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Break down the silence

By Bruce Mullan

Like the proverbial elephant in the pew, the question of mental health has been a silent matter in the life of our church communities; rarely acknowledged, hardly spoken about and inevitably misunderstood.

OFFICIAL ESTIMATES are that mental illness will affect more than 20% of the adult population during their lifetime and between 10 and 15% of young people in any one year.

Many will be undiagnosed, others will recover spontaneously, and the great majority can be treated and will experience full recovery.

A smaller number of people with mental health issues will experience long periods of distress and sometimes permanent disability.

The pain of those who suffer is exacerbated by the lack of community concern and sympathy which is more readily available to those with obvious physical disability whose needs are more easily recognised.

Older church members will recall earlier approaches to mental health where the more severely affected were isolated and cared for in psychiatric institutions.

Contemporary approaches focus on treating and supporting people with mental illness in their own community, but critics of this approach suggest that many of the people who were once resident in specialist psychiatric hospitals are now incarcerated in the prison system.

In 2003 the NSW Corrections Health Service found 86% of women entering prison were suffering some form of mental illness and 12% had psychotic disorders.

Advocates for community based care are committed to allowing mentally ill

people equal opportunity to participate in the life of the community, while critics have suggested that there are insufficient support systems to guarantee accommodation, support, employment, counselling and treatment.

Those experiencing long-term mental health problems are among the most disadvantaged in the Australian community and those with more treatable issues are largely left to battle through alone.

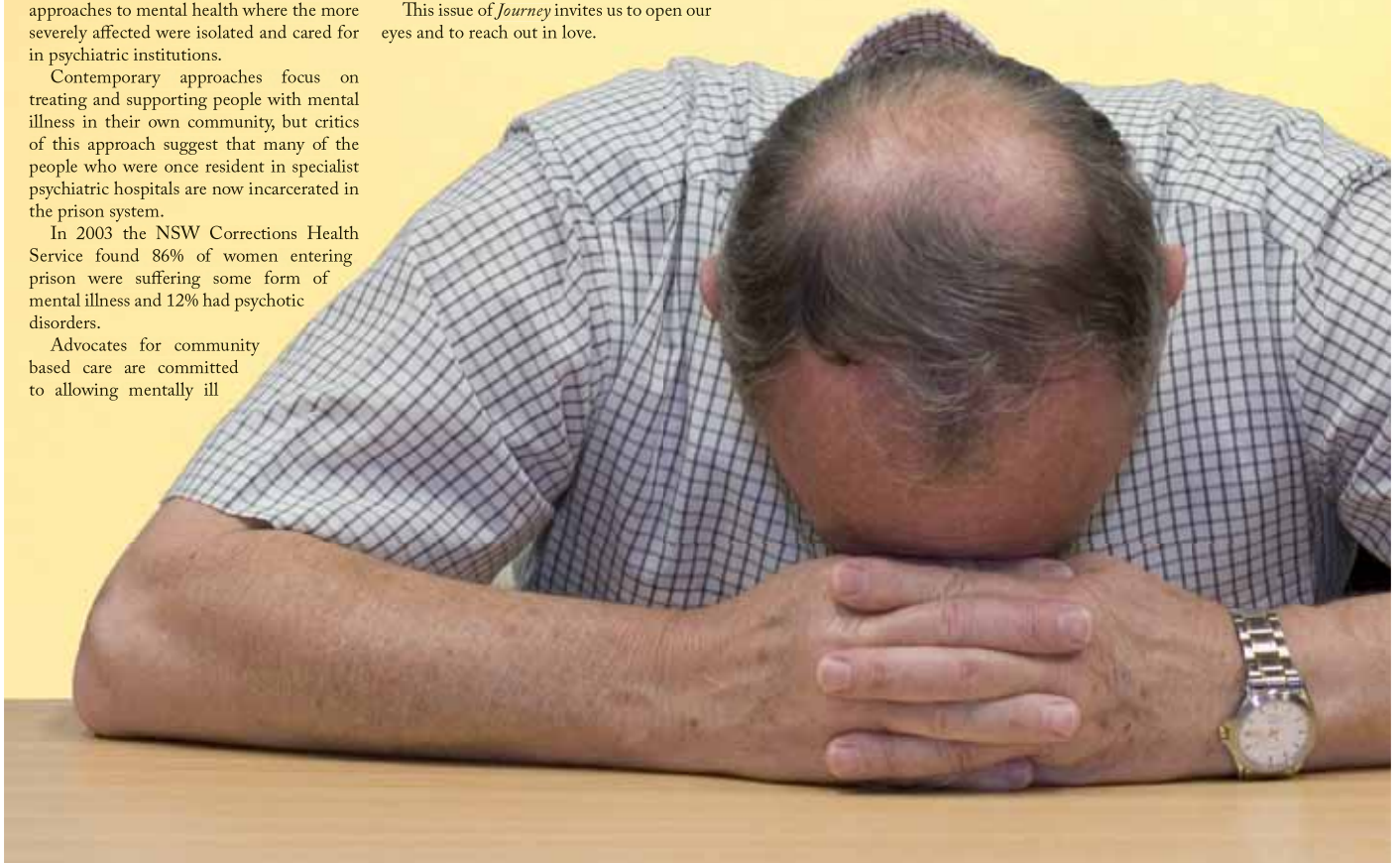
How should the church respond, and how can Christians exercise their legendary care and compassion when it comes to those with mental illness?

Will we ever get to the point where, without embarrassment, we can ask, "How are you managing your dementia?"

This issue of *Journey* invites us to open our eyes and to reach out in love.

More on mental health

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It's that time again

INDICATIONS ARE that Australians will go to the polls sometime fairly soon to elect a new Federal Government.

This is a very serious matter that requires our careful thought and attention, not least because political parties, in the lead up to voting day, often roll out a host of policies and make all kinds of promises that pander to our self-interest rather than address the really hard issues that cry out for concentrated and concerted effort.

I have no interest in promoting one political party over another.

I am far more interested in appraising and evaluating the commitment of each of the parties to particular matters that I believe, in the light of scripture, are especially important.

In summary, these matters bear upon: the care and conservation of the environment, including clear strategies and goals in regard to global warming and climate change; a responsible and compassionate response to the poor and disadvantaged, especially indigenous Australians; developing a generous and hospitable culture that welcomes and supports those seeking a new life in this country, and treats refugees with respect and compassion; and offering leadership in the international arena in regard to the pursuit of peace, the provision of aid to impoverished nations and the eradication of poverty.

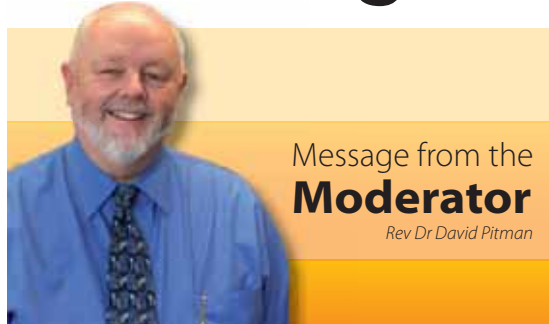
I could add some others, but these four will serve to illustrate the point I want to make.

Scripture declares that the world God has made is a gift entrusted to our care.

In the beginning, God saw that what the divine wisdom had brought into being was "good".

We, as the stewards of creation, are entrusted with the responsibility to ensure that it remains so.

Faithfulness to God expressed through justice for the poor, the social outcasts, the widows and orphans, and the refugees was



Message from the Moderator

Rev Dr David Pitman

the primary message of the Old Testament prophets.

Micah summed it up in his declaration to the people, "And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8)

In the preaching of the prophets, the spiritual health and wellbeing of the nation, and the acceptability of their worship of God, were directly related to their willingness to live in accordance with these fundamental principles.

The significance of all this in the biblical witness is given even greater emphasis when Jesus adopts a prophetic manifesto from the very beginning of his ministry, as he declares in the synagogue at Nazareth, "The spirit of the Lord is

"The best way to prepare ourselves for a federal election is to set aside our personal interest."

upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free." (Luke 4:18)

I believe that the best way to prepare ourselves for a federal election is to set aside our personal interest and take time to gather

and reflect on information relating to these key issues.

In that regard this issue of *Journey* is particularly relevant and helpful.

I want to commend Bruce Mullan, Editor of *Journey*, and his staff, for their initiative in gathering the responses from the various political parties that are featured in this issue.

This enables ready access to the policy statements provided and the opportunity to assess those policies in the light of what the scripture teaches us.

In addition, we can access the resources provided by the National Assembly of the Uniting Church to help us engage meaningfully and responsibly as disciples of Jesus with the issues that really matter.

It seems that the election could be announced at any time. We may already know that date by the time this issue of *Journey* reaches our congregations.

I urge you to take the issues seriously and also to take seriously those candidates who are willing to commit to responsible government that transcends party politics, personal self-advancement and demonstrates compassion and respect for all the people of Australia.

Beyond the election we have the further responsibility of holding our elected representatives accountable for the values and objectives they have outlined for us.

From the Editor

Here is a question for you.

How many families in your church include a loved one who is experiencing mental health problems?

As you'll read in this issue of *Journey*, people don't talk much about mental health issues, it's just too difficult.

If your congregation is typical of the Australian population, the answer to the question is, one in five households will experience living with someone's mental health problems over their lifetime.

That could include bipolar disorders, schizophrenia, disabling chronic depression, obsessive compulsive disorders, various anxiety disorders and a whole host of other issues.

Even in the church, which has a mandate to care for others and bear one another's burdens, there is often stigma and discrimination against persons with mental illness.

This is both a ministry issue and a social justice issue.

All people, both those with mental health problems and those who have not yet experienced that pain, are created in the image of God and are deserving of being treated with dignity, respect and love.

"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35)

Look at the people seated around you in church this Sunday.

One in five is probably hurting.

And they're definitely afraid to tell you.

Journey has received more letters to the editor about Bishop John Shelby Spong than about any other topic in the past twelve months.

It makes us stop and wonder what it is about this man and what he writes that causes such high levels of anxiety and concern among church members.

What are we afraid of?

The *Journey* staff had the opportunity to meet Bishop Spong just a few weeks ago for a brief photo shoot.

He was as polite and gracious as anyone we have met and worked with, and no, he didn't have horns or carry a pitch fork.

And no, we don't believe everything Bishop Spong writes or says.

Nor do we publish it.

Nor are we frightened by it.

Bruce Mullan

Sign of the Times



THIS MESSAGE on a local school noticeboard is a great reminder of the fantastic ministry done by volunteer Religious Education teachers in our State School system. One elderly RE volunteer has obviously made a difference in this school. Email your *Signs of the Times* church signs to journey@ucaqld.com.au.

JOURNEY

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Bruce Mullan
Associate editor / advertising Designer

Mardi Lumsden
Osker Lau

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Communications Services Unit
Uniting Church in Australia Queensland Synod
60 Bayliss Street Auchenflower QLD GPO Box 674 Brisbane QLD 4001
Ph: 07 3377 9910 Email: journey@ucaqld.com.au
Fax: 07 3377 9796 Web: www.journeyonline.com.au

New Synod website is a gateway to church and faith

COMMUNICATION Services Unit Manager Mr Bruce Mullan claims the new Queensland Synod website is as good as any denominational website in the world.

"As well as being a gateway to the Uniting Church in Queensland, the site has an emphasis on being a place where people can find faith information," Mr Mullan said.

"There is a strong focus on developing a web presence that presents the church as more than just an administrative structure."

The new Synod website includes even more information for those seeking to make contact with or visit congregations for worship.

An online directory of Queensland Uniting Church congregations is searchable by name, suburb/town or postcode.

Website visitors can type in their postcode and a list of the congregations serving their area will be provided with detailed information about worship times, contact details and location – including photographs and maps.

Website developer Mr Osker Lau said the site is built on the Microsoft .NET technology which provides the ability to quickly build, deploy, manage, and use connected, security-enhanced web services.

Mr Mullan said, having



The new Synod website www.ucaql.com.au is a gateway to the Uniting Church in Queensland

finished the initial site Mr Lau will now begin the second stage of development which will have the ability to include the websites of various Synod services and activities which are currently using other providers and platforms.

In the third stage, it will provide a place where each congregation could choose to place its own individual web presence.

"This will ensure the web presence of the Uniting Church in Queensland is information-rich

and easily navigated through a portal that congregation members, church leaders and the general public can use as a single, unified entry point."

The Synod website can be found at www.ucaql.com.au

Indigenous church growing

"I'M COMING down to church soon", said one local man, after meeting Indigenous Pastor Rodney Minniecon on one of his walks around Zillmere.

The Brisbane Congress Congregation at Zillmere is one church experiencing dynamic growth after Mr Minniecon took up the call to evangelise and pastorally support the fellowship.

"Five months ago there were only four people here... a lot of people are now coming to worship once a month to see what's going on here," Mr Minniecon said.

"Aboriginal and Islander people are coming from all over, word of mouth is bringing people here; it's an exciting time."

"We have a stable fellowship group of about 40 now and people are giving to support the fellowship."

"God is blessing us in this place."

Newcomers are different and not included

By Bruce Mullan

SURPRISING RESEARCH from the National Church Life Survey (NCLS) shows that people joining Queensland Uniting Church congregations are different from the people already attending.

Newcomers in 2006 were twice as likely to be remarried, separated or divorced and four times more likely to be living in a defacto relationship than long-term Uniting Church members.

They are also likely to be younger than the existing church members with more people joining a congregation for the first time in their 40s than at any other age.

The research differentiates between long-term members and newcomers who were not attending any church five years ago, switchers who have joined from another denomination and transfers who move between Uniting Church congregations.

Newcomers and transfers were twice as likely, and switchers three times as likely, to be born outside Australia and in a non English-speaking country than long term members.

The highest percentage of movement into Queensland Uniting Church congregations was from switchers between 40 and 49 years of age.

Minister with Chapel Hill Uniting Church congregation Rev David Wilshire said many of those who have joined his church were connected as a result of doing the Alpha course or through contact with a play group at the church.

"People have come into the Church for a variety of reasons: a change in their circumstances or their domicile, parents of young children looking for Christian instruction or guidance for their children, or just shopping around."

Despite a steady movement of people into the Uniting Church, "inclusion" (the process of intentionally seeking out new people or people on the margins and including them in the life of the church) scored lowest of all the nine core qualities valued by long-term Uniting Church members.

Only one quarter of long-term Uniting Church members are part of a formal welcoming system in their local congregation and many congregations have no formal system for welcoming and integrating new people.

Minister with Pine Mountain Uniting Church Congregation Rev Bob Miles said a system for incorporating new people was essential.

"You have to be intentional about welcoming and integrating people – it rarely happens in isolation," Mr Miles said.

"The people who come are looking for genuine spirituality and a loving environment."

The NCLS research defined inclusion as being "truly welcoming to all people regardless of their background, and if someone begins to drift away there will always be some who notice and reach out a hand in friendship".



Pine Mountain Uniting Church Minister Rev Bob Miles.
Photo by Bruce Mullan

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Sound recordist Jason Bray and film maker Russell Brown in Zambia. Photo courtesy of Jason Bray

Film shows tears and joy in Zambia

By Mardi Lumsden

LAST YEAR West Australian film maker Russell Brown packed up his camera and travelled to Zambia to visit Uniting Church aid worker Fiona Dixon-Thompson at the Mwandi Orphans and Vulnerable Children's Project.

Along for the ride was sound recordist and Centenary Uniting Church youth worker Jason Bray.

The result was the documentary *Seven Days*, a brief look at a week in the life of Ms Dixon-Thompson whose primary role is to care for the numerous orphans (mostly AIDS orphans) in the community.

"At first everything seemed good. The children were happy and smiling and we didn't think people were that sad or their lives that broken," he said.

"One morning we both had to go to school and help kids write down sponsorship details. One of the questions was 'is your mum or dad dead?'"

"I sat down with a child. We went through the questions and when we got to that question, it

stopped us in our tracks. It was the first point where we realised that everything was not OK.

"It ended up being the opening scene. That reality hit home."

Ms Dixon-Thompson lives that reality and Mr Bray said it was hard for her to have long lasting relationships with local people because of the death rates.

"She has friends, but many of those people die of AIDS," said Mr Bray.

"We were really impressed with Fiona. She has a real stamina and drive that enables her to push past the complete poverty she lives in and simple things like loneliness and missing her family growing up back here in Australia."

Later this year Mr Bray is taking a group from Centenary Uniting to experience Fiona's world for themselves and he hopes they recognise the abnormally affluent lives they live in Australia.

"I want them to be well and truly aware of the reality that a large percentage of the world lives in. We do not live the normal lifestyle.

"I want them to wrestle with what that means and what they can do about it.

"I am a firm believer that the answer to the developing world's problems lies in the hands of the developing world.

"The answer lies in empowering people in the developing world to go forward.

"Not so much in charity but in solidarity.

"That is what Fiona is doing. She does a lot of hands on stuff but she works closely with the Zambians.

"She would always take a back seat and allow the Zambians to take the lead."

Seven Days will be screened on 4 and 6 November in Brisbane and will include a question and answer session with director Russell Brown.

For more information visit www.uim.uca.org.au. To order *Seven Days* online visit www.astounded.tv/store or www.orders.koorong.com

Lawyers seek peaceful solutions

By Bruce Mullan

A GROUP of Christian lawyers have founded PeaceWise, a new national not-for-profit organisation aimed at promoting peace and reconciliation in relationships through biblical principles.

The group will teach and educate people on how to deal with conflict and help others through conflict situations, and help churches and other Christian organisations develop cultures of peace that foster healthy responses to conflict.

Secretary of PeaceWise and Gold Coast lawyer Mr Mitchell Clark said he strongly believes resolving conflict through biblical principles is of greater value than adjudication of a dispute by a Court.

"In my experience as a lawyer, secular mediation can provide useful and practical outcomes, yet may not reach the core, personal issues," Mr Clark said.

"The deficiencies in the civil law system were highlighted through my professional involvement in a couple of very serious legal cases concerning sexual abuse involving clergy.

"Those legal cases tested my own faith, at the same time as they gave me a much clearer understanding of the extreme levels of trauma associated with that form of abuse."

A member of Newlife Uniting Church Robina, Mr Clark

said the Australia-wide and denominational-inclusive emphasis of PeaceWise is important to him.

"I was brought up in the Catholic faith and I am now, with my family, a member of the Uniting Church.

"For me there is significant strength in Christians joining together across denominations in the important area of conflict resolution."

PeaceWise will be officially launched by The Honourable Paul de Jersey AC, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Queensland at Banco Court, Level 2 Supreme Court, Brisbane on 25 October from 5.30pm - 7.00pm.

For more information contact Mitchell Clark on 07 5494 9096 or visit the website www.peacewise.org.au



Mitchell Clark

Church goes green

SHERWOOD UNITING Church Minister Rev Heather Griffin has announced that her congregation is going green.

"We strongly desire a green spiritual life for our church, one where caring for the environment is integral to our spirituality and an expression of our love for God and the Creation," Ms Griffin said.

"Many individuals in our church

are environmentally conscious but we want our whole church to be 'green'."

Sherwood Uniting Church is voluntarily undergoing a green audit, prompted by a proposal at the May meeting of the Queensland Synod which addressed climate change issues.

The proposal encouraged all congregations and church offices to audit their energy usage.

Three QUT engineering management students Lei Liu, Zhe Zhang and Chien-Ming Chen are undertaking the audit as part of their studies.

Ms Griffin said the students are examining energy usage (gas and electricity) and water consumption of the Church building, the Church Hall and the minister's residence.

"Sherwood Uniting Church facilities, both the hall and rooms in the church, are used by church groups and community groups ranging from playgroups to youth groups to senior citizens, indoor bowls, dancing and cultural groups.

"Members of Sherwood Uniting Church are keen to receive the report and are committed to moving forward by implementing the recommendations made and providing quality facilities for the community."



QUT engineering management students Lei Liu, and Chien-Ming examine energy consumption with Rev Heather Griffin at Sherwood Uniting Church



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Film makers Dee Martin, Mandy Lake, Poni Rapana, and Chris Ogdon. Photo by Adam Ware

Walking the talk

By Mardi Lumsden

A GROUP of teenagers from the Beenleigh area launched a ground-breaking documentary about bullying in September.

An initiative of the Smart Connections Program at Beenleigh Adult and Youth Service (BAYS), a Wesley Mission activity, the film *Walk in My Shoes* is a collaborative and multi media effort from about 25 young people who attend the Youth Space.

These young people have overcome huge personal challenges to be a part of this project, with many of them having experienced the debilitating effects of bullying.

Smart Connections coordinator Fiona Ware is immensely proud of the young people's achievement and she is not the only one. The film has even sparked interest from Dr Ken Rigby, an expert on studies into bullying.

Ms Ware has worked on the project from the start and said she noticed a lot of changes in the young people as a result.

"I have noticed a huge difference

individually and a big difference with them being together as a team.

"When they first came they had difficulty being with other young people...but now they have become a really tight, productive team because they have been working on something that they really like and that they are proud of."

14-year-old Dee Martin worked on the documentary and said it was a great experience that made learning fun.

She said the team created animations, wrote and recorded music, and interviewed principals, teachers and parents for the film.

"We also interviewed people who were bullied when they were younger and now they are actually best friends with them."

Ms Martin said working on the film taught her a lot about bullying and how to deal with it.

"A lot of us here have learnt to make it into a joke. You shouldn't have to take it and you should turn to someone and not keep it as a secret. You shouldn't have to keep it within yourself by being depressed.

"We are all human... even the bullies have a reason to bully."

Mandy Lake of Flickchicks was hired as a consultant to guide the young people through the art of film making.

Ms Lake said the experience was "one of the most rewarding, life-changing and inspirational projects" she has worked on.

"I learnt humility, the power of human spirit, and a lot about strength in people," said Ms Lake.

"I think a lot of these people would be completely lost in mainstream schooling.

"If it wasn't for projects and programs like these, they would not be able to fly. They'd be lost in the system."

Ms Lake was also amazed at the amount of talent she had stumbled upon when asked to do the job.

"I couldn't believe what a goldmine of talent it was. With Dee, I didn't even know she could sing. She just emerged and she'd written this song and I was listening to it being played back and I had tears streaming down my face."

The young film makers have now completed a TAFE module to validate their learning experience and plan to take the film in to schools in the hope of overcoming bullying.

Church adopts a new Lent Event

By Bruce Mullan

A DECISION of the Council of Synod will see the annual Lent Appeal fundraising venture expanded to provide a range of resources including educational and community building resources for children, youth and adults.

In the Uniting Church, Lent has traditionally been marked by prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

While some churches still observe a rigid schedule of fasting on certain days during Lent the Uniting Church tradition has focused more on charitable deeds, especially helping those in physical need with food and clothing.

The new Lent Event program will build around the appeal focus with worship resources, educational programs, comprehensive promotional materials including a DVD presentation for use in worship, and a detailed project fact sheet for each supported project.

Lent Event coordinator Sarah White said Lent Event invites individuals and communities to forgo something of their choice during the 40 day Lenten period as a way to deepen personal discipleship.

"Lent Event participants think about the various 'things' that make up their lives, and stop to consider what is really needed for a meaningful life and what they could give up," Ms White said.

"Throughout Lent, they are reminded of the difference between the comfort of our lives and the poverty of the lives of others."

Synod Justice and International Mission Advocate Andrew Johnson said funds raised by the Lent Event appeal will still go to providing sustainable support for the poorest of the poor, and will be directed through the Uniting Church's overseas aid and development arm, UCOA.

"All projects are with our partner churches in Asia, the Pacific and Africa," he said.

"They include support of water supply for the Sudan and Papua New Guinea, education and food

for children in South India and Zambia, and micro-enterprise in Timor.

"Each project can make a real and life changing impact in the lives of people and is part of the Uniting Church's commitment to international mission."

From 2008 onwards gifts to the Lent Event appeal will be fully tax deductible and can be made either through the local congregations or by cheque or credit card through the mail, or online.

Ms White also believes that the Lent Event can serve as an evangelistic tool as it can involve the wider community.

"One participant said 'it provided an opportunity to share my faith in a surprising way. I didn't expect that at all'.

"This was a common experience and is a real bonus to the Lent Event experience."



Lent Event Coordinator Sarah White will be on the phone to Queensland congregations between now and Lent 2008. Photo by Erica Harrison

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Farming for the will to survive

By Mardi Lumsden

ON AVERAGE, one male farmer commits suicide every four days in Australia.

It is a statistic that has been reported everywhere from Women's Weekly to BBC news.

Originally these statistics were used in a rural health campaign by Beyondblue, the national depression initiative.

The figures come from a study a decade old but Beyondblue said there is no evidence the rate would have gone down, especially with the drought continuing and working the land getting more difficult.

There are no accurate up-to-date figures on suicide rates in rural areas, and very little study into mental health in rural and remote areas, but experts say we cannot blame the drought as the sole reason for depression and suicide in rural communities.

It is a combination of isolation, family expectation, lack of mental health services, lack of willingness

to ask for help, highly visible life in small towns, and much more.

A 2006 paper called 'Understanding suicide in Australian farmers' published in *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology* said: "Individual personality, gender and community attitudes that limit a person's ability to acknowledge or express mental health problems and seek help for these may be significant risk factors for suicide in farmers."

Rev Peter Hall of the Maranoa Uniting Church Parish in Roma knows how hard it is to connect with people in rural areas and the church out there has a goal to build that connection.

"Our goal is to build meaningful relationships with people on the land so that they feel like they can talk to us if they need to.

"There is a big shame factor in depression. Men suffering from depression on the land probably won't leave their properties.

"They won't communicate, sometimes not even to their wives.

"It's not easy... but we hope to build relationships across the land. That is our long term goal."

In August, Mr Hall organised for South African farmer and author Angus Buchan to visit Roma, Charleville and Toowoomba to talk about his faith, his struggle with depression, and farming.

Mr Buchan's book *Faith Like Potatoes* tells of his struggles and how he came to faith and he was keen to share what he has learnt with rural communities.

Mr Hall said Mr Buchan didn't want to go to the cities. "He wanted to go where the guys were hurting."

The visit has also inspired clergy to work together in a new project called Heal the Land.

"We see the problem and we see Jesus Christ as the answer. Angus went through what these guys are going through and found Jesus."

Frontier Services patrol padre Rev John Case and his team recognise the lack of entertainment in rural areas and, with the help

of a UC Foundation grant, have organised morale lifting concerts at local properties.

Concerts will be held on 13 October at Stirling Downs (near Tambo), with more concerts in November at Toompine and December at Listowel Downs.

The concert series will feature Viva la Musica performing classical music and jazz.

"We have had a very positive response. We don't get a lot of classical music out here," said Mr Case.

Churches don't need to plan big events to make a difference in rural communities though, and with vast distances and few people to cover them, it is perhaps the small things that count.

On a grass roots level churches are in a position to at least offer care, direction to services and just a plain old cuppa.

For more information on the concerts contact John Case on bwf.fs@bigpond.com or phone 07 4654 2900



Depression: is it a problem that the church can live with?

By Bruce Mullan

EVEN THOUGH research suggests that up to 20% of Australians will be diagnosed with depression at some stage in their lives, in church circles depression is still largely ignored.

Editor of *Footprints Magazine* Janet Camilleri, who will be talking about depression and Christians at a special World Mental Health Day Gathering at Bayside Uniting Church (See *Journey* 'What's On' page 16), said depression is a taboo subject for Christians.

"I have learnt through my own experiences with this illness, that there are some issues which are particularly difficult for Christians," Ms Camilleri said.

"We are often taught that we should be 'living victoriously' (which we often do), but somehow this has been distorted to 'once you are a Christian your life will be

perfect; if not, then you must be doing something wrong'.

"To admit to depression can be a huge hurdle for a believer."

Bayside Uniting Church Woman's Ministry Coordinator Sherryl-Lee Secomb said anyone can experience depression regardless of their faith life and her church has seen this.

"The problem is we are often at a loss as to how to really help.

"There are plenty of spiritual platitudes but our desire to help is often overwhelmed by our lack of knowledge."

Minister with the South East Uniting Community Rev Yvonne McRostie said people with mental health issues really do feel alone.

"We have a motto in the church 'You are not alone' - we proudly used this slogan in a recent Christmas campaign.

"We say this all the time, but do we give others the opportunity to

know they are not alone through our faith in Jesus which calls us to walk alongside people and be moved with compassion and share in their pain?"

Ms McRostie said the experience of many people dealing with mental illness was that it was in the church they felt the loneliest.

"There seems to be a clear incongruence between who we say we are and who we really are."

The question of whether the church is a safe place for people with mental health problems became apparent when a number of ministers *Journey* spoke with about their experiences asked that their names not be published.

One minister pointed out that while it was acceptable for someone to be able to say they need eg. insulin or heart medication for their body to function healthily, there was a stigma attached to mental illness.

"It really isn't safe for those in

leadership in the church to say they need medication for their nervous system to function normally.

"It is as if somehow it makes you a potential 'loose cannon'.

"Many still think that those with depression, for example, just need to pick themselves up and keep going - it's just a matter of will, but for many who battle with depression, and a battle it is some days, it really isn't as simple as just changing thinking patterns."

The minister felt some members of the congregation may not take the condition seriously and might think they were over-reacting.

"There are some in the church too who think that Christians just shouldn't get depression - and, hey, that would be great but it just isn't a reality for so many.

"So I work quietly supporting others and allow others to quietly support me," the minister said.

"Perhaps in time with some more runs on the board it won't be so scary to openly say, 'I live with depression', because frankly, I think we together need to do a lot of work before it is safe for people to be open in the church about their mental illness."

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Deliver us from the Evil One!

By Scott Stephens

ANYONE WANTING to poke fun at the naïveté of the first-century worldview – and by implication the biblical texts shaped by it – will sooner or later bring up the ‘primitive’ belief that those suffering from a mental affliction are actually beset by demons.

Unlike our own world, which is governed by rationality, hard science and medicine, the first-century world appears hopelessly dominated by magic, myths and demons.

So, whereas the ancients used exorcism to deal with mental illness, we use medication, precise treatment programs and various forms of supported accommodation.

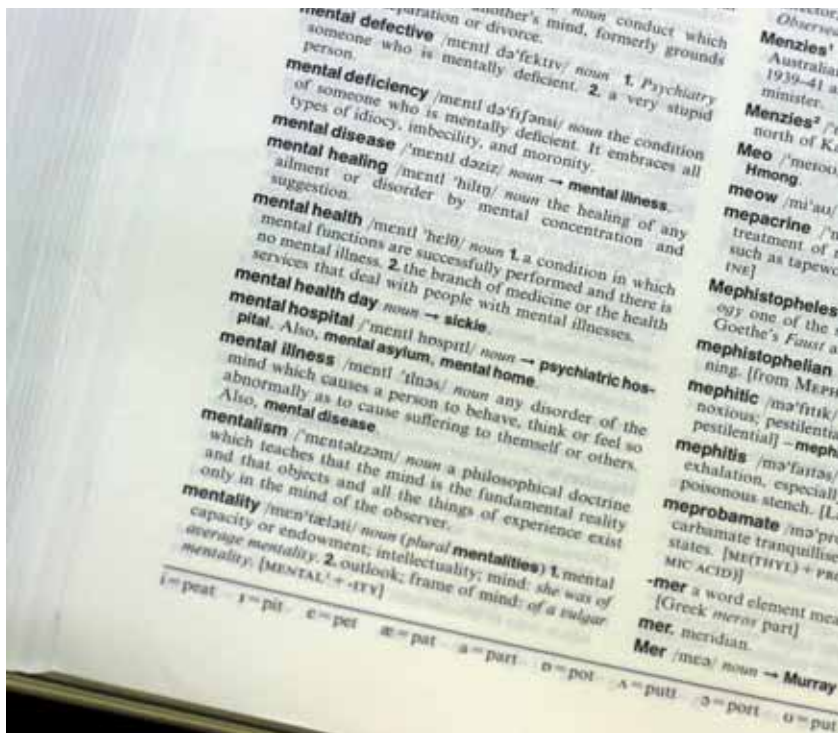
There is a clear, if implicit, judgement that drives these comparisons: the benevolence of modern science and the health-care system, on the one hand, versus the cruel, more ancient practice of ostracising the sick from civic life, on the other.

But is the difference quite so clear-cut? As soon as it's pressed, this double reduction – modern benevolence versus primitive cruelty – collapses.

To begin with, earliest Christianity, and indeed Jesus himself, did not simply accept the superstitions of its cultural surroundings.

Instead, it consistently exhibited a remarkable capacity for theological and moral imagination; this is nowhere better demonstrated than in the radical way it presents and confronts the notion of ‘the demonic’.

Far from simply accepting the existence of malevolent spirits as an easy explanation for a variety



of ailments, the biblical texts speak about demonic influences as a way of offering a critique of the prevailing cultural-political climate.

For instance, in Mark's Gospel the announcement of the redefined kingdom of God at the beginning of Jesus' public activity is punctuated by the presence of “a man with an unclean spirit” in the synagogue.

It is as if the Jewish religious system itself, governed by the demands of holiness and ritual exclusions, is possessed by something antagonistic to the

presence of the kingdom of God.

Similarly, it is hard not to pick up the political overtones in Mark's episode concerning the Gerasene demoniac: he is possessed by a demonic-collective called “Legion,” that conspicuous sign of Roman power.

Toward the end of Luke's Gospel, the nocturnal arrest of Jesus is depicted as an activity of “the power of darkness.”

What is crucial to notice is the way the demonic influence is mediated through political and religious structures, as the

means by which individuals are subjugated, humiliated, excluded, dehumanised.

Thus, the Christian attitude toward demonic powers was not a simple acceptance of their existence and influence on the world; much less a kind of primitive device for explaining what now is the domain of medicine.

Instead, it represented a vital critique of those political, religious and even bureaucratic systems that subjugate humanity, and thus manifest a terrifying yet anonymous form of Evil.

But just as the New Testament texts are neither naïve nor homogenous in the way they speak of demons; our own world is hardly free from ‘demonic’ influences.

What is needed is the theological clarity and moral courage to be able to identify these influences as such.

One need look no further, for instance, than the diabolical effects that political neglect and bureaucratic indifference continue to have on the quality of mental health care.

The dehumanising forces endemic within mental health care stretch from the woeful levels of funding – which does little else than maintain an already tenuous status quo – to the high rate of staff turnover due to burnout and work-related stress.

But Stanley Hauerwas has gone even further, suggesting that the care of the mentally handicapped exposes the deep contradiction at the heart of liberal humanism:

“No group exposes the pretensions of the humanism that shapes the practices of modernity more thoroughly than the mentally handicapped.

“Our humanism entails we care for them once they are among us – once we are stuck with them – but the same humanism cannot help but think that, all things considered, it would be better if they did not exist.”

So how are we to oppose these powers today?

In his startling work of theological journalism, *Hostage to the Devil*, Malachi Martin insists that the exorcist places him/herself between the victim and the demon, becoming an advocate for the one who has no capacity to resist.

This is precisely the kind of faithful advocacy demanded from Christians – to oppose Evil even in its most innocuous forms and thus enact our common prayer, “Deliver us from the Evil One!”

Wesley Mission says deal with specifics

By Bruce Mullan

THE SUPERINTENDENT of Wesley Mission in Sydney Rev Keith Garner said that tackling the stigma of mental illness starts with talking about specific mental conditions.

Following an extensive study into mental health involving more than 600 interviews, the Uniting Church's Sydney-based Wesley Mission called for an end to discrimination in the workplace, more flexible employment opportunities and increased funding for community based care as part of a reform plan to address the major issues impacting people with mental illness.

The results from the six month research project are contained in the report, *Living with Mental*

Illness: Attitudes, Experiences and Challenges.

The Wesley Report found the prevalence and impact of mental illness in the community was much higher than expected with more than eight in ten Australians (85 per cent) having either experienced mental illness or been exposed to it through family or friends.

It also found that 36 per cent of respondents reported having a diagnosed or undiagnosed mental illness – much higher than the often quoted figure of 20 per cent.

“Mental illness remains a taboo subject for many people although it touches the lives of most Australians,” said Mr Garner.

The reported level of trust in someone in a position of high responsibility was lower for illnesses such as schizophrenia (18

per cent) and bipolar (25 per cent) compared to illnesses that have received more public exposure such as depression, reflecting the lower public awareness of both these illnesses.

Mr Garner told ABC Radio news that people have to stop talking about the condition as “just mental illness”.

“Only when we start talking about the specifics can anybody start to deal with them and actually say that it's possible in all these cases not only to handle it, but actually to receive the kind of support and help that will enable people back into normality of life.”

The report can be downloaded from www.wesleymission.org.au/News/Research/MentalHealth/default.asp

Mental health: where to go

Lifeline: 24 hour counselling and referral service. 13 11 14
www.lifelineaustralia.org.au

Just Ask: Rural mental health information. 1300 13 11 14

Mental Illness Fellowship: Mental health information and referral
1800 985 944 www.schizophrenia.org.au

Men's Line Australia: 24 hour counselling service for men.
1300 78 99 78 www.menslineaustralia.org.au

Kid's Helpline: Counselling service for people under 18 years of age.
1800 55 1800 www.kidshelp.com.au

SANE Helpline: Mental illness information, support and referral.
1800 18 SANE (7263) www.sane.org

Beyondblue: The National Depression Initiative
www.beyondblue.org.au

Arafmi: Support for families, carers and friends of people with mental health issues. www.arafmiaustralia.asn.au

Grow: Community working towards mental health through mutual help and a 12 step program of recovery. www.grow.net.au

Group 61: Multi-denominational response to mental health issues on Brisbane's Northside. Contact John on ph 3359 4089 or visit www.sixtyone.com.au

ELECTION 2007

Called to political engagement

ACCORDING TO Queensland Synod Justice and International Mission Advocate Andrew Johnson, Jesus was not a mute healer, nor was he just a well meaning comforter.

"Jesus challenged the powerful leaders of his society; both religious and Roman," said Mr Johnson.

"The prophets of the Old Testament used every communication technique they could find to confront the societies they lived in and their message of justice rings in our ears."

Mr Johnson said that Christians are called to engage with the world and, when they encounter the pain of people, can be disturbed and provoked to see those things in our world which are not right.

"The gospel makes it clear we are called to raise our voices as well, not just as a comfort to the poor but as a challenge to the powerful."

"In 1977 our Uniting Church identified the issues which continue to challenge us as a society today: poverty, the environment, racism, employment, education, health care and free speech."

The first words of a new church to the nation were contained in the *Statement to the Nation* which began: "In the Uniting Church our response to the Christian gospel will continue to involve us in social and national affairs."

National Director of UnitingJustice Australia Rev Elenic Poulos said, as faithful Christians, we cannot live our lives hiding in the comfort of our homes.

"Our call leads us to an engagement with the world which is political," she said in the National Uniting Church Assembly 2007 Election publication, *Growing a Nation of Hope*.

Mr Johnson said our engagement with the powers of our day transcends party politics, and it transcends the borders of our countries.

"We proclaim the reconciliation and renewal of the whole creation."

"When we raise our voices in the upcoming election, will we be with one side of politics or will we be with Jesus, challenging the powerful and standing up for the powerless?"

"Jesus' road is a hard road which leads to the cross, but it's a road we are called to follow."

The full set of *Growing a Nation of Hope* resources can be found at <http://assembly.uca.org.au/election2007>

Do your research

THE TELL-TALE signs of an upcoming election are mounting: politics and politicians increasingly dominate the news, commentators grow more vocal, opinion polls are rolled out at a rapid rate, and the pressing issues of the day shape up into party policies that are mouthed in media sound bites.

As voters begin to ponder those issues, and to face the task of considering what they hold important and why, they also begin the process of deciding who to vote for.

Each Christian citizen has a responsibility to cast an informed vote that reflects both their concerns as a citizen and their theology as a Christian in order to ensure personal integrity and the health of our society.

The National Assembly has produced a set of election resources around the theme of "growing a nation of hope" to help members of the Uniting Church think through the issues and political rhetoric from a Christian perspective.

These resources are designed to encourage the exploration of the implications of the gospel in the consideration of policies and the process of coming to an individual decision.

The cornerstone of these resources is the *Growing a Nation of Hope*: your faith, your vote, your voice booklet, which will explore some of the major policy areas and current issues from a Christian perspective.

Areas covered include: climate change, counter-terrorism and human rights, indigenous health, industrial relations, aid and development, issues of reconciliation and multiculturalism and more.

It will also include an election toolkit with useful links and suggestions for planning activities and getting involved.

A copy of the booklet, together with a set of Hot Issues Briefs has been mailed to all congregations along with information about how to place further orders. All material is free of charge.

The materials are also available from the Uniting Church Assembly website <http://assembly.uca.org.au/election2007> together with a set of "issues papers".

Uniting Church members are invited to draw on these resources to assist in their engagement with the political life of the nation.

Voting in a federal election is one important way in which Christians can contribute to shaping the future of our country — a country that is well positioned to stand as a bearer of hope in the world: building strong communities and a healthy society where people are valued, respected, encouraged, cared for and supported; thinking creatively about solutions to violent conflict, environmental degradation, prejudice and social and economic inequities; and reaching out into the world in partnership to work for a peaceful and just world for the generations to come.

For more information about election resources contact Synod Justice and International Mission Advocate Mr Andrew Johnson on 07 3377 9911 or andrew.johnson@ucaqld.com.au

Please pray for the elections

MANY CHRISTIANS complain about their politicians, but how many take the time to pray for them?

Paul suggests strongly that Christians should be praying, among other things, for our political leaders.

"First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity." (1 Timothy 2:1-2)

As the Federal election looms, politicians of all persuasions will hit the campaign trail at an alarming pace and be faced with the competing demands of numerous pressure groups for a slice of the pre-election pork-barrels.

Synod Justice and International Mission advocate Andrew Johnson believes Christians should be more intentional about offering prayer for politicians because of their challenging role.

"In praying for our political leaders we are not trying to get them to do what we want, but rather we are praying that they might be cared for by God and like all of us, seek a bigger picture of our world than our own self-interest," Mr Johnson said.

As part of the conversation with Senate Candidates, *Journey* asked each of the candidates contacted, "How can Uniting Church people best pray for you?"

Here is what they said.

Politics is a difficult calling, especially for Christians in a secular age. But it is very important to have Christian politicians so please pray for more. *Senator Ron Boswell (The Nationals)*

I would ask that you pray for the health and well-being of all people, and all the other creatures with which we share our world. *Ms Larissa Waters (The Greens)*

When my mother was teaching me and my sisters about prayer she said, "God always listens — we need to listen for his answers together" — let's listen together. *Senator Claire Moore (Labor)*

Members of the Uniting Church can pray for the election of people with strong family values and a mature level of experience in making the tough decisions when they come. *Mr Jeff Buchanan (Family First)*

Pray for justice for the oppressed, hope for the desperate and a peaceful, fair and sustainable future for all Australians and for all the people of Earth. *Senator Andrew Bartlett (The Democrats)*



Election 2007

With an election due for October or November 2007 *Journey* contacted six Queensland Senate candidates from among the contenders and asked them to provide answers to policy questions. Each candidate was given the same questions and word limit, and their answers have not been edited. *Journey* asked questions on issues which the councils of the Uniting Church have been concerned and are less likely to receive a high profile in the election campaign. The order of candidates’ responses was drawn by lot. This material is presented as an aid to help Uniting Church members make an informed choice at this election. *Journey* strongly encourages people to also consult candidates’ and party websites and publicity material to gain an understanding of their broader policy platforms.

Authorised by Bruce Mullan 60 Bayliss Street Auchenflower 4066.

	 <div>National Ron Boswell</div>	 <div>Greens Larissa Waters</div>	 <div>Labor Claire Moore</div>	 <div>Family First Jeff Buchanan</div>	 <div>Democrats Andrew Bartlett</div>
How will you ensure fair and just treatment of refugees and asylum seekers?	The Coalition has a set of standards and a code of conduct to ensure that the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers will be with respect and dignity at all times. To ensure this is upheld these services are subject to external scrutiny and accountability. It is a priority that all refugee and asylum seeker applications are processed with due diligence and expediency.	Greens Senators will work to end mandatory detention and have asylum seekers claims assessed while they live in the community. We will also work to end offshore processing and temporary protection visas. We believe that refugees need to be treated with dignity in an open and accountable humanitarian visa process.	Labor believes when someone fleeing persecution arrives in Australia, that persecution must end. Under Labor asylum claims will be processed within 90 days, without political bias. Detention would be for the purpose of health, identity and security checks and would never apply to children. Labor would end the ‘Pacific Solution’.	Family First supports appropriate independent oversight of the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers. It is important that claims are processed as quickly as possible so that genuine refugees and asylum seekers can be settled in the community and begin the process of establishing a new life in Australia.	I have tabled a series of Bills to remove the inhumane and unjust aspects of the Migration Act which discriminate against and demonise asylum seekers. I will continue to support those locked up in detention centres here and overseas as long as government locks up innocents in our name.
How will you care for the environment in response to climate change?	In the Sydney APEC Declaration, the Prime Minister secured an historic commitment from the world’s major polluters to accept the need for goals to cut carbon emissions. We committed \$4.3 billion in 2007/2008 to tackle climate change via solar panel rebates, low emission coal technology, renewable energy, local community environment funding, environmental taxation concessions and carbon sink forests.	Australia must contribute fairly to an international effort to stop global temperatures from rising more than 2 degrees. Greens policy is based on the best science, which says that to stop dangerous climate change, emissions must fall to at least 30% below 1990 levels by 2020 and 80% by 2050.	Labor would act decisively on climate change, with policies including cutting Australia’s greenhouse pollution by 60 per cent of 2000 levels by 2050, driving a clean energy revolution and providing \$10,000 low-interest loans for Australian families to green their homes. As well, Labor would immediately ratify the Kyoto Protocol.	Family First supports expansion of renewable energy alternatives, carbon trading and technologies such as clean coal. Family First has committed to work with major business and industry groups to map out a time table to reduce emissions and keep the ensuing cost rises to consumers at reasonable levels.	Our whole society must come together to shift to a sustainable path – government, industry and all of us as individuals. I have made many changes personally and professionally to reduce my impacts – fewer flights, more public transport and adopting a vegan diet. I am also running a carbon-neutral election campaign.
What is the role of government in ensuring peaceful relationships in a multicultural and multi-faith society?	To provide the policies and services that build social cohesion. Current initiatives involve multicultural programs in partnership with businesses, governments, and community organisations. We are united by the rule of law that underpins this diversity and tolerance with our basic rights for freedom of speech, association, assembly, religion and movement.	The Greens believe in a fair, just and sustainable society, in which people from many different cultural and faith backgrounds are welcomed. The Greens believe that government has a role in creating legislation that reflects this with fairness and compassion.	In a diverse society such as Australia, the challenge for government is to harness diversity’s tremendous rewards while minimising resentment, alienation, mistrust and promoting understanding. Labor’s policies of support services to help migrants settle into the Australian community, and of steadfast opposition to any fostering of hatred and division, meet that challenge.	The role of government is to enforce Australian law and ensure that regardless of cultural or faith traditions that all people living in Australia abide by our laws and our constitution and maintain respect for each other’s traditions and beliefs within that lawful and constitutional framework.	Australians are drawn from all countries, all races and all creeds. Government must provide services that ensure all Australians, regardless of background, receive the same opportunities. All governments and political parties should celebrate and promote our diversity. Current trends to promote assimilation, rather than diversity and integration, should be opposed.
How will you work towards reconciliation with Aboriginal people?	The Coalition Government has a comprehensive Indigenous Reconciliation Action Plan that focuses on Indigenous services and projects that support communities, families, young people and children. We back indigenous enterprises that offer jobs and a future to indigenous people. Our efforts in the Northern Territory are aimed at protecting the most fundamental rights of children to a safe childhood.	Greens will take steps to recognise Aboriginal and Islander people’s prior occupation of this land, to acknowledge their dispossession and their remaining rights and obligations as custodians. We would work toward a treaty, the establishment of appropriate representative bodies and the inclusion of indigenous people in all levels of decision-making.	A Rudd Labor Government will make a formal apology to the stolen generations. Labor remains committed to land rights, to establishing a national representative voice and to reaching a lasting settlement with Indigenous Australians. We will aim to close the gap in health, education and employment within real timeframes... working “with” community rather than “on”.	Family First supports practical steps to achieve reconciliation and redressing the endemic disadvantage of indigenous Australians is a matter of immediate priority. This can be best done by rebuilding the role of family in indigenous communities and working with them to create partnerships with public and private sector leaders in key areas of service delivery.	I promoted the necessity for the needs and challenges facing Indigenous Australians to be given top priority, and for their views to be heard. I’m committed to advocating this priority in the future. I will keep working to have unfinished business like Stolen Wages and the Stolen Generations addressed.
What should Australia do to reduce global poverty?	Our government’s objective is to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable development in developing countries by promoting trade; supporting the drivers of growth by investing in infrastructure, building skilled workforces, and supporting private sector-led rural and business development; and addressing environmental challenges to growth eg climate change.	The Greens believe that Australia has a responsibility to contribute to eliminating global poverty. We want Australia’s aid budget increased to UN-recommended levels. Greens in the Senate will advocate for long term aid programs that target the poorest communities, and are directed toward enhancing their self-reliance, equity and sustainability.	Australia should be a leader in the fight to end global poverty. A Rudd Labor government will increase Australia’s aid to 0.5% of Gross National Income by 2015, and use the Millennium Development Goals as the measure to test the effectiveness of our aid program in collaboration with developing countries.	Family First wants to increase our foreign aid spending to 0.7% of gross national income and commit funds to special initiatives to give families in developing countries access to clean water, especially in Australia’s region, and implement fair trading terms to support foreign economic development.	In 2000 the global community committed to eradicate poverty. Australia has delivered only a half of its promise. We should cancel the debt of Third World countries who are being crippled by it; increase aid levels; provide micro-credit to kickstart enterprises; commit to fair trade and help upskill Developing populations.
How should government support Australian family life?	Apart from direct assistance to families in health, welfare, education and childcare, government has a responsibility in law making to promote and build safer communities for our families. It is vital that we continue to have strong stable management of our economy to ensure families have the best possible opportunities available to achieve their life ambitions.	The Greens support laws and policies which enable Australian families to lead balanced lives, in caring and friendly communities. We believe this can be advanced by paid parental leave, flexible working hours, affordable and high quality childcare and fairer industrial relations and welfare systems.	Our families are the heart of our communities but many are under pressure. Labor is committed to making sure all Australian families have first rate health care, education, community services and child-care. Restoring balance to our industrial relations system will help working families by, for example, ensuring reasonable working hours.	Family First will seek to ensure that families have access to proper services, reduce petrol taxes and income taxes to help families make ends meet. Family First has a strong track record on pushing government to uphold stronger positions on combating pornography, gambling, alcohol abuse, abortion and other anti-family issues currently out of control.	We need a national Housing Affordability strategy to help relieve the thirty percent of Australians who spend too much on housing, as well as those who have none. We must enact policies for decent, accessible childcare, universal healthcare and recognise the needs of families in the IR and welfare systems.
How will you ensure adequate management of water resources?	Work with the states to build economically responsible water infrastructure. Educate communities on reducing water consumption eg community water grants program. Invest in alternative water solutions and better environmental practices. The Murray Darling Basin \$10 billion investment will optimise economic, environmental and social outcomes for Australia.	The Greens believe that we need to plan for a drier and more uncertain climate. We need to use water more wisely in the cities, including designing for low-water use, capturing and re-using storm water. We also advocate more accurate planning, monitoring and allocation of water resources.	A Rudd Labor Government will play a leadership role ensuring all Australians have a sustainable water supply. Labor will invest in water infrastructure; fix leaky pipes; set a national target of recycling 30% of wastewater by 2015; and offer low interest loans of \$10,000 to help families get rainwater tanks.	Family First in Queensland supports the recent \$10 Billion Murray Darling initiative and wants a thorough investigation of the Bradfield Scheme – an inland water pipe project that would move water from northern Queensland through the inland coast to the South East corner – rebuilding important rural and regional communities along the way.	A National Water Strategy can ensure our water security by properly pricing water; building and equipping our houses better and harvesting storm water. We must make our farms more water efficient and support full water recycling wherever it is economically viable. Environmentally, socially and economically destructive dams solve nothing.
What do you understand to be the future for rural communities in Australia?	Our aim is to achieve resilient individuals, businesses and communities with the resources, skills, wealth and opportunities to play a pivotal role in building Australia’s future. This aim is built around three key areas for change: community empowerment, economic and business development including e-commerce and equity of services.	Rural communities are faced with social, economic and climate change challenges. The Greens see a future in which profitable and sustainable agriculture supports vibrant rural communities. We need to plan for and address the impacts of climate change, support sustainable farming systems and new green industries.	Labor knows that rural communities have a critical role in the stewardship of our land and that many of those communities need specific programs to promote economic growth. A Rudd Labor Government will make sure employment opportunities, new technologies and services like health and education are available to rural communities.	Currently this future is bleak in a number of regions due to lack of incentive and investment in infrastructure (both physical and social). Family First wants a greater return of investment to regions that generate our export income and prosperity from mining and other primary production activities.	Rural communities are a big part of our social fabric and national identity, but get sidelined by national policies. Rural infrastructure and essential services need much better resourcing to protect communities, fight regional poverty and ensure the bush’s future. Government must assist farmers make the shift to fully sustainable practices.
What is your attitude towards uranium mining and the nuclear fuel cycle?	Australia’s uranium resources have the potential to provide a large share of the world’s future power needs with zero greenhouse gas emissions. I am not opposed to a nuclear power industry – there are already two nuclear reactors in Australia producing medical isotopes. I support binding local plebiscites before any nuclear power plant proposal could be approved.	The Greens believe nuclear power is too dangerous, too expensive and too slow to be a solution to climate change. Given the dangers of weapons proliferation, nuclear accidents and nuclear waste dumps, exporting uranium is immoral. The Greens oppose all aspects of the nuclear cycle in Australia.	A Rudd Labor Government would require State Government approval and world’s best practice for all uranium mining and rehabilitation of closed mines. Under Labor, uranium will only be exported to countries observing the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, maintaining strict safeguards and security controls. Labor opposes nuclear power and enrichment in Australia.	Family First has an open mind on this issue. Clearly, it must remain part of Australia’s options for consideration in addressing climate change until such a point in time that other measures can be proven to meet our demand for energy without exceeding emission reduction targets. Only then could nuclear energy be realistically ruled out.	The Democrats inserted in Australia’s environment laws the prohibition on nuclear energy and processing. Nuclear energy is dangerous, damaging, short-sighted and no solution. It’s not good enough for Australia, or anywhere else. Exporting it makes us complicit in the resulting risks –both environmental and the danger of further spreading nuclear weapons.
How do you understand Australia’s role as a peacemaker in Asia and the Pacific?	Our role is to assist in restoring peace where requested. In the Pacific we take a leading role in peacekeeping measures. Currently we have 140 ADF troops in the Solomon Islands and 867 ADF personnel in Timor-Leste. Australia has committed \$40 million over the next 5 years as part of the Defence Co-operation program in Timor-Leste.	The Greens believe Australia’s role should be to foster peaceful and co-operative relationships with other countries, based on mutual respect. We want to strengthen the process of democratisation in Asia and the Pacific. We would seek closer involvement in and co-operation with them.	Labor recognises that ensuring peace and stability in our region is one of Australia’s immediate foreign policy challenges. Through Labor’s Asia Pacific Partnership for Development and Security we will work closely with other governments across the region to build good governance, the rule of law, and economic opportunities and security.	Family First wants Australia to continue open and regular interaction among nations in the region and where appropriate bring leaders together for trade and development talks. Where appropriate, Australia must be prepared to use military resources to assist innocent people caught in foreign conflict in the region.	Aid, positive engagement and the promotion of human rights are more productive in securing our region, than chest-beating and talk of pre-emptive strikes in our neighbourhood. The Democrats support genuine peace-keeping as part of multilateral efforts, such as the East Timor intervention.

So what happened to the Liberal Party?
Journey first contacted each of the Senators by email on the 28 August asking whether they would be prepared to participate in this Election 2007 lift-out. Following a quick response from each of the other candidates the questions were sent with a deadline of Monday, 10 September. As there was no response from Senator the Hon. Ian Macdonald *Journey* made some follow up phone calls and sent the questions to his Electoral Office in Townsville. Senator Macdonald is first on the Coalition Senate ticket in Queensland. The Electoral Assistant indicated that she would be asking Senator Macdonald whether he was prepared to participate. *Journey* had four subsequent telephone conversations with Senator Macdonald’s office but no response was forthcoming. *Journey* then tried to contact Senator Sue Boyce but no calls were returned. Finally after contacting the fourth candidate on the joint ticket, Mr Mark Powell, the *Journey* editor received a phone call from an official from the Liberal Party Queensland Headquarters. There were five more telephone conversations with staff from Liberal Party Headquarters and the deadline was extended until Friday, 14 September but no response to the questions was ever received. Each of the other candidates had returned their answers in time for the original deadline.

What do you want to say to us?

In addition to the questions on the centre pages, Journey also invited each of the Senate Candidates to make a 150 word general statement to Queensland Uniting Church voters. This is what they had to say.



The Nationals: Senator Ron Boswell

I believe that one of the most important roles of government is to deliver the opportunity for people to lead happy, healthy, safe, informed and productive lives. Only a government that is careful with the economy can deliver low unemployment, low interest rates and high national security. Prudent economic management boosts jobs, home ownership and small business growth. That in turn allows our society to have the resources to help those less fortunate, both here and abroad. I personally also believe in the sanctity of human life which means that I take every opportunity to stand up for the rights of the unborn as in the cloning, embryonic stem cell and RU 486 debates. I also applaud efforts to filter out pornography from reaching the computers of children. Unless we have Parliamentarians who are prepared to be counted on these issues, then Christianity will lose its voice in our Parliaments.

The Greens: Ms Larissa Waters

Voting Green is the most important vote you can cast for the future of the planet. The Greens' policies are based on fairness in society. Only the Greens opposed this year's \$10 billion in tax cuts for the richest 10% of Australians. The Greens would use that money for all Australians, with a \$3 billion boost to public health and \$7 billion for public education. We will protect the nation's forests and rivers and make Australia a world leader in renewable energy and energy efficiency. Even if Kevin Rudd becomes the next Prime Minister, it is statistically impossible for Labor to get control of the Senate off John Howard. Without the Greens holding the balance of power in the Senate, we will be stuck with unfair workplace laws and inaction on climate change. Voting Green will ensure a strong, independent Senate. Think of us as 'Third Party Insurance'.



Labor: Senator Claire Moore

Australia, in 2007, faces many important challenges: the challenge of responding to climate change; of developing world class infrastructure; and of ending the blame game between governments. We face the challenge of keeping our nation competitive in the global economy while ensuring fairness at work for all Australians. Our opponents believe we must choose between economic prosperity and fairness. Labor believes Australia can have both and we can make a difference. Our vision is an Australia in which we have a strong economy based on market principles and a fair go for all Australian families - not just some. A Rudd Labor Government will create a fair, simple and flexible industrial relations system, bringing a new balance to Australian workplaces. A Rudd Labor Government will make sure all Australians have the services they need, by investing in infrastructure, training and education and in health - including a \$2 billion plan to end the blame game in the health system.

Family First: Mr Jeff Buchanan

Irrespective of who will be in Government after this election, the Senate (upper house) will almost certainly be controlled by a minor party. The Democrats are unlikely to survive so the battle for the Senate will be between Family First and an anti-family party - the Greens. Family First does not agree with the Greens moves to legalise drug use, shut down coal mining exports in three years that will crash the economy, deny more schools the right to employ staff that share the values that a particular school community wants. Family First has commonsense policies to help families and small business such as, lifting the tax free threshold from \$6,000 to \$8,000 immediately, cutting petrol tax by 10 cents/L which will also reduce transport costs, and keep a lid on inflation and interest rates, giving back to all families their public holidays, meal breaks, overtime, penalty rates and redundancy entitlements.



The Democrats: Senator Andrew Bartlett

The Democrats were founded on the idea that ordinary people should be as involved in politics as they chose. We work to build an open, compassionate society founded on honesty, understanding, compassion and sustainability. In the Senate, I have worked hard to promote those principles. I have worked with Indigenous communities to fight for the Stolen Wages and the Stolen Generations and other unfinished business. I have supported refugees against the Government's many attacks, campaigned against the War in Iraq, and against the war on workers at home. I stood up for the disadvantaged when the Government sought to make their plight worse. Log onto www.andrewbartlett.com for more on my campaigns and record. This election is not just about who forms government, but about who will hold them to account in the Senate. When it functions independently, the Senate is the conscience of the Parliament.

Get enrolled

Journey strongly encourages people to also consult candidates' and party websites and publicity material to gain an understanding of their broader policy platforms.

A good starting point is the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) website www.aec.gov.au.

The AEC website includes information about political parties, details about enrolment, information about the electorates and educational information.

Following changes to the Electoral Act, there have been important changes to the deadlines to enrol to vote, or to update your enrolment, for federal elections.

If you are not enrolled, or you haven't made sure that your name or address details on the electoral rolls are up to date, you risk missing out on being able to vote.

The electoral rolls for first time voters will close at 8pm on the same day the writs for the election are issued.

In order to vote in the federal election, your enrolment form must be correctly completed and received by the AEC before the close of the electoral rolls.

Election 07

Your faith, your vote, your voice

A community election forum organised by faith based groups.

Candidates from Labor, Liberal, National, the Greens, the Democrats and Family First have been invited to participate.

Tuesday 16 October 7pm for 7:30pm at Broadwater Road Uniting Church, 481 Broadwater Road, Mansfield.

The moderator will be David Busch Executive Producer, ABC Religious Programming.

This event is sponsored by: the Uniting Church Justice and International Mission Advocate, the UnitingCare Queensland Centre for Social Justice, and the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, Brisbane Archdiocese Social Action Office.

UnitingCare awards staff

By Mardi Lumsden

UNITINGCARE Health held its inaugural staff awards in September to commend innovation and excellence through the work of their Queensland hospitals.

St Andrews War Memorial Hospital in Brisbane was presented with two of the three awards.

The first award was won for excellence in 'clinical safety and patient focused service delivery' by improving patient outcomes through clinical audit.

St Andrews also won an award for 'visionary leadership and organisational performance' with their efforts to massively decrease water consumption throughout the hospital.

St Stephen's Hospital won the award for 'valuing employees and workforce management' with its

program to provide a positive and healthy working culture for staff.

UnitingCare Health Chief Executive Officer Richard Royle said he was immensely proud of the continued excellence of their staff.

He said the awards are a chance to celebrate significant achievements and learn from each other.

"Uniting Care Health treats thousands of patients a year and we do some fabulous work right through our organisations and our 3 500 staff," he said.

"This is an opportunity for staff to showcase some of their new initiatives and for us to gain learning from so we can benefit right across the organisation and therefore all the people we treat throughout our hospitals."



UnitingCare Health award winners: Ian Smith (St Andrews WMH), Jill O'Brien and Michelle Tanwan (St Stephens Hospital), UnitingCare Health CEO Richard Royle, Liz Rossmuller (St Andrews WMH), and UnitingCare Queensland Director Anne Cross. Photo by Osker Lau



Rev Dr David Pitman chats with Judith Hodgkinson after presenting her with a Moderator's Medal. Photo by Rob Evans

Prized volunteer

THE QUEENSLAND Moderator Rev Dr David Pitman travelled to Bundaberg in September to present a Moderator's medal to Judith Hodgkinson for her many years of voluntary service with Lifeline, BlueCare and Crossroads.

Minister with the Bundaberg congregation Rev Ray Nutley described Ms Hodgkinson as a humble and gracious lady.

"She was a little overawed and didn't want a fuss made. She would have preferred the medal to be mailed to her."

Ms Hodgkinson is still a very active member of the congregation and plays piano for the Saturday night Uniting Church worship service, for Crossroads meetings and in local nursing homes.

Who is in church

THERE'S MERCHANDISE, spinoffs, partyware - and now there's a Doctor Who church service!

A United Kingdom congregation was invited to compare a Time Lord with the Lord of Time at a special Dr Who-themed church service.

Teenagers and young people in their early 20s were being targeted for the "cafe-style" Communion service, with music and video clips from the hit series, at St Paul's Church in Grangetown, Cardiff.

The Anglican church was used as a location two years ago for an episode of the series starring Christopher Eccleston as the ninth Doctor.

Source: Dr Who Online
www.drwho-online.co.uk



Uniting Church in Australia Queensland Synod

DIRECTOR OF THE PILGRIM LEARNING COMMUNITY (PLC) (Full time; 5 year initial contract)

Applicants are now being sought to fill the position of Director of the new Pilgrim Learning Community, which, along with Trinity Theological College, will form part of the Queensland Synod's Network for Christian Formation (NCF). The Network will provide a highly respected centre of excellence in theological education that will equip both lay and ordained leaders for ministry in the Church.

Working with the other key leaders of the Church, the Director will create a learning community which will facilitate the equipping of God's people with knowledge and skills to fulfill the Gospel imperative in the 21st century.

The individual (lay or ordained) sought to fill the role will have a passion for Christian adult education and formation. He or she will have exceptional leadership, service delivery, management and educational skills. Applicants must have:

- Membership of the Uniting Church in Australia, and commitment to and understanding of the mission and ethos of the Uniting Church.
- Thorough knowledge of the Uniting Church and its polity.
- Demonstrated capacity to implement strategic plans in complex organizations within fluid and changing environments.
- Experience in providing educational resources, delivered through a variety of methods.
- Demonstrated effective communications skills.
- Qualifications / experience in Christian Adult Education

The full application pack is available via the website (<http://www.ucaqlld.com.au/job.aspx>) or by contacting Ana Mila (07) 3377 9709 or ana.mila@ucaqlld.com.au. Applications will close Friday, 26th October 2007.



Uniting Church in Australia
Queensland Synod

MULTI-CROSS CULTURAL ADVOCATE

(Part-time 0.5 Position)

The Queensland Synod will be appointing an energetic and visionary Multi-Cross Cultural Advocate who, in conjunction with the Multi-Cross Cultural Committee, will provide leadership in supporting, resourcing and encouraging culturally and linguistically diverse people within the Uniting Church in Queensland.

The Church is seeking applicants with a commitment to and understanding of the mission and ethos of the Uniting Church, and substantial experience in multi-cross cultural ministry. The person will have excellent communication skills in working with culturally and linguistically diverse people, and qualifications in one or more areas of community, human services, theology, or social sciences.

People from culturally diverse backgrounds are encouraged to apply.

The full application pack is available via the website (www.ucaqlld.com.au/job.aspx) or by contacting Ana Mila (07) 3377 9709 or ana.mila@ucaqlld.com.au. Applications close 29th October 2007.

JOURNEY
www.journeyonline.com.au

More news at
www.journeyonline.com.au



Customer Service Role
U.C.I.S

Are you interested in banking & finance, and want to work for the Church?

The Uniting Church Investment Service (U.C.I.S) at Auchenflower is seeking an experienced Customer Service Officer to work in its Customer Service Team. The role involves undertaking the day to day transactional and customer service operations within U.C.I.S.

The successful candidate will have Customer Service experience in a credit union or banking environment; will be competent with computer systems; be able to communicate with internal and external customers; be able to learn and work with a range of financial products and services; and able to solve problems creatively, showing initiative and commitment to excellence.

The role includes the processing of client transactions in a financial institution setting, opening investments, dealing with customer enquiries and associated clerical work.

If you're interested in a "hands on" role inside the mission of the Uniting Church, please call Stephen Peake or Rob Cowan on 1300 655 653 or email your resume to ucis@ucis.com.au and quote CSO 0907.

View the full position description at: www.ucaqlld.com.au/job.aspx

U.C.I.S
THE UNITING CHURCH INVESTMENT SERVICE

www.ucis.com.au

Philip Yancey: church is a broken witness

By Bruce Mullan

WITH MORE than 14 million books in print, award winning US author Philip Yancey surprised a Brisbane business luncheon by announcing he didn't have any answers to offer.

"I don't have all the answers. I have questions and that's how I usually choose what to write about – I choose something I don't know the answer to," Mr Yancey said.

"If I knew the answer before I started I'd get bored within a

couple of weeks, and it takes me more than a year to do a book so I like to choose things I'm learning from."

Mr Yancey shared observations about the church that he finds puzzling and paradoxical.

One observation Yancey made was that as the gospel penetrates a culture, it tends to create characteristics that are anti-gospel.

"If you ask many people in the world what's the most Christian country, they'd say it's the United States.

"By church attendance and other measures, it's right up there.

"But if you ask a different question, 'If I say the words United States, what comes to mind?'"

"What do people say? They almost always seem to say, great wealth, military power or sexual decadence."

Mr Yancey believes the more radically Christian a culture gets, the less appealing it gets.

"The challenge is to penetrate a culture in such a way that it still sounds like Good News."

"If we don't do it right, if we just inherit it from past generations, if we just pass it along and institutionalise it, it stops sounding like Good News."

Mr Yancey told how, with his wife Janet, he had been visiting each of the 24 churches in the small community of 7 000 people where they live in Evergreen, Colorado.

"The overwhelming question that I have most of the time when I go to these churches is, 'Why would anyone want to get up in the morning to attend this?'"

"They are going through this ritual – there is no spirit, no passion – there is certainly no revolutionary fervour."

"How do you sustain the revolutionary flame of the gospel so that we don't need to keep having revivals, we can simply have 'vivals'."

Mr Yancey said Jesus' body wasn't just broken on the cross or at the Eucharist, but is broken every day in the ways we misrepresent who God is.

"And yet the only way the world will know who God is, is through the body that he left – the body that is Christ."

"That's my challenge to you: to represent God in such a way that even in our confused and broken state we somehow reflect the reality of God's justice, compassion, mercy and grace."



James Morrison will be performing at this years Stable on the Strand. Photo courtesy of www.jamesmorrison.com.au

Strand all set for stable and sound

TOWNSVILLE'S STABLE on the Strand is an annual ecumenical event attracting thousands of people.

Held from 19-23 December, Stable on the Strand offers a unique Christmas experience for visitors and volunteers alike.

The combined churches present the message of Christ's birth through drama, song and many other activities in a festival atmosphere.

This year guest artists will include singer-songwriter Colin Buchanan and renowned jazz musician James Morrison, who will be performing on the main stage.

Stable on Strand coordinator Anne Harley said the event unites the community.

"I have no doubt that Stable on the Strand is part of God's plan for Townsville," said Ms Harley.

"We see an incredible unity and working together of the Church."

"We see the Council and

businesses coming together with the Church to create an amazing event.

"We see miracle after miracle as God provides new ideas, people, resources and finances."

"We see lives changed, skills learnt and ministries raised up. It is a privilege and a joy to be part of such a God thing."

Stable on the Strand has grown into a significant event over the past five years.

The team are hoping this year's Stable on the Strand will attract more than 50 000 people.

Last year more than 50 churches provided 584 volunteers and more than 26 000 people attended the festival organised by the Combined Churches of Townsville and Thuringowa.

Why not visit Townsville to have a look or become a volunteer?

For more information about Stable on the Strand visit www.stableonthestrand.com.au



Editor-at-large for Christianity Today Philip Yancey issued a challenge to Queensland. Photo by Bruce Mullan

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The Waiters Union co-founder Dave Andrews.

Waiters radical development training

"BE WARNED – doing this course may change your life," said Christian Frost, a 23 year-old social work student from Indooroopilly about a new community orientation course.

The Waiters Union, a West End based small network of households committed to living out a Christ-centred approach to community development is partnering with the Uniting Church to provide the grass-roots, gentle-but-radical community development program.

"I had little knowledge of the course or its content and was surprised to find that it has revolutionised my understanding of living as a Christian with a vocation of caring for others," said Mr Frost who attended a previous course as a prerequisite to his field placement.

"The course provided discussions on community work theory and practice as well as knowledge and skills for living out Jesus in my life."

The program will be delivered by people who are involved with those who are struggling with serious disadvantages and significant disabilities in inner-city Brisbane.

The Waiters Union network

began in 1985 when Dave and Ange Andrews returned from India to Australia and expressed interest in doing the same kind of faith based community work in West End as they had done in New Delhi.

Synod Vision for Mission Advocate Rev Duncan Macleod said the Uniting Church through the Vision for Mission project has entered into a three year partnership with the Waiters Union Training Team.

"We are resourcing seven part-time workers to share in the ongoing development of faith-based community development training in Queensland."

Key member of The Waiters Union Dave Andrews is the author of *Compassionate Community Work*, a textbook on community development being used throughout world.

The next course will be based in West End, Brisbane from 9-22 December.

To learn more about the Waiters Union and training opportunities, visit www.waitersunion.org or contact Dave Andrews on ph 3844 1043

An Evening with John Shelby Spong

I CAME away wondering not about the speaker but about his audience.

My first impressions of the evening were based upon the gathering crowd.

Anyone expecting a motley collection of ratbag heretics and weirdo new-agists would have been sorely disappointed.

Those filing in to fill the auditorium were strangely, almost disappointingly, conventional: middle aged, middle class, white.

Of course there were exceptions – I even spotted a young person – but the whole show was so very “Uniting Church” in appearance.

Judging from the crowd alone, one might have imagined a large respectable Sunday morning congregation, or even a freshly convened Synod.

Where were all the extremists? Spong imagined himself to be addressing “the church alumni association”, by which he means those who have grown weary of swimming against the tide of fundamentalism and who have left the church, even if they have not lost their faith.

And he was probably correct, at least in part.

I’m sure there were some, perhaps many, who fall into that category, but I know

(because I recognised them) that there were lots and lots of folk in the hall who are not “alumni”.

They have not graduated from the institution but remain firmly embedded within it, many of them in positions of considerable responsibility.

As folk arrived, there were lots of moments of recognition, many of them of the “I didn’t expect you to be here!” kind.

So what does the presence of so many solid church goers tell us?

The bishop, dressed as a church insider (purple stock and clerical collar), covered a wide range of subjects and the vast majority of the crowd followed him every step of the way.

When he waxed eloquent on matters of sexuality, people listened intently and nodded in agreement.

But that was to be expected. What was more surprising to me was the strength of response he received when he spoke about the struggle for women to claim a legitimate place in the life of the church.

There were spontaneous applause and cries of encouragement, not just from the women in the crowd even though their voices were most prominent.

Do their reactions question our assumptions about equality in the church?

At other points, too, there was a palpable sense of connectedness between speaker and spoken to – people leaning forward in their seats, head nodding (or wagging, as appropriate), an immediate responsiveness to his commentary on the place of the church in society discerned in body language and note taking and whispered asides to neighbours.

Afterwards, in the general hubbub that follows such gatherings, it was easy to feel a collective sense of relief: I’m not alone. I’m not the only one who thinks such things.

Perhaps it is okay to ask questions which challenge conventional and conservative thinking.

What I think we can conclude from observations of the crowd is that there are many faithful, devoted Christians who want more from their relationship with the God of the Bible than the easy answers they are sometimes served up in church.

And I think they deserve the respect of the whole church to be allowed to wrestle with what the Good Shepherd means when he says, “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly”.

Colin Gurteen is minister with the West End Uniting Church Congregation

I CAME away with a deep sense of disappointment.

Bishop Spong’s critique of the consequences of literalist approaches to scripture and fundamentalist faith, which have led to injustice, violence and exclusion, was neither new nor very constructive.

I waited to hear a new approach to the scriptures and faith that might help those who have only been exposed to such poor teaching in the past.

I waited in vain.

My greater disappointment stemmed from Bishop Spong’s repeated assertion that those who held such narrow, out dated views were “mentally ill”, “mentally disturbed” or “mentally unbalanced”.

While such comments drew laughter from the adoring audience, it seems to me that this is simply a more modern way of branding people as heretics or being possessed of evil spirits; something Bishop Spong derides.

As a proponent of the enlightenment scientific world view, I would have thought that Bishop Spong would be more understanding of the serious stigma and misunderstanding experienced by those with mental illness and would not add to the widespread disparagement they encounter by dismissing those with whom he disagreed in such language.

However these comments alerted me to something I was told many years ago.

Fundamentalism is not a theological position, rather a mindset that is convinced that the way I understand truth is “right” and any opposing views are clearly foolish, misguided or blatantly wrong.

I will stand with anyone who would confront the injustice, violence and exclusion that is often perpetrated in the name of Christ.

However I will not use the same tactics that categorize and disparage those who hold different views.

Given Bishop Spong’s obvious popularity I can only assume he does offer a positive, life-affirming approach to life in Christ, but I was disappointed that I didn’t hear it.

Bruce Johnson is minister with Broadwater Road Uniting Church and Moderator Elect of the Queensland Synod



Controversial Bishop John Shelby Spong spoke to about 500 people in Brisbane on Saturday, 1 September. Photo by Osker Lau

APART FROM a few inferences, which pointed at some of those heresies for which Spong is regularly attacked, I heard little that was too controversial or heterodox.

Spong was an engaging speaker, his anecdotes, humour and obvious depth of reading provided the audience with both insight and entertainment.

This does not mean I agreed with all he had to say but it helped me understand his popularity.

It was clear that whilst Spong wanted to deconstruct literalism he still accorded the Bible great authority and treated it with respect. If not why would he spend so much time analysing it?

When asked a question about his personal understanding of God he gave a thoroughly post modern answer.

He said his understanding of God and of Jesus was based on his personal experiences.

In some ways none of us as Christians can say any more or less than that our understanding of God is based on our personal experience of God.

The limitation of this is that we can fall into the trap of thinking ‘my’ experience is right whilst other people’s are wrong.

Finding the balance requires us to understand that our faith exists in the context of a community and that we need to weigh up our experiences in the light of what others have experienced and what the community of faith has agreed upon together.

As the evening came to a close Spong revealed his commitment to the Scripture as the source of his faith as he declared that his approach was very much grounded in his conviction concerning Jesus

teaching found in John 10:10 “I came that they might have life and have it abundantly.”

He then wrapped up by declaring his faith as a follower of Jesus.

In my encounters with Christians from all walks of life and from the vast spectrum of theological understanding I might want to argue that some of what Bishop Spong says is wrong.

Yet I would do so acknowledging that on this particular night he showed a certain respect for the authority of scripture, if in a different way to me, he grounded his faith in this scripture and his personal experiences of Jesus, and that he willingly and publicly declared himself to be a follower of Jesus.

Peter Lockhart is minister with Clayfield and Hamilton Uniting Church Congregations



Holy Land Tour with Steve Kersnovske & Tom Kerr 7-19 April 2008

Ten days of touring the Holy Land. Price includes return airfares, 4 star accommodation, aircond bus, english speaking guide and most meals.

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Steve on 0427 727 070
stevek@yacmu.com.au

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Residential College

**STUDENT SERVICES COORDINATOR
12 MONTH CONTRACT**

The Uniting Church In Australia is seeking the services of an energetic and organised individual to undertake the role of Student Services Coordinator – Raymont Lodge Residential College for a period of 12 months.

Raymont Lodge Residential College provides fully furnished accommodation for students undertaking tertiary study in Brisbane. The College is located in Auchenflower and attracts students that attend the University of Queensland, Queensland University of Technology and other educational institutions.

The role provides a broad range of services including office administration, processing of applications and enrolments, accounts, pastoral support for students, tours and event management.

If you are passionate about customer service, have excellent interpersonal and initiative skills, and are in sympathy with the ethos of The Uniting Church, send your application and resume to:

Property Services Manager
Department for Financial and Property Services
G.P.O. Box 674 Brisbane Qld 4001

Applications close Monday, 15 October 2007

For further information regarding the role, please contact Mark Lee on 07 3377 9823.

WHAT'S ON

October. Beyondblue Anxiety and Depression Awareness month.

Wednesdays, 9.15-11.30am. Craft Experience at The Gap Uniting Church. Child minding for \$3 per child. Contact Janice Harris on ph 3300 6293 or email thegapuc@inet.net.au.

October 5-6, 7am-4pm. Theological Reflections on diakonia: from Scripture to... at Clairvaux MacKillop College, Upper Mt Gravatt. Featuring Uniting Church Deacon Rev Alison McRae. Contact Douglas Jones on ph 3377 9868 or email douglas.jones@ucaql.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 6, 11am-1pm. Community Forum on Climate Change at The Sofitel, Brisbane. Mention Queensland Churches Together for reserved seating. Contact admin@qccql.org.au or ph 3221 0188.

October 7-13. Mental Health Week.

October 10. World Mental Health Day.

October 10, 7.30-8.30pm. Recognising and Defeating Depression seminar at Bayside Uniting Church, Manly West, Brisbane. Janet Camilleri discusses depression and the Christian. Contact Sherryl-Lee Secomb on ph 3890 2392 or email sber@myaccess.com.au.

October 12-14. Asia Focus Weekend, Brookfield. Contact Howard Thomas on ph 3343 3893 or email howard.thomas@bigpond.com.

October 13. Beneath the Stars concert at the Brisbane River Stage. Event cancelled.

October 13-14. Buderim Uniting Church Centenary celebration. Open Church, music, social activities and celebration dinner. Contact Lionel Ash on ph 5445 3537 or Max Fenn on ph 5476 8158.

October 12-14. Order of Knights/Comrades 5th Reunion in Bundaberg. A four-day holiday organised from Brisbane. Contact Don Hutton on ph 3264 6241 or email donhutton@powerup.com.au.

October 14, 2pm. St David's Welsh Society of Brisbane Gymnafa Ganu (festival of hymn singing). Holy Trinity Church, Fortitude Valley. Contact Kay Mathie on email kmathie@tpg.com.au.

October 16, 9.30am. UC Synod International Mission Support Group (Qld) at St Andrew's hall, Ann Street, Brisbane. Contact Judith Finau on ph 3711 4622 or email liffinau@dovenetq.net.au.

October 19, 7-8.30pm. Lifeline Trivia Night at Colossus Reception Lounge, 71 Jane St West End, Brisbane. \$30/ person. Contact Jenifer Knox on ph 3250 1934 or email jenifer.knox@lccq.org.au.

October 20. QCT Make Indigenous Poverty History forum and action day. The Aspinall Centre, Upper Mt Gravatt. \$40/\$30. Contact Jela Virzi on ph 3369 6792 or email admin@qct.org.au.

October 20, 10am-3pm. Dr Baxter Kruger speaking on his book *Across All Worlds*. Nambour Baptist. Visit www.perichoresis.org.au.

October 25, 5.30-7pm. PeaceWise National Launch, Supreme Court, Brisbane. A new, Christian peacemaking organisation. Contact Mitchell Clark on ph 5494 9096 or email mitche@peacewise.org.au.

October 26-28. Uniting Church Beenleigh Region Craft Retreat at Tamborine Lodge 255 Beacon Road North Tamborine. Cost is \$110. Contact beenleighuc@dovenetq.net.au.

October 27, 8am-1pm. Brookfield Country Market and Art Show at Brookfield Uniting Church. Contact Edith McPhee on ph 3374 1404 or email emcphee@westnet.com.au.

October 27. Garage Sale. Paradise Point Uniting Church. Contact Peter Alfredson on ph 5529 3669 or email pgaca@bigpond.net.au.

October 30, 10am. Meeting of retired Ministers, their Spouses and Widowed Members at The Gap Uniting Church. \$13.50. Guest speaker Rev Bruce Johnson (aka Moderator elect). Enquiries & replies to the convenors, Jim and Jill Tame, phone 3891 6462 or email jnjtame@bigpond.net.au.

Want to promote an event?

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



Prison ministry coordinator Beatriz Skippen. Photo by Osker Lau

Prison Ministry thanks Foundation

THE UC Foundation has provided funds for upgrading of equipment designed to support Lifeline Prison Ministry's growth.

This has enabled the Prison Ministry team to better spread its message in an accessible way both inside and outside the prisons.

"We now can speak in particular to the 'X' and 'Y' generations in a way that we have been unable to do before," said Prison ministry coordinator Beatriz Skippen.

"The use of this equipment is new for the inmates, so Prison Ministry has been a 'ground-breaker' in this area."

So far the team has had several special occasion services using multimedia and PowerPoint presentations in two different correctional facilities.

The new technology has been enthusiastically received.

The response from the inmates was reported to have been overwhelming to the team and they are currently negotiating with Prison Management in several other facilities to more regularly feature this type of service.

This equipment is also being used in their deputations.

The Lifeline Prison Ministry team are now reaching out to more groups across the generations and seeing an encouraging increase in awareness of our ministry.

Lifeline Prison Ministry thanks the UC Foundation and all their prayer partners and supporters for growth and continued passion in ministering to those held by corrective services in Queensland.

Introduction to Aged Care Ministry (Residential and Community) Course 2008

THE INTRODUCTION to Aged Care Ministry (Residential and Community) course is being offered again in 2008 for people interested in Pastoral Care and Chaplaincy in Aged Care Facilities and in the Community, and for people interested in the care of ageing persons generally.

The course, which may be covered in one year, integrates theory and practice, (and each participant is provided with a comprehensive Learning Guide for each Unit of Competency).

Monthly group or individual meetings or teleconferences facilitate discussion and provide information as necessary.

The course is offered in Brisbane and beyond.

For further information contact Course co-ordinator Rev Lynne Gibson on 0419 650 468 or email l.gibson@bluecare.org.au



A Spectator's Guide to Worldviews: Ten ways of understanding life
 Edited by Simon Smart
 Blue Bottle Books
 RRP \$24.95

A Spectator's Guide to Worldviews provides a challenging introduction to various ways of looking at the world.

A worldview is the framework or fundamental belief that shapes how we understand the world around us and the picture of our ideal world.

The Guide achieves its aim of presenting a balanced view of each 'ism' that it analyses, including postmodernism, consumerism and feminism, while dedicating space to how each philosophy compares and contrasts with Christianity.

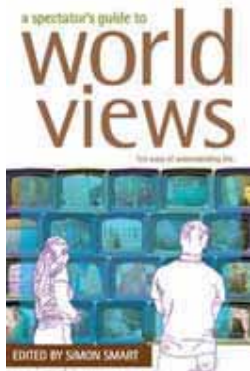
These comparisons, along with the discussion questions at the end of each chapter, make this book a valuable tool for anyone wishing to grapple with how different people approach life.

It also encourages the reader to critically examine their own presuppositions and philosophies.

The questions make *A Spectator's Guide to Worldviews* prime material to read alongside someone else and explore your worldviews together.

Another part of this publication that could be used for discussion is the narrative sections and interviews, however these sections are not introduced in any way and have no starter questions, disrupting the flow of the text and bewildering the reader.

Callouts and sidelines are seemingly used with abandon but whether they add or subtract from the text depends on the preference of the reader.



The content of each individual chapter however is well laid out, guiding the reader through the history of each worldview, its main proponents and the influence it has had on the world, leaving any judgement call about the consistency, relevance or accuracy of any particular worldview to the reader.

This scrutiny is encouraged by all the authors.

Overall, *A Spectator's Guide to Worldviews* is a thinking person's summary of the many answers given to the question, "What's life all about anyway?"

Stephen Rae is secretary of Holland Park St David's Uniting Church

Seven Days

Directed by Russell Brown
 MintoXmedia
 Rated M
 RRP \$19.95

Seven Days is a remarkable documentary about an extraordinary young Australian woman Fiona

Dixon-Thompson working in a remote African village.

With one in three of the locals suffering HIV/AIDS and many of the children in her care being orphans, Fiona faces appalling obstacles with determination and courage.

Trained as a plumber, Fiona has been full-time coordinator of the Orphans and Vulnerable Children project in Mwindi, Zambia since September 2004.

She has oversight of a feeding program, a drop-in centre, basic education and the provision of health education including for HIV/AIDS.

Seven Days is a brutally honest, no-holds-barred presentation looking at a week in Fiona's life as she moves from frustration to anger to hope.

It is both sobering and inspirational.

Queensland Uniting Church Youth Worker Jason Bray was the sound recordist for the film, and Fiona's supporting agency and film sponsor is Uniting Church Overseas Aid, the relief and development division of Uniting International Mission.

Fiona is one person who has heard God's call and responded, and *Seven Days* offers a similar challenge to those who watch it.

Nominated for WA Screen Awards Best Documentary this year, *Seven Days* is a must view for congregations, small groups, fellowship groups and Uniting Church young adults.

The DVD includes director's commentary, deleted scenes and a six minute preview.

You can watch a preview of *Seven Days* at www.youtube.com/watch?v=tOKr0N1FZVg and order the DVD online at www.astounded.tv/store/shopexd.asp?id=88.

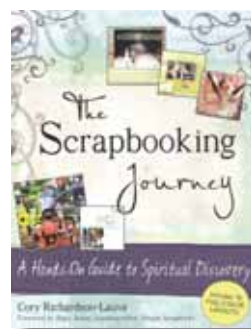
Bruce Mullan is editor of Journey



The Scrapbooking Journey: A Hands-On Guide to Spiritual Discovery

By Cory Richardson-Lauve
 Skylight Paths Publishing
 RRP \$32.95

When I first saw the title of this publication I didn't believe it would



be about Scrapbooking (a current worldwide craft form) and spiritual discovery, but that is exactly what it is!

The author leads you on an imaginative journey which involves reflection and journaling, all the while asking and seeking answers to searching questions about life.

The result of this process is expressed through the written word, images in various forms and design using tools available through scrapbooking suppliers.

In fact in the introduction to the book is a list of needed tools for the hands-on production of scrapbooking pages.

The nine chapter headings of this creative resource give an indication of areas of content and emotions the book explores: Resonance, Equilibrium, Movement, Awareness, Expression, Awakening, Celebration, and Connection.

Each chapter has reflective writing which sensitively involves and challenges the reader, then leads you through a scrapbooking exercise relevant to your responses.

Towards the end of the chapter on Celebration, for example, you are invited to create a scrapbook journal page that recognises and celebrates your uniqueness.

Black and white images are placed throughout the book with sixteen full colour layouts.

The last section of each chapter invites you to go deeper to expand your vision and to experience afresh your connection with Creator God.

The craft experience is linked subtly with the faith experience.

The Scrapbooking Journey is gentle and encouraging.

This imaginative resource will be appreciated by anyone who is willing to experiment with a fresh approach to self-awareness and spiritual discovery.

I don't believe *The Scrapbooking Journey* is for women only.

I can see it as an excellent element of retreats for lay and clergy.

Rev Barbara Bailey is a retired minister living in Caloundra

REVIEWS

Home Song Stories
 Directed by Tony Ayres
 Starring Joan Chen
 Rated M

Home Song Stories is the true story of a glamorous Chinese singer, Rose, who takes her two children to Australia in the 1960s for a better life after falling for an Australian sailor.

Once in Australia, Rose drifts from man to man, dragging her children with her, while she struggles with being an exotic, dynamic, and mentally unstable woman in drab suburban Australia.

Told through the eyes of Rose's young son Tom, the story is a journey of an immigrant family not only struggling to find their place in a white Australia, but also dealing with their mother's depression and consequent suicide attempts.

Home Song Stories is a finely crafted film.

Each character's subtly expressed emotions reflect the silence about mental health and difference in the 1960s, that perhaps remains today.

While Tom (Joel Lok) and his sister May (Irene Chen) are dealing with very grown up situations, they still manage to show their innocence as children and dependence on their mother, despite her pitfalls.

We travel with Rose's children (and long suffering husband Bill played by Steven Vidler) as they grieve the loss of the woman they had known and come to terms with the woman she has become.

For May, she learns what made her mother the way she is.

With a superb cast writer and director Tony Ayres brings his childhood alive in *Home Song Stories*.

As he says, it isn't necessarily the true story; it is how he remembers it.

And there are some things, a child never forgets.

Mardi Lumsden is associate editor of Journey



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

China's Christian Martyrs
 By Paul Hattaway

After the Heavy Rain
 By Sokreksa S Himm

PRAYER DIARY

7 October:
Bowen

Bowen is known as the "Top of the Whitsunday".

It is situated between Mackay and Townsville on the Whitsunday Coast.

We are part of the North Queensland Presbytery.

We are a diverse church with three worshipping congregations.

The English service is held at 9.00am, the Tongan service at 3.00pm and the Korean service at 6.30pm.

Rev Meong-Hee Seo travels from Townsville every Sunday to conduct the Korean service.

Please pray for her and the Korean congregation.

Please pray for our Minister, and our church council, Helen Barnes (Chairperson), Anne Steen (Secretary), Bruce Chamberlain (Treasurer) and all its members.

Also for Ian Ness and all our Elders Council members.

Please pray for our Women's Fellowship and our Friendship Club, their ministry and their leaders, Jan Goodman, Betty Gribble, Mary Darwen and Julie Jurgens.

Please pray for our young people and our youth group and their leaders, Ian Ness, Lekie Crichton and Naomi Edwards.

Also for our Sunday school and the teachers, Rosemary Chamberlain, Steve and Irene Afu and Joanne Thompson.

Please pray for our new mission initiative to the community called Court House Ministry, where we attend court sittings to support and distribute court information to those who come there, especially for the first time.

This is a combined initiative by our Church and the Clerk of the Court.

Please pray for our Prayer Group which meets every week to pray for the ministry of the church and the community.

Also for our Music Ministry led by Mark Steen, Joyce Roth, Julie Jurgens and Lekie Crichton.

Please pray for our ministry relationships with the Collinsville church where we provide a worship leader once a month.

Also for our relationships with Blue Care and all other

organisations in our community.

Please pray for all the members of our congregation and the ministry they perform as individuals through volunteering within our community.

Please pray that we can be attentive to the leadership of the Holy Spirit so that we can be a true reflection of the glory of God in all aspects of ministry that we are a part of in his church and in the community.

Glory be to God.

14 October:
Cleveland

Cleveland Uniting Church has three weekly worship services and a wide range of activities and groups during the week for all ages.

Our Ministry Team is led by Rev Peter Elliott and Mrs Beth Nicholls.

Please pray for the Ministry Team and the other leaders of our congregation including the officers of the church council, Elders, church councillors, Administrator, and other leaders of our Ministry Cells and Groups as they seek to discern God's will for our worship, witness and service.

Pray for the Sunday School and its leaders as they prepare for a new phase of ministry for next year.

Pray for our Christmas Kid's Club and also as preparations are made for a weekly Kid's Club for next year.

Pray for Priority One leaders and especially for the Year 7 students making the transition to High School next year.

Pray for our Friday night youth group and its leaders along with our Sunday morning youth program and its preparations for next year.

Please pray for our ecumenical endeavours, especially as we prepare for our combined churches Christmas carols.

Please pray for our Stewardship focus on 14 and 28 October and 4 November that we may be challenged afresh in regard to this aspect of our discipleship.

Also on 28 October we will be handing on our gifts through Samaritan's Purse.

Pray that all comes together well



Councillor Andrew Antonioli (centre) and Lady Mayoress Mrs Janet Pisasale present the cheque to the Chair of Glebe Road Uniting Church Council Mr Rob Edwardson (left). Photo courtesy Glebe Road Uniting Church

LOCAL GOVERNMENT visitors to the 20th Anniversary Service of the building of the Glebe Road Uniting Church brought with them a cheque for \$6 000, a Council contribution to the cost of paving the car park for Glebe Road's Neighbourhood Centre.

"This is a very dynamic live church with a wonderful future," said supply minister Rev Dr Lew Born.

"I've been in a number of churches over the years, but there's a bigger percentage of gifted and hardworking, willing leaders here."

and that the recipients are truly blessed through this giving.

Pray for our Christmas Lights preparations for our outreach during December.

Pray for our ministry into the community and the many ways that we touch people's lives that they may awaken to the presence and love of God.

21 October:
Ashgrove West

Ashgrove West Uniting Church is a small, hopeful congregation, appropriately housed in Glory Street where we remember our past glories and hope for future glory.

With Emmanuel Uniting Church in Enoggera, we give thanks for a great, shared ministry team of John Cox, Rosemary Costello, Tim Robinson and Rebecca Blake.

Please pray for them and our hardworking Lay leaders.

We are where we are because God has called us to be part of a small church, but in recent months

we have been saddened by the deaths of much-loved members and friends, and serious ongoing illnesses, including a baby girl.

Please pray for healing and pray for us in our grieving.

At the same time we are excited to be starting up a Sunday School again after a gap of several years.

Please support Bec who will be the driving force behind this.

Pray also that the children and parents of the Ashgrove State School, where Bec teaches RE, will see the value of Christian education.

Several times a week a small Korean congregation uses our buildings.

They are called the Church of Grace and Truth and they minister to Korean young people studying here. Please pray for them.

We would love your support in prayer but also in attendance at our Christmas Tree Festival from Friday 7 to Sunday 9 December.

Please pray for good interaction with our local community as we strive to keep the Christ of Christmas in our living.

Pacific churches call for climate justice

THE GENERAL Secretary of the Pacific Conference of Churches said climate change needs to be at the top of the agenda of the churches in the region.

"This is especially with regards to the issue of resettlement and calling and holding countries accountable for their pollution," said Fe'iloakitau Kaho Tevi.

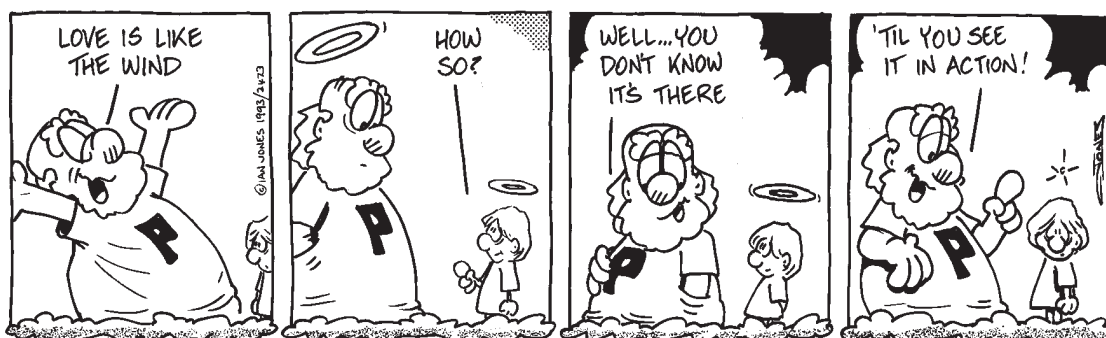
Many of the Pacific's small island nation states said they are already facing the adverse effects of climate change due to rising sea levels that could potentially displace millions of people in coming decades.

Delegates at the assembly called for solidarity from churches in highly industrialised countries to reduce the causes of human-induced climate change.

"We further urge these countries to take responsibility for the ecological damage that they have caused," they stated.

Assembly delegates said they would campaign for a regional immigration policy allowing citizens of countries most affected by climate change, especially by rising sea levels, to resettle in other Pacific Island nations or Pacific regional countries of their choice.

They would also campaign for an inter-regional sea level rise financial assistance scheme to finance the cost of mitigation, adaptation and resettlement.



Suspicious of agendas

We wish to express our concern about the Northern Territory Aboriginal Intervention legislation as a response to *The Little Children are Sacred* report.

While we applaud the government for taking this disturbing report seriously, we wonder why similar reports were largely ignored and believe that there may be other agenda behind this election-year legislation which seems to be more directed towards the control of land than the protection of children.

If the agenda in Aboriginal communities is to improve the wellbeing and safety of the people, particularly the children, then we would expect a culturally sensitive, community based solution to be the only appropriate approach.

If the agenda is to secure rights to mine uranium or build nuclear waste dumps, then the approach being taken is both clever and devious and we would object most vigorously.

Valerie Whitehead
Ecumenical Social Justice Group
Western Suburbs

If the latter, what is it worth? If it is true, what does it show except that a liturgical approach - traditional or non-traditional - has value?

If we have surveys such as the NCLS, let them prove what they set out to prove, and let's not use them to bolster our biases.

Paul Walton
Centenary

External Church

If a reader who uses *God's Minute* (Robert F. Schuller) should turn to 14 August, the prayer begins "External Father".

It is a dreaded typo, of course, but it took my mind back to my first parish.

A good friend, an 'outsider' shared his statement of faith: "I'm a buttress of the church, not a pillar. Pillars are inside".

Our hope is in an external cross and a high-pitched roof in every town and city, pointing to one who is nearer than breathing, closer than hands or feet.

Phillip Ramsay
Manly West

Definitely is awesome

I am frankly amazed that Graham Beattie can make the statements he does about the "sense of God's presence" in worship, which dismiss the experience of those who feel this presence as "older church worshippers", whose experience "may represent a traditional liturgical understanding" (September *Journey*).

Has he reached this conclusion through research, or assumption?

Spong is wrong

Rev Dr David Rankin's approval of the *Journey* advertisement of the visit of Bishop John Shelby Spong is disturbing.

The scriptures, particularly 2 John and Jude are clear in warning that we are not to give invitations to those who deny the basic tenets of our faith.

David points out that he gives students exposure to the "heretical minds of the early church".

So he should, but we should remember that these people who were considered heretics were not encouraged to spread their heresies.

On the contrary, they were often banished. I am not suggesting that we try to banish Bishop Spong, but I doubt the wisdom of promoting him.

Donald McKay
Samford

I believe that Dr Rankin (September *Journey*) has made a substantial point with regard to the need to identify and understand the teachings of those who claim to be aligned to the Christian faith but in word (and perhaps practice) show that they are misled and, in the case of church leaders such as Bishop Spong, misleading to the members of the Church.

Although I accept that we must clearly hear their argument so that we might challenge corrupt teaching we need to be clear about our understanding of human limits, we must know when enough is enough.

Bishop Spong has been asserting his rhetoric about liberating the Christian from the bonds of fundamentalism and literalism for quite some time now and I think we have a pretty good idea of his arguments and our counter arguments.

As one who has struggled long and hard to find a pathway through the mire of liberalism versus conservatism, I think it has become a wearisome walk, draining to the soul.

Rev Craig Mischewski
Townsville

Advertising heresy

Rev Dr David Rankin affirms that "it would not be inappropriate to classify Spong's views on many matters of theological substance as heretical".

May I respectfully suggest that *Journey* has a serious responsibility to inform readers when they may be listening to a "heretical" speaker, if it chooses to include advertisement for such speakers within its pages.

Bruce Morey
Highland Park

LETTERS

Spong not so bad

Rev Dr David Rankin in the same issue of *Journey* claimed that a significant number of the theological positions espoused by Dr Spong were inconsistent with Christian teaching and further that Spong's views on many matters of theological substance could be classified as heretical.

Recent statistics on Church Life would strongly indicate that Dr Spong's statement about Christianity is close to the mark.

Partly in efforts to counteract this, lay church members are encouraged to reach out to non-church attendees with the same traditional Christian stories that are now 2000 years old.

A large portion of the population "out there" can't wrap its brain around first century symbols of a three tiered universe and supernatural miracles.

This is the twenty-first century and not the world and understanding of 2 000 years ago.

I find much of that which Dr Spong says makes sense in 2007.

Basil Gillespie
Beachmere

Keep it simple

I would like to submit this opinion to you and trust that you will receive it in the spirit of love that ought to be engendered in each of us through the love of good.

Through conversation with various members of our congregation I have formed the opinion that much of the material in *Journey* does not have significant interest to the average worshipper in our church.

While I appreciate that most of the topics discussed need to be explored through the variety of opinions that must be evident in a broad church community I feel that one or two opinions would suffice.

The responses I have gathered from other church members indicate very little interest in some of the topics discussed.

I firmly believe that the Christian message was never intended to be overly academic.

Jesus chose very ordinary people to be his disciples, and his message of divine love was taken to the ordinary people in the community.

Angus I McKay
Sandgate

Please Pray

At Southport Uniting Church we have reviewed our pilgrim journey in Christ with new plans to take us from the faithful endurance of past fruitful years into our courageous vision for the future.

It was both encouraging and inspiring to us to have the focus of the September *Journey* on Evangelism, how the church shares faith and brings people into a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Let us pray for each other, for courage to walk alongside and share our stories of faith.

Rita Botwright
Southport



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

Not an accident

Iris Williams' call to 'keep meticulously to the rules' (September *Journey*) has more implications than are at first obvious.

If we are to reduce the road carnage, we must first accept that about 96% of road 'accidents' are not 'accidents' but due to human error. Thus most are preventable.

Calling them 'accidents' tends to absolve us as individuals from any responsibility of causing or contributing to the result.

Certainly few of us mean what happens when we make an error of judgment and others become involved. Nevertheless we are responsible for our speeding, our weariness, our blithe ignoring of the 'rules', our drug ingestion, our bald tyres, our ignorance of road conditions, or whatever.

Road safely begins with me - more so if I claim an allegiance to Christ.

I think it was to Ravi Zacharis that a guest commented in effect; "Ravi, there are in your household five drivers. From the way they drive, none would be recognised as Christians".

If an investigator were watching us drive, would there ever be enough evidence to convince us of being Christian?

A.W. Hartwig
Auchenflower

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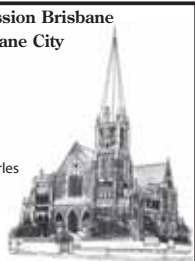
Albert Street Uniting Church Wesley Mission Brisbane
Celebrates 160 years of Ministry in Brisbane City
Sunday 21 October 2007

9.00 am Worship, including dedication of Memorial to Rev George Nash

11.30 am Lunch (bookings essential)

1.00 pm HymnFest, (also celebrating 300 years of Charles Wesley) with guest artists Anne Fulton, Adele Nisbet, Scott Malcolmson, Wesley Voices and choirs from St Andrews and Albert Street.

Contact 3031 3030 for further information



JOURNEY asks...

How has mental illness impacted on your life?

Helen Prior

It is now almost fifteen years since I had a breakdown, an event which had a lasting and mostly positive impact on my life.

Having been exposed to breakdowns both in my family and during my ministry I knew I would recover from it, especially if I took prompt action.

As a result I chose to resign from my parish.

With my resignation came the realisation that I now had nowhere to live.

Neville and Margaret Marsh came to the rescue, and their generous support over the next few months was a significant factor in my recovery.



Eventually, having depleted my savings and with no supply available, I spent some time on the dole, a fact church people seemed to find particularly hard to cope with.

As a result of the breakdown I gained needed space to step back from parish ministry so that I could follow my original call to hospital chaplaincy.

I learnt about self-care and its importance for my physical, mental and emotional well-being as well as for my ministry, and explored those aspects of my personality which had made me susceptible to a breakdown so that I could strengthen them.

I am now more interdependent rather than independent, having learnt to value true community.

Sadly though, my priorities are such that, whereas the church was once the place where I felt most at home, it is now the place I feel least at home.

My theology has changed significantly. I am more aware of my need for the love and grace of God and less concerned about rights and wrongs and answers to prayer.

And I search for deeply authentic relationships rather than being content with the superficial.

Having a breakdown was a very painful but enriching experience for which I am deeply thankful.

Rev Helen Prior is a chaplain at the Princess Alexandra Hospital, Woolloongabba

This back page contribution came from a young man who suffers from depression and who chooses to remain anonymous.

My battle with depression started almost two years ago. It came upon me gradually at first as I started to feel a sadness and emptiness about life.

Negativity began to overwhelm me and I struggled to see the positive anywhere.

Things that used to give me fulfilment and meaning became pointless and boring; it was as if the day to day pleasures of life seemed futile and I longed for a deeper level of existence.

I began cutting myself to help make the pain tangible, so I could see it with my own eyes.

I've made a few attempts on my life, but never whole heartedly.

The hardest thing about depression is the isolation and loneliness that comes with it.

I'm a very social person but often feel reluctant to socialise and force a happy face in public.

Then of course there's the stigma that's associated with any form of mental illness.

It would be a lot easier telling your boss you can't work full-time because you have an obvious physical condition.

I've been a church-goer my whole life and my father is a minister in the Uniting



Church, but I've never really found my way with God... for many difficult to explain reasons.

But I know he exists because I've seen the supernatural at his hand.

I've also seen friends brought away from drugs, alcohol, occultism and depression to a completely positive, clean lifestyle through their faith.

Throughout my depression I've struggled with religious obsessions as I've yearned to find a deeper meaning in life.

However, I think I now understand what God wants from me, and maybe what he needs from everyone.

I need to let go of all the baggage in my life, and give it over to him: the sin, the guilt, the temptations, the pain...all these things and perhaps more.

The challenge is actually doing it.

Lyndal Hutton

The years leading up to my son's diagnosis with a mental illness were frustrating and exhausting to say the least.

Feelings of fear, guilt, anxiety, heart-ache and helplessness prevailed.

To journey alongside my son, and give him support, I felt that I needed more strength, compassion, patience, wisdom and grace than I could ever possibly have.

Through this dark cloud of mixed and troubled emotions, hymns from my childhood played in my mind.

I was drawn to a warm and welcoming church and later encouraged to attend an Alpha course.

I discovered "What a friend I have in Jesus".

At times, I have feelings of guilt that it took the impact of mental illness on my life to discover this transforming friendship.

I have attended various mental health workshops, which I have found interesting and at times inspiring.

A Lab 1 course was most helpful in cultivating and improving my active listening and communication skills.

Living alongside a loved one with a mental illness has changed my outlook on life, particularly in relation to people's differences, and my priorities.

I question the boundaries of normality placed on us by secular standards and values.

I question what defines a successful life as I see my son interact with family members and friends and pursue worthwhile activities in the community.

I have great respect for his effort, courage and determination.

I have a sense of humble pride as I see the compassion of his young nieces and nephews as they observe their uncle in darker moments and the joy on their faces and the love shown to him when all is well.

I wonder what lessons of life they too are learning.

There are times when my son experiences extreme loneliness and other times when we have very meaningful conversations.

Mental illness challenges me and I know as I have been challenged I have changed.

Life is great and we have many good times together.

As my husband and

I work together as part of our son's support team to enable him to manage his illness, our relationship deepens and strengthens.

Infrequently, there are times of frustration and heart-ache but I am blessed with a loving, caring husband and family and supportive church family and I know that "Day by day and hour by hour I am carried in the arms of grace and love divine".

Lyndal Hutton is a member of Moggill Uniting Church Congregation



Robert Hutton

I am not lonely,

We all have a weakness and must ask for forgiveness to find the better part of me.

You are my friend and there is still each other. I am not lonely.

I struggle with the inner part of me when everything else is gone.

No matter how hard I try I seem to battle with this sickness, turning into another who fails.

Wait, hold, overcome, realise, Oh, Oh, Oh, Oh, Oh.

Take me away and let me discover this better part of me, 'cause we still have each other.

I still persist, we must find it out. Memory oh the memory, when the cloud still prevents the shining light,

Lonely, lonely, lonely, oh no I won't be lonely, just stay with me because there is something better.

Fill my eyes with light and let the clouds disappear.

Tonight I drink to youth because I want to stay sane.

Doesn't love hurt but I feel alive, because without this I won't survive.

I don't want to lose the truth which I had as a boy.

Robert Hutton is Lyndal's son

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