, Valentinus of Rome and Basileides of Alexandria (second century), Arius of Alexandria and Eunomius of Cyzicus (fourth century), and Nestorius of Antioch and Pelagius, monk of Britain (fifth)] all helped the emerging understanding of orthodoxy in the Church.

All of them – with the possible exception of the incautious Nestorius who was actually a bit of an embarrassment to both friend and foe – were devout, intelligent and deep thinkers, profoundly committed to the exploration and the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ, passionate and earnest about the faith and the hope of the people of Christ.

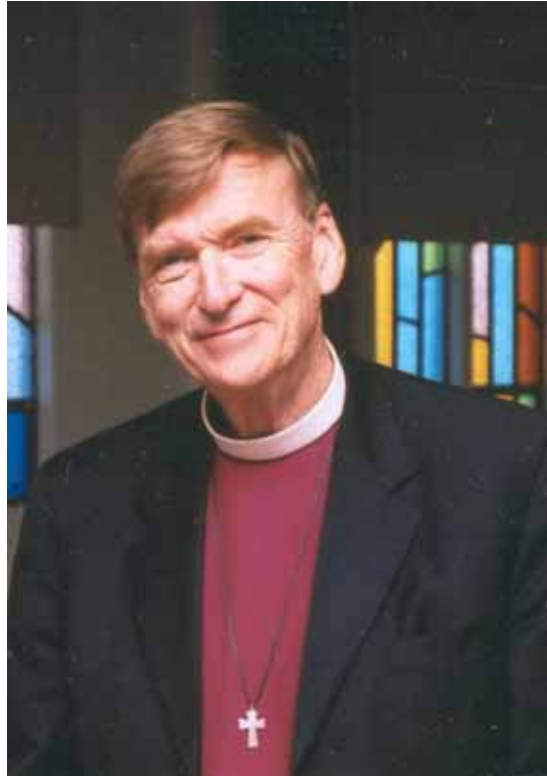
But with respect at least to the theological questions with which they were most closely associated,

“It is only over against those with whom we find ourselves in utter disagreement... that we can be challenged to explore and to discover.”

all were profoundly, hopelessly and dangerously wrong.

They were and are the arch-heretics of the early church.

These faithful but misguided thinkers were important, however, because without them the fledgling Church would probably have struggled to come to terms with its God-given task of defining and articulating what it believed to be the essential content and the implications of the Good News of Jesus Christ.



Bishop John Shelby Spong. Photo by www.unc.edu

It is only over against those with whom we find ourselves in utter disagreement, and in a type of dialogue with them, that we can be challenged to explore and to discover even a portion of the truth of the Gospel and the truth of God.

It might even be said that the heretics of the early centuries (and now) may possibly be part of the provisioning of God for his people – given to the people of God as an aid to exploring what we believe. For God can and does make use of error.

From time to time I have deliberately subscribed to journals which adopted positions much different from my own views so I might be forced to struggle with the lines of my own endeavours to

explore a wide range of matters.

In my teaching classes now – particularly in the class on the early Church Fathers – I give over some of the time to introducing my students to some of the best thinking (in terms of clarity and force of argument) that the heretical minds of the early church could offer.

Only then can their thought, their questions (always crucial) and

their answers be explored alongside those of the thinkers regarded then, and for the most part now, as the orthodox definers and articulators of the great doctrines of the Church.

Though I do not embrace the views of someone like Dr Spong, I welcome them as they better focus and sharpen our own reflections as we struggle together as church to grasp something of the truth, however imperfectly, which God speaks to us.

So Editor, please feel free to publish such advertisements without fear or favour, and feel free to mis-file those letters which are not prepared to engage the thought of Dr Spong and other controversial figures. Such activity is an essential part of the whole theological enterprise.

Rev Dr David Rankin has two doctorates and teaches in Early Church History, Patristics, and Reformation History. He is Principal and Director of Studies in Church History at Trinity Theological College



Rev Dr David Rankin

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Moving from rally to relationship

By Bruce Mullan

You may not be a member of any church. You may be Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish. Whatever your race, whatever your religion, I'm going to ask you to come. Get up from your seats, hundreds of you, just get up out of your seats and come and stand quietly, right here, quietly and reverently.

THESE WERE familiar words to those who attended one of the rallies during the historic fifteen week Billy Graham crusade held in Australia in 1959.

The largest of the crowds gathered on a Sunday afternoon at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. Every seat was taken, including the standing room and the royal boxes.

Official attendance was given as 143 000, the governor of Victoria read the Bible, President

relational and more personalised. Churches can no longer rely on the gifted preacher from the other side of the world to come and bring their community to faith.

One contemporary approach has been educational evangelism through programs such as Alpha



How can we cooperate with God?
Peter Armstrong

and Christianity Explained courses. The Alpha Course is a series of talks, usually delivered on video, addressing key issues relating to the Christian faith and generally packaged together with supper and small group time.

Over eight million people have attended Alpha courses world wide but Proserpine Uniting Church Minister Rev Wayne McHugh feels it runs for too many weeks and prefers the local Christianity Explained program.

"I have had experience in the last decade in somewhere near ten Christianity Explained courses, in which almost all participants have knelt with me and prayed to accept Jesus.

"Most participants are at least interested when they begin or they wouldn't be there, but a small number of participants have been there for other reasons yet have still come to faith – to their own surprise.

"It has convinced me that the gospel message is still effective to attract people to faith in Jesus."

National Consultant for Theology and Discipleship in the Uniting Church in Australia Rev Dr Robert Bos promotes the Becoming Disciples process as a flexible way to introduce people to Jesus and the life of faith.

He describes it as the front verandah of faith; an hospitable place providing a shady spot where family members can gather, enjoying cooling breezes and sharing the news of the day.

"Churches need such half-way spaces where people can be free to explore, to talk, to make tentative explorations, to form relationships.

"For strangers to be thrust straight into the formalities of worship can be as frightening as suddenly being dropped into a foreign country where the language and customs make little sense.

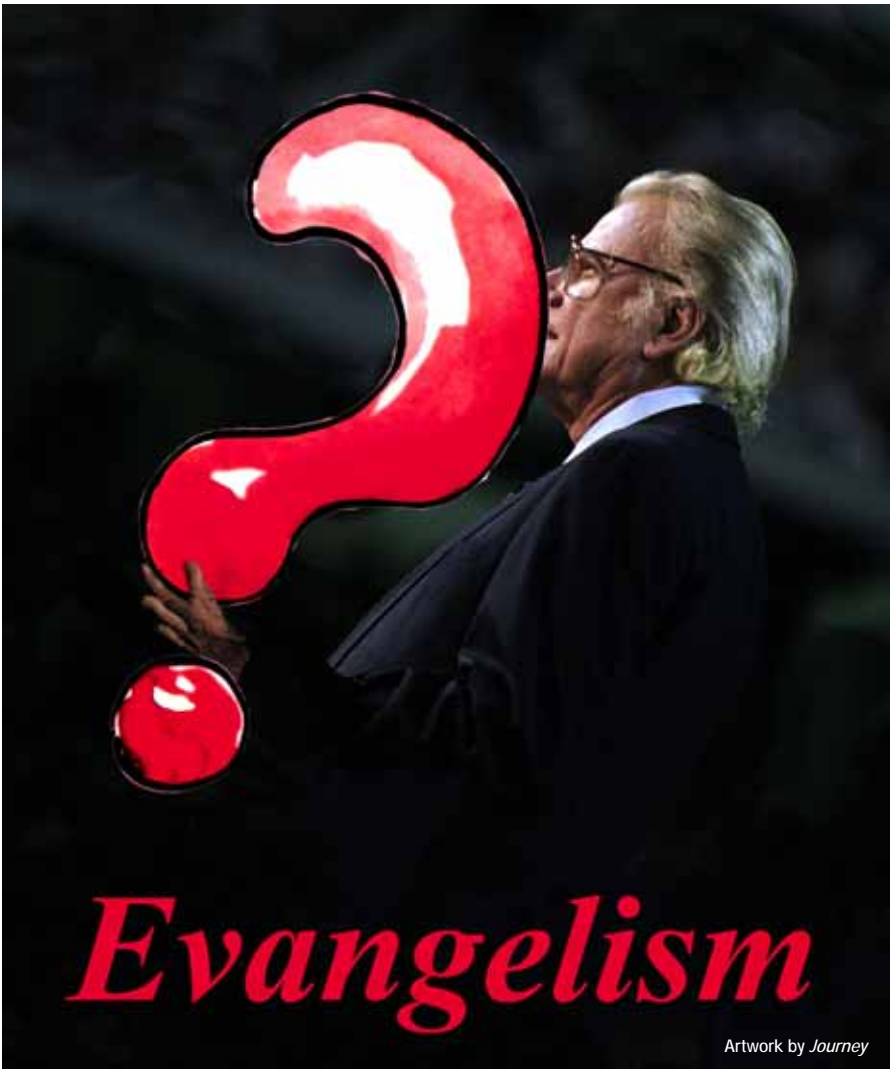
"People need time to ask questions, to grow into relationships,



Not decisions but disciples
Graham Beattie

to have time to reflect and discuss with others in the security of a group."

Redcliffe Uniting Church minister Rev Peter Armstrong looks to the "Great Commission" at the end of Matthew's Gospel



and marvels at the mystery of God choosing to work in partnership with humankind.

He also identifies what he terms the "cringe factor"

"Not all of us are gifted to be able to lead every second person we meet through the 'sinner's prayer', and when we have tried we have felt horribly uncomfortable, as have the people we have cornered."

Synod Mission Consultant Rev Dr Graham Beattie has been developing a program called 'Faith Story' – a small group program to equip people to share faith.

"Personally, I'm motivated to find ways to share my faith that are true to who God is, true to my own experience.

"I know from experience that it's helpful to have someone to help think through my faith.

"Having friends alongside me has helped me work my next steps in responding to God."

Mr Armstrong said we tend to see and try to make the process of embracing faith very one dimensional, where it is actually very relational and can take a long time.

"A good question to ask ourselves is, 'What is God is doing in the world, in our community, in our friends,' and to ask him how we can co-operate with him in what he's doing."

Mr Beattie believes the goal of evangelism is not to get decisions but to make disciples.

"It's vital that new believers are resourced for their own spiritual growth, helped to discover their own mission in the world and become thriving, proactive members of the Christian community.

Top evangelical says talk less, do more

By Bruce Mullan

Prominent and outspoken UK evangelical leader and social activist Rev Steve Chalke claims Jesus never asked anyone to become a Christian.

Founder of the Oasis Trust and the Faithworks movement for Christian social action, Mr Chalke spoke recently to a packed audience from across Brisbane churches.

"Jesus never asked anybody to go to a religious service.

"He did once tell someone he'd cured of leprosy to go and present himself to a priest, but that was to get a medical clearance."

Mr Chalke claims that Jesus did consistently ask people to follow him and his lifestyle

"His promise was, 'If you follow me I'll give you a life worth living'.

"I believe it's the church's task to say, 'Follow Jesus, and if you do you'll have a flourishing life'."

Mr Chalke believes evangelicals have focused on saying, "Pray this prayer and you'll go to heaven".

He said this is "an incredibly 20th Century, hedonistic, me-centred culture" and has very little to do with what Jesus was really about.

"Jesus was actually a social activist – Jesus *did* things.

"He did extraordinary things, he did provocative things, he healed people on the Sabbath, he preached to women, he ate with tax collectors and drunkards, he reached out to Gentile people, he



Walters Union team leader Dave Andrews and World Vision National Church Segment Leader Carolyn Kitto talk in Brisbane with UK Evangelical leader Steve Chalke. Photo by Duncan Macleod

touched untouchables, he smashed the temple up.

"Jesus did provocative things all the time, and just sometimes he stopped to talk about what he was doing."

Mr Chalke told *Journey* that the kind of theology that only asks people to pray the prayer to get to heaven can only be countered through good solid teaching about Jesus in context – what he actually

came to do and how he taught us to live.

He believes that Jesus wasn't primarily a preacher but was a person of action right though to his death on the cross and resurrection.

"Our whole faith is based around what Jesus did. He did stuff that has changed the world.

"It strikes me that our task is exactly the same."

Mr Chalke claims that through

the 20th Century evangelicals became known for talking.

"The people of the Word became the people of lots of words, thousands of words, millions of words, millions of books, millions of sermons.

"But we became less and less known as people of provocative action.

"In the 21st Century, in a world that's so full of words, what's needed is some more action."

Thank you Billy Graham

By Mardi Lumsden

BORN IN 1918 and raised on a dairy farm in North Carolina during the depression, Billy Graham learnt the meaning of hard work.

At the age of 16 he made a personal commitment to Christ through the ministry of an evangelist.

He worked in radio ministry and at 28 he became the youngest president of Northwestern College in Illinois in 1946.

Dr Graham co-founded Youth for Christ in 1944 with Torrey Johnson and began travelling around the United States and Europe as an evangelist.

His crusade in Los Angeles in 1949 launched him as an internationally renowned preacher and he began the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association in 1950.

The first of many crusades to Australia occurred in 1959.

Dr Graham's notoriety has allowed him to travel and preach in places and ways that would have otherwise been impossible. He preached in South Africa during the Apartheid era and publicly denounced the segregation of his

audiences and Apartheid itself.

He was a close personal friend of Martin Luther King Jr as well as personal counsellor to several American presidents, in particular Richard Nixon and Bill and Hillary Clinton.

Hillary Clinton told *Time Magazine* in August this year that Mr Graham was a close personal

confidant during the Monica Lewinski scandal.

Ms Clinton said he was, "Incredibly supportive to me personally. And he was very strong in saying, 'I really understand what you're doing and I support you.'"

"He was just very personally there for me.

"The entire world was judging

my decisions and my actions and there weren't very many people who, frankly, were understanding, and he was.

"He said, 'Forgiveness is the hardest thing that we're called upon to do and we all face it at some point in our lives and I'm just really proud of you for taking it on.'"

A best selling author of 25 books, Billy Graham's message of evangelism has spread throughout the world in various forms.

In June of this year, his wife Ruth passed away.

According to the *LA Times*, Mrs Graham dissuaded her husband from launching a campaign for the U.S. presidency by telling him she would leave him if he quit his ministry and that the American public would not accept a divorced man as president.

Dr Graham's final public crusade was held in New Orleans in March 2006 and he attributed his subsequent retirement from public preaching to his failing health.

He has suffered from Parkinson's Disease for over 15 years and recently announced he was battling prostate cancer.

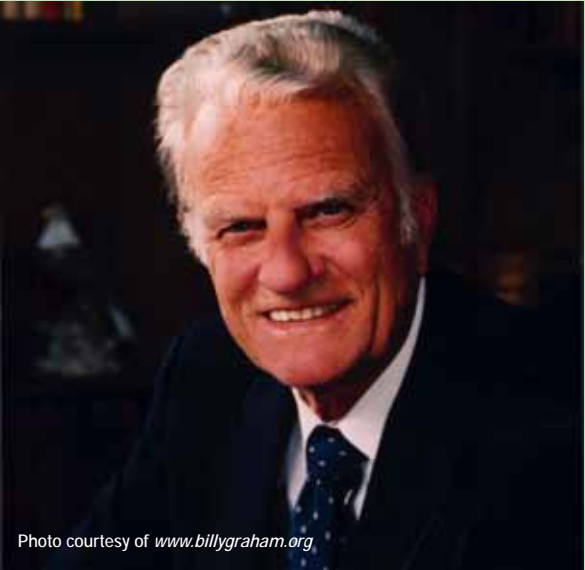


Photo courtesy of www.billygraham.org

Young people want you, warts and all

By Mardi Lumsden

ACCORDING TO Synod Young Adult ministry coordinator Tom Kerr, the key to evangelising young adults is by not evangelising.

Well, not in the traditional sense of the word.

Mr Kerr says forming a connection with young adults comes from being yourself and growing friendships, not pushing beliefs on someone.

Here is part of Tom's story:

"I'm having this discussion about faith in God with four young adult blokes in my car. None of them go to church.

"I'm a 50 year old, but they don't mind talking with me about God.

"When we park the car, we're going to get out and start throwing each other around and attacking each other with knives, chains and broken bottles.

"It's all good though. We do this every Wednesday night. I give them a lift to Ju Jitsu.

"The faith thing comes up every second night that we travel together.

"It started when one of the guys asked me what I do for a living.

"I told him I work for the church and discussions about everyone's church experiences started flying around the car.

"Then it gets to God and what we believe. We're all comfortable. It's good.

"We share ideas and beliefs with each other – rather than sell ideas and lecture each other.

"There is no condemnation, self righteousness or judgement.

"We can disagree and that can be okay. We do it respectfully.

"Everybody is happy. And there's actually a lot more we agree about when it comes to God than we disagree about.

"Once we got on to the topic of traits we respect in people and what we do not respect.

"It shifted to Christians who do not live up to the price tag.

"We all agreed that if someone has faith in Jesus, they need to show that in their actions.

"You'd think they were quoting the book of James to me.

"They intuitively know that's the deal, these four young adult guys who don't go to church, but are happy to talk about faith when it comes up naturally."

The Gap Uniting Church member Erin Van Krimpen said building relationships and being yourself with integrity are the most important things when talking to young people about God.

"Young adults usually aren't looking for a holier-than-thou person who will teach them all they need to know," she said.

"What they're really looking for is someone just like them for whom

following Christ is working.

"Don't be afraid to be yourself, warts and all."

Ms Van Krimpen is in her early 20s and said simple exposure to Christianity through friends, teachers and people in the community was what made her interested in learning more about Christianity, not in-your-face Bible bashing.

"No sermon, no song, no book, no lecture, no meeting with a minister, no podcast will ever be as powerful a witness as the relationship you build with a person."

Towong Early Adult (TEA Party) member Naomi Waldron said building relationships within church members is an important part of keeping young adults in church.

Challenged to be the church

By Scott Stephens

THE CHURCH has reduced itself to being a mere service-provider and a dispenser of sentimentality and meaningless assurance.

That was the astonishing claim of Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his 1937 book, simply titled *Discipleship*.

While he laboured with a sense of urgency that seemed almost to demand that he write it, *Discipleship* was not produced in response to the rise of National Socialism in 1933 or even the constitution of the Reich Church under Hanns Kerrl in 1935.

Such political events paled compared to the catastrophe that was occurring within the church.

In Bonhoeffer's reckoning, there had been a chronic malfunction in the church's life which all but neutralised any effective witness it might have to the world.

Somehow, since Luther, "grace" had ceased being the power which bound the church to Christ, which elicits the repetition of the drama of death and resurrection in the lives of members of the church.

It had instead been perverted, cheapened, and re-tooled so as to consecrate indiscriminately all the banality and godlessness of culture, thus effectively baptising German society as "Christian."

"Grace" was shorthand for a gospel aimed at making people "feel more secure in their godless lives."

Clearly pained by this realisation, Bonhoeffer was forced to conclude that the church was no longer the church.

It had abandoned its calling to be "salt and light," and had whored itself to the state, offering its wares in exchange for financial security and the benefit of a quiet and peaceful existence.



Adolf Hitler greets Reich Bishop Mueller and Abbot Schachleitner in a 1933 photo. From the website www.nobeliefs.com/nazis.htm

Bonhoeffer wrote, "We gave away preaching and sacraments cheaply; we performed baptisms and confirmations; we absolved an entire people, unquestioned and unconditionally ... When was the world ever Christianised more dreadfully and wickedly than here?"

Surrounded by a nominally Christian culture without, and having been inoculated against the unconditional demands of real grace within, Bonhoeffer believed the church stood condemned to the existence it chose for itself: one of self-congratulating obsolescence.

The church was functionally dead, and yet prided itself on being prosperous and alive.

Bonhoeffer continued, "Like ravens we have gathered around the carcass of cheap grace. From it

we have imbibed the poison which has killed the following of Jesus among us."

Despite the oft made claims that Howard's or Beattie's politics

"Like ravens we have gathered around the carcass of cheap grace. From it we have imbibed the poison which has killed the following of Jesus among us."

But what is striking about Bonhoeffer's *Discipleship* is how unaffected it seems by the political climate.

The sole concern of the book is what had taken place in the church to make it susceptible to the allure of the pompous nationalist idolatry of Nazi Germany.

It is here that the parallels with our condition are most pronounced, and most terrifying.

Bonhoeffer observed that one of the great contradictions of German Protestantism was that its adherents were indeed "members of a true-believing church with a pure doctrine of grace, but no longer members of a church which follows Christ."

Similarly, the perilousness of our present situation comes into focus as soon as one looks at the stark difference between our 'official' statements of belief and the realities of our practice.

Paragraph 4 of the *Basis of Union* represents one of the great formulations of ecclesiology of modern times: "Through human

witness in word and action, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ reaches out to command people's attention and awaken faith; he calls people into the fellowship of his sufferings, to be the disciples of a crucified Lord; in his own strange way Christ constitutes, rules and renews them as his Church."

One wonders, when the language of witness and discipleship is so prominent in the *Basis of Union*, why are the practices of witness and discipleship so undervalued in Uniting Churches?

Everywhere one turns today, the unconditional summons to discipleship has been swapped for shameless attempts to entice people into church attendance by the lure of facile 'community oriented' programs.

The call to "bear witness" to Christ "in word and action" has been traded (with the encouragement of certain pseudo-theological trends that are flowing through our church's veins like a cancer) for the bland affirmation of each individual's idolatrous quest to discover the divine in us all.

And many of our ministers have abandoned the sharp corners of tough Christian belief and practice for fuzzy ecumenism, pursuing the well-worn paths of least mental resistance instead of the hard work of theological clarity.

In our time, the commitment to ecumenism and inter-faith dialogue has become a smokescreen for our own exceedingly tenuous grasp of the Christian faith.

With this escalating catastrophe taking place within our own church, the saddest indictment of all is that the only thing that gets everyone talking about the state of the Uniting Church is the decline in attendance recorded by the latest census.

Perhaps the most radical challenge facing the Uniting Church today is to have the courage to actually be the church!

Scott Stephens is an author, theologian and minister at Chermiside Kedron Uniting Church. He teaches ethics at Trinity Theological College and is a regular contributor to *Journey*



Uniting Church in Australia
Queensland Synod

ADMINISTRATION OFFICER - SYNOD SUPPORT SERVICES

Located at the Uniting Church Centre, Auchenflower, a vacancy exists for a full time Administration Officer within Synod Support Services. Reporting to and as directed by the Executive Administration Assistance, the successful applicant will be responsible for the provision of administration support to the Queensland Synod's Executive Committees – Council of Synod, Synod Leadership Team and Placements Committee, the Office of the Moderator and General Secretary and Synod Support Services.

The administration support provided should be done in a manner which is deemed timely and helpful and enhances the overall quality, effectiveness and efficiency of duties performed and responsibilities carried out by the Office of the Moderator, the General Secretary and Synod Support Services. If you are interested in working in a friendly supportive team environment where individuals are committed to ethos and mission of the Uniting Church in Australia, Qld Synod, then please contact Ana Mila for an application package.

The closing date for the receipt of applications is **close of business Monday 24th September 2007**. Applications should be marked **CONFIDENTIAL** and addressed to **Rev Jenny Tymms, General Secretary Qld Synod, GPO Box 674, Brisbane Q 4001**.



Uniting Church in Australia
Queensland Synod

Nominations for Finance, Investment & Property Board (FIPBoard)

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

The Board supports and resources 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 risk management and effective property and asset management.

Board members need to have a mix of skills including an understanding of the Church and governance. Expressions of interest are being sought from individuals with particular skills in banking, finance, investment, and audit and risk management.

A full information pack is available at www.ucaqlld.au/employment.php or contact Ana Mila on ph: (07) 3377 9705.

Uniting Church in Australia
Queensland Synod



Hospital Ministry and Pastoral Care Course

Expressions of interest are invited for the 2008 Hospital Ministry and Pastoral Care Course which is offered through Trinity Theological College. The course will run from February to early November.

For more information contact Rev Wally Stratford, Pastoral Care Department, Wesley Hospital, P.O. Box 499, Toowoong 4006. Walter.Stratford@wesley.com.au. Phone 07 3232 7289.

Uniting Church leaders condemn Indigenous intervention process

UNITING CHURCH President Rev Gregor Henderson, and Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress National Administrator Rev Shayne Blackman have jointly expressed concern about legislation relating to the Northern Territory Indigenous intervention.

"The Uniting Church stands with its Indigenous leaders in expressing our alarm at the way this legislation has evolved," said Mr Henderson.

"This is some of the most significant legislation in the history of our nation, over-riding aspects of the Race Discrimination and Native Title acts.

"It is with disbelief that we note that it merited only a one-day Senate hearing, which did not consult with some of the key stakeholders in the plan.

"Agencies and members of the Uniting Church who work and live in remote communities that will be affected by these changes have expressed their dismay at the way this process has been undertaken, and are fearful of the possible consequences of legislation on the permit system and land tenure," said Mr Henderson.

Mr Blackman said the process showed a fundamental lack of

respect for the Indigenous people most affected by the changes.

"This legislation has been underpinned by ferocious and hasty so called reforms laced with military style coercion," said Mr Blackman.

"It has not been fully negotiated with those Northern Territory communities in a manner and timeframe that will enable all stakeholders in this issue to be in a position to support these new laws in any cohesive fashion.

"The Government has chosen to pursue populist policies and

temporary solutions which will further push Indigenous rights and responsibilities to the fringes.

"This is not the act of a Government that respects and values the Indigenous people of Australia.

"What is needed are long term empowering programs that enable people to take ownership of these changes over the long haul so that any positive developments are sustained and are undergirded by individual responsibility.

"The child abuse crisis is just one of a series of symptomatic societal

crises in Indigenous communities resulting from a legacy of failed policies.

"These problems need long-term, sustainable, fully-costed solutions, and must be backed up by political will and commitment to the long haul."

Both Church leaders urgently called on the Government to re-evaluate its strategy.

"We call upon the Government to institute a substantial plan for consultation and fairly evaluate the plan on its merits, according to the outcomes it will produce for Indigenous communities and people and in consultation with them," said Rev Henderson.

While applauding the initiative to curb the "rivers of white fella frog" and deal with issues of violence in Aboriginal communities, Uniting Church Minister and Chairperson of the Aboriginal Resources and Development Services Inc. (ARDS) Rev Dr Djinyini Gondarra, has been critical of the removal of the permit system.

Dr Gondarra believes Minister for Indigenous Affairs Mal Brough and the Prime Minister are misleading the public when they say that the permit system on Aboriginal communities has been used to lock out the media and allow the abuse of Aboriginal children to continue.

"To our knowledge, the permit system has not been used in this way.

"The only time that we know that the media has been denied

entry to an Aboriginal community is when Aboriginal people have wanted to hold a private funeral.

"It seems that the rich and privileged in this world can deny access to the paparazzi but Aboriginal people are not allowed the same privilege.

"Permission is required to visit John Howard at the Lodge or Kirribilli."

Dr Gondarra called for policies that will empower people instead of turning their lives into "bigger nightmares" than they are.

"Sadly one must ask is the *Little Children are Sacred Report* and the violence now seen in some Aboriginal communities being used as a 'trojan horse' to take away private protection and property rights - rights that Aboriginal people have had to fight for over many decades.

"If so then we can only hang our heads in shame that any violence against children could be used to political advantage against Aboriginal communities in this way.

"How bad is European law when it does not protect private property rights?

"According to our Madayin law nobody can just take someone else's private property like the federal government is doing in the Northern Territory.

"We are pleading for the permit system to stay over the access roads and Aboriginal communities so that they can feel safe and be safe in their home communities."



Chairperson of the Aboriginal Resources and Development Services Inc. Rev Dr Djinyini Gondarra. Photo courtesy of ARDS

Could Spong be Uniting?

Journey asked Trinity College Director of Studies in Systematic Theology Rev Dr Geoff Thompson whether there is a place in the Uniting Church in Australia for the theology articulated by John Shelby Spong and championed by self-styled progressive Christians.

FOR MANY people, the Uniting Church is a natural home for this kind of theology. Why is this so?

After all, on the great doctrines of the faith, the Uniting Church's stated positions are broadly orthodox.

Perhaps one reason is the Uniting Church in Australia's explicit commitment to a scholarly faith.

Progressive Christians believe that a scholarly faith will gradually liberate itself from the shackles of orthodoxy with all its pre-modern beliefs and eventually give way to a progressive faith in harmony with the modern worldview.

The Uniting Church's commitment to scholarship does not, however, point to this kind of logic.

The *Basis of Union* links scholarship, modernity and orthodoxy in a way that invites a more nuanced conversation amongst them. It is this nuanced conversation that is absent from the rhetoric of progressive Christianity.

For example, Spong's writings give the impression that on the sorts of questions he is raising, the community of intellectually responsible and academically well-credentialled theologians speaks with one voice, supporting his. It doesn't.

He also gives the impression that orthodoxy rests on a blunt belief in the supernatural, a rigid biblical literalism, and adherence to crass penal substitutionary theories of the atonement.

These might be the foundations of modern fundamentalism; they are not the foundations of orthodox Christianity.

Of course, the appeal to orthodoxy can be just as blunt as the appeal to 'the latest scholarship'.

In the hands of many contemporary theologians, however, the narratives of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, the high Christology of the creeds, and the doctrine of the Trinity are far more than remnants of a primitive world view.

They are being brought to life as the foundations of current developments in theology, ethics and spirituality.

For such scholars, orthodoxy is a resource, generated by the definitive claims of Christianity, for re-thinking reality outside the narrow limits imposed by modernity.

No less so than for fundamentalists, the Uniting Church will inevitably be a place of tension for progressive Christians.

Yet it is also a place where moving beyond the 'radical' and 'controversial', their ideas can enter into an intellectually responsible conversation between orthodoxy, scholarship and modernity.

This is the kind of theological conversation to which all of us in the Uniting Church are summoned.

Rev Dr Geoff Thompson is Academic Dean and Director of Studies in Systematic Theology at Trinity Theological College



Rev Dr Geoff Thompson

Uniting Church in Australia

Two positions in Far North Coast Presbytery



Presbytery Administrator [full time]

This position will provide high-level administrative support to the Far North Coast Presbytery.

The Presbytery sees this as a vital role to support the people and congregations of the Presbytery and to resource the Presbytery as it moves to implement its vision of Shared Ministry and growing vibrant and exciting Church Communities.

The person will need an excellent knowledge of the UCA polity, ethos and regulations and be a person with initiative, insight and ability to work cooperatively with people and to plan around competing demands from many sources.

High-level computer literacy is required including word processing, spreadsheets, presentation, email, and web page maintenance.

Some weekend work will be required.

Presbytery Admin Support [part time]

This part time position will support the Presbytery Administrator to undertake the necessary provision of resources and information to the Presbytery and Congregations. The person will be required to record the minutes of Committee and Presbytery meetings.

Computer literacy is required to undertake the tasks of word processing, presentation, and email.

Some weekend work will be required

Both positions will be located in the Lismore - Ballina area. For a Position Description & Information kit:

Contact Lismore Regional Mission
T: 02 6621 5801 or E: lismoreuc@lismoreuc.org.au

Applications close on 21 September 2007

WHAT'S ON

September 1, 7pm. An Evening with Bishop John Shelby Spong, St Aidan's Anglican Girls School, Corinda. \$25 from Ticketmaster 136 100 or ticketmaster.com.au. Contact Ross Garnett on ph 3254 1449 or email drjarn@bigpond.net.au for more information.

September 3, 10.15am-12pm. Uniting Church Adult Fellowship annual service, Samford Uniting Church, Mt Glorious Road Samford. Guest Speaker Dr Sue Fairley, Principal Grace College UQ. Contact Anne McKay on ph 3349 3747 or email mckay32@optusnet.com.au.

September 6-8. 9am-5.30pm. Laidley Uniting Church Quilt & Craft Expo. 45 Patrick St, Laidley. Displays of quilts and fine arts/ demonstrations of pottery/ folk art/wood turning and more. Contact Robyn Muller on ph 5466 5436 or email rob.mul@bigpond.com.au.

September 8-9. Walk-a-thon from Enoggera to Wynnum with the Enoggera and Bayside Uniting Churches. Raising money for refugees in Enoggera and the Bayside team's trip to Africa. Visit www.bayuca.unitingchurch.org.au or www.emmanueluc.unitingchurch.org.au.

September 9. Glebe Road Uniting Church Building 20th Anniversary, cnr Glebe and Ellen St, Ipswich. A worship celebration of the coming together of the three congregations. Contact Pastor Vi Beaumont on ph 3288 6358 or email vbeaum@optusnet.com.au.

September 14-15, 8am-4pm. Creating A Conversion Culture conference at Robina Uniting Church. Hosted by the Local Church Development [LCD] Network within the Uniting Church. Guest speaker Rev Roger Brookes from Pedare Uniting Church, Adelaide. Friday night dinner speaker Pastor Brett Swann (Springfield Church of Christ). Contact Bob Miles on ph 33431019 or email pinemountainuniting@bigpond.com. Registrations close 7 September.

September 15, 7-8.30pm. Virus at Broadwater Road Uniting Church, 481 Broadwater Road, Wishart. Want to become part of an epidemic for Jesus? Share in a great night of praise and worship lead by Jess Hutton and The Easily Distracted. Contact Tim Allen on ph 3349 7168 or email timtamboy40@hotmail.com.

September 16, 10am-4pm. Celebration of 100 years of Methodism/ Uniting Church presence in Murgon at Rotary Park, Krebs Street, Murgon with an open-air service followed by lunch and an ecumenical Hymn Fest in the current Uniting Church, Gore Street. Contact Margaret Jensen on ph 4168 1953 or email pjcombes@hotmail.net.au.

September 20-22. Sandgate Uniting Church Craft Fair at 116 Board St, Deagon. Admission gold coin. Contact Bobbie Jeays on ph 3269 6565 or email djeays@bigpond.net.au.

September 30, 6-7.30pm. JAM @ Emmanuel UC (featuring 'Ripple Effect'), 249 South Pine Rd, Enoggera. Enjoy Christian bands and be encouraged in your faith. Great for youth and young adults! Contact Tim Robinson on ph 3355 2162 or email robbo78@hotmail.com.

October 5-6, 7am-4pm. Theological Reflections on diakonia: from Scripture to...? at Clairvaux MacKillop College, Klumpp Road, Upper Mt Gravatt. With Roman Catholic scholar Dr John N Collins, Uniting Church Deacon Rev Alison McRae and Anglican Deacon Rev Dr Peter Pocock. Contact Douglas Jones on ph 3377 9868 or email douglas.jones@ucaqld.com.au.

October 6, 9am-3pm. Elanora Flower Show and Spring Fair, Elanora Uniting Church. Contact Mary Flynn on ph 5598 8733 or email flynn10@bigpond.com.

October 12-14. Asia Focus Weekend - Missions Roadmap at the Baptist Camps and Convention Centre, Brookfield. Find your way into mission in East Asia. Contact Howard Thomas on ph 3343 3893 (Mon-Thurs 9.30-4.30) or email howard.thomas@bigpond.com.

October 13, 6.30pm. Beneath the Stars: Songs of Hope & Joy at the Brisbane River Stage. Variety concert to raise funds for seriously and terminally ill children. SCAT, Shannon Noll and lots more. www.beneaththestars.com.au. For more information or to volunteer to help contact Peter Hempenstall on ph 0408 972329 or email peter@beneaththestars.com.au.

October 13-14. Buderim Uniting Church Centenary celebration. Open Church, music, services, social activities and celebration dinner. Accommodation available for those coming from afar. Contact Lionel Ash on ph 5445 3537 or Max Fenn on ph 5476 8158.

Want to promote an event?

Go to www.journeyonline.com.au and click on 'What's On'

Hardingham takes international flight

FLYING PADRE, Queensland McKay Patrol Minister Rev Garry Hardingham, has been appointed Secretary of the International Rural Churches Association (IRCA).

IRCA is a world wide network of Christians with a passion for rural communities who share stories of struggle and hope.

Over 100 delegates from 16 countries gave a world-view of the challenges and hopes in rural ministry at the International Rural Churches Association 4th Conference in Canada.



McKay Patrol Minister Rev Garry Hardingham

Under the theme of 'Cry of the Heart: How Can we Find Hope in the Rural Landscape?' the conference explored the issues of mono-culturing, environmental degradation and corporate colonialism in many rural settings around the world.

Key note speaker was John Ikerd, a former professor of economics, and author of a number of books including "A return to Common Sense".

Professor Ikerd spoke of the tragic effects of economic rationalism upon the culture and sustainability of rural communities.

He said in many instances, multi-national corporations have become the new 'colonisers' of the rural landscape, buying up farming communities and implanting a corporate regime that seeks only to make profit even at the expense of

rural culture or sustainable farming practices.

Mr Hardingham said one key theme arising at the Conference was the perceived indifference of many city-based denominations to see the value of rural congregations as a cohesive part of the rural landscape.

"Many complained that whilst in years gone by denominations supported rural ministry as a sign of their commitment to people in these regions, today support is often gauged against economic viability of rural churches and ministries.

"There was also a strong call for denominations to take seriously the possibility of including rural training into their curriculum for the training of ministers and to make a stronger effort in recruiting ministers from the rural context."

Mr Hardingham said the placement of 'city-raised' ministers in rural communities of which they have little understanding has left a litany of destroyed congregations and burnt out ministers. This has become a world-wide phenomenon.

Youth leaders get First Aid

AS PART of their commitment to health and safety the Glebe Road Uniting Church in Ipswich has just completed training 13 of their youth leaders in first aid.

According to Church Council Chairperson Mr Robert Edwardson, the church's efforts are not just directed towards youth and children but across the whole church.

"We have appointed a training officer who will be facilitating the

training of all our various interest groups.

"First aid training was considered a priority and is just the first phase as we regard our children's ministry as particularly urgent."

First aid trainer Ms Luella Charles said the youth leaders who attended the course were eager to learn and all did extremely well.

"They are now compliant with the new health and safety rulings and are a credit to the local community."



REVIEWS



Amazing Grace: William Wilberforce and the heroic campaign to end slavery
By Eric Metaxas
Monarch Books
RRP \$32.95

David Stratton, movie reviewer for *The Australian* and the ABC, gave two and a half stars to the movie *Amazing Grace* – the story of William Wilberforce and the heroic campaign to end slavery.

I'm still going to see the movie – because this book, spawned from the movie, paints an exhilarating picture of the life and times of Wilberforce in this, the 200th year

since the Parliament of the United Kingdom abolished the slave trade.

It is an entertaining read, certainly less stodgy than the movie if Stratton's opinion counts (and I often find Stratton is spot on).

Complete with stills from the movie, the book rattles along in a lilting, off-hand literary style which seems to work even if it is a little different.

The aim of the book *Amazing Grace* I think is to paint a positive picture of a robust in-the-world-but-not-of-it type of faith.

It is intentional about being a feel good tale of a hero. In doing that, I don't find the book pretentious and it seems to be an accurate enough account.

We get a very good caricature of Wilberforce, parliamentary colleagues and folk like John Newton who wrote *Amazing Grace* the hymn.

It will inspire you to consider again what can be done if the fellowship of Christ turns its collective and personal trust to God – and it will open your eyes to yet another part of shameful history that is not rigour du jour on the school syllabus.

Michael Hewson a member at The Hills Uniting Church Congregation



Amazing Grace
Directed by Michael Apted
Starring Ioan Gruffudd
PG

This is a fine film, both inspirational and appealing.

Directed by Michael Apted and starring Ioan Gruffudd as William Wilberforce, *Amazing Grace* describes the 20 year parliamentary campaign against the slave trade in the British Empire, culminating in the passing of the Slave Trade Abolition Bill of 1807.

The ecumenical organisation, Churches Together in England, has established a campaign, called "Set all free" (see www.setallfree.net) to commemorate the bicentenary of abolition, and to work against continuing forms of slavery in the world today.

Other commemorative events and resources can be found via www.wilberforcecentral.org.

The film itself appears at first to be rather moralistic and didactic. However, I stopped worrying about these tendencies as soon as Wilberforce meets clergyman John Newton (played by Albert Finney), who wrote the hymn, *Amazing Grace*, about his former life as a slave ship master.

The encounters between the campaigner and his counsellor provide ballast at pivotal moments in the story, which tells of Wilberforce's illness (colitis), family life, household values, as well as his frustrations with the politics in and around the abolitionist movement.

The presence in the film of the actor, Nicholas Farrell, who plays Henry Thornton (one of the founders of the evangelical Clapham Sect), reminded me of his much earlier film, *Chariots of Fire* (where he played the Olympic runner Aubrey Montague).

There is a Chariots quality to *Amazing Grace* in its focus on the practical and mystical power of conscience. Both are films worth seeing and stories worth recalling.

Mark Young is a long time reviewer for *Journey*

Normal Days
By Scattered People
CD
RRP \$25

This second offering from Scattered People once again shows that community music making can be a wonderful experience for the participants as well as the audience.

A project of Lifeline's community development unit, *Normal Days* brings together refugees to share their stories of struggle and triumph through music.

Producer and arranger Simon Monsour of Sweet Freedom Inc has incorporated the influence of African percussion, South American wind instruments, and a choir of refugees from all over the world.

Songs like *Precious Water* reminds us that some problems are universal, while the stripped back *All We Hope For* longs for the simple things in life that so many of us take for granted.

"Clothes on our back, food on the table, children in school, willing and able, it's all we hope for."

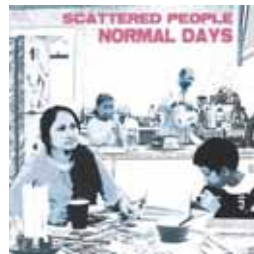
Light a Candle tells the story of starting a new life in a new country, using numerous different languages to emphasise Australia's global community.

With tight production and a mixture of acoustic and programmed instruments each track stands apart.

The Scattered People choir adds a warmth, honesty and overall cohesiveness to what is an excellent example of collaborative community music making at its best.

Normal Days is available from www.sweetfreedom.org.

Mardi Lumsden is a musician and associate editor of *Journey*



Evan Almighty
Directed by Tom Shadyac
Starring Steve Carell and Morgan Freeman
PG

Evan Almighty brings Noah and his ark into 21st Century Washington DC, courtesy of the folk who made *Bruce Almighty*.

If it had been a British production, Adrian Plass might have written it. Perhaps it was Morgan Freeman playing God, but this reviewer heard echoes of "God is nice and he likes me".

The carefully chosen cast produced well drawn performances. The bad guy wasn't evil. The good guy wasn't perfect.

There were enough familiar faces among the support actors and cameos to make viewers feel at home.

Evan Almighty went close to the line but managed to skirt away from schmaltzy home-spun American homilies.

I was dreading the moment when Evan would spout some



conservative middle class gospel, and all would be well in the suburbs.

Instead, the modern day Noah was left asking God hard questions to the very end.

There were moments when it felt as if *Evan Almighty* might slip into the usual 'environment is sacred' stuff served up by Disney of late.

It fell to God, manifested as a greasy spoon waiter with the nametag Al Mighty, to explain some facts of faith. He asks Evan's confused and angry wife, Joan, about answers to prayer.

God talks about "opportunities". If someone prays for courage does God just make her brave or does he give her opportunity to be courageous?

I won't spoil the ending. Let me say you'll get your \$2 million worth.

However, right to the end you may be expecting a cop-out.

Joan gathers up so much of the debate in our own church when she asks Evan if perhaps God didn't mean what he said, literally.

Evan is standing on the deck of a finished ark, loaded with animals, surrounded by network TV cameras and not a drop of rain.

Evan sums up many Christians' sentiments with one memorable phrase.

In the end God says to Evan, "You did good, son".

It's gentle but it worked for me.

My annoyance was that the film makers settled for a closing message that appeals to the idea of doing good instead of being faithful.

The word 'ark' makes a cute acronym – perhaps a little too cute.

Overall, I'd spend the money and take the family along again.

Phil Smith is a writer, speaker and broadcaster

More reviews available at www.journeyonline.com.au including:

The Feminine Spirit: Recapturing the Heart of Scripture
By Lynne Bundesen



"Brave and audacious approach."
Heather den Houting

PRAYER DIARY

2 September:
Sunnybank

Sunnybank Uniting Church is a multicultural congregation consisting of English language, Samoan language and Korean language worship experiences each Sunday.

We are one church with one vision: connecting people to God and each other.

Being one church with multiple worship options does require much intentional teaching, equipping and strategising; this is the primary role of our senior minister, Rev Andrew Ross.

Our Church Council is in the process of creating a new functional structure that facilitates holistic growth, worship, discipleship, and mission and evangelism in our ever-growing congregation.

This task is complex and unique as there are no other similar Uniting Church congregations in Australia with the same vision of being one congregation.

However, we believe that God has called us to be a church of the nations to the nation, that we may live this vision and journey with other churches around our multi/cross cultural land to enable them to embrace the joys and the struggles of being one in the midst of diversity.

We ask that you pray for our church leadership as they discern and implement a new structure.

We also ask that you pray for provision of financial resources to employ new staff members to lead, train and equip our continually growing church to be and do all that God has called us to.

9 September:
Karana Downs

We are one of the newer congregations in the Uniting Church, having been planted by Moggill Uniting in the 1990s.

We have about 45 families, with children, young people and families mixing with retiring baby-boomers.

When you pray, give thanks for the Religious Education ministry we support to four local schools and pray for the chaplaincy program we

are seeking to establish in Mount Crosby State School.

Pray for Jenny and Heather, who are the leaders of our children's ministry, and Kate, who leads our youth class on Sundays.

Pray also for Steve who leads the youth group we share with Moggill Uniting.

He wants to undertake a youth worker trainee program and we are trying to raise funds to help him.

David and Jan lead our home fellowship groups and we would value your prayers for them and the people they lead, that they may come into a closer knowledge of God, the scriptures, and one another.

Our Church Council is seeking ways to grow our ministry to the adjoining suburbs of Chuwar and Karalee; both growing suburbs.

Pray for Andrew, our new Risk Management and Safety Officer, as he supports our leaders in their ministries.

Pray for our ministry into the community, including the Community Support Network, that people will be able to find the help they need by making contact with us.

We are looking for a new minister, so your prayers for the Joint Nominating Committee and the minister God is calling to come, would be appreciated.

We have outgrown our building about four times now, and we really need about \$3 million to set up a new community centre styled church. You can pray for that too!

16 September:
Clayfield Hamilton

The Clayfield Hamilton Uniting Church Congregation worships in two centres, one at Bonney Avenue in Clayfield and the other at St. Luke's in Hamilton.

This year we are celebrating the 100th anniversary of St. Luke's and whilst we are only a small group we have set the aim of raising \$100 for every year of ministry in the church (\$10 000) for a group of nominated projects.

The projects are the Scripture Union School Chaplaincy program, Frontier Services, the Clown Doctors, Rarongo Technical College in Rabaul PNG and other

Uniting International Mission Projects.

At Clayfield we are seeking to grow our ministry with families through our Sunday School, Mother's group and monthly worship led by a worship team which is constantly changing.

2007 is a landmark year as it is the first year we have not had a fete in a long time. This has been a difficult decision but we continue to seek to develop new ideas for building our links with the community and raising funds.

This year we have also decided to work towards gathering donations for the Samaritans purse project.

Pray for us in these endeavours and for our groups and other activities including our Bible studies, men's breakfast, adult fellowship, friendship groups, involvement in religious education and development of our pastoral care team.

23 September:
Warwick Killarney

Warwick Killarney has three congregations: Warwick, Freestone and Killarney.

Freestone is a small rural church which shares worship with the Anglican Church at Freestone.

The Warwick and Killarney churches are near the centre of the respective towns.

Please continue to pray for the end of the drought that is deeply affecting the people of our communities, both those on the land and in towns and communities.

Give thanks for our faithful people, who are deeply committed to our Lord Jesus, and who work diligently to share the Good News.

Pray for the teams who serve the 'Courthouse Cuppa', our RE teachers and the ecumenical pastoral care at Warwick hospital.

Praise God for the rich relationship we have across the Christian denominations in Warwick, Killarney and Freestone.

Give thanks for our young people and our youth group as they grow and learn together and the dedicated leaders who give their time and energy to this important aspect of our Church.

Pray for Scots PGC College, for the staff and students that our school will continue to be a place of learning and life enrichment.

Pray for our minister May, and the elders and leaders and the spiritual life of our church.



James Hempenstall (left) with Shannon Noll. Photo courtesy of www.beneaththestars.com.au

Stars shine for sick kids

MEET JAMES Hempenstall.

James is the main organiser of a variety concert to raise money for the Starlight Foundation to be held at the River Stage in Brisbane on 13 October.

James has, with the help of his Dad Peter and a bunch of other great people, pulled together some of the biggest names in the Australian music industry, including Shannon Noll and Rickie Lee, with some more big names to be announced.

A mean feat for any teenager, let alone one who is not 100% well.

Many years ago James was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumour. He has been in and out of hospital for much of his life and is one determined and selfless young man.

The next edition of *Journey* we feature James' story.

In the meantime, visit www.beneaththestars.com.au to read more about the big dreams of one big-hearted kid.

Rev Bevan Favelle 1948-2007

SIX HUNDRED church and civic representatives farewelled Bevan Hunter Favelle at an inspiring celebration of his life at Glebe Road Uniting Church in Ipswich.

Uniting Church ministers and pastors from other denominations

formed a guard of honour as the casket was taken from the Church to the Fellowship Hall.

Born in Sydney, Bevan graduated from University with a degree in Commerce.

After his call to Ministry, he undertook theological training at the Methodist School of Theology and was ordained at Coffs Harbour in 1977.

He served in congregations at Coffs Harbour, Coonabarabran, Elandora and Glebe Road.

During his treatment for cancer in Wesley Hospital, Bevan wrote these words.

"I wish to return your precious greetings to all my family and friends, as I have been overwhelmed with all your love and constant prayer.

"It has been so beautiful. I encourage you to hold to the goal of people being united in Christ, working with him and becoming that special work of grace in the community.

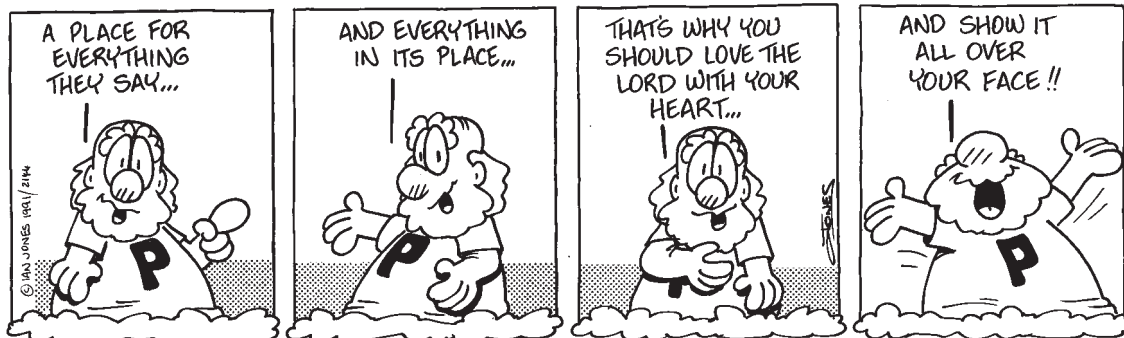
"I long to share of God's goodness as he has showered indescribable love and support upon myself and the family."

Bevan had a transparent pastoral heart through which he brought comfort and consolation to many in life's more devastating situations and will be fondly remembered for his vision and deep personal spirituality.

Bevan is survived by his wife Lynette and their children, Matthew, Rachael and Nathan.



Rev Bevan Favelle 1948 - 2007



LETTERS

I like it

Now don't get me wrong, I do respect other churches and I have friends in all parts of the Magnetic Island community but I really do like the Uniting Church.

I like it because it is centred on the God we meet in Jesus Christ and His Holy Spirit.

I like it because its *Basis of Union* is founded on God's Word and respects the historic creeds and beliefs of the Universal Church through the ages.

I like it because, although it dispensed with many of the traditions of its founding churches in 1977, it kept their values and became a really Australian branch of the Christian Church.

I like it because it isn't afraid to sometimes try new and scary things, some of which work and some of which don't.

I like it because it is pretty democratic, each layer of government with its own responsibilities and all composed of democratically elected lay-people and clergy.

I like it because it cares for people in need internationally and nationally.

I like it because it is, in my experience, a happy family church always willing to share its good news with whoever wishes to hear it.

Alan Renton
Magnetic Island

What do you like about the Uniting Church? Feel free to send your thoughts as a letter.
(Ed.)

Both are wrong

In response to the controversy over the promotion of John Shelby Spong's latest tour, why doesn't *Journey* also seek the advertising dollars of Richard Dawkins?

Both Spong and Dawkins accept evolution as fact, with its corresponding millions of years of death, disease and suffering.

Both deny that the Bible is an accurate let alone trustworthy revelation from God and both wish to see the end of orthodox Christianity.

The only real difference between the two is that Dawkins is more consistent to be an atheist than Spong, who has a god of his own make-believe.

Greg Cooney
Via fax

Missing Margate

I read with interest the article about the coming closure of the Margate Conference Centre.

I am saddened by this development as I have very happy memories of the predecessor to the Margate Conference centre, the Margate Camp which was on the same site.

In January 1952 I attended my

first Sunday School Teacher and Leader Camp at Margate.

These Teacher and Leader Camps were held on the long weekends in January and in June, and were attended by young people and older folk who were involved in Sunday School teaching.

Mr Vic Davis, Miss Joyce White and Miss O. Marquis were leaders of these camps in the early 1950's.

The Camps were the means of encouraging young people into various areas of service within the church.

My own call to ministry had been sustained through Margate Camp.

Another memory is rising at 4.30am during camps to "stoke the donkey", the hot water system, so that hot water was ready when campers began the day.

Ladies of the Morningside church were in charge of the kitchen, and great meals were another feature of the Camp.

Ted Hutton
Strathpine

Road Rules

I am surprised that the articles about risks when driving all avoid what I see as the most compelling reason for a Christian to keep meticulously to the rules.

Titus 3:1 says, "Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey..."

I believe that as a Christian I must trust in God whether I "get there" in time or not, and I have never known him to fail me.

There are times when I hate keeping to the speed limit - I know I could safely drive faster - but I believe my Lord wants me to live under this subjection, to give up

my right to do as I think good, and he's never let me down.

Once driving to a meeting where I was taking the projector material for the lecture, and knowing I could be there by speeding (safely), I thought, "How can I ask God to keep me safe, if I don't show trust in him?"

I got there late, but no one in the audience realised I had kept the lecturer waiting, because the power failure only ended just after I arrived.

A Christian should be a model for keeping the law, and bear teasing, for the honour of giving up their pride to the Lord.

Iris Williams
Buderim

It's all about sex

The decline in numbers attending the Uniting Church since the last census was discussed in August *Journey*.

No mention was made of the numbers lost because of the Resolution 84 debacle which allowed practising homosexuals to occupy ministerial positions.

I was surprised by the omission.

G Hall
Victoria Point



Have your say

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

Post: *Journey* GPO Box 674
Brisbane 4001

Email: journey@ucaqld.com.au



Del Smith and Judy Holmes from St John's Anglican Church in Dalby engaged the digital photography workshop at the recent Communications Training Day hosted by Journey and the Australasian Religious Press Association at the Synod Centre in Brisbane. Photo by Osker Lau



Uniting Church in Australia
Queensland Synod

RURAL MINISTRY COORDINATORS

The Queensland Synod is seeking two Rural Ministry Coordinators to resource, encourage, equip and support the church in rural Queensland.

The positions would interest people with a passion for enabling congregations in rural communities to sustain faith and develop new ways of being church. It is an opportunity to invest in the lives of country people and to assist them to navigate change.

These positions would suit lay persons or persons from a specified ministry who have experience of rural communities, gifts in education or training, a capacity for theological reflection, ministry experience and an ability to advocate for the needs of God's people in the bush. The positions would involve extensive travel and the successful applicants will live outside of the greater Brisbane area. Confidence in using technology would be an advantage.

Application packages available from www.ucaqld.com.au

For further information Contact

Rev Kaye Ronalds kayeronalds@optusnet.com.au 0429 340 057

SUNSHINE COAST

UNITING CHURCH - BUDERIM



INVITES YOU TO JOIN US AS WE CELEBRATE
100 YEARS OF MINISTRY

Saturday 13th October - 6 for 6.30 pm CELEBRATION DINNER.
Sunday 14th October - 9.30 am CENTENARY CHURCH SERVICE.

For further information please phone:

Lionel Ash - 54453537 or Max Fenn 54768158

CLASSIFIEDS

Accommodation

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

Fantastic location for beachfront holiday in charming cottage at Currumbin Beach, Qld. Ph 33764247.

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

For rent

3 bdr highset house, 2 car lug and carport in quiet street in Virginia. 10 mins walk from train. 3 mins from bus. Ph Amanda 07 3261 8899.

Travel

Israel Diamond Jubilee Tour. Join Rev Dr Geoff & Mrs Lorraine Pankhurst in a pilgrimage next May celebrating Israel's 60th Anniversary. Experience the wonder of walking where Jesus walked. Details 0746 987824

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

Historically Speaking



The oldest funeral business in Queensland

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

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

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

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

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

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

Alex Gow Funerals

A Brisbane-owned family business, established in 1840.

Phone 3852 1501

JOURNEY asks...

How did you come to faith?

Paul Walton

It was 5 April 1968. I had gone for the first time to the Methodist youth group in Inala.

My parents thought I needed to get out more, and had asked a lad to invite me.

He was apologetic when he realised that the group was going to Billy Graham and said he would have told me to come the next week if he'd known.

I was secretly glad. I'd been reading the Gospel of Luke in my Gideon's King James Version, and getting bogged down in the language.

But I wanted to know more about God and I didn't want to go to hell.

I did have one test for Billy Graham: Martin Luther King had just been shot dead, and I wanted to hear something positive about him. I wasn't disappointed.

As far as I know, it was the first time I'd ever heard the Gospel.

I'd never heard of altar calls before, but I couldn't stay in my seat. I didn't understand how anyone could!

I went out, and gave my life to Jesus.

The youth group leaders were cheesed off that I'd held everybody up by going forward.

When I got home, I told Dad what I'd done. He told me not to write to send the studies in; they would just send 'begging letters'.

Weeks later I did write, and Dad accepted it without comment.

I didn't stay in the Methodist group for long. The leaders never spoke to me about what I'd done and I just didn't feel it meant anything to them.

Months later, I started going to my best mate's church, which was Open Brethren.

And the King James Version? I found that it suddenly made sense to me, funny language and all.



It was totally different reading it after giving my life to Christ! Not that I use that translation these days...

Rev Paul Walton is minister in the Centenary Uniting Church Congregation and chairs the National Working Group on Worship

Ian Harvey

As the third in a family of four children I always felt safe and special and, despite the "depression" years into which I was born, I was largely insulated from most of its adverse effects.

My mother often went to Communion at the large Anglican church in Dubbo and sacramental worship seemed important for her. She also prayed.

From a very young age I observed her kneeling down beside her bed each night to pray. She also taught us children to say our prayers - "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild".



But for me church and religion were an outdated, boring and unnecessary impediment to Sunday relaxation and enjoyment.

When I was 15, we moved to suburban Sydney and our house was situated only one block from the local Anglican Church.

My mother thought we should attend church on the very first Sunday after we moved in and I went very reluctantly, trying to be inconspicuous.

But on the way out I was accosted by a man who invited me to come along next Friday evening to the Boys' Society.

As there would also be gymnastics before the meeting, I agreed.

There would be a 'Four-Square' program, which included a religious 'talk' but I felt I could put up with this, for the sake of the gymnastics and the supper.

But my disinterest quickly evaporated as my youthful and inquiring mind took over and I began to realise there was indeed a spiritual life-hunger in me.

I was invited to join a Boys' Bible Class and it was not long before my grey-haired teacher introduced me personally to Jesus as my friend, saviour and Lord.

At the tender age of 16, there was no way of holding me back. I was alive and on fire for God.

My mother and my teacher were two of many people who were major contributors to my journey and life of faith.

As I reflect upon my life I humbly thank my God and the Lord Jesus, in whose Spirit my whole life has been, and still is, truly both rich and meaningful.

Retired psychologist and lawyer Dr Ian Harvey was formerly the Chair of the Elders Council at Newlife Uniting Church Robina and will be 78 years-old next birthday

Tanya Johnson

I wasn't born into a church-going family.

My family went to the Catholic Church in my home town of Bundaberg at Christmas and Easter.

Apart from having fun at Uniting Church day camp with my friends, and going through the Catholic confirmation process, my understanding of God and Jesus did not translate into action.

After high school I moved to Brisbane for university study. I moved into Grace College, and although I wasn't part of the crowd who attended church, I spoke to people who did speak of their trust in God, which I didn't really get.

After living at college for three years, I moved out into a unit with a college friend. Life was proceeding as planned.

That is when my most formative faith experience occurred one random evening.

One night, when I had just moved in and was looking forward to this new world of being more independent, it felt like something was amiss.

I asked God whether he could connect with me in some way, and show me how he could actively move in my life. The next morning in the mail box was a pamphlet from the St Lucia Uniting Church, extending an invitation to their next Alpha program.

One could dismiss the proximity between that night's prayer and the pamphlet, but I had a strong feeling it was something I shouldn't ignore - it was too much of a coincidence. So I went to St Lucia Uniting Church one Sunday evening.

The congregation genuinely welcomed me, and connecting with the members really crystallised my faith. Many of them were three times my age, but that was never an issue.

The Alpha course gave me a valuable basic framework for thinking about Jesus and a daily approach to interaction which I'd never experienced.

I firmly believe God's hand has always been present guiding my faith journey; from an acceptance of his role to an understanding through people and a framework.

The simple and sometimes forgotten and seemingly troublesome act of letter-box dropping really connected for me.



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