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The church has long been conflicted over issues of doctrine, biblical interpretation, sexual ethics and governance structures but often the most intense and protracted disputes have been over worship styles. This month *Journey* looks at the music we sing in worship and examines what some have termed the “worship wars”.

By Bruce Mullan

WHILE THE value of music in worship is readily acknowledged, conflict often arises over the questions of what we should sing and how we should sing it.

Singing can unite the gathered community together and can encourage an attitude of worship providing an emotional connection to the liturgy.

The hymns we sing can also be a good source of theological education, reprising the sermon and reminding us of the faith we hold dear.

But when it comes to choosing the songs and style of music, the question of personal taste can become a conflict issue for the community of faith.

The “how” question is a potential cause for more dissent as the choice of instrumental accompaniment and leadership style becomes the focus.

The conflicts and tensions felt in many churches over favoured worship styles is not easily resolved.

Minister at Logan Uniting Church Rev Graham Keech believes the style of worship

comes out of who the community is.

“Worship is not about me, it’s about God and us – it’s about us gathering as a body together,” he said.

“If we’re called to be somehow connected to our era we can’t be a 1968 church – we have to struggle to be a 2008 church.

“If a church is an inward looking ‘60s community, the worship is going to reflect that.

“And probably until you get a handle on that issue and give that priority, then you’re never going to change worship in a life-giving way.”

The question remains whether the issue boils down to anything more than power games.

Jesus asked Christians to worship God in spirit and truth.

Did Jesus say, “Those who worship the

father must sing from *Together in Song*, or use a data projector, or unplug the organ and put it in the corner?”

Noosa Coastal Uniting Church Minister Rev Scott Ballment thinks for one group or individual to assert their own worship preferences over others or to manipulate the community to their way of thinking is not about true worship.

Mr Ballment said he had witnessed a situation where the question of who played the music and how it was played was ultimately a question of power.

“The exercise of power has the potential to spill over and eventually corrupt worship,” he said.

Such behaviour stands in stark contrast to the one who did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, even to the point of death.

My chains fell off
my heart was free,
I rose, went forth
and followed thee.

Charles Wesley

My comfort, my shelter
Tower of refuge and strength
Let every breath, all that I am
Never cease to worship you.

Darlene Zschech

More about music

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On the brink again!

THE FIRST article I wrote for *Journey* during my current term as Moderator was entitled "On the brink".

It was a reflection on transition and new beginnings with particular reference to the story in Joshua 3 that recounts the crossing of the River Jordan by the Israelites as they entered the Promised Land.

Now I'm on the brink again and that means another transition and another new beginning.

In one sense it's no surprise because I knew that it was inevitable from the time of my induction.

This transition is different, however, because it represents a move from active ministry into retirement, whatever that means.

I've talked to a lot of retired people in recent times who almost without exception tell me how busy they are.

That's absolutely fine but I'm actually content to discover what retirement means for me rather quietly and gradually.

A lot of people have asked me what I'm going to "do".

This is a perfectly reasonable question and it's easy enough to answer because the list is already getting longer by the day.

However, the question also leaves me uneasy.

Why is the "doing" so important?

I've never really been comfortable with the idea of defining people by what they do, and certainly not on the basis of how busy they are.

Over the nearly 70 years of my life I've been child, sibling, student, friend, husband, father, grandfather, teacher, minister, missionary, moderator.....we've all got our own list.

All of those ways of being myself have been formative and significant.

They identify the key relational and vocational dimensions of my life.

But there is much more. Since my early teens I have thought of myself, first and foremost, as a child of God, created



Message from the Moderator

Rev Dr David Pitman

a spiritual being for relationship with my Creator.

I still believe what I learnt and affirmed from the Catechism when I was quite young, that my primary purpose in life is to love and enjoy God forever.

That understanding of who I am and what I live for informs and shapes every other dimension of my personhood, including all the "doing" aspects of it.

Inevitably, and quite properly, it will inform and shape what my retirement means as well.

I am deeply grateful to God and the church for the great adventure in faith, hope and love that my life and ministry have represented.

Almost all of it has been quite wonderful.

By God's grace, and the love of family and friends, even the really difficult times, including the failures, have been sources of learning and renewal.

Thank you, my brothers and

sisters in Christ, for your prayers and encouragement during this most recent phase of my journey.

The many opportunities I have had to connect with, and share in, the amazingly rich and diverse life of the Church have unquestionably been the best part of being Moderator.

"On the brink" can convey a sense of imminent peril, or it can mean the beginning of a new experience and opportunity.

As I begin the next phase of my life I look forward with anticipation and confidence to what is about to unfold because I hold in my heart the promise of God's presence, a promise confirmed by the words of Jesus and experienced in the power of the Spirit: "Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the blessing of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

Thanks Moderator

The *Journey* team thanks David Pitman for his continued support, affirmation, good humour and consistently high quality "Message from the Moderator" columns over the past three years.

We will miss you and pray that God will continue to bless you in your retirement. We know you will always be a rich resource to your family, friends, wider church and our Queensland community.

Go well David, and live with great meaning.

From the Editor

Hands up all those who sang this week other than on Sunday in church.

Some may have sung in the shower or to help young children go to sleep at night, but my guess is, not many.

Apart from church and the occasional rendition of the National Anthem, community singing has all but disappeared from our mainstream culture.

So why do we sing in church?

Christian congregations haven't always lifted their hearts in songs of praise.

It seems St Ambrose Bishop of Milan may have introduced congregational hymn singing in the Western church in the 4th Century and there was a clear biblical mandate to do so.

Some of the church fathers opposed this innovation on the grounds it permitted women to raise their voices, but the practice caught on.

Martin Luther also championed congregational hymn singing but it was not until the 18th Century that English congregations generally took up the practice.

But as those born without hearing, Quakers and other groups have demonstrated, it is possible for worship to exist without communal hymn singing.

Perhaps we have become too dependent on music as the medium through which worship occurs and the channel through which we find our spiritual connection with our God.

One very dear friend often points out to me, "The music is the worship".

I don't think it is. Worship can and often does include singing, but worship is not the same as singing!

If you want to proof-text for the nexus between music and worship just try Romans 12 where the harmony talked about is the way we live together, not the way we sing together.

You can sing and not be worshipping.

And you can worship without singing!

Bruce Mullan

Cover photo: Courtesy of the United Methodist Church in the USA. Original photograph by Mike DuBose. Artwork by Osker Lau

Sign of the Times



THIS GLASSHOUSE Country Uniting Church sign was quite appropriate as they had the Guide Dog speaker at Adult Fellowship that week. Photo by Chris Bell. Email your Signs of the Times church signs to journey@uqaql.com.au.

JOURNEY

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Journey awarded by religious press

JOURNEY HAS been honoured with three Bronze Awards at the Australasian Religious Press Awards held in Brisbane in October.

In a highly contested competition among print and electronic religious press across Australia and New Zealand, *Journey* was commended in the categories for best website having religious connotations, best editorial/opinion piece and best headline.

The *Journey* web site www.journeyonline.com.au which now receives around 9000 page views a month was beaten by the *Sydney Anglicans* and *Tear Australia* web sites.

The Bronze Award for *Journey* Editor Mr Bruce Mullan's Christmas 2007 editorial was described by the judges as short, to the point, and touching an issue that too often gets lost in the frenetic activity that leads up to Christmas.

"The issue is both contemporary and universal, and the style is immediately arresting, making its point through what seems at first

to be an outrageous statement and then explaining it in a way which makes us re-examine our own values – just what such an article ought to do."

Mr Mullan said it was always exciting to have the work of the *Journey* team recognised.

"It's particularly good to have peer recognition and to be acknowledged by professional judges who are experts in the field."

The Bronze Award for best headline was for the front page of the August 2007 issue of *Journey* which looked at Road Safety and the poor driving record of Uniting Church ministers.

The headline was titled "Thou shalt not Rev".

Other Queensland publications including Baptist, Anglican and Lutheran papers received a number of awards as did the Uniting Church papers *Insights* (NSW) *Crosslight* (Vic/Tas) and *Revive* (WA).

In 2007 *Journey* received Gold Awards for best newspaper front page and most improved newspaper.



A Huli Wigman in traditional dress came to show support for the reconciliation event. Photo by Hannah Hoskin

Finding peace in PNG

By Hannah Hoskin

AFTER GENERATIONS of warring, looting and a vicious daily cycle of violence and retribution, the enemy tribes of the Papua New Guinea Southern Highlands have signed permanent peace treaties.

The 'Tari District Peace Agreement' was negotiated through peace-building activities by a dedicated team of local volunteers working for the Australian organisation Young Ambassadors for Peace (YAP), a program of Uniting Church Overseas Aid.

In the hot sun, hundreds of tribesmen marched in a long line through the village of Tari, led by Secretary for YAP Joy Balazo and other YAP coordinators. They were all clad proudly in bright blue YAP t-shirts and flanked on all sides by prayer-warrior women dressed in long white dresses.

These clans have been at war for so long that the sight of them walking unified brought hundreds of Tari villagers out on the streets to follow alongside.

Children ran to get the best view, old ladies wept with pure joy and many shook their heads in disbelief at what they were seeing.

The peace process has taken more than seven years of negotiation by former nun, Ms Balazo, who was nominated for Australian of the Year in 2007 for her work in fostering and negotiating peace agreements in the Asia Pacific region.

"If people are given the place and are willing to take up the opportunity to understand and learn to respect people's cultural, religious and political differences then I believe peace is always possible," said Ms Balazo.

Under the treaty all 32 tribes will lay down weapons and cease decades of aggression, and agree to compensate each other for property destroyed and lives lost during decades of ongoing conflict over land, stock and crops.

They will leave the past in the past and learn from their mistakes.

They will endeavour to react to conflict with words rather than violence.

The Southern Highlands region has been in a constant State of Emergency since 2001, when Prime Minister Sir Michael Somare sent in the army to restore law, order and good governance in the region.

YAP negotiators will continue to work with the tribes on programs to sustain peace in communities, while tribes will work together to ensure prosperity for their region and their people.



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Synod: budget dilemmas continue

THE CONTINUING world economic crisis will not make it any easier for the Synod as it battles with budget issues and staff cuts said Synod Director of Property and Financial Services Mr Robert Packer.

"All the funds the Synod has invested will be getting a lower rate of return," Mr Packer said.

"That includes the Synod Reserve Fund, the Mission Development Fund and the Future Development Fund.

"It will also affect UC Foundation income and the income from the insurance fund which helps offset premiums."

Mr Packer said the full meeting of the Synod at Alexandra Headland in the first week of November will have full and frank discussions about the financial issues facing the church.

As a result of budget shortfalls Synod staff reductions have seen former General Secretary Rev

Jenny Tymms accept an appointment as Presbytery Minister and Chairperson for the Pilgrim Presbytery of the Northern Synod, based in Darwin.

Currently serving as Mission Consultant (Discipleship, Formation and Spirituality) Ms Tymms said she was "sad to leave, but looking forward to a new opportunity to serve in ministry."

Journey will be carrying a full report of the 27th Synod in the December issue but daily updates will be available at www.journeyonline.com.au.

Communications Manager Mr Bruce Mullan said audio podcasts and some videocasts of key Synod events and programs would be available for download from the website.

Synod will open on Friday, 31 October at Alexandra Park Conference Centre with the induction of the incoming Moderator Rev Bruce Johnson.

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Youth converging to hear Claiborne

NATIONALCHRISTIAN Youth Convention 2009 keynote speaker Shane Claiborne's philosophy of life is simple: "We love God, love people, and follow Jesus."

Mr Claiborne has visited Iraq, worked with Mother Theresa and is committed to simplicity, spirituality, hope, and sometimes a bit of non-violent civil disobedience.

Mr Claiborne also makes his own clothes.

Author of *The Irresistible Revolution: Living as an Ordinary Radical*, Mr Claiborne is an evangelical from the Simple Way community in Philadelphia—which has an aim of "changing the world one loving act at a time".

Rev Stu Cameron and Rev Ralph Mayhew from New Life Uniting Church on the Gold Coast will be leading one of the NCYC Bible studies and will be encouraging delegates to actively live out their faith.

Halfway through the convention will be 'Submersions day' which is a day of action, service, lobbying, public liturgy, protest, political stunts, simulation and culture jamming as a response to our faith in Jesus Christ.

The idea is to articulate and demonstrate the positive and loving lifestyle of Jesus, recognising that the whole is greater than the sum of the work done by various groups, churches, agencies and friends.

Examples of action could be helping in a community garden, singing outside a detention centre, cleaning up a creek, fixing buildings or yards at a school, random acts of kindness, protesting an issue, sharing lunch with a different community, helping to make or



NCYC guest speaker Shane Claiborne. Photo courtesy NCYC09

serve food, or visiting the elderly.

Convention Coordinator Rohan Pryor said delegates will get their feet wet by engaging in activities across Melbourne.

"It will be a day of faith in action, concluding with a public celebration, where all the delegates will gather to reflect on their

collective submersion actions," Mr Pryor said.

Registration for NCYC 2009 close on November 30.

Visit the NCYC09 website <http://ncyc.org.au> for all the latest news and to register, or phone the NCYC office on 1300 00 NCYC (6292)



Nuer congregational leader Pastor Moses Leth with his key. Photo by Andrew Demack

Sudanese congregation unlocking the doors

THE SOUTH Moreton Presbytery has recognised a Sudanese congregation as an official faith community.

The congregation worships at St David's Uniting Church at Coopers Plains and is made up of 50 to 60 Nuer people, mostly refugees from Sudan.

The Nuer people have been in the middle of the civil war in Sudan since 1983.

In that time more than four million people have been displaced and two million killed.

The group began gathering at St David's five years ago after a chance meeting between then St David's minister Rev Lu Senituli and the Nuer congregational leader Pastor Moses Leth.

Current St David's minister Rev Ivan Kirk and St David's ministry candidate Victor Wolfram have continued to foster the relationship.

A service of recognition was held for the faith community where Mr Leth was presented with a key to the church.

Mr Leth was reportedly touched by the gesture and responded by saying the key was his most treasured possession and he would take it with him to heaven.

Mr Kirk said the Nuer congregation added much excitement to the church.

"I love the way they process out of church singing songs in to a world that has not always been friendly," he said.

"The Africans are full of gratitude for the hospitality they have experienced among us and together we hope to strengthen each other's witness to the welcome God offers us all in Jesus Christ."

LECTURER IN MISSIOLOGY

Applications are invited from gifted educators keen to play a role in developing leaders who are passionate, Christ-centred, highly skilled, and mission oriented practitioners.

The Lecturer will carry out teaching responsibilities in the area of Missiology among lay people, candidates for specified ministries, and ministers seeking professional development and continuing education. In particular he or she will play a key role in the development of leaders who have an advanced knowledge and understanding of Missiology and who can discern the purposes of God in the contemporary missional context and initiate and lead the church's response to those purposes. The appointee will be expected to identify and develop a team of practitioners who will assist in the teaching of Missiology.

The Uniting Church has established a centre for leadership development to resource the development of effective leaders for healthy missional churches throughout South Australia. The centre is part of the Adelaide College of Divinity and the Flinders University School of Theology.

A position description together with the method of application is available from:

The Principal, Rev Dr Andrew Dutney at andrew.dutney@flinders.edu.au

Applications close November 14, 2008.
Appointment effective from January 2009.

LECTURER IN LEADERSHIP

Applications are invited from enthusiastic, gifted and motivated teachers who have a track record of effective congregational ministry, a capacity to inspire students and colleagues and experience in helping form people for leadership.

The Uniting Church has established a centre for leadership development to resource the growth of effective lay and ordained leaders for healthy, missional churches throughout South Australia. The centre seeks to appoint a Lecturer in Leadership who has the ability to articulate a vision for leadership development within the mission of the church and identify, develop and lead a team of practitioners who will assist in teaching.

The appointee will play a key role in developing leaders who can interpret the Scriptures in the contemporary missional context. The centre is part of the Adelaide College of Divinity and the Flinders University School of Theology.

A position description together with the method of application is available from:

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Uniting International Mission

UnitingCare supports the Solomon Islands

By Bruce Mullan

UNITINGCARE Health has agreed to an initial one year program of support for the Helena Goldie Hospital in the Solomon Islands.

UnitingCare Health Director for Mission Rev Robyn Kidd said Registered Nurses with an interest in infection control, diabetes and wound management will visit the hospital to provide support and assist with the education program of the Nurse Aide Training School.

"Two one week visits by experienced hospital administrators will also assist the hospital with management and budgeting," said Ms Kidd.

Helena Goldie Hospital is an agency of the United Church in Solomon Islands, a partner church with the Uniting Church in Australia.

Ms Kidd recently visited the hospital and was impressed by the work done at the 65 bed facility in the remote Western Province of the Solomon Islands.

"With almost 800 maternity deliveries a year and over 400 major surgical procedures, this is a very busy hospital working with very limited resources," Ms Kidd said.

"There were over 17 500 outpatient consultations last year, many as a result of the Tsunami which struck the region at Easter."

The exchange will be part of the staff members' work as UnitingCare Health employees but the nurses will meet their own airfares to the Solomon Islands.

Ms Kidd said UnitingCare Health has also committed to source much needed clinical equipment for the Helena Goldie Hospital. The first gift of an urgently requested bench top sterilising unit is currently on its way to the Solomon Islands.



UnitingCare Health Director for Mission Rev Robyn Kidd packing surgical equipment into the bench top steriliser for the Solomon Islands. Photo courtesy of UnitingCare Health

Angelina Jolie in Vogue-style Bible

TELEGRAPH.CO.UK reports that Angelina Jolie is featured in a new version of the Bible.

The glossy coffee table tome, titled *Bible Illuminated: The Book*, is a bold attempt to capture the attention of modern readers.

Instead of following the usual Bible format - lots of words but somewhat lacking in celebrity portraits - Swedish ad man Dag Soderberg has decided to repackaging it in the style of *Vogue*.

Passages are written out in a magazine-style format and accompanied by striking images.

Also included are Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela and U2 frontman Bono, to illustrate the importance of doing good deeds.

They celebrities were selected after the publishers asked the Swedish public which famous figures in modern times represented goodness and compassion.

According to its publishers, when *Bible Illuminated* was released in Sweden it accounted for a 50 per cent rise in the country's Bible sales for 2007.

It was initially sold in fashion boutiques, art galleries and design stores before reaching bookshops.

Mr Soderberg's goal is "to make a version of the Bible that people want to pick up, instead of hide away or just place on a bookshelf."

10 commandments for Internet bloggers

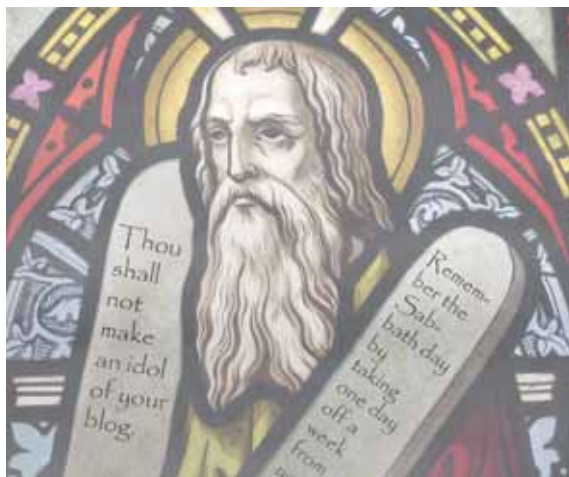
CHRISTIAN INTERNET bloggers have received ten commandments to help them avoid the dangers of writing in haste what they might later regret at leisure.

Unlike the Ten Commandments of the Bible, the cyberspace injunctions have not been written on tablets of stone but on the web site of Britain's Evangelical Alliance <http://www.eauk.org/articles/blogging-ten-cfm>.

Bloggers - writers of Internet diary and comment pages - are told not to murder someone else's reputation, or steal their content. Nor should they give false testimony against another, commit adultery in their mind, or make an idol of their blog.

"I love the world of blogging but sometimes it can take over your life.

For example, if you are posting at a time when your family might



need your attention," said the Alliance's church mission director, Krish Kandiah, who drew up the code with a group of fellow bloggers, aged from 18 to 87.

The 10 Web injunctions were thrashed out at a seminar where the bloggers, who included clergy, teenagers and an 80-year-old agony aunt, met face-to-face. **ENI**

The 10 blogging commandments

1. You shall not put your blog before your integrity.
2. You shall not make an idol of your blog.
3. You shall not misuse your screen name by using your anonymity to sin.
4. Remember the Sabbath day by taking one day off a week from your blog.
5. Honour your fellow bloggers above yourselves, and do not give undue significance to their mistakes.
6. You shall not murder someone else's honour, reputation or feelings.
7. You shall not use the Web to commit or permit adultery in your mind.
8. You shall not steal another person's content.
9. You shall not give false testimony against your fellow blogger.
10. You shall not covet your neighbour's blog ranking: be content with your own content.



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Emergent leader looking for change

By Bruce Mullan

TRADITIONAL WORSHIP in mainline churches was a key target for controversial US emerging church leader Tony Jones when he visited Queensland in October.

Dr Jones said what really worried him is how reluctant most churches are to changing the primary thing that we do together, which is worship.

"We still have people come in; they look at the back of people's heads for 65 minutes, they sing some songs; and they listen to a unilateral form of communication from one person who has ontological superiority in the community based on the education they received in a special college called a theological college.

"[That person] gets to say all the magic words and all the special things and everyone else sits passively and receives," said Dr Jones.

"This is very much part and parcel of what those of us in the emergent movement are trying to usurp, or rethink, or deconstruct, and try something new."

Dr Jones is the author of a number of books including *The New Christians: dispatches from the emergent frontier*.

He is currently the National Coordinator of the Emergent Village network which describes itself as a growing, generative friendship among missional Christians.

In the Emergent Village Dr Jones works alongside Post-Evangelical gurus such as Brian McLaren and Doug Pagitt.

Dr Jones believes coming to terms with cultural change is more difficult for mainline churches than for evangelical or independent churches.

"Evangelical churches tend to be more progressive methodologically – like meet wherever you want, dress however you want, as long as you get the message right.

"In the mainline churches we are constantly rethinking the message and what the Gospel means, but there's a certain way that we structure ourselves, there's a certain way that we worship, this is how we understand ordination, and so on."

A doctoral fellow and senior research fellow in practical theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, Dr Jones is quick to dispute doctrinal issues and ideas including 'penal substitutionary atonement' – the idea of Jesus dying as a 'punishment substitution' for human sin.

Dr Jones said the Emergent Village doesn't have a traditional statement of faith.

"We believe in God, beauty, future and hope.

"We don't have a problem with faith, but with statements.

"Whereas statements of faith and doctrine have a tendency to stifle friendships, we hope to further conversation and action around the things of God."

When *Journey* asked Dr Jones how many people were in the Emergent Village network he said they purposely do not count.

"We don't know.

"We think one of the fallacies of the modern church is the insatiable desire to count everything," he said.

"So we don't keep track, and even if we did, we wouldn't tell."



Emergent church leader Tony Jones stirred up local churches.
Photo by Osker Lau

Pope: don't build on sand

POPE BENEDICT XVI has told Catholic bishops meeting in Rome the current global banking crisis indicates that the modern world economic order is built on sand and only the word of God can offer a solid foundation for life.

"He who builds on sand only builds on visible and tangible things: on success, on career, on money," Pope Benedict told the October meeting, known as a Synod of Bishops.

"Apparently, these are the true realities but all this one day will vanish," the pontiff said in his

remarks on the Synod's opening day.

"We can see this now with the fall of two large banks. This money disappears; it is nothing, and thus all things which seem to be the true realities we can count on, are only realities of a secondary order."

Pope Benedict said, "Who builds his life on these realities, on matter, on success, on appearances, builds upon sand.

"Only the word of God is the foundation of all reality; it is as stable as the heavens and more than the heavens: it is reality."

Foundation manager calls for continued generosity

NEW MANAGER of the Uniting Church Foundation Robyn Allcock believes people are still willing to give to charitable organisations despite the current economic climate.

"For organisations which rely on corporate funds there is an obvious risk; and in the US, one of the largest not-for-profits is already in trouble."

Ms Allcock said while businesses watch their spending, the impact of hard times on individuals is that many become more likely to give.

"It is a response to the suffering of people around them.

"That attitude is especially

prevalent in the church, and giving to the Foundation is a way of preparing for the unexpected.

"The funds we raise help ensure that the Church can continue to respond to emerging needs," she said.

The Uniting Church Foundation was established in 1991 to raise funds to support the ongoing growth of the Uniting Church and the services it provides.

To date, over six million dollars have been donated to be held in perpetuity with the interest being distributed as grants to Uniting Church congregations and agencies to support the development of new projects and initiatives.

Ms Allcock has more than twenty years experience in fundraising and has relocated from Sydney to take up the role.

She is not a newcomer to the Uniting Church having served from 1996 to 1998 as Frontier Services' National Fundraising Manager.

Ms Allcock is working on a new strategic plan for the Foundation and would like to hear from any Uniting Church members wishing to have an input. Email robyn.allcock@ucaqld.com.au or write to UC Foundation at GPO Box 674, Brisbane, QLD, 4001



New Uniting Church Foundation Manager Robyn Allcock. Photo by Osker Lau

Rural Ministry Team Associates

Two New Positions Available

The Uniting Church in WA is seeking to fill two new placements known as Rural Ministry Team Associates, preferably full-time but not excluding part-time options. The appointees will serve within the Presbytery's Rural Ministry Team providing resource support to small rural congregations and their lay leaders. The terms of appointment will be as per specified ministry in the Uniting Church in Australia.

For a detailed profile of the role and the areas being supported go to www.wa.uca.org.au/jobs or contact Rosemary Hudson Miller, Associate General Secretary (Mission Support) [rosemary.miller@wa.uca.org.au] or Rev John Atkinson, Rural Ministry Team Co-ordinator [john.atkinson@wa.uca.org.au]

Phone (08) 9260 9800 or 1300 736 692

Applications, addressing the personal specification, or expressions of interest close (cob) Thursday 16 October 2008.

Uniting Church in Australia
Western Australia



Craving choruses don't strike the right chord

By Mardi Lumsden

ONE OF the best known voices in Australian worship music is afraid we have missed the point of Christianity.

Former Assembly of God pastor and founder of the Hillsong music empire Geoff Bullock told *Journey* he questioned the theology of many of the songs sung in churches, including some of his own songs.

"The biggest thing that I fear is that we have missed the point of Christianity," said a humble and thoughtful Mr Bullock.

"I fear that the church is all about something that hasn't yet happened and it is all about us and the worship is all about us.

"People are so intent on this pleading with God to come or to make us feel different... which to me says... you've missed the point, the whole crux of Christianity.

"How can you be singing these things and then celebrating Christmas?"

Having penned some of the biggest hits in worship music in the last twenty years including 'The power of your love' and 'The heavens shall declare', Mr Bullock sees a clear difference between the act of worship and the songs sung during that act.

"When we call music 'worship' I think we are missing the point.

"I write songs that are about worship, but worship is an entirely different thing.

"It is a bit like love songs. Love songs aren't love, they are songs about love.

"I think worship is far more your response and your meditation and being confronted by what it means to receive grace and forgiveness from God.

"I think we make God really small, we make him hover above the moon, rather than thinking of eternal issues and all of creation and then putting God outside that and having this sense of forgiveness and grace from that eternal being.

"The crucifixion and the resurrection define God in such a

way that it challenges us to change. Now that, to me, is where worship is.

"I think what we call worship music needs to reflect those issues far more than issues of feeling the 'anointing' or 'the presence of God'.

"We tend to sing songs that are asking God to do things that he has already done, like 'Lord have mercy', 'Lord forgive us' or 'Lord let your presence fall'.

"When you think about the coming of Christ, that has already happened! Which to me says maybe we do not fully understand what being a Christian is."

It was for these reasons that after leaving Hillsong in 1995, going through a very public marriage breakdown, being diagnosed as Bipolar, and finding love again that Mr Bullock decided to rewrite the lyrics to many of his songs.

"At that time I was probably being a bit extreme," he said.

"I have settled back in what I hope is middle ground.

"I just became aware that if I wrote the songs now, I would write them quite differently.

"Then the challenge was just how much I could change them without losing the metre and the poetry of the lyrics.

"A good example is 'The power of your love' where I say, 'Lord I come to you'.

"Well, that is not particularly ground breaking, it is not a great revelation of spirituality... that is the objective of all religions.

"The miracle is 'Lord, you come to me'. I find that far more exciting.

"The same thing with the chorus: 'Hold me close'.

"Again, the reality is God holds us close

and asking God to hold me close is almost a presumption that he doesn't. Whereas, 'You hold me close' is the miracle of God's presence.

"The same thing with 'Just let me say how much I love you'.

"The miracle is, 'Just let me say how much you love me'!

"For me that is incredibly comforting considering my life journey.

"I don't want to sound like some puffed up prophet but this is the progress in my life and the change in my spirituality which has come through hard times."

Hard times that were very well documented in the media.

"I have tried to walk away from it many times because I found that to remain in the public eye is to be responsible for my life's journey and to speak about it.

"I'm not sure how I keep coming back, but I do.

"I've come back this year. The word is almost miraculously,

because it is so at odds with the last few years, but it is necessary."

Living life in the public eye is not something Mr Bullock enjoys but sees as an opportunity for people who relate to his story.

"I think my story makes sense of the music.

"I suppose it gives people comfort because there are so many people dealing with depression and they feel burnt out and disappointed and at odds with the church's teaching because they are not experiencing what the church is saying they should be experiencing.

"I would hope that my story gives them a sigh of relief.

"The songs are birthed out of human experience and not to speak about it is, in a way, not to do the songs justice."

As for the future of worship music, Mr Bullock hopes to see songs focus more on social justice.

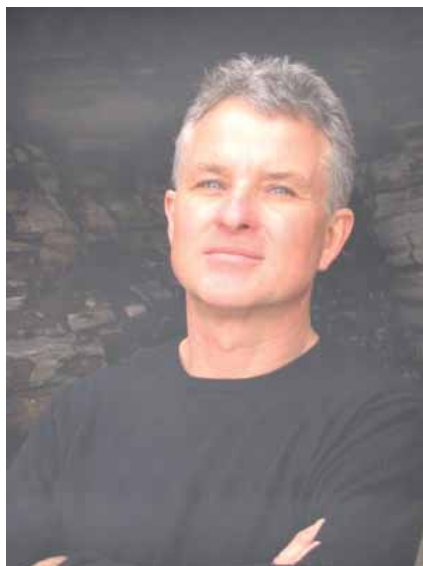
"It would be really lovely if we wrote some justice songs for our worship music.

"It would just change the emphasis without it necessarily being a big change.

"I think it would be more comforting, where there wouldn't be all this spiritual striving anymore where people are crying out for God without realising that he, in reality, cries out for us.

"There are so many of those statements like, 'I walk with Christ'. No you don't, he walks with you!

"Music is a language to the soul and I think we need to return to the point of inspiration that has preserved Christianity for 2000 years and the point of revelation of the coming of Christ and lyrically express that."



Worship songs need to reflect bigger themes said Geoff Bullock. Photo courtesy of www.geoffbullock.com



Geoff Bullock's new self titled album is out now through Koorong and Word Books. www.geoffbullock.com

I'm learning to be loved

By Geoff Bullock © 2004

I'm learning to be loved, I'm learning to receive
A love that is unearned, unmerited and free.
This love I can receive not struggling to achieve.
I'm learning to be loved.

I'm learning to be loved, this miracle of grace
That finds me as I am and shows me heaven's face,
Eyes that see my pain, hands that know my shame.
I'm learning to be loved.

This love that knows no end,
This love that knows no bounds,
This love that reaches out Before my silent prayers.
This heart of heaven speaks Of grace that mercy meets
Within this heart of mine,
Within this heart of mine

I'm knocking on the door that opens from inside,
I'm seeking for the truth that alone I cannot find.
A wisdom that is shown, a truth that is made known
I'm learning to be loved.

Indian church leaders criticise government response to alleged rape

By Anto Akkara

CHURCH LEADERS in India have said an inquiry ordered into the case of a young nun allegedly raped in Kandhamal province, amid anti-Christian violence in the state of Orissa, had been instituted only because of media criticism of government inaction in the case.

Archbishop Raphael Chennath of Bhubaneswar, whose diocese covers Kandhamal, said that what he described as belated action by the government of Orissa demonstrated it had been "embarrassed by media reports".

The alleged rape of the nun in Konjamendi took place on 25 August, when a mob attacked the

30-year-old nun and a local priest, the Rev. Thomas Chellan.

The mob, said by Christians to be Hindu extremists, then paraded the priest naked through the streets together with the nun in torn clothes.

The government launched its inquiry on 3 October, after the case had been in newspaper headlines for several weeks.

The government also suspended the chief of the local police station at Konjamendi pending an investigation into "dereliction of duty".

Chellan said that the police chief had led a team of fellow officers, who stood by as the priest and nun were taken through the streets.

The *Press Trust of India* news agency reported that three youths from Kerala had been arrested in connection with the alleged rape; bringing the total number of arrests to eight.

The news agency said the nun had made a written complaint the day after the incident, and had also undergone a medical examination.

Church officials say the woman is now having trauma counselling in New Delhi.

"I wonder why it took so long for the government to act in this case," Church of North India Bishop Samson Das of Cuttack told *Ecumenical News International*.

The Queensland Orchestra

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Are we creating disposable worship?

Head of Contemporary Music Studies at Macquarie University in Sydney Dr Mark Evans fears for the future of contemporary worship music suggesting that, because of its insatiable appetite for the latest, 'hit' praise songs, the Church is propagating a culture of 'disposable' worship and building a 'canon' of similar-sounding songs as shallow as the throw-away pop-culture it mimics. . .

MOST HEALTH professionals acknowledge that a balanced diet is essential for well-being.

To achieve this we are encouraged to include foods from the five basic food groups in our diet every day.

It would seem to me that a similar philosophy would be helpfully applied to the musical diet of our modern churches.

Due to the denominational

branding of churches, or even the specificity of individual churches and their musical needs, some churches are effectively restricting their diet to one food group.

Often this food is the music produced from their particular church or denomination.

For example, Christian City Church (CCC) used to pride itself on only using its own music in its

corporate gatherings around the world.

Most CCC music is produced from their Sydney homechurch, so even at a base level this music is going to be less localised and distinct to congregants in the Vancouver CCC church, for example.

Such diversification is even more indispensable in smaller churches where there may only be two or three main songwriters.

In such cases limiting the catalogue to songs from these writers inhibits the breadth of Christian experience being sung about and experienced.

Many large music producing churches around the world restrict the use of other people's songs during their gathering.

Certainly they argue that they have enough good songs to satisfy a meeting of believers – no matter the thematic concerns of the service.

Yet the point remains; they are only consuming one kind of song, their musical diet is one-dimensional.

A cynical observer might conclude that the reasoning for such a policy is strictly commercial – that is, we sing only our songs so people will buy only our albums.

Advocates will argue saying that they only use their own music because that is the church's 'brand name', that is the language and experience they understand.

The real travesty of this thinking comes when one reflects on the vast volume of contemporary song being produced around the world.

There is now so much quality congregational song being written around the world, which is easily accessible through CDs, music books and the internet, that there can be no excuse for using material of an inferior standard.

It is simple logic that using music only from one source will not always yield the optimum results.

A diet of only one food will make you sick – no matter how good that food is.

One offspring of this unfortunate tendency is that the constant turnover of contemporary songs means very few songs are being retained around the world as some form of modern canon.

As people age they often return to the music of their youth, music they grew up with, music that was special to them at important moments.

Indeed, oftentimes particular artists are lauded throughout their career by fans for exactly those reasons.

Does this have even greater resonance in the life of Christians?

Songs important in the formative stages of someone's Christianity, or as a response to significant periods in their life, remain integral to their faith life.

This is one of the reasons that classic hymns remain revered by older members of congregations.

This is their music. They identify with and draw strength from those songs.

The question for us becomes what will happen to our currently

popular congregational song given its place within a throw-away pop culture society.

Will it be enough in 30 years that Christians constantly sing new songs and have no history of hymnody of which to draw?

If we are producing congregational song which we consider to be disposable, fleeting and of little long-term worth, then what does that say for the quality of the text to begin with?

A time will come as current congregations age that a yearning to find comfort and encouragement from the songs of the past will emerge.

Will the songs still be in current rotation, or will we have replaced them with last year's 'best of'?

Certainly, songs like 'Shout to the Lord' (by Darlene Zschech) may continue on into the future, but will it take a song of such universal acceptance to make the next congregational song canon?

We do risk becoming a victim of a musical trend, even more a cultural trend that praises the immediate, the successful and the popular.

We need to ensure that the congregational song of today leaves a lasting value to the Christians of tomorrow.

Dr Mark Evans is the author of *Open Up The Doors: Music in the Modern Church* (Equinox Press, 2007).

This article is an extract from a longer article which was first published by online music, arts and faith website

www.aboutchristianmusic.com.au

Kiwis pick up the beat

By Bruce Mullan

NEW ZEALAND hymns feature a range of emotions from the language of prophetic anger and dissent to intense empathy with suffering and pain, said well-known Kiwi hymn writer Colin Gibson.

Dr Gibson who is Emeritus Professor of English at Otago University was keynote speaker at this year's US and Canada Hymn Society conference at Berkeley,

California, and at the Hymn Society of Great Britain and Ireland conference in Liverpool, United Kingdom.

Dr Gibson spoke about a distinctive 'voice' in New Zealand hymn writing which he said was matched by a willingness on the part of writers to explore serious social and religious issues of the day.

"Issues of inclusiveness and equality, of social justice, of concern for the natural world, of peace and

conflict, of alternatives to the God-talk and the theologies of yesterday: the very issues which are troubling and energising the Christian Church in every part of the globe," Dr Gibson said.

Together with renowned New Zealand hymn writer Shirley Erena Murray and others, Dr Gibson will be special guest of the 'Hope is our Song' conference to be held next year.

Chairperson of the New Zealand Hymn Book Trust and conference organiser John Thornley said the strength of Kiwi hymnody is that the tunes are not tied to old-style 4/4

common metre tunes but celebrate the livelier and varied rhythms of today's pop music styles.

"It's music more suited to dancing, than marching," he said.

"The Trust writers not only challenge and support a personal life of integrity and witness, but also acknowledge the weekday life of work, service, and the larger, global issues of peace, justice and integrity of creation."

The New Zealand Hymnbook Trust Conference will be held on 24 to 26 October 2009 email info@hymns.org.nz or go to www.hymns.org.nz



Academic and hymn writer Colin Gibson. Photo courtesy of New Zealand Hymnbook Trust



Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

Author of 'When I survey the wondrous cross', Isaac Watts was one of the earliest hymn writers to depart from the traditional style of only using paraphrased biblical texts and began to include a sense of personal spirituality in his lyrics.

Mr Watts grew up as the son of a committed Nonconformist, Isaac Watts Snr, who was incarcerated twice for his controversial views.

Mr Watts displayed a propensity for rhyme on many occasions driving his parents to the point of distraction with his verse. Once, he had to explain how he came to have his eyes open during prayers.

"A little mouse for want of

stairs ran up a rope to say its prayers."

Receiving corporal punishment for this, he cried, "O father, do some pity take and I will no more verses make".

Unable to enrol at either Oxford or Cambridge due to his non-conformity, Mr Watts went to the Dissenting Academy at Stoke Newington and became pastor at a large Independent Chapel in London.

Mr Watts also wrote 'Jesus shall reign where'er the sun' and 'O God, our help in ages past'.

Besides being a famous hymn-writer, Isaac Watts was also a renowned theologian and logician, writing many books and essays on those subjects.



Singing the eternal hymn

Mission Consultant (Discipleship, Formation and Spirituality) for the Queensland Synod Rev Jenny Tymms was recently interviewed on the ABC Radio National *Encounter* program entitled 'Music and Intimacy'. Here are some selections edited from that interview.

I'M REMINDED of the countercultural and rather revolutionary work of John and Charles Wesley back in the early to mid 1700s.

They took music that was unaccompanied sung psalms and, in their desire to bring God to people who no longer felt comfortable with church, they developed music from pub tunes and very secular music and livened it up and made it boisterous.

They put words to these very boisterous, vigorous songs that were the carriers of their theology.

So they began to sing about sinners being saved and the grace of God, and of course it was not at all acceptable at the time but was a vehicle for bringing God into places where God seemed absent.

I think we can learn a lot from that today in terms of the kind of revolutionary, vigorous, social justice oriented music that can change lives.

So we'd better sing and listen to songs that are life-changing because they are the things that we often remember and can hold us together in interesting times.

We do sometimes talk about the music wars in church because younger people are wanting to have music that they can sing, that is more akin to the music they hear on the radio.

Our older people are often more familiar with the older hymns that, mind you, have slowed down over the years, they've tended to get slower and slower.

They didn't start off slow.

I think it will [change] when organs disappear and we continue to take up contemporary instruments again, because our hymns were originally devised to be sung with guitars and drums and lutes and were very rollicking.

And it was when the pipe organs were the new instrument that they took over, and simply because of the mechanics of how you play those instruments the music was slowed



Rev Jenny Tymms is keen to join in praise with the choirs of angels. Photo by Osker Lau

down and I think over a period of time it has got slower and slower.

There's a place for slow music, where what you are seeking to sing is reflective but when the words of the hymns are about joy and abundant life and creativity, there's a sense in which it needs to be more upbeat.

That's already happening. That's happening now with contemporary drums and guitars and so on in church.

I think what happens is that we're always seeking to make the connections between what we do in worship and what is in the world.

I think there needs to be a flow. The music and instruments in the songs we sing are a carrier of contemporary culture, and it can move both ways, both from within our context of worship and back out in to the world.

We need to learn and listen, listen, listen to what is happening in the world, and part of that are the songs that we can sing in

new ways, singing new songs, new forms of expressions of faith.

The Western Christian church is a singing church and when we gather in worship, part of being able to worship is to lay our whole selves, our joys, and our brokenness before God and with one another, and we do that by joining together in hymnody and in song.

So it's an opportunity to use our whole selves, our bodies, our minds, our breath and our words to join together.

It's a way of gathering together, coming from our isolation to join together, it's about participation.

Through music and song we can often bypass our brains and touch our deeper selves, our emotions, whether they be emotions of joy, thanksgiving, or confession.

It enables us to empathise with the feelings of others that we might not have ourselves, simply by singing songs that might be songs of lament.

Singing can be a memory trigger so that what we learn by repetition and singing and listening together in worship we will find during the rest of our days. That triggers, memories will emerge, and often with the music comes the words, and those words will often be words of prayer.

So music carries you into different spaces and through different places, both on your own and together.

Part of our liturgy is when we say 'We join in praise with the choirs of angels and the whole of creation in the eternal hymn', so it is a kind of sense in which singing and music are two of the most profound ways in which we can acknowledge to whom we belong, and that is God, the Lord of song, if you like.

A full transcript of *Music and Intimacy - A long street in London and beyond* can be found on the Radio National *Encounter* website <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/encounter/stories/2008/2371829.htm>

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Together with older brother John, Charles Wesley was a leader of the Methodist movement and he wrote over 6000 hymns, many of which are still popular.

Mr Wesley and his brother did not always agree on questions relating to their beliefs and Charles was strongly opposed to the idea of a breach with the Church of England into which they had been ordained.

Although close, sibling rivalry, heart-felt theological disputes and a clash of personality all contributed to what was at times a very stormy relationship.

Just before his death he sent for his minister and told him, "Sir, whatever the world may say of me, I have lived, and I die, a member of the Church of England".

Some of his more famous hymns include 'And can it be that I should gain?', 'Hark! the herald angels sing, 'O for a thousand tongues to sing' and 'Love divine, all loves excelling'.

Around 150 of his hymns were included in the Methodist hymn book.



Fanny Crosby (1820-1915)

A lifelong Methodist, American Fanny Crosby was one of the most prolific hymn writers in history composing over 8000 hymns

During her lifetime she was one of the best known women in the United States.

At six weeks of age Ms Crosby caught a cold and developed inflammation of the eyes.

The family physician was not available, and the man who came in his place recommended hot poultices as treatment - the botched procedure left her blind.

Ms Crosby was never bitter about her disability.

She wrote, "It seemed intended by the blessed providence of God that I should be blind all my life, and I thank him for the dispensation.

"If perfect earthly sight were offered me tomorrow I would not accept it. I might not have sung hymns to the praise of God if I had been distracted by the beautiful and interesting things about me."

Her best known songs include 'Blessed assurance' and 'To God be the glory'.

Ms Crosby composed her hymns entirely in her mind and it is said she worked mentally on as many as twelve hymns at once before dictating them.

Because some publishers were reluctant to have so many hymns by one person in their hymnals, Ms Crosby used nearly 100 different pseudonyms during her career.

Celebrating together

By Mardi Lumsden

WHEN PREPARING a worship service people in ministry all over the world seek the advice of one Brisbane-based Uniting Church minister.

In 2000 Indooroopilly Uniting Church minister and long-time member of the National Working Group on Worship Rev David MacGregor began a website called *Together to Celebrate*.

The site offers musical selections that link up with weekly readings from the *Revised Common Lectionary*.

With a broad range of musical offerings the appeal of *Together to Celebrate* has reached all over the globe and the website is now one of the most used sites of its kind.

Together to Celebrate is a kind of one-stop-shop that lists weekly readings and suggests a variety of song titles that could accompany each reading.

Lyrics and sheet music for Mr MacGregor's own songs are also regularly available free of charge on the site and songs are often

downloadable straight from the site or visitors can be directed to online stores to purchase the songs.

According to *Google Analytics*, the site averages 1000 hits a week. 40 per cent of these come from the United States, 40 per cent from Australia, seven per cent from the United Kingdom, seven per cent from Canada, and three per cent are from New Zealand.

A well-respected Christian song writer in his own right, Mr MacGregor said he enjoyed the fact that music can bring people together.

"In church people sing. It is one of those rare things that regardless of denomination, people do together."

He challenges churches to develop diversity in the music they use.

"Since 2000, the site has provided lectionary music selections across the diversity of contemporary song.

"It has proved a God-send (ministers' words – not mine) for those preachers and music ministers not wanting to be limited to either *Together in Song* or *Hillsong*.



Rev David MacGregor goes over the Lectionary. Photo by Osker Lau

"There is no doubt it has met a strong need."

As a musician himself, Mr MacGregor is driven to see churches diversify their worship music to ensure everyone feels included.

"I'm passionate about worshipping communities

broadening their musical diet – there is contemporary lectionary-linked music out there offering more than simply praise.

"*Together to Celebrate* offers titles for discipleship, justice, lament, confession and intercession – too often forgotten when choosing contemporary worship music.

"The Christian church, particularly those in spiritual and musical leadership, needs to catch afresh the formative power of music in developing worshipping, witnessing and serving disciples of Jesus."

Visit the *Together to Celebrate* web site at www.togethertocelbrate.com.au

Uniting churches in song

By Mardi Lumsden



Most independently released CDs don't sell more than 500 copies, but the Ballarat Uniting Churches have almost doubled that with the sale of an album they made for churches without choirs.

United in Song II is the work of singers from Uniting Churches in the Ballarat area who wanted to produce a resource for use in regional and remote churches that may not have a music ministry.

This project is the second CD released by the group after a strong response to the first CD in 2006.

Project convener Ann Pryor said enthusiasm for the first recording was high, consequently encouraging the work to continue.

"The response was so great that we decided to do another one last year. We have continued to include some older hymns in the mix and now we are about to embark on a third one," she said.

"The production of the CDs started in response to our concern locally that we would like to assist small congregations in drought

stricken areas of Victoria many of which have no organist."

Ms Pryor said they also hoped to promote *Together in Song* as well as challenge congregations to learn some of the newer songs and hymns.

To date nearly 900 copies of the CDs have been sold throughout Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia.

United in Song II features 31 tracks including 'Tell out my soul', 'Amazing grace', 'Come as you are' and many more.

It is sung just as an enthusiastic congregation would sing.

The group does not claim to be a choir but sing with fervour and are accompanied by an organ and trumpet.

The passion for this project is as obvious when speaking with Ms Pryor as it is when listening to the music.

To order phone Ann Pryor at (03) 5341 3397 or email commvet@netconnect.com.au. \$15 includes postage and packaging

Top ten hymns raise the roof

THANKS TO all those who entered the Top Ten Hymns competition.

There were only two winners.

For your interest, here are hymns in order starting with the most popular hymn.

1. How great thou art
2. Dear Lord and Father of mankind - Tune: Repton
3. The day thou gavest - Tune: St. Clement
4. Be thou my vision - Tune: Slane
5. Love divine, all loves excelling - Tune: Blaenwern
6. Be still, for the presence of the Lord - Tune: Be still
7. Make me a channel
8. Guide me, O thou great Redeemer - Tune: Cwm Rhondda
9. In Christ alone
10. Shine, Jesus, shine

The source was the BBC *Songs of Praise* survey and telephone poll.

Tens of thousands of English viewers registered their votes and the top ten were performed in a special concert at the Royal Albert Hall.

Visit stuarttownend.typepad.com/stuart_townend/2006/10/songs_of_praise for critiques of the top ten hymns.

Finding the heart of worship

LEADING WORSHIP is more about reflecting the ethos of the congregation than a personal performance.

Former Hillsong worship leader Geoff Bullock said that was at the heart of what a good worship leader does when it comes to performing music during a service.

"It really has to start at the very core of the church and its vision and methodology, so the musicians are reflecting something that is at the core of the church ethos," he said.

Logan Uniting Church worship leader Craig Burnett agreed.

"My ideal is where a worship team simply facilitates worship through diverse mediums and the community at large is so engaged in their discipleship and life with God that they can't not connect to the opportunities given to express worship," Mr Burnett said.

"Unfortunately modern life is constantly at odds with discipleship and intimacy with God and leaves us distracted and energy-less for celebrating and seeking.

"I guess this is where a worship leader can help re-focus the gathered and call them to give the attention of their hearts and minds to God."

Synod Mission Consultant Rev Graham Beattie said the biggest changes in worship leading over the last 15 years have been the greater participation of lay people

and a change in the use of musical instruments.

"A number of congregations now use percussion, violin, flute, guitars and keyboards and there is not as much reliance on the organ," he said.

Worship is no longer directed from behind the organ.

Mr Burnett is keen on using a variety of musical styles and other creative arts within a worship service but said being a worship leader was very different from performing with jazz band Scat.

"As an entertainer I can sometimes get by with a bit of smoke and mirrors, kind of keep the crowd distracted from knowing if the art is actually any good.

"In worship leading however this never cuts it. Even if the service is pumping I am called to a stillness and centredness, to risk silence, collecting of thoughts, to not be too concerned by the visual response of the crowd and to hold up a picture of hearts connecting with God, including mine.

"This is almost like a prayer of the imagination and faith that will move me to seek and smile in God's presence and hopefully move others to do the same."

By Mardi Lumsden
Read next month's *Journey* to find out about Scat's exciting Christmas gift to churches.
www.scatzazz.com

Believing, belonging, behaving, becoming

By Mardi Lumsden

BEING A young adult can be great fun. It can also be tough. There are so many opportunities and choices available.

There are so many things to try and enjoy. But stepping out of the comfortable world of the local church Youth Group can be eye opening, challenging and rewarding.

According to the Queensland Uniting Church's Young Adults Ministry co-ordinator, Tom Kerr, being a young adult is about owning your decisions.

"The big wide world means wide and diverse faith systems, value systems, morals and work ethics," said Mr Kerr.

"If you have gone from a school that might have a certain culture, now you are open to people of all sorts of persuasions and you have got to find your place again.

"Teenagehood is about identity and identity diffusion.

"When you get to the end of it, you might need to reassess who you are within that new context and group of people.

"If people get the transition right, there is all this empowerment to say... look at me, look at how I am building a great life for myself.

"If you get it wrong the price can be quite high."

But let's face it; getting it wrong and the finding the ability to learn from our mistakes is what maturing is all about.

Mr Kerr spoke of a young man he knows who, within two years of finishing high school, was an alcoholic.

"He had to get in a program and everything. He was really going down," Mr Kerr said.

"Some of the things that I think can help with that transitioning is if you have mentors who you respect and look up to who are maybe a little bit further down the track, but will tell you like it is."

Queensland Uniting Church Youth and Children's Ministry Unit (YACMU) director, Michael Jeffrey, agreed.

"Choosing peers who you are moving forward with can help you stay true to who you are," he said.

"Just one or two can help, and then that frees you up to mix with all sorts of people because you know where your roots are."

Mr Jeffrey said some university courses may challenge people's religious and world views and, while that may be difficult, it can also be very rewarding.

"It can really throw you into a headspin if you are not ready

or open to the possibility that, just because you believe it, not everybody else does.

"You have to be able to face that eventually, so they are good problems to have, but often people aren't ready for it."

Mr Jeffrey thinks the key to making good decisions during the transition from being a teenager to being an adult is owning your 'adult space'.

"It is about owning your adult space and knowing what your

boundaries and limits are and going with a plan beforehand, rather than just rolling from one thing to the next.

"It is about saying, 'This is my limit for this evening' (whatever that may be) and knowing the warning signs when you are not being the kind of person you want to be.

"And asking, 'How do I want to remember this night or experience?'

"Then, even if you stuff up, think about what you did and how you got there and what you would do differently next time, because we always stuff up.

"Putting down good habits in that area will continue throughout the rest of your life."

Mr Jeffrey said connection with the church can be about believing, belonging, behaving and becoming.

"If the church emphasises behaving (this is what you must do) that is not a good thing for young adults who are learning to deal with their freedoms.

"If it is more about belonging and believing in God, then the behaving will follow later on and the becoming will follow too."

First published in
www.thetransitlounge.com.au
23 September 2008



Youth workers Michael Jeffrey and Tom Kerr bounce ideas off each other. Photo by Osker Lau

Income gap leaves no cash for essentials

A POVERTY statement released by the Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS) in September showed a massive income gap between Australia's poorest and richest households.

The statement also revealed the fact that many households have virtually no money left from their weekly income for essentials such as education and transport.

The top 20 per cent of households earn an average of \$225 350.

This is ten times the income of the bottom 20 per cent whose average household income is \$22 500.

77 per cent of Australians believe the gap between rich and poor Australians is widening.

The statement also looked at how much money was left in households after rent, food and power was paid for.

It revealed a single pensioner living in regional Queensland had only \$16 per week left for such things as transport, clothing and phone.

A sole parent with two children would only have \$50 per week left over for these essentials.

A parent with children also has to pay for such things as education, uniforms and dental care.

Moderator of the Queensland Synod Rev Dr David Pitman said it is unacceptable that one in ten Queenslanders live in poverty.

"That's a lot of families desperately trying to get by," he said.

"When families are struggling like that it puts a stress on marriage and the fabric of family life.

"Not only are they poor, not only are they struggling on a day-to-day basis, but the family

relationships begin to become dysfunctional."

Karyn Walsh would like to see all levels of government work with the community sector to not only reduce and eliminate poverty, but prevent it from occurring in the first place.

"This is not unrealistic," said Ms Walsh.

"It can happen."

Ms Walsh said some people mistakenly think only 'absolute poverty' (the complete lack of the basics including food, clothing and shelter) was the sole issue needing to be addressed in Australia.

The QCOSS statement suggested the concept of 'relative poverty' was a more constructive measure for talking about poverty.

Relative poverty means the person or household is unable to afford the goods and services needed to enjoy a normal or mainstream lifestyle in the country in which they live.

Right: QCOSS President Karyn Walsh. Photo courtesy of www.communities.qld.gov.au



ACCOUNTANT Immediate Start

We are seeking the services of a qualified and experienced accountant to help take us to the next level.

Aboriginal Resource and Development Services Inc (ARDS) is an agency of the Uniting Church and provides unique education to the Yolngu People of North-East Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory.

The core purpose of ARDS is to 'Empower Indigenous Australians so they can access and participate fully and actively in the NT economy and community whilst keeping alive their traditional cultural ways of being'

We are seeking an outstanding performer who is superbly qualified and experienced in accounting & financial management to join our leadership team and help take us to the next level!

We are ideally looking for a full time person, however, we are open to discussions as to the position being full time, part-time or voluntary. For further information please contact our office on (08) 8982 3444 or via email on info@ards.com.au

SCHOOL CHAPLAIN



SU Qld, a Christian interchurch agency, providing pastoral care and education programs to school communities, invites applications for a School Chaplain at Cloncurry State School P-12.

For more information phone SU Regional Development Coordinator, 0747881253 m. 0437040161 or apply on line at www.su-chaplain.com

Young Families Emerging Church Minister

Young Families - Emerging Church Minister

Part-time (0.5) Placement (Ordained or lay)

Seeking 'fresh expressions' of being church. This placement has exciting possibilities to plant a new 'emerging' congregation beside traditional congregation in Hobart. Three year appointment. Expressions of Interest by 14th November 2008 (see profile) Wesley 'in the city' Uniting Church Hobart

For more information: Rev David Parker 03 6231 4033, Email: minister.wesley.uca@bigpond.com

Website wesleyhobartuca.org.au

WHAT'S ON

November 4. The Imam and the Pastor seminar in Toowoomba. For information contact Brian Lightowler on 3378 0357 or lightow@bigpond.net.au.

November 5-8. Bald Hills/Bracken Ridge Christmas Craft Show at Bracken Ridge Uniting Church, cnr Bracken St and Pellinore Rd. Opening on 5 November at 7.30pm by Councillor Amanda Cooper with entertainment from jazz group Strange Fruit. Do your Christmas shopping from the variety of craft on display. For details contact Pam Harris on 3261 2000 or pamreg@optusnet.com.au.

November 8, 8.45am-12pm. The Imam and the Pastor seminar at Riverglenn Conference Centre, Kate Street, Indooroopilly. A donation of \$10 per person is encouraged to cover costs. RSVP by 31 October. To RSVP contact Brian Lightowler on 3378 0357 or lightow@bigpond.net.au.

November 8, 6-10pm. The Great Cover Up - A fundraising event at the Princess Theatre, Wolloongabba, hosted by Jessie Hutton of St Mark's Uniting Church to raise funds for Zoe's Place, a hospice for children with a life threatening illness. Features talented Christian artists including Stu Larsen, Lydia Cole, Nainby, Jess and TED, Teagen Keith and Tim Nelsen performing covers of their favourite songs. Tickets \$10 from Leanne Hutton on 3345 2161 (AH) or 0409 615342. For more information email pllj@optusnet.com.au.

November 8, 6-10pm. Forest Lake Uniting Church international dinner at Forest Lake College Chapel Alpine Place, Forest Lake. Tickets \$25 per head or \$60 per family. Ten countries will be represented and there will be entertainment. The funds raised will go to the Uniting Church save the Sudanese children Project. For more information contact Michele Shumack on 3279 8283 or shelly.07@bigpond.com or Pam on 3372 5970.

November 11, 7-9pm. Caring for Creation: A Christian Call to Action on Climate Change seminar at Kenmore Baptist. Explore the biblical mandate to care for God's creation and the urgent need to tackle climate change to protect the world's poor and future generations. Speaker is Rev Richard Cizik, Vice President for Governmental Affairs with the US National Association of Evangelicals and an advocate for action on climate change. Chaired by Carolyn Kitto, World Vision. Supported by the Evangelical Alliance, Micah Challenge, TEAR, The Climate Institute, and World Vision. Contact Miriam Pepper on (02) 9252 5200 or mpepper@climateinstitute.org.au.

November 14-28. Christmas Gift Market at Chermide-Kedron Community Church. Opening at 6.30pm on 14 November. Crafts, food, jewellery, books, cards and more. Contact Christine on 3350 4302 or ckc@dovenetq.net.au.

November 18, 9.30-11.30am. UCA International Mission Support Group (Qld) at St Andrew's Church Hall, Ann Street Brisbane. Annual General Meeting. Congregations and Adult Fellowships are invited to send representatives. Contact Judith Finau on 3711 4622 or ljjfinau@dovenetq.net.au.

November 20-22, 8.30am-3pm. Wheller Gardens Rummage Sale at Uhl Hall, Wheller Gardens 930 Gympie Rd Chermide. Preloved clothes, books, knickknacks Saturday 8am-12noon Half price (except craft). Contact M Herbert on 3857 4668 or billmerr@bigpond.com.

November 27, 10am. Frontier Services Auxiliary Christmas Cheer morning tea at St Andrew's Church Hall, Creek Street Brisbane. Program by the Sherwood Singers. Admission \$8. Booking essential. Contact Jessie Logan on 3278 1868.

December 6, 5.30-8pm. Festival of Christmas Lights at Elanora Uniting Church. Sausage Sizzle, entertainment, Christmas Carols. Turning on of the Christmas lights at 7pm. Contact Jan Drury on 5598 8005 or jandrury@bigpond.com.

December 6-24, 10am-3.30pm. Montville Christmas Display. Visit the craft and food shops lining the main street. Theme is Joy to the World. Contact Ruth Potter on 5478 6484 or rpotter@westnet.com.au.

December 14, 2-4pm. Bribie Island Carols on the Lawn at Bribie Island Uniting Church, Webster St Bongaree. Contact Tony Curtis on 5497 5848 or curtisabem@internode.on.net.

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



Liz Stevens mentoring mentors.
Photo courtesy of Karen Ross

Mentoring course helps ministry

WITH THE help of a Uniting Church Foundation grant the Sunnybank congregation has launched a mentoring initiative which identifies, trains and equips individuals into the ministry of mentor.

Mentors are encouraged to journey alongside someone of a different culture or generation to them and develop a Christ centred character and competency for ministry.

The Uniting Church Foundation grant provided finance to resource cutting edge training.

The Foundation assists many new projects in local churches through the generous support of church members' donations and bequests.

Sunnybank Uniting Church has a vision to connect people to God and to each other.

Sunnybank is a multicultural congregation consisting of five worship services each Sunday and values authentic relationships across multiple generations and ethnic cultures. A key method of empowering members to disciple others in such a diverse community is through mentoring.

Sunnybank discipleship pastor Karen Ross thanked the Foundation and encouraged others to assist the Foundation in their work.

"I strongly encourage individuals to financially support the Foundation so that they may continue to serve the local church," she said.

Wilson inspires kids at games

LIFEWORKS UNITING Church in Toowoomba was abuzz with activity during the September school holidays.

Lifeworks teamed up with Middle Ridge Uniting, West Toowoomba Anglican and Lifeline's RAI program to host the Red Rockets Kids Games.

Children and adults alike were inspired at the opening ceremony by guest speaker, sprinter Stephen Wilson, who won a bronze medal at the 2008 Beijing Paralympics.

73 children and 39 volunteers participated in art, craft, sport, games, drama, singing and dancing.



Stephen Wilson on his way to a bronze medal in Beijing.
Photo by Serena Corporate Photography



I'm Not Crazy, I'm Just a little Unwell

By Leigh Hatcher
Strand Publishing (2005)
RRP \$19.95

I'm Not Crazy, I'm Just a little Unwell is the poignant story of one man's agonising journey through Chronic Fatigue Syndrome.

Leigh Hatcher, a well-known television journalist, likened this life-changing interval to groping in a hostile wilderness.

He was dealing with a two-headed monster: the debilitating physical symptoms forced him to face his own mortality, while the misgivings of those who implied the illness was psycho-somatic

eroded his confidence and badly bruised his soul.

However, despite extreme bodily weakness and nagging self-doubt, he remained doggedly positive, consistently courageous and always authentic throughout his struggle and final triumph.

The narrative moves quickly, an easy read in everyday language. It is neither sentimental nor self-pitying, but provokes frequent pauses for personal reflection.

In many ways, Mr Hatcher is a plaintive voice for people whose suffering has been inadvertently disenfranchised by tactless friends, relatives, employers, medical staff and ministers.

Significantly, Mr Hatcher sacked two pastoral carers who

REVIEWS

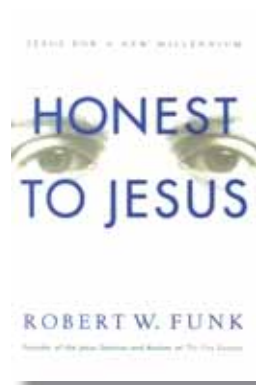
visited regularly, but seemed unable to identify with his anguish nor to validate his multiple losses.

Accordingly, in the Appendix, the author offers 'twelve simple suggestions about how we might better look after those doing it tough.'

As a chaplain at the Wesley Hospital, I intentionally purchased this book to better understand and minister to the needs of chronic sufferers, and it has proved to be an excellent resource.

I'm Not Crazy, I'm Just a little Unwell could help all readers by raising awareness of the varied spiritual, emotional, social, financial and physical challenges of the sick and informing us how best to support them.

Reviewed by Hope Brock, a volunteer chaplain at the Wesley Hospital in Brisbane



Jesus to try to discover what he was really like and what his message really was.

This group became known as the Jesus Seminar and its leader, the author Robert Funk, summarises much of their work.

The Seminar's aim was to get back to the knowledge and understanding which gave birth to the early church and sustained it through the first three centuries of the so-called Christian era.

Mr Funk canvasses the scripture and other material relating to a wide range of theological topics.

The problems encountered in understanding sayings attributed to Jesus are examined by taking account of the thought forms and linguistic habits of a first century Jewish culture and the difficulties inherent in translation to and from Greek of that time.

This is a scholarly book written in unpretentious English.

Honest to Jesus is not always easy or pleasant reading because of its assault on ingrained and cherished beliefs and understandings, but it can be an encouragement to those disaffected with teachings of the church.

It is well worth careful and thoughtful reading and reflection by those concerned with the proclamation of the gospel and the church's role in this task.

Reviewed by Alan Cook, a member of Wavell Heights Uniting Church Congregation

Ego & Soul: The Modern West in Search of Meaning

By John Carroll
Scribe (revised edition 2008)
RRP \$35.00

At a time when there is widespread pessimism among social commentators about the driving materialistic influences in modern life, it is stimulating to read in *Ego & Soul* an Australian sociologist's perspective which asserts that most people are still struggling to find some overarching meaning in life.

John Carroll, professor of sociology at La Trobe University Melbourne, believes that properly explored, the everyday pursuits of ordinary people reveal this ongoing search for meaning; the quest to answer three fundamental metaphysical questions: 'Where do I come from?' 'What should I do with my life', and 'What happens to me at death?'

In this heavily revised and updated edition of *Ego & Soul* (first published ten years ago), Carroll examines some of the core interests and activities that shape the lives of contemporary people in western society.

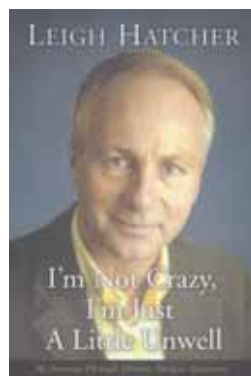
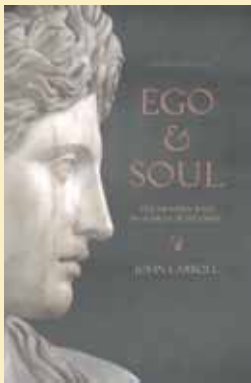
"Battlegrounds" explores four broad areas: work, sport, love and lower-middle-class culture; "Nihilism and Consumerism" examines self-hatred in high culture, the modern university, shopping and tourism; and "New Dynamism" looks at democracy, the motor car, the do-it-yourself home, the personal computer and nature.

Ego & Soul provides a stimulating opportunity for us to reflect deeply upon the ways ordinary people are seeking to 'find traces of coherence' in their lives in a time of rapid change and cultural uncertainty.

I was compelled, as a Christian, to consider more prayerfully how the Spirit of God may be at work in people's lives, and to ponder how God's good news in Christ might be spoken afresh into the hearts and minds of people struggling against the sense of futility that threatens to overwhelm them.

Reviewed by Rev Jenny Tymms, Mission Consultant (Discipleship, Formation and Spirituality) for the Queensland Synod.

Read the full text of this review at www.journeyonline.com.au



Honest to Jesus: Jesus for a New Millennium

By Robert W. Funk
Polebridge Press (1996)
RRP \$37.95

It started in 1906 with Albert Schweitzer and his book *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*.

Years later a group of academic theologians, incensed by the limitations placed on their research, banded together to look at all the evidence concerning the life of

Hope

Directed by Steve Thomas
Documentary (103 minutes)
Flying Carpet Films (2007)

Seven years ago 400 people set out on a boat bound for the Australian coast but only seven made it.

Steve Thomas' moving documentary *Hope* is the story of asylum seeker Amal Basry.

Ms Basry had watched *The Titanic* at a cinema in Baghdad the night before she fled Iraq.

18 months later the people smuggling boat she was on sank between Indonesia and Australia. 350 people, mostly women and children, drowned.

The boat later became known as the SIEV X.

Ms Basry survived the largest

maritime disaster since World War II by clinging to the floating body of a dead woman for 22 hours.

She did not know if her 16-year-old son Amjed, who had boarded the 19.5 metre fishing boat with her in Indonesia, and who had given her a life jacket, was alive or dead.

Hope (which is what the name Amal means) tells the story through the eyes of Mr Thomas after he heard Ms Basry make a speech describing the experience.

"Everybody was in tears, including me," Mr Thomas said.

"Here was a woman who was not going to be shut up.

"She has a strong voice and she was going to speak out about the boat, about the uncertainties of the boat, of the sinking."

What Have They Done With Jesus?

By Ben Witherington III
Monarch Books (2007)
RRP \$24.95

This is a book for anyone who has been confused by or is interested in theories of Jesus' life.

Ben Witherington sifts through theories, rumours, historical documents and the Bible to determine what they reveal about Jesus.

I found *What Have They Done With Jesus?* easy to read and delightfully insightful and compelling.

Mr Witherington does not adopt a view that extra-Biblical material should be rejected outright, but reads the documents in their historical context to extract what they contribute to our understanding of who Jesus was.

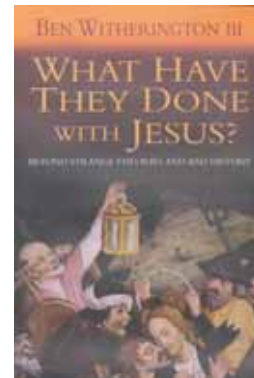
He discusses issues around Jesus' identity and delves into his relationships.

Mr Witherington presents each idea from its own context and allows the reader to make up their own mind.

For the most part I found that his explanation sits with the Australian culture but it still leaves the reader to make their own determination which is probably a good thing.

The book however quickly sets aside our culture and looks to answer the question, "What have they done with Jesus?"

Reviewed by Linda Hamill, a Ministry of Word candidate from The Gap



Perhaps a little long, *Hope* is a low budget film that would have benefited from better editing, but these flaws are unable to mask Ms Basry's courageous spirit and refusal to be silent about the innocent people who died in this tragedy.

Despite the story, this documentary is not depressing but rather echoes its name.

Together Ms Basry and Mr Thomas have collaborated to make sure that the SIEV-X disaster is not forgotten.

Reviewed by Bruce Mullan. *Hope* will be screened as part of the "Sink or Swim" exhibition of work by Geraldine Berkemeier and Gary Shinfield at the Gold Coast Arts Centre Gallery on Thursday 6 November at 6pm



Amal Basry talks to the filmmaker Steve Thomas in *Hope*

PRAYER DIARY

16 November:
Glebe Road Ipswich
Uniting Church

Glebe Rd Uniting Church is a large regional suburban church about 3.5 km east of Ipswich's city centre.

We have four worship services each Sunday covering a variety of different worship styles and formats.

We have a dynamic youth and children's ministry and also a wonderful community of retirees.

Our church has been exploring different ways to serve our local community.

With this in mind, we have initiated a range of different ministries ranging from the development of mentoring programs in some of the local schools through to the implementation of a marriage enrichment course.

We also have a vibrant garden club with a large community involvement and a worship service that actively involves people with disabilities and special needs.

We have a neighbourhood centre that helps young families with a variety of programs and resources.

We also hold an annual Eisteddfod that celebrates the gift of God's creativity through the arts.

Our church has also been actively raising money to build a home for orphans in Uganda through a mission organisation called Watoto.

Our target is \$38 000 and we are about half-way there.

Next year we will be developing an extensive program of evangelism and discipleship based on the themes of *imagination, courage and faithfulness*.

We are about to advertise for a Young Families' Pastor to grow our ministry to the young families in our community.

We are also looking to grow our cell-group network to be the primary place of mission and pastoral care in the life of our church.

We ask for your prayers as we move forward in ministry.

23 November:
Maroochydore Uniting
Church

The Maroochydore Uniting Church is a congregation of about 80 regular worshippers mainly from the retired section of the community.

Some are people who have lived on the Sunshine Coast for most (or all) of their lives while others have come to retire here and enjoy the more relaxed lifestyle.

We have a morning service each Sunday at 8.30am and when there is a fifth Sunday of the month an evening service at 6.30pm preceded by a 'bring and share finger food' fellowship tea.

Our focus of ministry is "Growing Effective Grand Parents".

Our congregation very rarely has young people as part of its number.

We are blessed with having a large number of visitors who come for holidays and make the church their spiritual home while they are here.

Some come for a week or two, others come for 3-6 months each year and these visitors consider themselves to be members of our congregation while they are here.

Some come from as far away as New Zealand and Canada as well as from other states in Australia.

Location! Location! Location! is the "buzz word" and we are centrally located in Maroochydore adjacent to the Sunshine Plaza and very close to the new development projected to be completed in the next five years.

The development is anticipated to bring new businesses to the area and will also include high-rise unit dwellings.

The biggest challenge facing us at present is how we will reach out and connect with the new community that will be on our doorstep in the not too distant future.

Please pray for the continued vibrant life of our congregation and that, although ageing, we might be effective witnesses for Jesus Christ in our community.

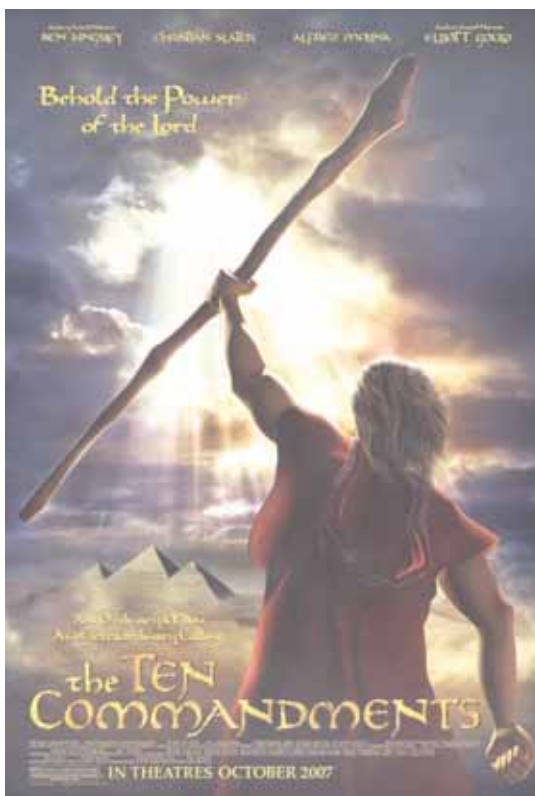


The Christmas Bowl just keeps on giving

THE PHOTOGRAPH above features in this year's Christmas Bowl material. It depicts six South-Sudanese girls who live in the Dereig camp for Internally Displaced People hurrying to attend a school which the Christmas Bowl has helped establish.

2008 marks the 60th year of Australians giving and sharing through the Christmas Bowl which has delivered critical assistance to people around the world affected by poverty and ongoing conflict.

To support the Christmas Bowl visit www.ncca.org.au/actforpeace



Commanding give away

THANKS TO our friends at Heritage HM Journey has three copies of the animated film *The Ten Commandments* to give away!

To win a copy of the DVD email your name and postal address to journey@ucaqld.com.au and answer these two questions:

1. Who reviewed this version of *The Ten Commandments* on *www.journeyonline.com.au*?

2. Who voiced of character of Moses in this version of the film?

The first three correct entries will win.

This competition is not open to the reviewer or staff in the Queensland Synod office.

Good luck!

Want to write a review for Journey?

WE ARE always looking for reviewers for publication in *Journey* and at www.journeyonline.com.au.

All we need is 300 words and you get to keep the book, CD or DVD for your library.

Review guidelines are provided.

Lists of book available for review are regularly posted to the 'Queensland Synod Discussion Group' an e-group conversation about Uniting Church Queensland issues.

Review lists are also posted to the Queensland Synod weekly e-newsletter *UC Information*.

You can subscribe for both in the 'Communications' section of the Synod web site www.ucaqld.com.au.



Satisfaction theories: the debate continues

In his opinion piece (September *Journey*) Rev Dr Geoff Thompson unfortunately failed to give full attention to the New Testament in relation to the "wrath of God".

St Paul in his Romans exposition of the Gospel tells us that, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven..." [1:18] and the place, of course, where the wrath is revealed is in the Gospel itself.

The bad news of the Gospel is that there was a mutual alienation between God and man: humanity's sinful rebellion against God elicited God's wrath, and the judgement of God's wrath on sin is death.

The good news of the Gospel is that God himself in the person of the eternal Son became man.

In this act God in himself shouldered all of humanity's sin and guilt and on the cross bore humanity's judgement of death.

In this way, God Himself in Himself satisfied the righteous wrath of God.

God reconciled sinful humanity to himself by God himself in Christ removing the alienating realities of the sin of man and the righteous wrath of God through the cross.

Raymond Lindenmayer
Manly

Geoff Thompson responds

Spencer Gear and Nathan Barton (October *Journey*) raise objections to my concerns with satisfaction theories of Jesus' death (September *Journey*).

Both are disturbed by my claim that 'not once in the New Testament is it ever said that Jesus bore the wrath of God'.

My point was an interpretative one: because there is no explicit statement, 'Jesus bore the wrath of God', all such explanations of Jesus' death necessarily depend on certain interpretations of such ideas as sacrifice, substitution, ransom, judgement, and even wrath itself.

Even if one allows that such terms can be *interpreted* to mean that Jesus 'bore' the wrath of God, it would require yet a further step of *interpretation* to equate that with 'satisfying' the wrath of God.

Therefore, my rejection of the idea that Jesus' death 'satisfies' the wrath of God is not adequately countered (as suggested by Mr Gear) by Leon Morris' distinguished but widely disputed argument for rendering the Greek word *hilasterion* as propitiation or appeasement in Romans 3:25.

The ongoing debate is not about whether *hilasterion* can be rendered as propitiation, but whether this is what it means in Paul's theology, shaped as it was by the multi-faceted Jewish understanding of sacrifice, martyrdom and redemptive suffering.

The further charge (by Mr Barton) that I was playing with semantics in relation to 2 Corinthians 5:19 misses the point.

Responsible interpretation of the Bible requires careful attention to meaning, grammar, syntax and, yes, even semantics.

Failure to give such attention in this particular case obscures the distinctiveness of the gospel and risks reducing Christianity to a pale imitation of pagan religion.

Christianity is not just one more sacrificial religion distinguished only by the identity of the one sacrificed.

It is a religion of incarnation according to which God in Christ graciously assumes, identifies with and heals the human condition even to the point of a Godless death (Mark 15:34).

I am not suggesting that defenders of satisfaction theories deny this, but popular expressions of these theories frequently sit loosely to the incarnation.

By suggesting that something must be done to satisfy God before he forgives, satisfaction theories compromise the gratuity of the gospel of grace.

Such theories appear to have taken hold of much popular piety. I remain convinced that they need to be challenged.

Geoff Thompson, Trinity Theological College

Thinking about the Signs of the Times

What a surprise to open *Journey* and find our notice board sign displayed on page 2.

We have no idea at all who photographed it and submitted it to *Journey*.

It was such a tonic for our congregation.

Since my placement here at the Grove began in February 2007, I was given the task of coming up with a sign board notice every week and our church secretary insisted I had to come up with something every week, no excuses.

From day one I determined it would not be anything that was derogatory or pointed, or anything that sounded punitive.

So I thought what was needed was a conversational approach to the community as it passes along our very busy Ashgrove Avenue.

Some weeks I've had little time to give it too much thought, but there's always been something that seems to resonate, hopefully for our congregation and with the passing community on the street outside.

Mal Lightbody
The Grove Uniting Church

The photographer was none other than *Journey's* associate editor Mardi Lumsden. Be alert, not alarmed... our sign spotters are everywhere - ed

Warming the heart and not the head

Journey regularly features excellent articles which stimulate and confront the intellect.

Most readers would enthusiastically endorse the Rev Dr Geoff Thompson's criticism of the theology of some of the hymns we often mindlessly sing.

Those looking to enrich the inner life can be tempted to seek this through the intellect, sometimes perhaps the outcome bordering on a modern form of Gnosticism.

It's interesting that it was Wesley's heart which was 'strangely warmed' and not his head.

Our church has a proud history of evangelism and the pursuit of social justice but certainly not of actively encouraging the enrichment of the contemplative life.

Perhaps we need more exposure to the rich contributions from exponents of monastic spirituality and not maintain the view that no good thing can come from Roman Catholicism.

Ken Wakeling
Scarborough

Emerald says thanks for the flood support

The Emerald Fernlees Congregation would like to thank the Queensland Synod, the Central Queensland Presbytery and many individual congregations for their generous support to our

LETTERS

congregation and community during and after the Emerald floods earlier this year.

These contributions have allowed us to offer support to some of our church people and other community members affected by the floods, and have also contributed to the normal work of our congregation during this difficult time.

Our church leaders and fellow congregations wisely recognised that we would not be able to raise funds easily when so many people in the community were affected either directly by the floods or indirectly by disruptions to normal business.

In one case, we were able to offer some help to a family who have still not been able to move back into their home six months after the flood, and are expecting to be living in a shed and caravan for many months.

The church provided heating equipment to warm the shed during a particularly cold winter.

Without the generous support we received from the wider church we would not have been able to offer help to those in need, and would have struggled to maintain our congregation.

On behalf of the Church Council Emerald Fernlees Uniting Church

Doug Core
Church Council Secretary
Emerald Fernlees Uniting Church

The Synod Secretary responds to criticism

In response to Mr Butler's letter, it needs to be noted that the current financial situation facing the Synod is not "one of the outcomes of decisions taken at the last two Assemblies".

Over the past decade, the Mission and Service Fund has become increasingly reliant upon contributions from the Uniting Church Investment Service (U.C.I.S.), a risky strategy at best and a situation which has now proved to be unsustainable.

Having said that, it does need to be acknowledged that the contribution from congregational giving into the Mission and Service Fund did reduce following the Assembly in 2003.

Comparatively, that reduction is small compared to the reduction in the contribution from U.C.I.S.

With the ongoing changes in the world financial scene, and the decision of the Finance Investment and Property Board that U.C.I.S. would move out of certain areas of lending, the Synod cannot rely upon U.C.I.S. to carry the unbearable burden of massive contributions to the Mission and Service Fund.

In response to Mr Rea's letter, it is not helpful to compare the current complex environment in which the church now operates, an environment that requires competent staff who are adequately remunerated, with what may have been done in the past.

Those with positions of responsibility in the Synod do concentrate on business matters to the extent that that is part of their responsibility.

However, they do so in the context of their commitment to the wider ministry and mission of the whole church.

I, for one, am deeply grateful for the high level of dedication and commitment displayed by those who work in the Department for Financial and Property Services.

I agree with Mr Rae in that the current situation does provide a challenge and an opportunity to rethink our strategies.

Douglas Jones
General Secretary

Religion Report axed

ABC RADIO National has announced *The Religion Report* will be axed as part of major changes to its 2009 schedule.

Staff were made aware of the changes but it was outspoken Radio National presenter Stephen Crittenden who made the cuts public in a strongly worded two minute preamble to his program.

"The decision to axe one of this network's most distinctive and important programs has been approved by the director of ABC Radio, Sue Howard, and it will condemn Radio National to even greater irrelevance," Mr Crittenden said on air.

"The ABC's specialist units

have been under attack for years, but the decapitation of the flagship program of the Religion Department effectively spells the death of religion at the ABC."

He encouraged listeners to protest against the decision naming Director of Radio Sue Howard as having signed off on the decision.

Radio National manager Dr Jane Connors said, "Decisions to wind up programs are never easy as all of the network's shows are made with passion and care and each have their devoted following."

Senior Communications Officer for the Uniting Church Assembly Penelope Monger described the decision as "a disgrace".



Have your say

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

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JOURNEY asks...

What is your favourite hymn and why?

David MacGregor

My favourite worship song is 'A place at the table', lyrics by New Zealand's Shirley Murray and tune by American Lori True (found in the Church of Scotland's *Church Hymnary* 2006, Canterbury Press).

Anyone familiar with this world-acclaimed writer will know her passion for justice, peace, community and new life in Christ.

I came upon the song last year during worship in Iona Abbey. More accurately, the song came upon me! I found myself sobbing.

It really hit me!

"For everyone born ... for woman and man ... for young and for old ... for just and unjust ... a place at the table ... yes, God will delight when we are creators of justice and joy!"

Every time I sing it, or celebrate communion, I feel propelled into God's justice-making, joy-making mission in the world; to go beyond simply words and embody Paul's Galatians 3 teaching about inclusion in my life.

Justice and joy! Indeed.

Rev David MacGregor is the webmaster for the *Together to Celebrate* hymnody website www.togethertocelbrate.com.au



Yvonne McRostie

It's not fair to ask a person who loves music their favourite song of faith. It changes so often, and so it should as I meet new people and hear their stories.

Recently the song 'It is well with my soul' hit number one on my top ten.

Written in 1873 by Horatio Spafford, the story goes that after losing all his money and the death of his two daughters, the Holy Spirit inspired the words.

This song, which surprisingly I'd never heard before or I'd ignored, touched me deeply when dealing with a difficult situation within our congregation.

It was an older person of faith who quietly played it for me as their song of comfort.

I often wonder if Horatio Spafford ever thought that his pain and suffering and his inspired words of comfort would still be bringing people to know God's peaceful presence with them through difficult times.

Rev Yvonne McRostie is minister with South East Uniting Community in Brisbane



Steven Nisbet

What a challenge – for an organist to select a favourite hymn!

Because I play hymns, I am first drawn to the tunes. Nevertheless, the words must make sense to me theologically.

Would my favourite be 'Christ is made the sure foundation' to Purcell's strong tune, Westminster Abbey, or the Australian hymn 'Sing a new song' by McAuley and Connolly with its references to mathematics - number, shape and design? Maybe it's 'God is love, let heaven adore' (to Abbot's Leigh) closing with "... love forever o'er the universe must reign", or Charles Wesley's magnificent hymn 'Love divine' (to Hyfrydol)?

After much consideration, I select 'All my hope on God is founded'.

Robert Bridges' 1898 words based on Neander's 17th century hymn inspires me to trust in God and believe not only that "God's great goodness lasts for ever", but also that those who follow Christ "shall not fall".

Herbert Howells' tune 'Michael' also is inspirational, and in my opinion, the best hymn tune written in the 20th century.



Steven Nisbet is organist at St Andrews Uniting Church in Brisbane City

Ian Mavor

My favourite hymn is 'O love that wilt not let me go' (*Together in Song* 602).

In this deeply personal affirmation of faith, George Matheson draws on painful experiences to give richer meaning to key Christian terms - love, light, joy and the cross.

The words and symbols of his evocative poetry convey acceptance of what is, and hope for what will be.

When inducted as Executive Director of Lifeline Gold Coast in 1998, I sang this hymn as a solo.

That milestone in my ministry marked acceptance into a church appointment after six years in a secular role.

During those years, I helped create Hopewell Hospice providing end-of-life care in a home-style setting, also Paradise Kids supporting children and families through experiences of grief, loss and illness.

For Mr Matheson, the pain of grief brings healing and joy when accepted and supported.

Then, the "weary soul" finds fulfilment, the "flickering torch" is restored, the rainbow shines through the rain, and from the depths blossoms new life.

Rev Dr Ian Mavor is a member of the successful Blenders (formerly known as the Banana Blenders) male choir on the Gold Coast



Jenni Schnetker

When looking for a favourite hymn I looked for one that said everything!

Just like those Christmas cards that have baby Jesus, the star, shepherds, wise men, Mary and Joseph, animals and angels all rolled into one. I didn't quite find that.

But my very favourite must be 'When I survey the wondrous cross'.

The hymn lyrics were written by Isaac Watts in 1707 to a Gregorian tune.

At the time, 'When I survey' was quite a radical departure from hymn tradition: Watts wrote in the first person, departing from straight scripture or doctrine.

Funny how what is now considered a conservative song was once so controversial.

The central theme of the hymn, that in Christ alone we can boast, is drawn from Galatians 6:14.

A great modern arrangement is that by Chris Tomlin and Jesse Reeves, entitled 'The wonderful cross'.

It has an added chorus that finds "Oh the wonderful cross, bids me come and die and find that I may truly live. Oh the wonderful cross, all who gather here by grace draw near and bless your name."

I guess for me a great hymn is one that touches the heart, and has great music that can be both traditional and can also be modernised to reach a new audience.

Jenni Schnetker is Music Director at Newlife Uniting Church in Robina



Ian Smallbone

Favourite hymn or song... straightaway I've got a dilemma; I want two bites at this cherry.

So I'll just mention in passing that I'm very partial to Isaac Watts' hymn 'When I survey the wondrous cross' for many of the same reasons that I'm naming Matt and Beth Redman's 'Blessed be your name' as my favourite song.

Written as a response to the 9/11 tragedy of 2001, the song has recognisable echoes of Job's dealing with his own personal disasters and powerful elements of both praise and lament.

All of us have found ourselves "on the road marked with suffering" or where there has been "pain in the offering".

Add to these the times "when the world's all as it should be" and we're in the "land that is plentiful", the song basically hits us at every point of our life, reminding us that we can choose to bless the name of the Lord in all the circumstances of our lives.

Very singable and easy to learn, I reckon this is truly a great worship song that will stand the test of time.

Rev Ian Smallbone is Minister at Karana Downs Uniting Church and former member of the well known Christian music group Family



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