



Community workers  
mean business

Page 4



Only visiting  
this planet

Page 5



Being sorry,  
saying sorry

Page 14

# Give peace a chance

**"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, do not resist an evildoer... You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. (Matthew 5:38-39, 43-44)**

MOST CHRISTIANS like to think of themselves as peaceful citizens and many of us count among our heroic figures those who have lived as model pacifists such as Martin Luther King Jr., Mohandas Gandhi, Albert Schweitzer, Baroness Bertha von Suttner, John Lennon, Dorothy Day, the Dalai Lama, John Howard Yoder and Jesus.

Yet 2000 years of Christian history has not managed to curb the violence or end the ceaseless wars.

As Hermann Goering said at the Nuremberg Trials after World War II, "Why, of course the people don't want war. Why should some poor slob on a farm want to risk his life in a war when the best he can get out of it is to come back to his farm in one piece?"

"Naturally, the common people don't want war... That is understood.

"But after all it is the leaders of the country who determine the policy, and it is always a simple matter to drag the people along, whether it is a democracy, or a fascist dictatorship, or a parliament, or a communist dictatorship," Goering said.

"All you have to do is to tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger."

But the rejection of military violence was one of the key tenets of the early church and Church historian Roland Bainton claims there is no evidence whatever of Christians in the army from the end of the New Testament period to the decade of 170-180.

"East and West repudiated participation in warfare for Christians," Bainton said.

It was during the era of the Emperor Constantine when Christianity became accepted as the religion of the state that those who had been the persecuted became the persecutors.

Christian violence reached its height during the violent Crusades and the Spanish Inquisition but, as General Secretary of the World Council of Churches Samuel Kobia said, Christians have continued to "legitimise a culture of violence by invoking God arbitrarily to suit a particular agenda for aggression."

It was Martin Luther King Jr. who pointed out that the ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy.

"Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it.

"Through violence you murder the hater, but you do not murder hate. In fact, violence merely increases hate," King said.

"Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars.

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Love is the most durable power in the world.

"Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend."

This month *Journey* asks how we might give peace a chance.

By Bruce Mullan



## More on making peace

P.2 Moderator / Editorial

P.7 Blessed are the peacemakers  
Turning young minds from violence

P.8 Fighting for pacifism  
Give a child a gun?

P.9 Churches condemn "War on Terror"

P.10 Not peace but the sword  
Doing peace together

P.16 *Journey* asks

# Called to be peacemakers

I RECENTLY went to see the movie, *Charlie Wilson's War*.

Charlie Wilson was a United States Congressman who became actively involved in a clandestine operation aimed at the defeat of the Russians who had invaded Afghanistan in 1979.

The movie is both a fascinating and frightening insight into the political manoeuvring involved in such a venture and the consequences that follow.

The provision of arms to the local Afghan resistance fighters resulted in major losses of Russian aircraft and tanks and led to the withdrawal of all Russian forces in 1989.

However, the Americans, having achieved their political objective, effectively abandoned the Afghan people to fend for themselves and the outcome of that, as we know, was the rise of the Taliban and all the excesses that inevitably followed.

Charlie Wilson saw this abandonment of Afghanistan as an appalling betrayal.

Reflecting on all that had happened he said: "These things really happened. They were glorious and we changed the world. Then we (totally messed) up the endgame."

Like almost every other generation in human history, we are witnesses to the constant perpetration of armed conflict, violence, inhumanity, genocide and murder.

Israelis and Palestinians go on maiming and killing each other and Christian pastors fighting for justice in the Philippines are routinely assassinated.

Human rights abuses in many countries are an absolute disgrace and tribal conflicts, nepotism and corruption in a number of African nations mean that millions of people live in poverty and fear.

The war in Iraq is far from any kind of constructive resolution and the killing goes on.

Though images and stories from these many different situations of conflict are constantly before us



## Message from the Moderator

Rev Dr David Pitman

through TV, radio and newspapers, it can be easy for us to become indifferent and complacent.

The suffering of others has no direct impact on our own circumstances. It is not our own safety, or that of our families, that is threatened.

In the face of all this, what does it mean to be disciples of Jesus in a

role as a peacemaking body in the world.

The Christian faith is grounded in the good news that God loves all of creation and that all people in the world are called to be as neighbours to each other.

We believe that God came in the crucified and risen Christ to make peace; and that God calls all Christians to be peace makers, to save life, to heal and to love their neighbours.

Any person who is not treated with dignity and respect represents a turning away from the belief that human beings, our neighbours, are made in the image of God.

The path of faithful discipleship does not mean retreating from the difficulties of the world, but getting involved in finding a better way.

It does not mean avoiding life and its struggles, but rather taking risks, standing up for what is just, acting as neighbour to those in most need and sharing the great love of God in all we say and all we do.

Being faithful to Christ means that we will seek to resolve conflict and pursue reconciliation even when we believe that we are the victims of misunderstanding or abuse.

We are not ready, or even competent, to address issues of global significance, until we have dealt with our own demons and can pray with sincerity, "Forgive me my sins as I forgive those who have sinned against me."

**"Being faithful to Christ means that we will seek to resolve conflict and pursue reconciliation."**

world of conflict and violence? We can't really avoid that question and nor should we.

Doug Hynd, a Mennonite from Canberra, writes:

"Christ commits Christians to a strong presumption against war.

"The wanton destructiveness of modern warfare strengthens this obligation.

"Standing in the shadow of the Cross, Christians have a responsibility to count the cost, speak out for the victims, and explore every alternative before a nation goes to war."

Peacemaking is central to our vocation as Christians and is central to our confessing Christ in a world of violence, and it begins with us, where we are, in all our relationships and interactions with others.

The Uniting Church has consistently affirmed the church's

## From the Editor

As a teenager watching the daily news of conflict in Vietnam and being required by the National Service Act to register for the ballot for possible conscription and overseas service, I grew up with a keen interest in questions of peacemaking.

While not a conscientious objector (a possibility I would now have more seriously considered given the passing of years), I had no ambition to participate in what I perceived with limited knowledge to be an unjust and inappropriate conflict.

It was also a time when we lived under that shadow of an impending nuclear holocaust as families considered the possibility of constructing bomb shelters and made evacuation plans which could be implemented "just in case".

As a Christian I sought desperately to discover what insights my new found faith might offer to my thinking on issues of war and peace and was profoundly influenced by contemporary and historic Christian pacifists, and then later by the writings of Christian peacemakers such as Ronald Sider, particularly by his classic *Nuclear Holocaust and Christian Hope* (1982).

Most significant for me however were my frequent readings through John's Gospel chapters 13 to 19 and reflections on Jesus' words and actions during his passion.

While others of a more militaristic persuasion may proof text Jesus' actions in the temple or statements about not bringing peace but a sword, I looked at the broader picture of Jesus, living in a military occupied country, dealing with grossly unfair treatment by the judicial system and facing the prospect of his own violent death, for an indication of the compass he lived by.

I am prepared to be as wrong on this matter as I am on other issues, but it seemed to me then, as it does now, that Jesus was the ultimate pacifist, prepared to carry his non-violence through to his own death while never once cowering to the domination of those around him who exercised their sense of authority through violent activity.

Jesus did not respond with physical or verbal aggression to those who provoked, goaded and tortured him and asked his disciples to put away their swords.

While Jesus submitted himself to the authority of those who mistreated him and did not resist his arrest and crucifixion, he consistently challenged their unjust and inappropriate actions, clearly asserting that what they were doing was wrong.

I wonder if I could do the same.

Bruce Mullan

## Sign of the Times



REV PETER Holden from Gosford in NSW wrote an open letter to John Howard. You can read the full letter at [www.journeyonline.com.au](http://www.journeyonline.com.au).

"...Compassion always comes with a price tag. It did then and it does now. It seems to me that even if I don't think saying 'sorry' will do any good, I would be less than compassionate if I did not do it and passed up that opportunity of a bargain basement priced step towards reconciliation and a step towards breaking down the barriers which diminish all of us.

"John, it is a pity you missed the opportunity to lead the way on our journey towards national reconciliation.

"Even though it is too late for that now, I hope you will ponder my reasons for saying 'sorry' and ask again whether they can be important to you too. I hope you can join us on the journey."

Email your Signs of the Times to [journey@ucaqld.com.au](mailto:journey@ucaqld.com.au)

## JOURNEY

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# Young people are just not connecting

By Bruce Mullan

IN THE ten years between 1996 and 2006, 100,000 young people ceased to identify with the Uniting Church.

This is the alarming information revealed by the Australian national census data said Uniting Church Minister and Senior Research Officer of the Christian Research Association (CRA) Rev Dr Philip Hughes.

Dr Hughes said his chief concern was that the Uniting Church was losing engagement with a generation of younger people.

CRA looked at the age profile of those who identify in the Census as Uniting Church and then projected what (according to Census information) the local church demographic should look like.

In most cases, actual congregations are considerably older than might be expected from the Census' Uniting Church statistics.

"The older people are more likely to attend," Dr Hughes said.

"The Uniting Church had a large 'fringe' group of people who used to attend occasionally and who now never attend.

"Some of these people once said that they belonged to the Uniting



Queensland Synod's Vision for Mission Advocate Rev Duncan Macleod (left) comparing notes with Senior Research Officer of the Christian Research Association Rev Dr Philip Hughes. Photo by Osker Lau

Church because their parents did, or because they went to a Sunday School in the Uniting Church or its predecessors.

"Now they no longer feel any connection and are no longer

identifying with the Church.

"My concern is that we need to have different forms of engagement - which may not be around a local congregation - through which we find ways of raising the issues of

spirituality and exploring those issues of the spiritual dimension of life with people.

"We need to be doing that with young people in a much more diverse range of different ways.

"There are few who will commit themselves to continuous involvement in a congregation but a lot who are willing to explore in other forms."

The Queensland Synod's Vision for Mission Advocate Rev Duncan Macleod said there were a number of events such as Summer Madness and the National Christian Youth Convention that help young people explore faith, but those who attend have come through congregations.

"We need to develop alternative pathways to these kinds of events," Mr Macleod said.

"We're looking for a different way of connecting; recognising that for many people their engagement in spiritual formation happens intensely but less often, rather than in a few moments of inspiration every Sunday."

Dr Hughes said one of the big growth areas identified by the 2006 Census was a 23% growth in those people who identified themselves as Christians but did not specify a particular denominational group.

"The fastest growing Christian group in the last Census was in fact those who identified as 'Christians not further defined'."

The Christian Research Association is yet to do an age breakdown of this group but Dr Hughes said while the proportion is still quite small, this rise is quite substantial.

## Churches name gambling as a health issue

By Bruce Mullan

THE CONSERVATIVE estimate is that 1% of the adult Queensland population has serious problems with gambling, and they in turn affect the lives of another 2-3% who face severe problems due to the gambling of a close relative or partner.

Heads of Churches representative on the State Government's Responsible Gambling Committee Rev Dr Noel Preston says this represents between 80,000 and 120,000 Queenslanders who face significant problems.

"We believe around 48% of total gaming machine revenue is sourced from problem gamblers and the proportion for all forms of gambling is around 37," Dr Preston said.

A BBC report on gambling in Australia claimed that more than 80% of the Australian adult population gambles, the highest rate on the planet, and that Australia has the highest number of 'Vegas slot' style electronic gaming machines per capita in the world - approximately four times the number per capita as the United States.

"For many, the jingles and electronic clatter of the pokies have become just as quintessentially Australian sounds as the call of a kookaburra," the report said.



The Community Sector Members of the Responsible Gambling Advisory Committee have issued a "Statement of Current Concerns" which Queensland Moderator Rev Dr David Pitman said identifies the serious issues the Heads of Churches have raised with the State Government on several occasions.

"It is our hope that the Government will look beyond the attraction of financial gain to consider the enormous personal and social cost that gambling incurs in our society," said Dr Pitman.

Dr Preston said the vast majority of Australian gamblers do so responsibly but problem gambling is a serious public health issue that must now be addressed.

"We believe it is now time to introduce further measures to redress the harm being done to some of the most vulnerable in our society."

He said the Community Sector Members of the Responsible Gambling Advisory Committee are calling for reduction in trading hours for gaming venues, control of cash withdrawals at automated teller machines in gaming venues, more stringent licensing guidelines, and a moratorium on issuing new licences.

"Venues should also be prohibited from cashing their own cheques that they have issued to winning players, which clearly contravenes the intention of the regulations concerning limits payable in cash."

According to the Queensland Government's Office of Gaming Regulation there are more than 41,000 gaming machines in Queensland which paid out metered wins of almost 1.8 billion dollars in the past twelve months.



Bayside Uniting Church has many activities that help live out its mission: play groups, youth groups, choirs, interacting with local schools, and even travelling to Uganda to build houses for orphans.

To support these groups the church has a U.C.I.S investment for each, which Bayside Uniting Church Treasurer Allan Nutley said makes it easy to monitor funds and helps the wider church.

"U.C.I.S provides ethical investments that not only help support our congregation's projects, but enable us to help other churches," Allan said.

"By investing our funds with U.C.I.S, we're helping to serve God and further His Kingdom."

Read the full story in the Autumn edition of *energy* at [www.ucis.com.au](http://www.ucis.com.au).



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Singer Sarah Blasko, Biddy Bag founder Samantha Jockel, and Biddy Bag team member Ivy Turner.  
Photo by Jason Zambelli

## Community workers mean business

By Mardi Lumsden

WHEN SAMANTHA Jockel thought about engaging her local community, it wasn't in the normal way one would think.

Ms Jockel wanted to connect with local isolated elderly ladies, use the skills they already had and share them with the world.

She did this through handbags, though not your average bag.

Biddy Bag is a non-profit public company "limited by guarantee", said Ms Jockel.

It is a social enterprise that fuses the craft skills of a group of mature-aged women from Logan City to Redcliffe and the designs of young women. The result is a one-

of-a-kind bag and the creation of a community for the women who are involved.

The makers of the bags receive over half of the profits and each bag tells the personal story of its maker on a tag sewn into the seam.

The bags have been featured in *The Courier Mail* and fashion magazine *Frankie* as well as *Triple J* radio and other publications around the country.

Ms Jockel said buying a Biddy Bag is more than buying just another handbag.

"It is about realising that behind every product there are people," Ms Jockel told *Triple J*.

"It is about connecting you to the person who made the bag."

Not only does the business provide unique and fun fashion pieces, it also provides a social activity for the makers.

The initiative even caught the attention of ARIA Award winning singer Sarah Blasko who is now the official Biddy Bags spokesperson after being approached by Ms Jockel.

Alleviating the social isolation for certain groups in society is also one of the aims for another micro-business called Blackstar Coffee.

Blackstar Coffee director Martin Richards said there are a few key elements at work in his company that provides Fair Trade organic coffee.

One of those elements is creating ways for people from disadvantaged backgrounds to earn an income and develop business skills.

"We are about multicultural inclusivity, worker ownership, sustainability, and promoting and supporting local community," he said.

Blackstar don't just trade in coffee though, they have also started a multicultural soccer team they call Blackstar FC.

The company actively employs and trains people from a variety of backgrounds and looks forward to that commitment growing with the company.

By freshly roasting 100% certified Fair Trade organic coffee, Blackstar Coffee is not only assisting international coffee growers but is also providing a coffee that both tastes good and feels good for the growing speciality coffee market in Brisbane.

Both Biddy Bag and Blackstar Coffee have been assisted by the Vision for Mission program.

For more information on these social enterprises or to place an order visit [www.biddybags.com.au](http://www.biddybags.com.au) or [www.blackstarcoffee.com.au](http://www.blackstarcoffee.com.au)

## Parents and peers can combat binge drinking

AS THE Prime Minister Kevin Rudd seeks to curb binge drinking among young people, an Australian Catholic University (ACU) researcher has discovered direct links between the approval of parents and friends and the likelihood of drinking with potentially harmful consequences.

The studies by ACU researcher Dr Rivka Witenberg looked at the underlying attitudes that influence excessive, or binge, drinking in 18-25 year olds.

In a screening test, participants made judgments about binge drinking and explained the justification for their decisions.

Results showed that negative beliefs about the consequences of alcohol were associated with decreased levels of drinking.

In one scenario where young people faced responsibility for their actions the morning after a night of binge drinking, over 80% rejected binge drinking as a healthy attitude.

They instead expressed the desire to be responsible and in control of their actions.

"However, it is interesting to note," said Dr Witenberg, "that

when participants held pre-existing positive attitudes towards binge drinking, they endorsed excessive drinking within the scenario and were much more likely to view binge drinking in a positive light.

Dr Witenberg sees binge drinking as a major problem for young people in Australia.

"Many young people embrace prevailing social beliefs that drinking to excess is fun and relieves stress.

"We know less about young people who are protected from excessive drinking and the factors that create this environment.

"That is what we were interested in discovering," Dr Witenberg said.

Overall, the studies showed that participants who valued socialising over health tended to be binge drinkers, and that the best predictors of binge drinking were the attitudes and behaviours of young people's parents and peers.

In addition, the studies showed that males drank significantly more alcohol than females and that rural respondents consumed significantly more alcohol than their urban counterparts.

## Transit Lounge targets students

A PUBLICITY campaign has been launched to promote the Uniting Church National Assembly's online magazine *The Transit Lounge* to university students around the country.

*The Transit Lounge* aims to help young people who are not necessarily part of the church to make sense of what it means to be Christian or on a spiritual path in contemporary society.

Chaplains Coordinator for the Presbytery of Sydney Rev Dr John Hirt and other chaplains around the nation handed brochures out at stalls and to Bible study groups.

Dr Hirt says the students' first reaction was one of quizzical interest.

"That the Uniting Church has been active in launching this kind of campaign, principally reaching out to unchurched young adults in a way that's not predictable and is edgy and inviting is commendable," he said.

With its broad, non-sectarian focus *The Transit Lounge* is particularly relevant to educational settings where it can be accessed not just as an e-zine but also as a useable resource.

Created as a forum for exploring issues of faith and spirituality the e-zine is published fortnightly, with articles relating to a particular theme.

Visit *The Transit Lounge* at [www.thetransitlounge.com.au](http://www.thetransitlounge.com.au)

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by steve bagi

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Hundreds of homes were inundated and lost precious belongings in the Mackay floods. Photo by Euan McDonald

## Lifeline supports Mackay flood victims

LIFELINE COUNSELLORS sprang into action in Mackay after a severe weather system dumped more than 600 millimetres of rain in just six hours cutting off power, forcing schools and businesses to close down and flooding 200 houses in one suburb alone.

Acting Lifeline Community Recovery Coordinator Richard Johnson said Lifeline activated the Community Recovery team in Mackay as soon as the extent of the disaster became obvious.

"Community Recovery counsellors are trained in psychological first-aid and their first priority is to provide counselling to those suffering the distress of evacuation," Mr Johnson said.

As the water levels eased, Lifeline teams stretched out into the community to support businesses and residents and set up one-stop-shops in Community Recovery Centres.

Still exhausted after his recent work in the Belyando shire, local Lifeline Counsellor Steve Davenport had to dig deep to find his second wind to help people affected by flood waters in his home community of Mackay.

Lifeline Community Care Queensland also brought in Community Recovery Officers

from other parts of the state as local Lifeline staff members were affected by flood waters that inundated their homes.

The first Lifeline team arrived on Saturday morning and, after a thorough briefing, were dispatched to the Community Recovery Centres to attend to the psychological and emotional needs of the hundreds of people seeking support as a result of their personal devastation.

After visiting the Community Recovery Centre Mr Johnson said he was overwhelmed by the high spirits and patience of the multitude of people as they waited to receive financial support from Government officials.

Among them, however, were many people who were absolutely shattered by their loss.

"Men, women and children were sitting and weeping as the realisation of their losses began to settle" said Mr Johnson.

"It is very difficult for people to complete official forms and make decisions about their future when their emotions are raw and overpowering.

"The Lifeline team have been absolutely sensational in providing psychological first aid," Mr Johnson said.

"I anticipate Lifeline Community Recovery teams will be active in Mackay for a couple of weeks to help residents and local business owners recover from the physical and emotional damage caused by the torrential rain."

Lifeline Community Recovery Public Relations Officer Anna-Maria Masci said the whole community can be very proud of the team of Lifeline counsellors who have put their own lives on hold to be available for others.

Chief Executive Officer for UnitingCare Queensland Ms Anne Cross reported that part of the BlueCare residential facility in Mackay was flooded and eighteen residents were temporarily accommodated in a part of the facility that is on higher ground.

"Several staff and their families moved into the facility to maintain services, despite their own homes being flooded."

The Respite Centre and Domiciliary Centre were also flooded and BlueCare Staff providing home based services were on the road trying to maintain services.

Two LifeLine Community Care Opportunity Shops were flooded but material aid was provided from those shops that weren't flooded.

## He was only visiting this planet

By Bruce Mullan

LONG HAIRED American musician, singer, songwriter and producer and Christian radical from the 60s and 70s Larry Norman died last month.

His second studio album, *Only Visiting This Planet*, produced with assistance from Beatles producer George Martin became theme music for the Jesus Movement and caused controversy among many conservative Christians when it was released in 1972.

Born in Texas in 1947 Norman moved to California with his family at the age of three and became fascinated with the music of Elvis Presley.

He frequently accompanied his father on Christian missions to prisons and hospitals and, at the age of nine, began writing and performing original rock and roll songs at school, experimenting and incorporating a spiritual message into his music.

"I wanted to push aside the traditional gospel quartet music, break down the church doors and let the hippies and the prostitutes and other unwashed rabble into the sanctuary," Norman said.

"I wanted to talk about feeding the poor, going into the world...[I felt that] most of the modern music was anaemic and needed a transfusion."

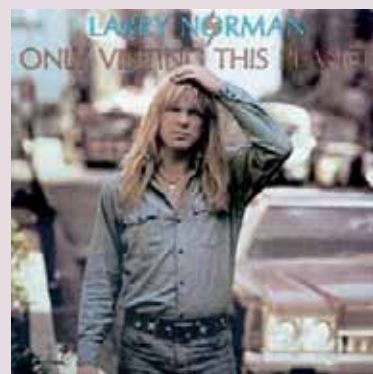
In 2001 Norman was inducted along with Elvis Presley into the Gospel Music Association's Hall of Fame and in 2007 Norman was inducted into the San Jose Rocks Hall of Fame.

Norman raised the ire of many conservatives in the Gospel music industry not only because of his music but also for the company he kept.

"The churches weren't going to accept me looking like a street person with long hair and faded jeans. They did not like the music I was recording. And I had no desire to preach the gospel to the converted."

Norman died holding the hand of his brother, alternative rock guitarist Charles Norman a member of the band Guards of Metropolis.

"We spent this past week laughing, singing, and praying with him, and all the while he had us taking notes on new song ideas and instructions on how to continue his ministry and art," Charles Norman said.



Just before his death Norman dictated a message to his friend Allen Fleming who typed these words into Larry Norman's computer.

"I feel like a prize in a box of crackerjacks with God's hand reaching down to pick me up," Norman said.

"I have been under medical care for months. My wounds are getting bigger. I have trouble breathing. I am ready to fly home.

"My brother Charles is right, I won't be here much longer. I can't do anything about it. My heart is too weak. I want to say goodbye to everyone.

"My plan is to be buried in a simple pine box with some flowers inside."

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# Church reports on global corruption

RICH NATIONS benefiting from corruption are making the poor even poorer.

The first independent report on global corruption since the election of the Rudd Government says Australia's foreign policy needs to cut off loop-holes in its battle against corruption.

The Uniting Church presented the first major independent report on global corruption to the new government of Australia at Parliament House.

The report, *From Corruption to Good Governance*, challenges the role of wealthy nations and big business in fostering and benefiting from corruption.

It calls on the Rudd Government to ensure that penalties for foreign bribery are adequate to deter

bribery, to guarantee whistleblower protection for people who expose bribery and support greater global efforts to shut down tax havens.

The President of the Uniting Church in Australia Rev Gregor Henderson said, "Corruption is an issue that hampers global efforts to deal with poverty and it needs efforts from all countries."

"Sadly, there are wealthy countries that continue to facilitate, reward and benefit from corruption in the developing world at the cost of the lives of those in poverty."

One of the authors of the report and the Director of the Justice and International Mission Unit at the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, Dr Mark Zirnsak said, "There is a real need for a concerted global effort to shut down tax havens, whose

secrecy and trust services provide a secure cover for laundering of proceeds of corruption, fraud, the illicit arms trade, other crime and the funding of terrorism."

Amanda Johnson, National Coordinator of Micah Challenge Australia said "Stable democracies like Australia are blessed because we have tools to tackle corruption and we have strong media and civil society to highlight best practice and expose mistakes."

"We can encourage our neighbours who are struggling to cope with development pressures and poverty to set standards of honesty and fairness too."

The report was produced by the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, with assistance from TEAR Australia and Micah Challenge.



Rev Ellis Bramley has been ordained for 70 years.  
Photo by Bruce Mullan

## Made it to 70 years of ministry

QUEENSLAND UNITING Church Minister Rev Ellis Bramley who is now 96 years old and still worships every Sunday at Cherside-Kedron Community Church celebrated 70 years of ordination on 28 February.

Ordained in 1938 Mr Bramley is still in remarkably good health, celebrated the milestone with enthusiasm.

Cherside-Kedron Uniting Church Minister Rev Glenn Mulcahy said it is not very often that Uniting Church Ministers celebrates 70 years of ordination.

"I also learned that he received over 450 Christmas cards last Christmas, such is the large range of friends he still keeps in touch with across Australia."

Mr Bramley was accepted for Home Missionary training at 18 years, as a candidate for the ministry at 21 and was ordained at 27.



Ordination intensive group with Moreton Rivers Presbytery Minister Rev Murray Fysh (left) and Moderator Rev Dr David Pitman and Principal Rev Dr David Rankin (right). Photo by Mardi Lumsden

## Long-timers workers to be ordained

A GROUP of 23 Uniting Church Youth Workers and Lay Pastors attended a Formation Intensive held at the Synod Centre in Brisbane in March.

The Intensive was part of the transition process associated with the new Specified Ministry of Pastor which will commence on 1 July 2008.

The reorganisation of specified ministry by the last Assembly meeting in 2006 gave some long-term lay church workers the option of being ordained as Ministers of the Word or Deacons.

Moreton Rivers Presbytery Minister Rev Murray Fysh said the transition was recognition of their call and long service to the church.

"Some of these people have been in ministry in the Uniting Church for 20 or 30 years."

## Uniting Church meets Brendan Nelson

UNITING CHURCH President Rev Gregor Henderson, Assembly General Secretary Rev Terence Corkin, and National Director of UnitingJustice Rev Elenie Poulos,

have had an encouraging first meeting with Dr Brendan Nelson, leader of the opposition.

"The meeting was held as part of UCA's ongoing commitment to engage with the political life of the country via both the government and opposition," said Ms Poulos.

"We're hoping to meet with the Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, in the near future and have written to him requesting a meeting."

The meeting with Dr Nelson focused on developing the relationship between the Uniting Church and the coalition.

Dr Nelson showed a keen interest in learning more about Uniting Church services and activities.

"We're also committed to meeting each other regularly and communicating about Uniting Church responses to various issues of public policy and community life in Australia," said Ms Poulos.

Dr Nelson expressed a firm commitment to ongoing dialogue between the Liberal Party and religious leaders of various traditions.

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The Network for Christian Formation  
UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

## BOARD OF THE NETWORK

The Implementation team for the Network for Christian Formation is seeking expressions of interest from individuals who would be interested in serving on the Board of the Network. The Network for Christian Formation will encompass the work of Trinity Theological College and the Pilgrim Learning Community and will provide a range of opportunities for ministerial, lay and congregational education and formation. While the Board will fulfil the functions of the M.E.B. as set out in the Assembly Regulations, it will have the authority to oversight all the work of the Network for Christian Formation.

Therefore we are seeking people who have a strong commitment to the vision adopted by the 26th Synod and can bring capacities in the following areas:-

- experience in tertiary teaching, academic research and professional learning;
- understanding of the contemporary missional context;
- experience in community-based learning;
- cross-cultural sensitivities;
- knowledge and experience of vocational formation.

Of the seven people to be appointed, at least five will be members of the Uniting Church. No Faculty or Synod staff member shall be appointed under this membership category.

The Board shall ensure it has access to business and marketing experience as necessary.

Those who would be willing to serve on this Board can submit an expression of interest with appropriate CV to the General Secretary, Rev Douglas Jones, by 11th April. [GPO Box 674, BRISBANE 4001.]



# Blessed are the peacemakers

for they will be called the children of God

*This well known saying of Jesus is the subject of one chapter of Brisbane Christian activist Dave Andrews' latest book, Plan Be. This is an extract from Chapter 7.*

MANY DEVOTEES of many different religious traditions claim to be the 'children of God'. And many of these so-called 'children of God' slaughter their brothers and sisters in the name of God.

Christians, Muslims and Jews use the violence advocated in the Hebrew Bible to justify their violence.

After all, they say, Moses says, "If there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise."

Before condemning others Christians should note that in the past thousand years there have been more devastating wars among Christian states fighting each

other than between Christian and Muslim states.

And predominantly Christian states have killed more Jews and Muslims than predominantly Muslim states have killed Christians or Jews.

Jesus treated the Hebrew Bible, our 'Old Testament', as his authority, but he interpreted the Law according to the Prophets, especially Isaiah, whom he quoted at the start of his ministry.

Jesus' devotion to peacemaking was inspired by Isaiah's vision for peace.

Jesus knew by heart, "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace" and the prayer for his people: "no longer will violence be heard in your land, nor ruin or destruction within your borders".

Jesus argued for a different approach to that taken in the

Mosaic law that legitimised retaliation.

"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, Do not resist (or retaliate against) an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also".

Jesus told his disciples, "You should always be ready to die - but never to kill - for your faith", so, under his guidance, the Jesus movement became a Jewish peace movement.

For three centuries, Christianity was a completely pacifist movement. The Apostles taught Christians the pacifist principle: 'love does no harm to its neighbour'.

Paul also said, "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge. On the contrary: 'If your enemy(ies) are hungry, feed (them); if (they) are thirsty, give

(them) something to drink...' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

When Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, Ambrose and Augustine developed a set of criteria to call those in power - who make war - to be accountable to the principles of justice.

They argued that in order for a war to be conducted according to the principles of justice it would need to meet eight specific conditions.

According to these criteria, our current wars are not 'just wars'.

As Christians committed to peace and justice, we should robustly oppose these hostilities and actively seek reconciliation with our enemies.

Christ says that only committed 'peacemakers' have a legitimate claim to be called the 'children of God'.



Dave Andrews is a Christian author, speaker, social activist, community developer, and a key figure in the Waiter's Union, a Brisbane inner city Christian community network working with Indigenous Australians, refugees and people with disabilities. This latest book *Plan Be - Be the change you want to see in the world* is published by Authentic and is available from all good Christian bookstores and on online from [www.lastfirst.net.au](http://www.lastfirst.net.au)

## Turning young minds away from violence

Bruce Mullan

"IT WON'T cost you the earth to rescue your child from violent toys," was a catch phrase of a 1988 Uniting Church campaign to have war toys banned.

Social Responsibility Consultant with the then Department for Mission and Parish Services Mr Mark Young convened a meeting of Queensland Uniting Church peacemakers concerned about what he described as, "the armoury of toy guns, military paraphernalia, wargames and victim toys" available at that stage in local toy shops.

Mr Young and others collected signatures for an anti-war toys petition but also encouraged parents to monitor the television shows children were viewing and ask local kindergartens and schools to create "war toy free zones".

A Commonwealth Committee of Inquiry into victim toys subsequently recommended self-regulation of the toy industry which the then Minister for Consumer Affairs, Senator Nick Bolkus determined after 12 months to have been ineffective.



Consequently, in 1989 the supply of specific victim toys in Australia was banned under the Trade Practices Act.

Twenty years on Mr Young said the culture of violence is still a concern to Christians and peace activists.

"I believe it is important to address the symptoms of this culture - such as the promotion of war toys and xenophobia in children's media - as well as the

root causes," he said.

"For example, some European countries have shown leadership by banning the advertising of war toys and trying to restrict their sale or import."



UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA  
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

### NATIONAL CONSULTANT, THEOLOGY & DISCIPLESHIP

**The National Assembly:** The Uniting Church in Australia seeks a full-time National Consultant for Theology & Discipleship, an agency of the Uniting Church National Assembly. The Assembly is the national council of the Uniting Church in Australia with responsibilities in matters of doctrine, worship, government and discipline.

#### Responsibilities

The National Consultant, Theology & Discipleship, is responsible for providing leadership and vision to the Church in areas of worship, doctrine, ecclesiology and theological critique and to initiate, recommend and implement policies and programs of the National Assembly.

#### Please Contact:

Rev Glenda Blakefield for a position description. Email: [glendab@nat.uca.org.au](mailto:glendab@nat.uca.org.au) Phone: 02 82674203  
Closing date: 30 June 2008

#### Key Selection Criteria

1. Specialist theological knowledge and leadership skills in the areas of Worship, Doctrine, Missiology, Evangelism, and Relations with other Faiths.
2. Post graduate qualifications in Theology.
3. Demonstrated theological leadership in the Church, in accordance with the traditions of the Uniting Church as expressed in the Basis of Union.
4. Ability to provide the President, General Secretary, Assembly agencies and other bodies with assistance in the areas of Doctrine, Theology and Ecclesiology.
5. Capacity and willingness to work in a variety of team settings.
6. Location of the role is negotiable



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- member of partner church.

Details from David Thompson:  
[davidt@wontulp.qld.edu.au](mailto:davidt@wontulp.qld.edu.au) 0429 992 037 [www.wontulp.qld.edu.au](http://www.wontulp.qld.edu.au)

## It's Just War

Ambrose and Augustine developed a theology of "just war" - war that is acceptable under certain conditions:

**One,** it would need to be motivated by a 'just' cause - and the only cause considered to be 'just' was to stop the killing of large numbers of people.

**Two,** it would need to be administered by a 'just' authority - duly constituted authorities had to proceed carefully according to due process before taking action.

**Three,** it would always need to be a last resort - after all means of negotiation, mediation, arbitration and non-violent sanctions had been exhausted.

**Four,** it would need to be for a 'just' purpose - to secure the welfare, safety and security of all parties in the dispute, including the enemy.

**Five,** it would need to be a reasonable risk - not a futile gesture, but a realistic venture, with a reasonable hope of success.

**Six,** it would need to be cost-effective - the outcomes of victory would outweigh the human costs of battle.

**Seven,** that any government intending to go to war should announce their intentions - articulating the conditions that would need to be met to avert it - in order to avoid going to war if at all possible.

**Eight,** that, if the war were to go ahead, not only the ends, but also the means would need to be 'just' - non-combatants must be protected; once combatants surrender, they too must be protected from slaughter; and all prisoners must be protected from torture.



# Fighting for active pacifism

By **Mardi Lumsden**

THROUGHOUT HISTORY Christians have taken up arms to fight against injustice, fight for the oppressed and for the survival of the freedom we enjoy in Australia today.

In the words of Aristotle, “We make war that we may live in peace”.

There is, however, another side to war - that of the Christian pacifists.

Not just those who abhor any kind of violence, but those throughout history who have actively stood up for non-violent action against unjust violence and for some, have even fought in just wars.

Prof Dr Walter Wink, Professor emeritus at Auburn Theological Seminary in New York, said there is more to the human condition than fight or flight instincts. Dr

Wink defined a new, third way to responding to violence.

He defined the three instincts as, “Violent opposition, passivity, and the third way of militant non-violence articulated by Jesus.”

In his essay *Beyond Just War and Pacifism: Jesus’ Nonviolent Way* Dr Wink said fence sitting was not an option for the great Christian pacifists of our time.

“Jesus, in short, abhors both passivity and violence,” he said.

Christian pacifism is a theological and ethical position that any form of violence or war is incompatible with Christianity. Possibly two of the best known Christian pacifists were Martin Luther King Jr and Leo Tolstoy.

Martin Luther King Jr once said, “Peace is not the absence of war, but the presence of justice”.

It is through this theory that

many people have fought in their own way against all acts of war.

Like many Christian pacifists, *War and Peace* author Leo Tolstoy’s faith was based on the Sermon on the Mount and was focussed into five key ideas including that people should suppress their anger, renounce all resistance to evil, and love their enemies.

Priest and author Ammon Hennacy was one of the countless individuals who was imprisoned because of refusal to serve in World War I.

During his two years in prison, Mr Hennacy had a profound conversion to Christian non-violence after reading the Bible.

In his essay *Love Your Enemy*, he said this of his experience.

“I read of Jesus, who was confronted with a whole world empire of tyranny and chose not

to overturn the tyrant and make himself king but to change the hatred in the hearts of men [sic] to love and understanding -- to overcome evil with goodwill.”

Mr Hennacy felt that being a Christian meant he must not only be a pacifist, but also an anarchist.

This is a theory projected by many of the world’s leading Christian pacifists.

If anarchy means to stand against the government, and the government is going to war, then active non-violence could also be defined as anarchy.

For the four members of Christians Against All Terrorism who broke in to the Pine Gap Joint Defence Facility near Alice Springs in 2005, the appeal to their sentences was more about the type of law used against them, rather than the fact they were found guilty of the act.



Demonstrator outside the gates at Pine Gap. Photo courtesy [www.melbourne.indymedia.org](http://www.melbourne.indymedia.org)

They were originally charged with a breach of Government security - the first time the Defence (Special Undertakings) Act had ever been used - that carried a maximum penalty of seven years in prison, rather than trespassing.

After two years jail time, the four were released, the charges were dropped and they were ordered to pay a fine. Their actions changed the way governmental law can and will be used.

One of the Pine Gap Four, Jim Dowling said the ‘citizen’s inspection’ of the facility was a way of questioning Australia’s involvement in the war in Iraq.

“I’ve been a Catholic all my life and I strongly believe in the Sermon on the Mount as a guiding principle of life. I believe in the necessity to struggle for justice and to resist the forces of death and violence.

“I believe we’re called to do this as Christians every day of our life.”

Commanding general of forces in Europe during World War II and former American President Dwight Eisenhower said people were more likely to promote peace than any government.

“I like to believe that people in the long run are going to do more to promote peace than our governments.

“Indeed, I think that people want peace so much that one of these days governments had better get out of the way and let them have it,” he said.

For some, to enact governmental change through active non-violence, Christian pacifism and anarchy is to live out the way of Jesus, not in a meek and mild manner, but as people who are ready to take up arms and fight for peace.

Dr Wink said the church needs to make a stand on unjust violence.

“It is time the church stops limping between just war theory and non-resistant pacifism and follows Jesus on his non-violent way,” he said.

You certainly wouldn’t say Jesus was a non-resistant pacifist when it came to the traders in the Temple.



## Give a child a gun?

By **Darren Wright**

YOU’RE THE character in a video game, aliens from another planet are attacking you, enemies from another country are killing slaves, and an evil corrupt ruling power just keeps on sending their troops after you.

Your character Striker needs to fight through the hordes of aliens, bullets, dead bodies, landmines, tanks, smoke and fighter planes in order to save the day and end the game, all by himself.

But instead, completely by accident you figure out that if you make Striker put his weapons away, have him kneel down, pray and ask for guidance there’s a peaceful way to end this game.

Suddenly your weapons disappear and you gain a band of followers, who like you fall on their knees and ask for guidance and peace.

Then more and more followers

join you, many of the aliens see you laying down your weapons and kneeling in an act of peace and they too join in on your action.

Suddenly out of the blue you hear a loud bang, you see your lifeline take a huge hit and the screen goes red.

You’ve been shot.

As you fall to the ground your character looks up to see one of the rulers is standing there, full battle gear on, holding a golden gun still smoking... You die.

In the closing scenes of the game you read that your followers never took a life ever again, that the rulers who shot you couldn’t seize control any longer as the people had found peaceful ways to resist their rule.

Does this sound like a reasonable ending to a video game?

A recent study by the University

# Churches condemn the “War on Terror”

By **Bruce Mullan**

THE UNITING Church in Australia has joined a world-wide call by many Christian churches for a re-evaluation of the so-called “war on terror”.

In a document named *Uniting for Peace: a Christian perspective on the war in Afghanistan*, the National Social Responsibility and Justice Agency of the Uniting Church claims the USA and its allies may have committed “grave breaches” of the Geneva Convention by deliberately targeting Afghan civilian infrastructure using weapons of low accuracy or that affect large areas.

Landmines and unexploded ordnances have been responsible for 88 recorded casualties per month half of which were under 18 and half the injured dying before they could reach medical facilities.

The report also points out that 70% of the population of Afghanistan is malnourished and that half the children in Afghanistan were suffering from malnutrition before the war started.

“Even before the US-led war in Afghanistan there were 3.7 million Afghan refugees, among them an

estimated two million children,” the report claims.

In the United Kingdom a group of Church of England bishops also issued a 100-page report criticising American foreign policy, the US war on terror.

The bishops charged some American Christians with the use of biblical texts to support a political agenda in the Middle East, and accused the US of using illegitimate and dangerous rhetoric.

The Church of Scotland has rejected ‘war on terror’ language and the Church of Norway stressed that the aim of terrorism is to create discord.

“It must therefore be combated through cooperation, measures that engender trust between ethnic groups and religious communities, and respect for diversity,” the Church of Norway said.

The World Council of Churches condemned terrorism but also urged its members to challenge the idea of the “war on terror”, warning that anti-terrorist legislation risks violating human rights.

“Every attempt to intimidate others by inflicting indiscriminate death and injury upon them is to be universally condemned,” the WCC

More to the point, we live in a world where we gasp in shock that young people in some countries are given guns at the age of five; a world where young people are used as soldiers in wars, in revolutions; a world where children regularly die because of violence.

And we in the Western world place virtual guns in the hands of our youth and call it “ministry,” call it “play,” call it “evangelisation.”

Are we comfortable with desensitising people to images of violence?

Instead shouldn’t we as people of faith in Jesus become angrier, more sensitive, more upset about images of injustice, violence, famine and oppression?

“Moving on”, a *New York Times* article in October 2007 shared that churches across America were using the latest release of a video game titled “Halo 3” (one of the most popular games in the world) as an evangelisation tool.

Churches were getting young people into the church by allowing network games on large screens to be played by kids who might not be able to afford the game, or for kids who just want to get together and shoot stuff up.

It’s the old “bait and switch” that we know so very well.

It goes like this: “If we can get the kids in here then we can share the gospel with them, have them accept Christ as their Lord and Saviour and get them saved.”

The Church and our youth

ministry have used this type of evangelism for years now.

Whether the games cause or encourage violent behaviour or simply desensitise people to violence is not really the point.

The point is that our actions, our ministries and our evangelism needs to connect with the radical peaceful call of the Gospel.

**Darren Wright is a Uniting Church Youth Worker in the Riverina**

Presbytery in NSW. Visit Darren’s youth ministry website [www.digitalorthodoxy.com](http://www.digitalorthodoxy.com). Read the longer version of this article on [www.journeyonline.com.au](http://www.journeyonline.com.au)



Photo courtesy [www.halo3.com](http://www.halo3.com)



# Not peace but the sword!

By Scott Stephens

PEACE IS one of the most deceptive terms in public discourse. Consequently, it is not at all clear to me that people know what they are referring to when they talk about peace.

Take the current political climate: peace most commonly refers to not having been part of the invasion of Iraq in the first place, or now getting the hell out of Iraq and thus bringing an end to our part in this bloody war.

When it comes to Iraq itself, the West's dreams of peace are for an end to sectarian violence and the emergence of some kind of nascent democratic society. And yet even at this point things are not what they seem.

Notice, for instance, that the recommendations coming out of the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) have increasingly stressed the importance of the creation of low-wage employment for Iraqi youths (who comprise over sixty percent of the population).

The rationale is: get them spending all their time working and saving for clothes, leisure activities or a new iPod and they won't have either the energy or the motivation to kill other Iraqis.

What I find remarkable about this is not just that the grand American rhetoric of 'bringing freedom to Iraq' is reduced to the more banal image of adolescent Iraqis flipping falafels at some street vendor in Baghdad. It is the way that this image reflects back to Western democratic societies its fantasies of what peaceful existence looks like.



Attack of the mutineers on the Redan Battery. Engraving 1858. Engraver Unknown. Photo by D Walker

Let me explain what I mean.

The fundamental delusion that rationalised America's invasion of Iraq was the belief that, once set free from the grasp of a maniacal tyrant, Iraqis would spontaneously adopt recognisably democratic forms of social life. In other words, they believed that beneath the skin we are all American, and that the longing for freedom, peace and the advantages of the free market run deep in the human soul.

The reality of the situation, however, was that deposing Saddam Hussein opened the gates of hell. As George Packer wrote in *The Assassins' Gate*, "Iraq without the lid of totalitarianism clamped down has become a place of roiling and contending ethnic claims".

This state of affairs should have come as no surprise, for the chaos to which the nation reverted

post-Saddam was anticipated in King Faisal's chilling description of his own people in 1933: they are, he said, "unimaginable masses of human beings devoid of any patriotic ideas, imbued with religious traditions and absurdities, connected by no common tie, giving ear to evil, prone to anarchy and perpetually ready to rise against any government whatsoever".

Far from releasing Iraqis from the terror of the Ba'athist régime so that some repressed longing for peace could bloom, the American invasion exposed the inherent violence and sheer bloodlust that had been held in check for four decades.

My point here is not to try to exaggerate the violent nature of the Iraqi people, but rather to call into question the widespread belief that peaceableness is a quality that

underlies the human condition, which is allowed to surface whenever the external determinants of tyranny or extremism are removed.

What then of the so-called 'peace' enjoyed and promoted by democratic societies? Isn't it apparent from the *Pax Americana* that now holds sway – whether at home or abroad – that such peace has become little more than an obsession with the trivial, a benevolent boredom, or worst of all, the inalienable right to excess?

It acts, in other words, like a palliative, a form of cultural sedation aimed at distracting us from our violent predisposition, all the while satisfying our bloodlust through vicarious means (television, movies, sport, etc.).

But the price to be paid for becoming a beneficiary of this

peace is that we abandon any kind of moral seriousness, renounce every 'higher' cause.

It is now more important than ever to be reminded of Jesus' words, which strike at the heart of every such pseudo-peace – whether the bloody peace-through-submission of the *Pax Romana*, or the indolent peace-through-sedation of our current *Pax Americana*: "Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division!"

The intense conflict introduced by Jesus and radicalised in his resurrection, cuts through every organic or ethnic tie (family, nation, gender), leaving those who follow him alone and unprotected in a world determined by self-interest.

The apostle Paul goes even further, locating this conflict at the level of the Dawkinsian 'selfish genes' themselves – his term for which is 'flesh'.

If there is any peace recognised by Christianity, it is this experience of being profoundly disconnected within a world that knows only violence.

But today, the Church has traded peace for leisure, whoring after the trinkets of our pleasure economy and abandoning its calling to risk everything for the sake of Christ's kingdom.

Our Easter declaration that 'Jesus is Lord' is a manifesto for the only peace that really counts. Will we have ears to hear?

Scott Stephens is minister at Forest Lake Uniting Church, and teaches ethics at Trinity Theological College

## The Uniting Church Foundation



Shaping the future

## Latest Uniting Church Foundation grant recipients

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

The closing date for the next round of general grants is 31 March, for disbursement during June.

For more information about bequests to the Church and for grant application forms, please visit the Foundation at [www.foundation.ucaqlid.com.au](http://www.foundation.ucaqlid.com.au)

Applicant	Project	Amount
Rev Paul Clark Rev Russell Reynoldson	Hive Resources – Printing	\$1,000
Glasshouse Country UC	Follow the Star Christmas festival	\$1,000
Justice and International Mission Advocate	Death or Glory – A Documentary	\$8,800
St Andrew's UC Hughenden	Multimedia Worship	\$3,200
Mapoon/Weipa Congregations	Cape York Youth Faith Exchange	\$7,000
Newlife UC Robina	Christmas Hamper Project	\$5,000
Tannum Sands UC	Fun with Music	\$2,560
Yalga-binbi Institution for Community Development	New Initiative – Reverse Blocks	\$7,000
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$35,560</b>

## Christians doing peace together

In a recent essay titled *"Building Communities of Peace in the Midst of Violence: An Intercultural Approach in Christian Theology"*, former Uniting Church President and now Executive Director of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture Rev Professor James Haire tells a story from his home country, Ireland.

ONE SATURDAY afternoon we were engaged in the regular marches which became a pattern of those times, walking through Protestant and Catholic areas, so as to show our unity in Christ.

I had a friend who had been teaching scholastic philosophy at the University in Belfast and had recently become a bishop. His name was Cahal Daly.

He subsequently became Cardinal Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of the Catholic Church in Ireland. He was not a natural hero.

He was a small, scholarly, introverted man – a large leprechaun as he once referred to himself.

On that Saturday afternoon

we locked arms and walked at the head of a procession through a joint Catholic-Protestant area.

Protestant young people were jeering at me because I dared to walk with a friend, now a Catholic bishop.

We were at that time both doing a bit of teaching at the university.

A person came charging out of a Catholic church, flailing a great crucifix above her head.

The person hit Cahal on the back of the head with it, at the same time questioning whether his parents had been married at the time of his birth.

She was able to express this idea with a single word.

Cahal fell to the ground, blood coming from the back of his head.

I asked him if he would like to sit in a shop doorway until we sorted things out.

He looked at me with steely eyes, which I shall never forget, and he said "James, put your hand into my pocket, get out a handkerchief, wipe the back of my head, clean me



Rev Professor James Haire

up, and up we get and on we go."

He was over seventy at the time.

He said to me, "If at this point we fail, if at this point we do not go on, than all those words that we spout from the pulpit will be shown up for the hypocrisy that they are.

"Community and peace will, under God, come by what we do now."

From *Religion and Violence* edited by Jonathan Inkpin published by ATF Press Adelaide

# Warwick goes to the head of the class

By Mardi Lumsden

WARWICK UNITING Church has received attention from their local newspaper with another innovative way of the church connecting with the community.

With 26 school teachers and retired school teachers within the congregation, they have started an after school tutoring service.

Not only is the service available to all students, it is free.

Warwick Uniting Church member and retired maths teacher Jean Reid spoke to the *Warwick Daily News* about the program.

"We thought maybe we could offer as a gift to the community our skills as teachers," Ms Reid told reporter Erica Tarlington.

The after school tutoring program began in March.

Each one hour session has two teachers on duty, one registered,

and tutors will liaise with local schools to keep up to date with what the students are learning.



Retired teacher Jean Reid. Photo courtesy of Warwick Uniting Church

Warwick Killarney minister Rev May Morris said the service was meeting the needs of their community.

"This adventure with homework help seems to be meeting a vital need, especially in the primary schools in Warwick," she told *Journey*.

"The students are delighted that they have their homework finished early in the week, and the parents are relieved that they don't have to 'nag' to get home work done."

Ms Morris said the congregation responded to the need by using their gifts.

"We saw a Church that has more than 30 teachers, retired and current, as a prompt from God to see how we could gift the community in a practical way."

For more information contact  
Warwick Uniting Church  
on 4661 1080



Warwick Presbyterian Girls College students share a 1962 typing lesson. Photo courtesy of Scots PGC



Queensland Governor Quentin Bryce launching the St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital 50th Anniversary celebrations in March. Photo courtesy of St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital

## Queensland Governor back for 50th anniversary

Governor of Queensland Ms Quentin Bryce could hardly have imagined 50 years ago as she launched the first door knock appeal in Brisbane to raise money to build a new hospital, that she would be back to launch St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital 50th Anniversary celebrations.

Who better than the Governor to open the proceedings and unveil a plaque in memory of this great occasion having marched the streets of Brisbane as a University of Queensland student all those years ago raising funds for the original hospital building.

Ms Bryce explained that as a child she had attended Moreton Bay College, at the time a Presbyterian school - the same church that was behind the founding of St Andrew's.

So in her first year studying social work at the University of Queensland it seemed a charitable thing to help raise funds for what is now one of Brisbane's most medically influential private hospitals.

"I remember door knocking in Auchanflower," she mused, "as it

was particularly hot that day and those hills are very, very steep!"

The doors of St Andrew's opened on 17 May, 1958 as a small 84 bed hospital.

Now it is undergoing a \$73 million redevelopment that will see it able to take 260 inpatients and will boast the most modern and up to date facilities.

The hospital, now under the umbrella of UnitingCare Health, has played an important part in the medical history of Brisbane and has featured heavily in the life of the Governor's family.

Her sister Diane was one of the first nurses to train at the hospital and went on to become the head theatre nurse. Ms Bryce has also used the hospital for her family.

"My daughter was at St Andrew's for treatment only last Christmas and received wonderful care and attention."

Ms Bryce said her involvement with St Andrew's was her first "grass roots experience" of community activity and helped shape her future.

"The foundation of the hospital was a remarkable endeavour."

"It was driven by marvellous doctors and supported by so many in the church and the community," she said.

The launch was the first of many celebrations the hospital will hold over the next few months to celebrate its jubilee year.

## College celebrates 90 Years

IN WARWICK during the time of the Great War (1914-1918) B.T. DeConlay and R.J. Shilliday wanted to send their daughters to a Presbyterian school and they were darned if they were going to send them to Toowoomba.

At a public meeting in Goondiwindi, Mr DeConlay proposed Warwick as the site for the College because of its central position in the Southern Downs and Mr Shilliday offered support.

Mr DeConlay told the meeting it was not enough to teach girls to sing and play the piano; they would be taught that there is religion in the world, and they should be taught to keep in touch with higher things.

The Presbyterian Girls College was opened for the first school day on 5 February, 1918. Founding headmistress Miss Mackness noted in her Record Book that the College opened with fifty-three pupils.

By 1942 there were just under 200 students at PGC.

Scots College was established as a boarding school for boys in

1919 to serve the needs of the large Scottish population in the area and provide a solid education.

The two separate schools were amalgamated in 1970 and today it is a Uniting Church co-educational school proudly named The Scots PGC College.



### The Australian Research Theology Foundation Inc.

is once again inviting applications for grants. The purpose of the grants is to support theological research and education for formal academic research, new projects or other related concepts.

Further information regarding the Foundation and details of the application process can be obtained directly from

our website - [www.artfinc.org.au](http://www.artfinc.org.au)

in writing to - The Administrative Officer  
A.R.T.F. Inc.  
PO Box 7418 Geelong West  
Victoria 3218

or by email to - [inquiries@artfinc.org.au](mailto:inquiries@artfinc.org.au)

Applications\* must be received by the end of May. Notification of Grants will be made from the end of July.

\*Applicants are requested to provide seven complete copies of their application.



# WHAT'S ON

**March 31, 7.30pm. 2008 Rollie Busch lecture** by Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali of Rochester, UK. The Bishop will address the relationship between Christianity and Islam in his lecture 'Conviction and Conflict: Islam, Christianity and World Order' at Chermide-Kedron Uniting Church. For more information contact Trinity Theological College on 3377 9950 or [tte@ucaqld.com.au](mailto:tte@ucaqld.com.au).

**April 8. Ministry to/with Seniors river tour** on the Murray River. Seven day tour of Adelaide and the Murray River. Aimed at those who may be helped by widening their circle of friends, those recently bereaved or retired, or feeling lonely. Contact Lew Born on mobile 0409 347 224 or 5580 0338 or [lewb@bigpond.com](mailto:lewb@bigpond.com).

**April 11-13. Grassroots Mission Festival** in Carlton, Melbourne. The national Forge Mission Summit includes speakers Sally Morgenthaler, Danielle Strickland, and many more. Focus on culture and consumerism, collaborative leadership, church planting, global justice and the environment, spirituality and worship, apologetic theology and evangelism. Register at <http://festival08.forge.org.au> or for more information contact Duncan Macleod on 3377 9809 or [duncan.macleod@ucaqld.com.au](mailto:duncan.macleod@ucaqld.com.au).

**April 15, 9.30-11.30am. UCA International Mission Support Group (Qld) meeting** at St. Andrew's church hall, Ann St, Brisbane. Congregations are welcome to send representatives. Contact Judith Finau on 3711 4622 or [lfinau@dovonetq.net.au](mailto:lfinau@dovonetq.net.au).

**April 16, 7.30-9pm. Workshop - 'A Pilgrim Way'** Celtic Christian practice in every-day life at St Francis Theological College, Milton. Special Guest Ray Simpson, author and noted teacher of Celtic Christian Spirituality. More information at [www.cabooltureanglican.org.au](http://www.cabooltureanglican.org.au) or 35147411 or [kluxfordmorgan@ministryeducation.org.au](mailto:kluxfordmorgan@ministryeducation.org.au).

**April 17-19. Aspley Uniting Church Annual Arts and Craft Show.** 748 Robinson Road, Aspley. Official opening Thursday 7.30pm by Channel 2 presenter, Jenny Woodward. Music by 'The Cascades'. Admission \$15 includes supper. Show continues Friday and Saturday from 9.30am. Admission \$7 includes morning or afternoon tea. A variety of art and craft for sale. Contact Elizabeth Mathers on 3263 1021 or [liz@mathershdraulics.com.au](mailto:liz@mathershdraulics.com.au).

**April 18-20. Lifeline Ipswich and West Moreton Bookfest** at Ipswich RSL Services Club, Lowry St, North Ipswich. Free entry. Books priced from \$1. For more information contact Kathy O'Meara on 3281 1920 or [a.mcdorwell@bluecare.org.au](mailto:a.mcdorwell@bluecare.org.au).

**April 19-20. Spirituality for the 21st Century: a Celtic Retreat** with Ray Simpson at Mercy Place 371 Simpson's Road, Bardonia. For more information visit [www.cabooltureanglican.org.au](http://www.cabooltureanglican.org.au).

**April 19, 9-11.30am. Project Hope on Peoples of God** meet at 69 Thomas St, West End, Brisbane. A network for people interested in community development. How can we live as people of faith in a world with many people of many faiths? Contact Neil Barringham on 3217 2522 or [neilb@onthenet.com.au](mailto:neilb@onthenet.com.au).

**April 19. Paradise Point Uniting Church Gigantic Garage Sale.** Enormous volume and variety of stock. Super cheap prices. Great family outing. Contact Peter Alfredson on 5529 3669 or [pgaca@bigpond.net.au](mailto:pgaca@bigpond.net.au).

**April 19, 10am-3pm. The Gap Uniting Church April Fair.** Pony rides, jumping castle, face painting, side-show alley and more! Second hand books, toys, clothes, plants, cakes, sweets and pies. Contact the church office on 3300 2712 or [thegapuc@inet.net.au](mailto:thegapuc@inet.net.au).

**April 19-20. Innisfail Church Building 20th Anniversary.** Historical display, stalls, morning tea, sausage sizzle, and worship followed by an anniversary lunch. More information contact Reece Evans on 4061 4515 or Peter Gill on [pwgill@bigpond.com](mailto:pwgill@bigpond.com).

**April 25. Anzac Day.**

**April 28-May 2. National Lay Preachers Conference** at Karrajong NSW. For more information visit [www.elm.org.au](http://www.elm.org.au).

**May 3-5. Round-About Arts and Crafts show** at Bulimba Uniting Church. For more information contact Wendy on 3399 8657.

**May 9, 5.30pm. QCT ecumenical worship service** at the Cathedral of St Stephen, Brisbane. A service to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Week of Christian Unity. For more information contact Jela at QCT on 3369 6792 or [gensec@qct.org.au](mailto:gensec@qct.org.au).

**May 18, 10am. Beaudesert Uniting Centenary celebration.** Guest preacher Rev John Mavor. Worship, book launch, catered lunch to follow. \$10pp, \$25/family. RSVP by 5/5/08 essential. Contact Vey Payne on 5541 1980 or Rob Packer on [beaudesert@radiantglory.com](mailto:beaudesert@radiantglory.com).

**May 24, 11am-4pm. Uniting Church Safaris 25th Celebration** at Sunnybank Uniting Church. Reunion of all past travellers. Please bring mementos and enjoy lunch and fellowship. Contact Doug Fergusson on 3273 2689 or [doug.fergusson@hotmail.com](mailto:doug.fergusson@hotmail.com).

Want to promote an event?  
Go to [www.journeyonline.com.au](http://www.journeyonline.com.au) and click on 'What's On'

## Jones' 50 years

REV DOUG Jones celebrated 50 years of Ordination by conducting the service at Maroochydore on Sunday, 17 February.

Mr Jones then travelled to Adelaide to celebrate with the other ten ordinands of his year.

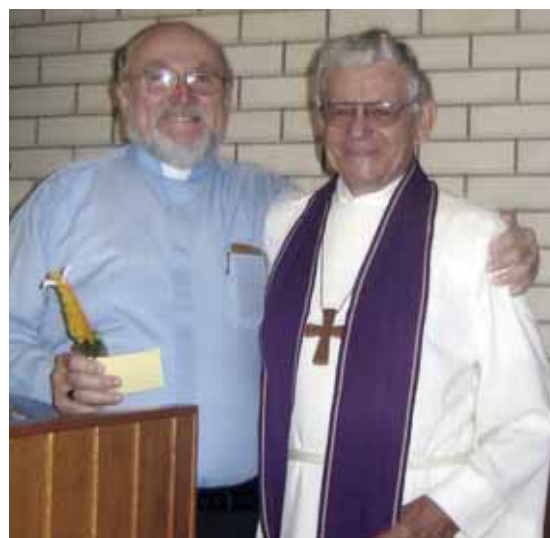
After many years in ministry in Adelaide, Mr Jones was appointed Chairperson of the Presbytery of North Queensland, where he served for nine years.

While there he was involved in the establishment of the Aboriginal Congress.

After a time with the International Congregation in Tripoli, Libya, Mr Jones and his wife Rita returned to Queensland where he was appointed to the Enoggera Parish.

In retirement Mr Jones has supplied at Townsville Central, Chermide, Merthyr, Norfolk Island, Stafford and briefly at Seghe College in the Solomon Islands.

Mr and Mrs Jones are also celebrating 54 years of marriage. In retirement they live at Maroochydore.



Rev Allan Kuchler congratulates Rev Doug Jones on 50 years in ministry. Photo courtesy of Mr Jones

## Win a Blue Care Country Kitchen cookbook

TWO LUCKY *Journey* readers can win a new cookbook of culinary creations and traditional recipes from friends and members of the Blue Care Caloundra Auxiliary.

Blue Care's Country Kitchen Cookbook contains around 300 recipes for every occasion from parties and family dinners to special times such as Christmas.

Proceeds from the book will benefit Blue Care clients and help support community care services.

Write to *Journey* Cookbook Prize at GPO Box 674 Brisbane QLD 4001 or purchase a Country Kitchen Cookbook for \$12 (plus \$4 postage) by calling Blue Care on 1800 001953.

## Put your stamp on International Mission

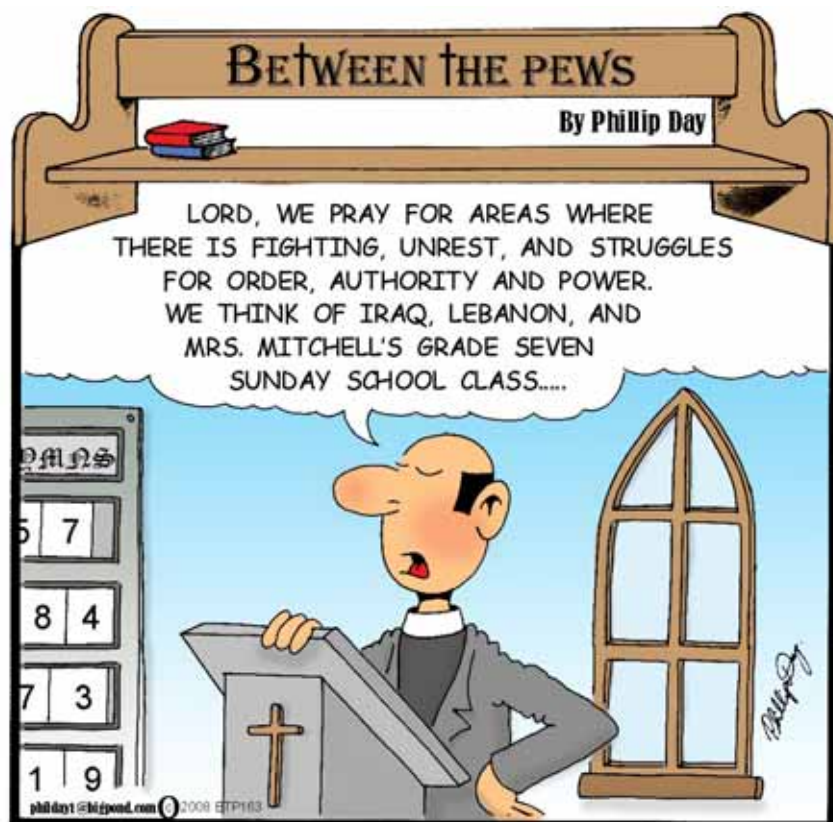
THE QUEENSLAND Synod is seeking a coordinator and small team to prepare bulk donated used stamps for sale for International Mission Support.

The volunteers would need to be Brisbane based.

Training and support will be provided.

The coordinator would need to be Internet savvy.

Contact Andrew Johnson on 3377 9111 or email [andrew.johnson@ucaqld.com.au](mailto:andrew.johnson@ucaqld.com.au).



**In the Valley of Elah**  
Directed by Paul Haggis  
121 minutes  
Rated MA

In the Old Testament story, the Valley of Elah is the place where the boy David slew the giant Goliath with a mere slingshot and stone.

It's a story of courage against the odds; the triumph of God's anointed man over an evil and seemingly insurmountable enemy.

But in Paul Haggis' film it is almost impossible to find a simple enemy or an easy hero, because this is a tale about the murky fallout of America's war in Iraq.

Hank Deerfield (Tommy Lee Jones) is a Vietnam veteran and retired army policeman. He has his own gravel-hauling business in Tennessee, where he lives with his wife Joan (Susan Sarandon).

When Hank gets a call from the army, telling him that his son Mike, recently returned from Iraq, has gone AWOL from Fort Rudd in New Mexico, he decides to drive down and investigate the disappearance himself.

What he finds there is an army bureaucracy that shuts him down at every point, while the young soldiers in his son's unit are unwilling, or unable, to shed any light on the mystery.

Hank's only ally is the civilian detective Emily Sanders (a fresh-



scrubbed Charlize Theron). She's a single mother trying to get on in her job while ignoring the rampant sexism within the force. She's a good cop, but not nearly as good as Hank, who shows her, on numerous occasions, how real investigative police-work should be done — with style, ingenuity and a dogged intelligence that is truly impressive.

What they find together is horrifying and almost incomprehensible — a parent's worst nightmare.

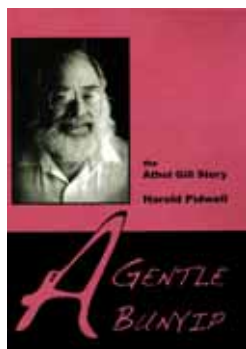
This film belongs to Tommy Lee Jones who totally inhabits the role of the searching father and stoic ex-military man.

*In the Valley of Elah* is a sombre, unhurried film. Shot by Roger Deakins in a style that takes in the wide flat expanses of the desolate

army town, we see the chicken factories, fast food joints and girly bars, and the streets lined with jeeps full of young men damaged by a war they don't understand.

The message here is, for the most part, restrained — in sharp contrast to Haggis' didactic *Crash*. Yet he can't resist a final flag-waving scene that feels like an unnecessary sermon.

Reviewed by Rochelle Siemienowicz the films editor for *The Big Issue* and first published in *Eureka Street*. Reprinted here with permission [www.eurekastreet.com.au](http://www.eurekastreet.com.au)



**A Gentle Bunyip: The Athol Gill Story**  
By Harold Pidwell  
Seaview Press  
RRP \$29.90

It is not often that one can say that a theological biography is just waiting to be made into a movie — but I think *A Gentle Bunyip: The Athol Gill Story* is it.

The biography of Athol Gill is a thought-provoking account of one of the most controversial Australian theologians in recent decades.

Athol Gill was a Baptist theologian and educator in Queensland and Victoria who is perhaps best known for his leadership in the radical discipleship movement.

The book title comes from the name of the Melbourne community which Mr Gill founded.

The aspect of his life that comes through most clearly is his courage in confronting his opponents, especially those of the fundamentalist persuasion.

Mr Gill was sacked twice by church authorities. The second time the decision was reversed and the account of his public inquisition in 1984 makes compelling reading.

On a personal level, the author identifies the importance of Gill's upbringing in country NSW.

*A Gentle Bunyip* is a fascinating book.

The author is not entirely uncritical of Athol Gill, showing him at times to be quite domineering. Nevertheless it is difficult for the reader not to be impressed by the enormous courage and integrity of the man.

Those who are interested in exploring the complexities of how to live an ethical lifestyle will be interested in reading *A Gentle Bunyip*.

Reviewed by Dr James Page, an academic at the Queensland University of Technology

## REVIEWS

**Another Turn in the Road**  
By Betty Willis OAM  
Community Books Australia  
RRP \$26.00

There is a school of thought that posits that any but celebrities who write memoirs do so out of a misplaced sense of their own importance and that is sometimes the case. However, the diaries and memoirs of so-called "ordinary" people are often well worth taking the time to read.

I must point out that the author of this particular memoir is a friend of mine, but she is a person whose involvement in the life of the church means that many a potential *Journey* reviewer would fall into the same category.

In the foreword to *Another Turn in the Road*, Betty Willis regrets not being able to use Robert Frost's line "the road less traveled" as her book's title and this would have been a fitting title for her memoir.

For "the shy, nervous girl from the bush" to leave her home in rural Queensland in 1943 planning to enrol in a crash course in teacher training, only to end up working in the Brisbane procurements office of the US army is an interesting enough deviation from the common path mapped out for girls in those days.

Her journey from there was through a number of challenging detours, to Rarongo Theological College in PNG.

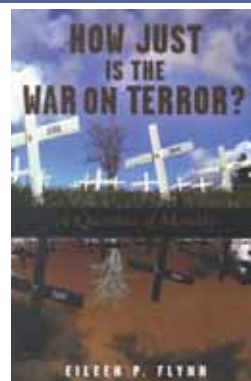
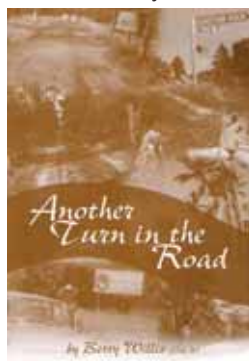
To still be working in the Pacific Islands in her 80s was remarkable indeed.

Ms Willis gives interesting insights into rural life in Queensland in the early 20th century, particularly the struggle to educate children.

Photos and original material written throughout Ms Willis's life, including poems and her newsletters from Rarongo, give a sense of immediacy and intimacy to the narrative.

One finishes *Another Turn in the Road* with a strong sense of having shared in some way in the journey of a remarkable Christian woman who has no false humility but likewise no misplaced vanity.

*Another Turn in the Road* is available from Betty Willis for \$28.50 (Australian addresses). Orders to 2/10 Daranlee Court, Toowoomba QLD 4350. Reviewed by Annette Dale



**How Just is the War on Terror?**  
By Eileen P Flynn  
Paulist Press  
RRP \$24.95

Rarely has a book left me so angry and disturbed.

It is not that this short book isn't well written. The four lectures, their study questions and case studies are easy reading and provocative and that is the point. It disturbs you and makes you think.

It is worth reading even though as a US-centric book it has the myopia about the rest of the world we have come to expect.

Frustratingly, *How Just is the War on Terror?* has little to no theological content except the Just War theory.

While this is well analysed it is never criticised. In any case the Just War's assumptions do not readily fit the war on terror.

Many of the difficulties Ms Flynn raises highlight that moral issues cannot be resolved without recourse to a foundation.

The difficulty for Christians is what are our choices if we leave aside simple pacifism, which is easiest to defend from the biblical narrative?

How to act is the daily question confronting any service person.

Ms Flynn uncritically makes the western assumption that a person's conscience should be trusted, both in heat of the moment decision making and in assigning blame in post "incident" investigation.

Her questions are good. Theologically however, human conscience is an imperfect guide to right action.

She is right in that soldiers, politicians and communities have to live with the consequences of actions taken. War does not last forever.

The last study deals with the practice of Rendition — relocating suspects for questioning to countries where torture is perhaps not illegal.

I can't help thinking that where this last issue has failed to be summarily dismissed not only is the struggle not just, but the war is lost and terror has won.

Reviewed by Rob Brennan minister with Banora Point Uniting Church

**Seven Ways to Change the World: Reviving Faith and Politics**  
By Jim Wallis  
Lion Books  
RRP \$24.95

When you get former President Jimmy Carter to write the foreword of your new book you've got connections — and connections with all manner of politicians, church leaders and political activists is just the name-dropping aspect of Jim Wallis's disappointing new book.

I admit to a dislike of the "ten tips", "six secrets" and "eight opportunities" type of book, but in *Seven Ways to Change the World* Wallis effectively argues that politics has failed to solve the biggest issues of our time and identifies seven basic commitments for political involvement which are: inclusion and opportunity, stewardship and renewal, equality and diversity, life and dignity, family and community, non-violent realism, and integrity and accountability.

With a focus on what he calls "the common good", Wallis helps the reader rediscover the Christian calling to social and political action and offers inspiration and challenge to chart a new course and build the kind of movement that changes the world. He calls the reader to "no longer accept the unacceptable" and to always make the choice for hope.

If you are patient enough to wade through the endless examples of faithful and famous people Wallis names as friends, you will find *Seven Ways to Change the World* an outstanding read.

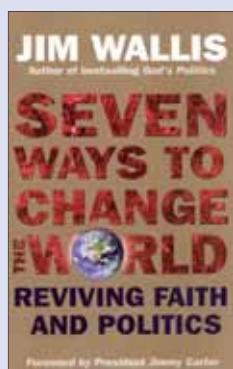
In his foreword to the Australian edition Tim Costello describes Wallis' remarkable ability to bridge the gap between faith and politics.

Wallis has "walked the talk" (he's been arrested many times) and talks about a deep hunger he has encountered among people, especially the young, for serious public engagement with the issues that stir their deepest values and convictions.

Wallis believes we are at a tipping point of history and confidently claims "the era of the Religious Right it now past and it's up to all of us to create a new day."

*Seven Ways to Change the World* will help that to happen.

Reviewed by Bruce Mullan, editor of *Journey*





# PRAYER DIARY

6 April: Thursday  
Island appeal down  
the home strait

In the weeks before Christmas congregations and individuals responded with enormous generosity when the Moderator asked for help with desperately needed repairs to Queensland's northernmost manse.

Any further north, and the manse that serves the Torres Strait would be in Papua New Guinea!

From Thursday Island, Lawes and Koggre Waia pastor a most unusual congregation – travelling by open boat to lead worship services and visit residents from Horn Island to Prince of Wales Island.

The folk of Torres Strait use their 'tinnies' as every day transport, the same way a suburban congregation would their cars.

As the regular searches for missing boats proves, this can be a demanding and sometimes dangerous ministry.

Everyone values a safe and secure home.

Mr and Mrs Waia are no different, especially when monsoon rains pour down.

Nine volunteers, including one from drought stricken Toowoomba, are rediscovering rain as they finish off the work on the Thursday Island manse.

The team from Toowoomba, Kawana and Bowen followed up the fund-raising effort by travelling to TI to work with a contractor, painting and finishing off other non-trade tasks.

The major work will be finished in April.

The Thursday Island Manse Appeal was so successful there are funds still available for an ongoing maintenance program.

Please pray and give thanks for:

- Members' generosity in donations of time, talents and money.

- The opportunities in Torres Strait to share the gospel and the commitment of the church there to go and make disciples.

Please ask God for:

- Wisdom as the church invests in this particular ministry.

- Safety for Lawes Waia as he puts to sea and serves faithfully in a situation most of us could not imagine.

20 April: Mudgeeraba  
Uniting Church

The Gold Coast Hinterland provides a beautiful backdrop for the central Gold Coast suburb of Mudgeeraba. With historic links to the timber industry and strong agricultural roots Mudgeeraba has rapidly transitioned from a rural community to a busy residential suburb.

In the last few years the Mudgeeraba Uniting Church has witnessed its surroundings change from farmland to a new housing estate. The church is located on a busy road and the local community supports the onsite ministries of the Community Care Opportunity Shop and Playgroup.

Op Shop revenue supports free community counselling, children's playgroups, and other ministries both local and international.

The local C&K Childcare centre leases church premises and has welcomed links with the congregation.

Our congregation of 75 regular members is close-knit and supportive.

Our resources are primarily channelled to the areas of property maintenance, congregational ministry and the smooth operations of the Op Shop.

2008 brings with it the following challenges:

The Main Roads Department will resume land at the front of the church property necessitating changes to property access and parking.

The transition of congregational decision making from an open congregational forum to a church council with elected delegates.

Work, travel and family responsibilities make us time poor.

Please pray for:

- Renewed passion for Christ's call on our lives.

- A strong vision for the way we should serve the community of Mudgeeraba.

- Courage to relinquish well established ministries if God is calling us in a new direction.

- Strength and wisdom for the leadership team

- Existing community ties with the Op Shop, Playgroup and Childcare Centre to be strengthened for God's glory.

- Smooth dealings with Main Roads.



Journey columnist Scott Stephens. Photo by Osker Lau

## Being sorry and saying sorry - Christians get why it matters

By Andrew Dutney

CONFESSION IS a core spiritual discipline of Christianity.

Confession is to Christians what meditation is to Buddhists.

As Martin Luther said in his Large Catechism (1529), "When I tell you to go to confession, all I'm doing is telling you to be a Christian."

Why is it so important? Because confession is the fundamental act of faith in the Gospel.

In acts of confession, Christians write themselves into the Gospel – identifying their own sins among those for which Christ died and seeking to be reconciled to God themselves.

Confession is an act by which Christians demonstrate their personal trust in the message that God loves them and that through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ God frees them from sin and its devastating effects.

There's more to being a Christian than that personal trust, of course, but it's hard to imagine a genuinely Christian way of life that didn't include at least that.

Confession isn't about wallowing in self-pity or shame. It's not about

making a guilt-inventory to feed your neuroses.

Baptist pastor and spiritual director Adele Ahlberg Calhoun puts it well when she says that confession "is a way of opening myself to God within the safety of his love so I can authentically seek transformation." For "transformation" is what it's all about.

We confess not only because we want things to be different, but because we discover through the process of self-examination that we want to be different ourselves.

The purpose isn't to feel bad about yourself but to be honest about yourself with God.

It's not to judge yourself but to be turned again towards God and the promises of the Gospel as the source of forgiveness and transformation.

Christian confession is all about making a fresh start – in the name of Christ and with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Rev Dr Andrew Dutney is Principal of Parkin Wesley Theological College in Adelaide.

This article first appeared in *New Times*

## Cleansed by Jesuits

By Bruce Mullan

"THE APOLOGY and the moral significance of guilt" (March *Journey*), the opinion piece by Forest Lake Uniting Church minister and *Journey* columnist Scott Stephens has generated an unusual amount of agitation.

The article was also briefly published in *Eureka Street* the online Jesuit Communications magazine generating substantial feedback from readers.

Conservative columnist Andrew Bolt reported in his *Herald Sun* blog that *Eureka Street* had "cleansed" its pages of Mr Stephens' article.

Mr Bolt described Mr Stephens as "no conservative, but simply a man of the left who sees through Rudd."

*Eureka Street* was quoted as saying while the Australian Jesuits and Jesuit Communications did not necessarily support the views expressed in their published articles, the publishers specifically disagreed with the substance of Mr Stephens' article.

"The article has been withdrawn. It argued that the Prime Minister's motivation was self-serving, and his action empty rhetoric.

"We apologise to those who were hurt or offended by allegations contained in it."

*Eureka Street* had published the article under the headline, "The warm inner glow in saying sorry".

*Journey* also stresses that opinions expressed in print do not necessarily reflect those of the editor or the policies of the Uniting Church in Australia.

Mr Stephens said he was not surprised by the controversy surrounding the article.

"I knew it would cause some trouble but I feel it was an important cautionary note to sound."

Mr Stephens said there is nothing straightforward about ethical or moral acts and that doing good has been deeply compromised by a new kind of paradigm introduced by the global economy.

"We live daily with the 'guilt' of the terrible consequences of our excessive lives and on so many different levels we are all seeking absolution.

"Acts of token morality are gestures toward this guilt and they need to be identified as such."

Mr Stephens said acts of penance can sometimes be counterproductive because they make our lives emotionally tolerable and ease our consciences while our behaviour doesn't change.

"My basic contention in the article was that two events took place on that Wednesday: one was an historic, meaningful and long-overdue apology to indigenous Australians; the other was a spectacle for white Australian viewers.

"Most commentators celebrated the former... I just didn't think the later could be ignored!"



We were swamped with letters about Scott Stephens's opinion piece, "The apology and the moral significance of guilt" (March *Journey*). There were far too many to publish in full so we are presenting a selection of edited letters representing the breadth of the responses received. Ed.

## Significantly sorry

I was disappointed with the tone and content of Mr Stephens's article, "The apology and moral significance of guilt"

While I often enjoy Mr Stephens's articles and recognise his desire to provoke, I am concerned that this contribution was "a bridge too far".

The article failed to recognise the historical context of the apology and what a momentous achievement this step was.

While I am often sceptical and even cynical of the motives of our leaders, I must disagree with the characterisation of the Prime Minister's actions as, "vanity exercise for a fledgling Prime Minister who needs people to love him."

That day, we saw something far more significant than a mere vanity exercise. We laid bare some of the worst episodes in our history and saw our national parliament own them in a way never seen before.

As I stood in Martin Place with 5000 others in the pouring rain I believe we saw something happen that could shape the future of our country.

If we are to believe that any symbolic actions are merely a vanity exercise we lose the opportunity to invest those symbols with something more.

The church is surely a place where we can understand investing symbolic actions with significant meaning.

Our nation is in a position to do that now. If we fail to embrace the small steps which our nation and government are taking then we will never be able to take the journey to a future Mr Stephens would want us to seek.

I hope articles such as these are not merely vanity exercises for Mr Stephens.

Andrew Johnson  
Cooparoo

On the day that Prime Minister Kevin Rudd delivered an historic apology to Australia's Stolen Generation I joined a public gathering at the Zillmere Police-Citizens Youth Club to hear part of the speech replayed.

The service (and it was a service) was lead by Pastor Rodney Minniecon of the Zillmere Uniting Church.

I was one of very few pale faces in a couple of hundred darker ones.

The event was moving: there were small children who might later recall the event, and there were grandparents, part of that generation, some of the Stolen, who had waited for the moment for many years.

Those who did not live to hear the Apology were remembered.

The event for the Indigenous People there was clearly important.

While I went along in solidarity with the Indigenous community, the event became important for me too.

Not from any feeling of guilt, for if I ever felt guilt in this matter it was quickly superseded by responsibility.

Responsibility because I care about people damaged in the past and who will be damaged more no matter what actions are taken now.

The event turned me from observer to participant: what really mattered to me on that day was the opportunity to share in the celebration of a people who felt a load lifted from their shoulders.

It is easy to be shallow and cynical about such an event.

It is easy to impute improper motives and a lack of integrity to others and to minimise what has been done.

To do so, however, is disrespectful of the people who long sought just this action.

Instead of denigrating the Apology to the Stolen Generation we should allow our Indigenous Peoples to enjoy a new dignity in their lives.

Dr Roderick Rogers  
Chapel Hill

Scott Stephens, as an ethicist you should know that good ethical practice demands that you at least acknowledge his own "situation in life" before assessing the cultural and political implications of contemporary Australian events.

As an opinion piece your article on the significance of the apology of the Federal Parliament to those who name themselves as part of the stolen generation, does little to assure me of your ethical manners.

This is an issue which touches a nerve for non-Indigenous Australians who have grown up here, have gone to school with those, (or the kids of those) of the stolen generation, have worked with Indigenous people and communities, or who have had our lives and self understanding transformed by pain and distress as the details of Australia's recent history have been revealed.

If you cannot claim to be an objective observer, then advise us of those community groups you have consulted, Indigenous or otherwise, whom you have chosen to label "props" or as "moral tokenists".



As a reader of *Journey*, and someone who still has to submit concise and well argued essays to lecturers at Trinity Theological College, I deserve better than this.

Heather den Houting  
Sunnybank Hills

While thanking you for your article and agreeing with some of your opinions, I was left, with respect, feeling sorry for you – sorry that you cynicism seems to have gotten the better of you.

Mr Stephens, I respect your opinions, however, I was left somewhat convinced (here comes another opinion) that in addition to being that, they were also prejudices.

So, I am wondering if you can provide any objective evidence to support what you've written, especially the comment about Kevin Rudd's need of people to love him – something I know I want and imagine you do too.

Some of us have waited for an act and a day like Tuesday, 13 February for a long time, and for all its symbolism and possible hype, ceremony and staging, it is at least a long overdue start.

Dean Olafsen  
Ipswich

Whilst I agree with much of the argument he proposed, I take exception to a photograph of Calvary Christian College being attached to the article "An apology without guilt means nothing".

As a parent and a staff member, I take issue with the 'guilt by association effect'.

While Stephens makes valid points, his suggestion that Calvary Christian College is participating in "tokenism" is grossly unfair.

At the very least, this inference towards our school was uncharitable.

Mr Kym Ayling  
Springwood

The use of the photograph of the excellent sign on the Calvary Christian College notice board was a decision of the editor and was done without consultation with Mr Stephens. There was no association intended. *Journey* apologises for any association that may have been unintentionally implied. Ed.

I hope that this new Prime Minister and new Government see this apology as a preface to reform for the plight aboriginal people.

Errol Barnett  
Petrie

I was struck by yet again seeing reference to the Kantian notions often cited by Christians, implying that expediency is automatically unethical.

This idea has always failed to strike a chord with me.

I often see the philosophical idea that "good things done because they are convenient are bad" in Christian literature, yet I can't say I can ever recall this being applied by Christians to the situation of people finding Christ when in crisis.

When someone finds Christ we rejoice regardless of how it happens, we are not bothered by the fact they rejected or ignored him in the past and only in their time of need did they open their eyes to him.

What makes other situations any different?

Whether or not a given action is convenient is not important, the only thing that matters is whether or not it is genuine.

Something being convenient makes it harder to prove that it is genuine; it doesn't mean it cannot be genuine.

Brett Caird  
Carindale

What Kevin Rudd did was to open the door a crack to "White Australians" who have entrenched themselves into disregarding the plight of the Aboriginal peoples and who have put the blame on them for their own hideous situation.

The speech also let the rest of the world know that not all Australians are racist bigots who will never admit to being wrong.

Thank God for the Kevin Rudds of this world.

Gloria McConnell  
Noosa Heads

## Money matters

It is beyond comprehension that economists including those within the Reserve Bank and politicians are still using interest rates as part of Monetary Policy.

The manner that they are currently being used is tantamount to complete ignorance in the operation of the economy as to its condition, the direction in which it is heading and its effect on the population as a whole.

A much better solution would be to re-regulate the banking system and control the increase in the money supply which is the prerogative of the banks to do as they like and which is the basic cause of our current plight.

Basil Gillespie  
Beachmere

## We're gone

We have been members of the Uniting Church since its inception and watched with great interest as it appeared to be moving in the direction of Progressive Christianity, a move we embraced wholeheartedly.

However, of recent months we have become alarmed to realise that the church appears to have taken a different turn and seem to be now heading back towards a much more conservative attitude.

In some churches women are still fighting for the right to be full citizens of the church as are homosexuals in our church.

Seeing our beloved church not only clinging to obvious untruths but taking backward steps has proved to be too much for us and we feel that we can no longer attend with integrity.

Ivor and Jean Head  
Gympie

## Safety first

The dispute between scientists that Warren Brown (February *Journey*) is referring to is not about whether global warming 'is' occurring, it is.

The dispute is about 'why' it is occurring and whether global warming is a direct result of human pressure on the planet, or if it is a natural cyclic event.

Whether the Uniting Church has scientific expertise or not is not really a problem – common sense and to err on the side of caution is the smart way to live.

The debate is basically whether we can do anything about this devastating path or not.

My personal belief is that, if one chooses not to believe global warming exists that is Ok for them, but should they be forcing their beliefs upon others?

Why would any person stand in the way of others who choose to help everybody just because they do not want help personally?

I guess those people should go and live on their own planet elsewhere and allow the rest of us to work on protecting this planet.

David Buck  
Hollywell

### Have your say

Letters may be edited due to space limitations.

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# JOURNEY asks...

## Should Christians take up arms?

Ross Heyde

My mother was devastated and my auntie prepared to chain herself to the gates of parliament when I was conscripted for National Service in 1966.

It seems every one of my friends escaped the dreaded 'marble' and managed to evade the call-up for 18 months because of (unsuccessful) university studies.

Doomsday was 4 July 1967. I managed just 12 days of recruit training at Kapooka before being sent off to officer training at Scheyville.

Graduating in December 1967, I was allocated to Infantry and eventually went to Vietnam in 1970.

Despite having a church background, I was not a committed Christian back then – I kept God waiting until 1985.

Infantry work was a lot of noise and aggression, and the Army had shown me I could achieve things I never dreamed possible.

I did my job as a platoon commander in Vietnam to the best of my ability and saw a fair share of action.

I recall quite a few moments of disquiet, particularly about

the plight of the civilian population, but I have not suffered the psychological consequences that many of my comrades have experienced.

Perhaps I was lucky, but I firmly believe my (submerged) faith sustained me.

I have come to believe that involvement in the Vietnam war was a mistake for Australia.

Then and now I believe that all wars are devastating and



inhumane but I also have no doubt that Christians can take up arms, provided they can reconcile the Government's demands with God's will for our lives.

There are times, perhaps, when we as a nation and individuals can not just stand on the sidelines.

I am still serving in the Army – now as a Reservist – and am a member of the Military Christian Fellowship. I have met, and read about, many wonderful Christians in the services.

I know that the question of Christians taking up arms gets quite an airing.

For myself, I often recall the story in Matthew and Luke where Jesus heals the Centurion's servant.

Jesus marvels at the faith of a man who serves in the army of a foreign oppressor.

Ross Heyde is a member of the Emmanuel Uniting Church Congregation at Enoggera in Brisbane and retired from the Regular Army as a Lieutenant Colonel. The photograph is of Mr Heyde on duty in 1980.

Lance Armstrong

Being a Christian peace activist has always left me living with a dilemma. While believing that Jesus is calling me to be a pacifist, I have never been prepared to call myself that.

Why? Because I know that in certain situations (say threat to my family), I could never abide by those principles.

Nevertheless, I remain convinced that war must always be the last resort.

This is not always clearly understood by political leaders and, at the very least, this must be the stand of Christians.

As I struggled with this issue, the "Just War Theory", as it has been worked out by Saints Ambrose and Augustine, became important in my learning.

They based this theory on the recognition

that the Christian's duty towards pacifism sometimes comes into conflict with duty to seek the well-being of neighbours who are vulnerable and threatened.

However, among other conditions this theory insists: the war must lead to improved conditions of living; that no more force should be used than is necessary; and that actions should discriminate between combatants and non-combatants (particularly women and children).

The purpose behind these conditions is to make it difficult to justify a war.

Indeed, the basic premise of this theory is that Christians must remain committed to peace.

Should Christians take up arms?

Christians need to recognise that Jesus' teachings are based on ideals and aspirations,

as opposed to rules and regulations.

This issue then, like many others, is not clear cut.

However, if we simply dismiss the ideals of Jesus as being hopelessly naive, then we Christians really do have problems with the matter of integrity.

PS: Nuclear weapons cannot meet the conditions of the Just War Theory. Therefore, at the very least, Christians must be nuclear weapon pacifists, and that is certainly how I presented myself during my years of activism.



Lance Armstrong is an ordained Uniting Church Minister and was a peace activist during the 1970s and 1980s. A former Greens MP in the Tasmanian Parliament he was Synod Peaceworker in Tasmania and founder of Christians for Peace (Launceston). Mr Armstrong has authored three books on justice and peace issues.

Melissa Lipsett

Both my husband Peter and I began our working lives as officers in the Royal Australian Navy.

We were both teenagers when we joined up, and not Christians, so neither of us had probably thought deeply or at all whether



or not it was appropriate to be a part of the Australian Defence Force (ADF).

For us, the main attractions were probably the subsidised tertiary education, good training, a sense of adventure, and an early yet respectable escape from the drudgery of high school and home life.

After training I worked in the communications intelligence branch, Peter was firstly a seaman officer, and later specialised as a helicopter pilot.

During our early years of service, both of us had become Christians – I was led to discover Christ via a wonderful Uniting Church Navy Chaplain, Rev Bill Rossier.

Our service had been as part of a peacetime Navy until 1990 when Kuwait was invaded by Iraq, triggering the Gulf War.

Peter was sent at fairly short notice as an embarked pilot onboard HMAS Darwin, thankfully after most hostilities had ceased. I was at home with a four month old baby and no husband for seven months.

Until this time, there hadn't been much need to examine our chosen careers in the context of 'Does God want me here?'

Previously, it had been easy – Peter's involvement in flying operations had been training and assistance to the civil community; flood relief, various search and rescue operations, fire fighting during bushfire season and the like.

I was involved in intelligence gathering and analysis which I considered important in the real world that we are a part of.

There was nothing there that we thought went contrary to our Christian beliefs – nothing that God would object to!

Now was the time to examine the question properly.

For us, the key to this was in the title of our organisation – Defence.

Neither of us could be involved in the armed forces of a country with expansionist or imperialist aims, or where conflict was against civilians but the notion of aiding an

invaded country through the auspices of the United Nations did not seem at odds with our faith.

In this particular conflict, we were both thankful when Operation Desert Storm ceased at the pre-war border between Kuwait and Iraq; the United Nations had no mandate past this point.

Similarly, the ADF has been involved in other operations overseas which have been defensive or aid-related, and non-imperial – medical teams in Rwanda, and the peacekeeping forces in East Timor and the Solomon Islands to name a few; Australians placing themselves in harms way to assist others.

As long as Australia's forces are guided by these principles, we can be, and are, proud of service in the ADF.

Melissa Lipsett is Community Life Pastor at NewLife Uniting Church Robina.

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