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27th Queensland Synod

I came away from this Synod inspired and encouraged as part of the Uniting Church in Queensland. **Rev Bruce Cornish**

RECOGNISED the widespread problems of homelessness and housing affordability, and requested congregations and presbyteries to become more aware of the issue and to seek ways of providing support.

HELD a Service of Lament and Listening in response to the Synod's financial situation, and encouraged congregations, presbyteries and agencies to discern how God would have them deal with the situation.

APPROVED the development of an affiliation agreement between Trinity Theological College and the Australian Catholic University.

BEGAN a process of developing some initiatives to enable congregations and Uniting Church members to support the work of the Synod during the current financial crisis.

RE-AFFIRMED the important place of chaplaincy within the life and ministry of the church and gave the Chaplaincy Commission authority to appoint chaplains and ensure adequate standards of accreditation and training.

ASKED the Schools Commission to take responsibility for the relationship with Uniting Church schools and to engage with schools for the purpose of understanding challenges facing them.

CHALLENGED congregations to discern persons displaying gifts for ministry and encourage young people to enter the training programs that are available.

SET in train the development of principles and policies that will apply in relation to remuneration of Uniting Church board members serving across the Queensland Synod.

REQUESTED Presbyteries and other parts of the church to foster multi-cross cultural relationships with culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

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I was never a success

IN A WORLD that urges us to strive for success and excellence, I am a failure.

It was a long time ago that I gave up any ambition to be a success.

When I was 21, I was asked to be the director of a regional youth camp.

There were about 100 youth and young adults from Gympie to Bald Hills in camp at Shannon Park outside Toowoomba.

We had great plans that this would be the best camp ever.

Unfortunately all the high profile people we asked to be the study leaders declined, so we had to settle for an ordinary congregational minister from our region.

He did a sound, but not inspiring job.

There were power struggles over how catering should happen at Shannon Park in those days, and the kitchen was not really adequate for the preparation of good meals. So there was considerable grumbling about the food.

Those to whom I had entrusted the responsibility for keeping the fires going that provided hot water didn't understand the complexity of the old fashioned system at Shannon Park so in the middle of winter in rainy weather there was not much hot water for showers.

I drove home from Shannon Park feeling a complete failure as a Camp Director. On the way I had to drop off some of the campers at the church in Maroochydyore.

As I reversed out of the church driveway, I hit one of those ridiculous half metre high brick walls that surround some church properties. Why we build such walls I have never understood.

I was feeling so discouraged I didn't even bother to get out and look at the damage. I just wanted to get home and hide.

I was fortunate that I lived out near Wappa Falls and had plenty of space to roam on my own and argue with God about life.

I kept going over what had happened, having so much wanted



Message from the Moderator

Rev Bruce Johnson

to be a success and show that I was a good leader, only to fall flat on my face.

In my sometimes "out aloud" argument with God about why this had happened to me, I sensed God say to me, "I didn't ask you to be a success, I just asked you to be faithful. Were you faithful?"

As I re-thought all that I had done in preparation and what I had

"I have never sought to be successful. I have only tried to be faithful."

done during the weekend, I felt I could say honestly to God, "I did the best that I could."

God said, "That's all I asked of you."

Hearing that, I felt relieved that at least God and the Church would never ask me to lead anything again.

Since that time, I have never sought to be successful. I have only tried to be faithful.

In a world that cries out for leaders who are successful, it is hard to focus on faithfulness instead. In fact being a success is quite easy.

You can go to any large bookshop and find dozens of books telling you how to be successful.

A search on Amazon.com brought up 646 765 with the word 'success' in the title.

All you need to do is find the book telling you how to be a success in your area of interest and follow the principles outlined.

As you follow the rules outlined, you can be successful by the measures that most would use to determine success.

If you happen to want to be a success in a Christian sense, they will probably tell you to undertake certain spiritual disciplines and exercises and pray to God for help.

Being faithful to God's call in your life is much harder.

It needs a willingness to be constantly open to a personal conversation with God.

You can't plan it since, as Jesus says, the "Spirit blows where it wills."

Being faithful demands being willing to spend time with God, listening to God, and having the courage to stand firm against the success driven demands of our world.

It is unlikely that you will ever know if you have been successful at being faithful.

I haven't found out yet.

I know in whom I have believed and I trust Christ to use me in what ever way he chooses.

My sense of purpose and fulfilment is found only in my relationship with God.

God alone knows if I have achieved what God longed for me to achieve.

From the Editor

"Tell me who you admire and I'll tell you who you are," said the ancient Greeks.

For them, heroes were people who had achieved something far beyond the normal scope of human experience and were often given adulation and worship akin to that given to the gods.

Heroes were not always "good" people but they were always extraordinary - heroes expanded people's sense of what was possible.

Thoreau said most of us live lives of quiet desperation perhaps suggesting our horizons of possibility are too confined.

If so, heroes can help us lift our eyes a little higher.

So perhaps the people we choose as heroes tell us what we really value - they are the women and men who exemplify our view of the greatest human potential.

This begs the question of who do we acknowledge as heroes when we meet as a Synod.

We spent the best part of one afternoon in memorial minutes for 13 ministers who had died since the 26th Synod, farewelling 14 who were retiring and welcoming seven newly-ordained ministers.

We farewelled a much loved Moderator and inducted a new Moderator. We also witnessed the presentation of Moderator's Medals to people who were recognised for years of faithful service through the community service agencies of the church.

Who are the heroes of our 21st Century Uniting Church in Queensland?

From the well-deserved honour and respect we give them it would seem that those who serve in full time ministry attain a certain 'hero' status in the life of our church.

Why this might be so is a complex question but the *Basis of Union* suggests that in the act of ordination the Church is praising Christ for conferring gifts upon men and women, as well as recognising Christ's call on the life of the individual.

For me, the real heroes have always been those who exhibit those wonderful gifts of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

As the recognition given to the community service volunteers shows, heroes can be found among those who do the daily stuff of life; serving others in quiet and faithful ways often unrecognised over many decades.

My best guess is there are a lot more heroes out there than we ever take time to acknowledge.

Bruce Mullan

Sign of the Times



GLASSHOUSE COUNTRY Uniting Church again captures the moment with this sign posted during the October Wall Street financial crisis. Photo by Chris Bell. Please send your Signs of the Times photos to journey@ucaql.com.au.

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Fierce storm tears through The Gap

MEMBERS OF The Gap Uniting Church are still struggling to come to terms with being at the centre of one of the worst storms to ever hit Brisbane.

On 16 November water forced its way through the roof of the new church building causing extensive damage to the church and destroying the kitchen ceiling and floor.

The Church's youth hall, was flattened while the newly opened Bike Shed, used as a workshop by the neighbouring Gap High School, underneath remained intact.

New louvres in the main hall, named after Scottish Reformation leader John Knox, were smashed, and fallen trees littered the car park and lifted the driveway in parts.

The manse which was being restored ready for a new minister suffered major roof damage when the patio cover at the back was rolled up and folded over the house by the cyclonic winds.

The Uniting Church's insurance assessors gave an initial estimate of the damage as in excess of \$600 000. This figure may rise with the suburb continually hit with violent storms in the days following the initial storm.

The damage has caused major disruptions to users of the facilities including a Kindergarten

Association Crèche, an exercise class for the over 50s and the new bike maintenance classes for troubled students from the High School.

Local Member of Parliament Kate Jones said it was very sad to see what has happened.

"The Gap Uniting Church does so much for our community," said Ms Jones.

"It is so sad to see what has happened here but we all know that this is a very strong community and we all know that if there is anyone that can come together at a difficult time I have full faith the congregation here will.

"The Gap Uniting Church is an institution in our community.

"They spend every other day of the year doing outreach services so I think it might be time to switch it around and get people to come and support the Uniting Church get back on track."

The Gap Uniting Church Finance and Property Committee Chairperson Ian Hayes said he was impressed by the speed of insurance assessors and builders.

"The day after the storm the site was full of people offering to help.

"It was interesting to see how the church could work together," he said.

"We had UC Insurance out here, we organised the assessors



Damage done to The Gap Uniting Church during the wild storms in Brisbane in November. Main photo, a fan left intact while the walls are blown down in what is left of the old Youth Hall; above left and right, The Gap Uniting Church member Ian Orchard, local member Kate Jones MP, and The Gap Uniting Church Finance and Property Committee Chairperson Ian Hayes inspect the damage. Photos by Mardi Lumsden

on site, by the end of the day we had loss assessors appointed, the builder appointed, roof tilers on, tradespeople in, and it was an example of the church in action."

Mr Hayes said they had received calls in from a number of churches offering help and were assessing where residents and church families were in terms of their own needs," he said.

The Gap congregation member Ian Orchard said activities on the church grounds have been put on hold.

"Everything is postponed at the moment purely for safety reasons and until we can get things cleaned up and dry. We will try desperately to get things back in to working order as quickly as we can," said Mr Orchard.

"In terms of worship, we will be in action this week, with some restrictions, but we will be here.

"The important thing is that everybody who is working here, while they are all devastated, have all got smiles on their faces.

"We have got so many people

in the community ringing and offering us assistance which is just wonderful."

Mr Orchard said that the local community has become closer as a result of the storm.

"You have only got to listen to the stories of people who have met neighbours they have never known before.

"People have wandered down the street from other suburbs to offer help in shifting things."

By Mardi Lumsden and Bruce Mullan

Hearing God's words in the global financial crisis

A message from Uniting Church President Rev Gregor Henderson

IT IS OFTEN in times of crisis that people ask the questions, "Where is God in this?" and "How could God let this happen?"

But God isn't necessarily speaking to us through this global financial crisis.

God is not responsible for every event in the world. God is not trying to punish us.

Rather, we learn a lot about what God wants for humanity by observing both the good and the bad in the world.

If we recognise that the economic system has failed us, we reflect on God's teaching that an abundant life doesn't mean the rich getting richer. The important things in life are not material.

Security is earned through faithfulness in and love of God.

By acknowledging this we can imagine a new economic system

that has at its heart values of equity, justice and respect for creation.

We can imagine an economic system that supports abundance, not through growth but through sharing and care for humanity.

People in many parts of the

world live in poverty and lack basic necessities. This latest crisis will make things worse for them and now is the time to be more generous, not less.

The Christian faith calls us to stand with those who are most vulnerable, those who live in poverty, and those who are left behind in the dash for cash.

Now is the time to listen to God and to hear what God would wish for humanity.



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Carmel O'Brien, Assistant to the Principal, Religious Education at Unity College with Komisi Fihaki, Head of Peteli Middle School. Photo by Judy Morrison

Unity College links with Tonga

UNITY COLLEGE, on the Sunshine Coast, has made another step forward in ecumenical relations with the establishment of a cultural exchange program with a school of the Free Wesley Church of Tonga.

Eight Year 10 students responded to the challenge to experience a very different culture first hand. They travelled with teachers Carmel O'Brien and Karen Harrison plus Caloundra Uniting Church member Wilma Hewitt to Nuku'alofa for a life-changing adventure.

At the airport they were met by

Rev Alan Morrison and his wife Judy, who helped to set up the visit, as well as the whole of Peteli Middle School (27 people) from Pea village, plus staff and families.

The warmth of the welcome set the tone for the week. Amazing relationships were established as the children and families shared their island and culture with the Unity students.

"It was a delight to see our students responding to the different values that confronted them," said Carmel O'Brien, Assistant to the Principal, Religious Education at Unity College.

Learning experiences were many and varied.

Time is flexible in Tonga; happiness does not depend on material possessions; the act of giving is a gift in itself; and above all, it is God who supports and guides us.

The students and staff returned full of stories and an enthusiasm to implement the next phase of the program: a visit by Tongan students and staff to Unity College is planned for next year.

Unity College is a joint venture of the Catholic and Uniting Churches in Caloundra.

Wilston cafés stand up for poverty

By Mardi Lumsden

WILSTON BUSINESSES asked their customers to stand up and read a pledge in late October in a bid to make poverty history.

Trinity Wilston Uniting Church Minister Sue Pickering asked businesses to help her speak out against world-wide poverty.

"I've always tried to keep in touch with the Make Poverty History campaign," Ms Pickering said.

"This is a great way to get the community involved in speaking out and making a difference."

Businesses involved in the Wilston Stand Up included The Coffee Club, Caffé di Vita, Cafe Conti, Urban Bites and Abode.

Wilston Uniting Church members Monika Hillier, Julie Powe, and Lesley Irvine were at Caffé di Vita to read the pledge.

Ms Irvine said their minister Sue Pickering was very passionate about the Make Poverty History campaign and so is the church.

"Sue Pickering is very proactive and very big on Make Poverty

History and what we as Christians can bring to that," she said.

"Sue says she has the gift of 'cheek'.

"She can go in and just ask people to give, but she does it in a very lovely way."

Caffé di Vita owner Bis Parry said she was very happy to be involved in the event.

"The church is part of our community and as I told Sue, I was scared and I had to do what she said," laughed Ms Parry.

The Wilston event saw 68 people stand up in a symbolic gesture against poverty.

Make Poverty History is the largest anti-poverty movement, involving 80 countries, and aims to end the injustice of poverty.

In Australia, the campaign is a coalition of more than 60 aid agencies, community groups and religious organisations.

The coalition seeks to ensure the Australian Government creates policies that guarantee better aid, debt relief and fairer trade.

More than 43 million people took the pledge last year.



Wilston Uniting Church members Julie Powe, Lesley Irvine, and Monika Hillier with Caffé di Vita owner Bis Parry on Stand Up for Poverty day in Wilston. Photo by Osker Lau

Henderson: Death penalty will not fix Bali

IN THE aftermath of the execution of the three men responsible for the 2002 Bali Bombings, the Uniting Church in Australia has reaffirmed its opposition to the death penalty.

Uniting Church President Rev Gregor Henderson said that while the Church condemns terrorism and continues to pray for those affected by the horrific and devastating events of October 2002, the Church did not condone the death penalty under any circumstances.

"We acknowledge the ongoing suffering, anger and loss experienced by the Balinese and Australian communities since 12 October 2002," Mr Henderson said.

"The crimes were abhorrent, and those responsible must be held to account. But the Uniting Church is a peacemaking church, committed to working for peace and justice in the world. As Christians, we believe that we are called to love our neighbour as we love ourselves and to extend this love even to our enemies.

"We regard human life as sacred and it is this belief that calls us to reject capital punishment, wherever it exists."

Mr Henderson said that the bombings had touched our collective conscience on matters central to human existence: the presence of human evil in the world; vulnerability and fear in the face of violence; and the meaning of justice.

But, he said, justice was not served through the execution of those convicted of the crime.

"We are committed to standing against the death penalty, believing that it denies the possibility of personal transformation which we believe is one of God's gifts available to everyone," Mr Henderson said.

Queensland Synod Moderator Rev Bruce Johnson affirmed



Rev Gregor Henderson. Photo by Osker Lau

the Uniting Church President's statement.

"Our opposition to the death penalty in no way reflects upon our deep concern for those whose lives have been permanently scarred by the actions of those who committed this horrendous act of destruction," Mr Johnson said.

"While the deaths of these murderers may satisfy our desire to see such behaviour punished it will not restore the lives of those so badly traumatised.

"I want to assure those who have suffered from the actions of terrorism that while always opposing the death penalty we will continue to support and care for the victims of crime.

Messiah correction

Details printed in the November edition of *Journey* regarding The Queensland Orchestra's performance for Handel's *Messiah* were incorrect. The Queensland Orchestra will perform Handel's *Messiah* at 8pm Saturday 6 December at St John's Cathedral, Brisbane city. Tickets are \$62. Book now through QTix on 136 246.

Communication Services Unit MANAGER / EDITOR

Uniting Church in Australia
Queensland Synod



Are you a communications specialist who wants to help the church reflect upon its ministry and mission in the contemporary context?

Applications are now being sought to fill the position of Manager of the Synod's Communication Services Unit and Editor of *Journey*.

This is a full-time position working with a small team of people responsible for implementing the Synod's communications strategy including production of *Journey*, internal communications, electronic and web communications, external media liaison, and public relations.

The Manager/Editor will liaise and consult with all parts of the church to develop strong and effective use of media and communication services both within the church and the wider community.

The applicant will be strategic, organised and creative, and will have excellent relational and leadership skills. The Manager/Editor needs to work with a commitment to and understanding of the mission and ethos of the Uniting Church and substantial communications experience.

A full application pack is available via the website www.ucaql.com.au or by contacting Ana Mila 07 3377 9709 or ana.mila@ucaql.com.au. Applications close 12 January 2009.

Synod inducts a new Moderator

By Bruce Mullan

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH Queensland Synod of the Uniting Church opened with a celebration of worship and the induction of the new Moderator Rev Bruce Johnson.

To the incoming Moderator, Retiring Moderator Rev Dr David Pitman said, "We rejoice that God has called you by the voice of the church to serve in this way."

"A great adventure is about to begin."

The declaration was greeted with enthusiastic acclamation from the gathered congregation and the newly inducted Moderator was presented with a moderatorial scarf and cross, and signed the synod Bible.

President of the Uniting Church in Australia Rev Gregor Henderson brought the greetings of the National Church, the five Moderators of the other Australian

Synods and the Moderators of partner churches in New Zealand with whom the Uniting Church has an increasingly close relationship.

Mr Henderson also paid tribute to the Retiring Moderator Rev Dr David Pitman for his great contribution to the national life of the church as well as his work in the Queensland Synod.

"We thank you David, and we will miss you."

Mr Johnson paid tribute to two women in his life: his mother who set in train his journey of faith, and his wife Heather who had encouraged and put up with him throughout his training and his ministry.

Mr Johnson referred to symbols of reconciliation and talked of his visits to Coventry Cathedral in the UK and the Japanese Garden in Cowra.

He claimed the story of the Choir



The 27th Synod inducts Rev Bruce Johnson as its new Moderator.
Photo by Osker Lau

of Hard Knocks was a metaphor for the kind of reconciliation spoken of in the Gospels.

Mr Johnson said the mission of the church is not building the church but being engaged in a

ministry of reconciliation.

"We started out as a group of pilgrims on the way but have been seduced into being the kind of denomination we wanted to leave behind."

"Why does God need a Uniting Church in Australia?"

"Ours was to be a ministry of reconciliation."

"If we're not doing that we should just join one of the denominations that best fits the way we think things should be."

Mr Johnson said whenever the followers of Christ "forget about their own ambitions and unite in humility and love, we too become a powerful living witness to God's reconciling work in this world."

"This is the ministry that has been entrusted to us."

"We must not lose sight of that calling, no matter how tough or how satisfying that journey becomes."

Affirming a place called home

By Mardi Lumsden

MEMBERS OF the 27th Synod meeting in October declared that homelessness and affordable housing are major social issues in Australia.

UnitingCare Chief Executive Officer Anne Cross said a proposal relating to homelessness was a step towards congregations and Church agencies making a real difference in the lives of Queensland's homeless community.

"This proposal seeks to raise awareness of the issues associated with housing affordability and homelessness," Ms Cross said.

Titled "A Place to Call Home" the proposal came out of a Housing and Homelessness Forum held earlier in the year and sponsored by the Synod Leadership Team.

Aitkenvale Uniting Church minister Rev Mark Dewar said the demographic of Brisbane's homeless is changing.

"Nearly half of those who are homeless are under the age of 25 and those who are aged between 12 and 18 are believed to make up a quarter of all those who are homeless."

"Unfortunately we find that Indigenous Australians are overrepresented. One fifth of those sleeping rough are indigenous," said Mr Dewar.

Ms Cross said this proposal was to encourage all areas of the church to act. "We ask everybody to engage in this very real social problem."

"A Place to Call Home" asks the church to assist people struggling with homelessness or in need of emergency accommodation.

Pitman: The church is not in decline

By Bruce Mullan

IN HIS final report to the Synod retiring Moderator Rev Dr David Pitman strongly rejected what he termed the language of decline in the church.

"The language of decline is invariably linked to collections of statistics that offer only a limited perspective on reality."

"It is theologically bankrupt because it seeks to interpret the life of the church without reference to God [and] ignores the lessons and

insights of 2000 years of Christian history."

Dr Pitman said the language of decline focused on church attendance and entirely ignores the many ways in which the gospel is shared and the mission of the church is fulfilled.

He called for the Synod to embrace the future not with accusation or recrimination, but with faith, courage and imagination.

Dr Pitman pointed to the magnitude of God, the limitless nature of God's grace, and the

power of the Holy Spirit to energise, encourage and equip the church for its task.

"We live in circumstances that are completely different."

"In our own time and place, when we make more disciples they may well identify and develop new and different ways of being together, of supporting each other, and sharing the journey."

"I'm quite sure that it doesn't mean retreating into maintenance mode and watching the world go by."

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More stories from the 27th Synod are available at
www.journeyonline.com.au

No more business as usual

By Bruce Mullan

AFTER ALMOST six months of grief the bad news has continued.

In a Pastoral Letter to the Church following the Synod meeting, the Moderator Rev Bruce Johnson said the Synod had been advised that some significant loans made by Uniting Church Investment Service (U.C.I.S.) will not produce their expected income.

The General Secretary of the Queensland Synod Rev Douglas Jones said U.C.I.S. will not be able to meet its commitment to give \$12 million to the Mission and Service Fund over the 2007-2009 triennium.

Mr Johnson assured the church that U.C.I.S. itself is still in a sound financial situation and that all deposits are safe and secure.

And the bad news continues with the Council of Synod meeting being told in late November that the situation is worse than expected.

Mr Jones said that it had been obvious that "business as usual" was not an option and that the uncertain external financial environment will mean another major draw down on reserves in 2009 even after the cuts made by the Council of Synod.

"Soon all the unrestricted reserves will be gone."

"In all likelihood, the Synod will need to start selling off assets in 2009 to cover expenditure," said Mr Jones.

"The wisdom of such a strategy must surely be questioned."

Sadness at loss

Mr Jones acknowledged the pain and disappointment involved in not being able to fund continuing positions for Mission Consultants, a Justice and International Mission Consultant and Youth and Children's Ministry staff.

Director of the Department for Financial and Property Services (FAPS) Mr Robert Packer said his department had determined not to replace staff who had left the service of the church and that FAPS staff had been reduced by nine positions.

"The staff of U.C.I.S. has been reduced from 15 to 12," he said.

The General Secretary and Director of Financial and Property



Moderator Rev Bruce Johnson and General Secretary Rev Douglas Jones guide the Synod conversation.
Photo by Osker Lau

Services gave frank and detailed reports on the financial strengths of the Synod in their presentations to the Synod meeting at Alexandra Headland.

Mr Jones noted that over a ten year period increases in congregational giving had not kept pace with CPI increases and, as a percentage of total Mission and Service Fund, had been declining.

"The financial circumstances of the Synod have changed drastically since the 26th Synod."

North Queensland Presbytery Minister Rev Bruce Cornish said the Synod leadership had provided a very clear, detailed and honest picture of the current situation.

He talked about the Synod engaging in a time of lament, repentance and listening for God.

"This time was critical to our moving forward as a Synod," Mr Cornish said.

"In that time a number of people gave us the benefit of what they believed God was saying to the Synod through them."

In his final report to the Synod, retiring Moderator Rev Dr David Pitman suggested whenever the church engages in reflection about money it is plagued by loud and insistent "demon voices".

"Jesus was so aware of the existence and influence of these demon voices that he devoted a significant proportion of his teaching ministry to issues about money."

Dr Pitman said if we are to live within the will and purpose of God, we have no option but to deal with the demons within as Jesus did in the wilderness.

"The demon voices are silenced by the word of God! When God speaks the demons have no answer!"

"They no longer have any power or influence over us. As always, and in everything, the choice is ours."

"We can never blame anything or anyone else for the choices and decisions we make."

Dr Pitman said this is as true about decisions regarding money as it is in all the other important areas of our lives.

"The stewardship of our money is first and foremost a matter of the heart."

"It's not about budgets and paying bills and maintaining our buildings, important as those things may be."

"Stewardship is about our relationship with God and our response in faith to our experience of the generosity of God."

Looking to God

The incoming Moderator Rev Bruce Johnson said the difficult financial news had inspired Synod members to begin to look at what God might be saying about how we serve God's mission of reconciliation in new ways.

"There was a strong sense amongst members of Synod that we are all on this journey together, so they asked the Moderator and Director of Financial and Property Services to offer a range of ways that individuals and congregations might help the Synod fund its work into next year and beyond."

"I encourage all who have a passion for our church's worship, witness and service to consider what they might be able to do to help the whole church be faithful to God's mission," Mr Johnson said.

"As your congregation considers your budget for next year, I would urge you to consider increasing your contribution to the Mission and Service Fund."

Mr Johnson said while some give more than 20% the present average congregational giving is only about 14%.

The General Secretary calculated that if every congregation could

reach the 20% benchmark it would return an additional \$1.25million to the Synod budget.

Some at the Synod in Session were inspired to make an immediate response to the shortage of funds and proposed that 1000 individuals, congregations and groups be invited to each give \$1000 to the Synod Mission and Service Fund for 2009.

Mr Johnson and his wife Heather wrote the first cheque for \$1000 and during the Synod meeting fifteen people committed to being a part of this way of helping.

"One woman said she had just received her tax return and that she would give \$1000 from her tax cheque," Mr Johnson said.

"Another told me that she had decided that, instead of the money she was going to spend on a new golf club, she would contribute to this fund."

Facing the future

Mr Cornish said, "There are wonderful, prayerful, clear thinking and discerning members in our church."

"We do not always think alike but at the Synod I had the feeling that we were moving in the same direction under God."

"I pray that we continue to do just that into the future."

The Moderator and General Secretary see a need for communal discernment across the Synod.

"It's time for a mindset change," said Mr Johnson. "We need to see ourselves as more interconnected."

The General Secretary said the challenge is to be prayerful and discerning.

"We no longer have it all together," he said. "We are in a new place of humble dependence but not paralysis. What does it mean to live by the grace of God?"

The Moderator added, "We must not let fear take over."

People wishing to make a special contribution to the Mission and Service fund can deposit money directly to the Mission and Service account BSB 034-061 Account number 160628 (Please mark your deposit with the words 'Synod special appeal') or send a cheque or money order (made payable to 'Uniting Church - Queensland Synod') to GPO Box 674, Brisbane QLD 4001.

UNITINGCARE CHIEF Executive Officer Anne Cross announced the 10 awards for the 2008 Moderator's Medals which were presented during the Synod meeting. Ms Cross said it was exceedingly difficult to narrow down the field of recipients due to the high standard of volunteers nominated.



GWENDA ROWE received a Moderator's medal for her work with refugees in the Logan Central Multicultural Congregation's welfare service Community Life Support and Access. Known as Auntie Gwen by many refugees, she has provided a friendly and understanding hand to assist people getting settled in Australia.



JAN DAVIS has spent 19 years finding a voice for the voiceless in prisons and fighting for restorative justice. Her work with the Prison Fellowship began by writing letters to inmates. Now she is busy helping to organise an initiative that provides more than 1500 Christmas gifts for children of prisoners across Queensland.

Brad Foote asks the question



Newly-ordained take the stage



The 'Tin Man' celebrates at Synod



Michelle Leggeo and Aaron Comollatti announced their engagement



Men in black - the tech team



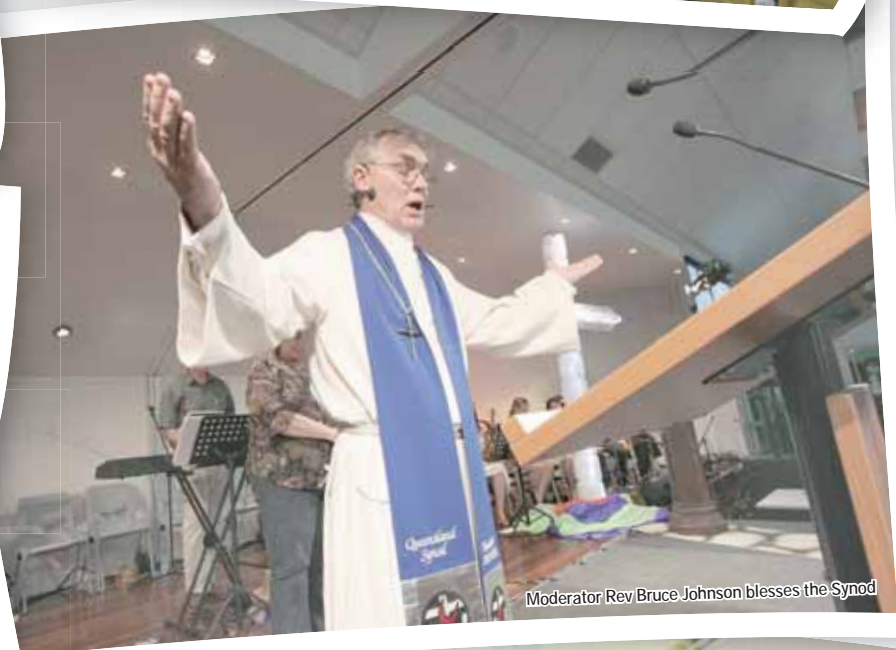
Steve Hatfield - Dodds gave the Noman and Mary Miller lecture



The worship team with hats



The people of God gather for the 27th Synod



Moderator Rev Bruce Johnson blesses the Synod



Mapoon Minister James Hughes was just happy to be there

Defining pilgrim's theology

By Mardi Lumsden

A NEW book collating key documents relating to the theological position of the Uniting Church was launched during the Synod in November.

The book, *Theology for Pilgrims*, was collated by the Director of the Pilgrim Learning Community Rev Dr Rob Bos and Trinity Theological College Director of Studies in Systematic Theology Rev Dr Geoff Thompson who wrote introductions to each chapter.

Moderator Rev Bruce Johnson said *Theology for Pilgrims* is a compendium of all the foundational documents of the Uniting Church in Australia.

"Documents about what the Uniting Church says about Jesus Christ, how the Uniting Church understands the Church's mission, the Covenant between the Uniting Church and the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress, why rebaptism is not permitted in the Uniting Church, and why the Uniting Church ordains women," he said.

Theology for Pilgrims contains documents on the other areas of controversy the church has experienced including the documents relating to lay presidency of the sacraments.

"It is fascinating to hear all these and know that they are issues that we have struggled with as a church over our time," said Mr Johnson.

"What Rob and Geoff have done for us is to draw all that information together in this book with introductory notes to help people in our church understand what we are on about."

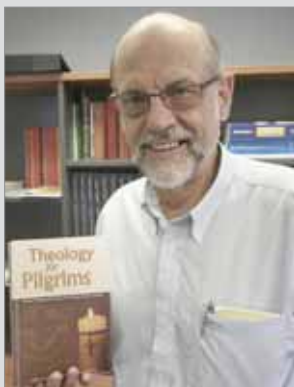
Dr Bos told the members of Synod that he and Dr Thompson thought this would be a six month project they could do in their spare time. "It ended up taking four years," he said.

"The criticism is often made that the Uniting Church doesn't know what it believes."

"The Assembly has decided what we believe on a large number of issues; we just haven't really heard about it."

"So the purpose was to collect some of the significant documents, but we have also prepared an introduction to each of the documents."

Theology for Pilgrims is \$70 and is available from Vision Books in Brisbane on 3894 8548 or email mguca@ozemail.com.au



Rev Dr Rob Bos. Photo by Osker Lau

DISCIPLESHIP AND LAY EDUCATION FACILITATOR

Do you want to:

- Provide and coordinate training for church members to live out their gifts, fostering growth, energy, vitality, and innovation.
- gather new people and refocus existing diverse groups.
- join the creative ministry team in the most innovative initiative in the rural church

Mid Lachlan Mission Area Central West, NSW seeks a Minister or Lay Person for this role

Further information:
www.milman.uniting.com.au

Enquiries: Bruce Irvine (JNC Chair) 02 6889 8336; brucei@nsw.uca.org.au
Applications (by 18th December) to ACOMP Secretary, Mrs Meg Herbert: megh@nsw.uca.org.au

Northern Synod FINANCE OFFICER



This highly valued member of our Synod team is responsible for:

- management of Synod finance, investments, insurance and industrial relations
- executive support to the finance and Property Services Committee
- provision of advice on UCA Regulations, Synod By-laws and other matters relating to finance as requested
- supervision of financial and accounting services to the two Presbyteries of the Synod
- in conjunction with the General Secretary and Presbytery Property Committees, assist in management of property within the Synod

We are looking for someone who is team orientated, who has experience in finance and possibly property development/management, who has an accounting qualification (preferably CPA or equivalent) and who wants to live in Darwin.

For further information contact Peter Jones, General Secretary, Northern Synod on 08 8982 3400. Applications should be sent to: peter.jones@ns.uca.org.au

Lent Event says thanks Queensland

By Bruce Mullan

LAUNCHING THE 2009 program, Lent Event founder and coordinator Sarah White expressed her deep appreciation for the Queensland Synod's \$90 000 in donations to the 2008 appeal.

"My heartfelt thanks go out to all the ministers, coordinators, church leaders and church members who embraced the Lent Event."

"It was a truly great effort and gives a great deal of hope for what is possible in 2009 and beyond," she said.

Ms White said it was a blessing to be part of the work of Lent Event which she described as "a Uniting Church movement that seeks to draw people nearer to God's purposes and provide development assistance to communities experiencing extreme poverty."

"Telling the story of the Lent Event, Ms White said her experience was simply and profoundly a gift of the unmerited grace of God."

"The resources encourage participants to reflect on the place of Christ within their lives as part of a continual reordering of priorities and values in the likeness of Christ. That is the journey of discipleship."

The theme for the 2009 program



Lent Event Coordinator Sarah White attending the Queensland Synod meeting. Photo by Osker Lau

and resources is "Finding faith in testing times".

"I believe given the current economic, environmental, socio-political climate and the personal struggles that so many are laden with, this theme at this time, perhaps more than any other, will speak powerfully and deeply into people's lives," she said.

Ms White outlined the high

calibre resources for the 2009 Lent Event program including a combined Prayer Book and Bible Study, comprehensive children's program developed by the Queensland Youth and Children's Ministry Unit, a youth study, and worship resources to enhance the Lenten journey.

Copies of the resources can be found at www.lentevent.com.

Calls to review and revive the Covenant

By Mardi Lumsden

MEMBERS OF the 27th Queensland Synod were called to renew the Covenant between the greater Uniting Church and the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC).

Rev Dr Chris Budden reminded the members of Synod that the relationship that exists between Indigenous and non-Indigenous members of the Uniting Church in Australia is based on the claim "that we are created together in the image of God and the fact that we share faith in Jesus Christ as

Saviour and Head of the Church".

"The Covenant with the Uniting Aboriginal and Christian Congress is about the shape of particular relationships," said Dr Budden.

"It is about commitment and promise."

Congress chairperson Rev Shayne Blackman said a change in the current Covenant was needed.

"It is about ensuring all people are shown the same respect."

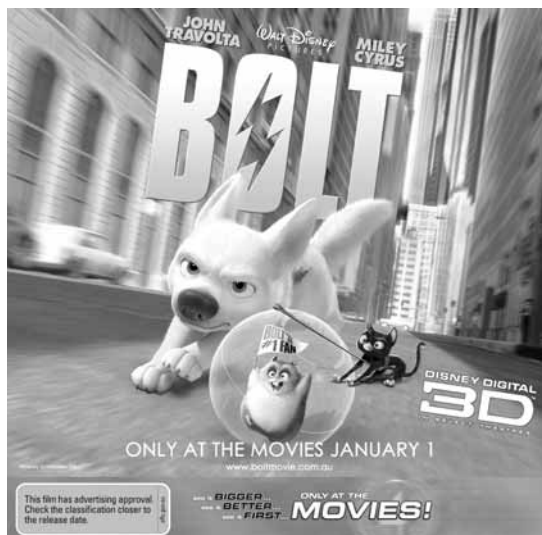
Mr Blackman said he was floored when he discovered that key members of the leadership of the church in Queensland were

unaware of Assembly regulations and protocols for matters relating to Indigenous members of the church.

"I try to sit down with people and talk about things as they relate to our people," he said.

"The Covenant is about working together to create a more equitable and just society in which everyone has the same opportunity."

All speakers urged members of Synod to see the Covenant as an active relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.



**ALBERT STREET
UNITING CHURCH**
**WESLEY MISSION
BRISBANE**

"Sing It Yourself"
Messiah will be held again this year

Sunday December 14
2008 Practice 5.00pm
– Presentation 7.00 pm

**Albert Street Uniting
Church, Brisbane.**

Please advise if you need
music, phone 3031 3030

Come to sing
or come to listen

Cost \$7.50

A sign of things to come

CARRYING A street sign that once pointed to a growing Uniting Church congregation Vision for Mission Advocate Rev Duncan Macleod spoke to the November meeting of the Queensland Synod about the lessons learned from two and a half years with the Vision for Mission project.

Mr Macleod explained that the sign had become redundant when the congregation closed and asked, "Where is the church opening now?"

"The Queensland Synod needs to foster new expressions of the church while still supporting those congregations which are well established."

He suggested the most effective model was to encourage congregations in their development of informal faith communities.

"The Gap Uniting Church, for example, is developing the capacity of its members to connect with students from the high school next door."

"Youth and community worker Richard Cassidy has been working with congregational members, teachers and students from the school and local business leaders to transform a storage space into the Bike Workshop for Year 9 boys."

Pioneering Ministries

The Vision for Mission project started in 2006 and was designed to encourage ventures in mission and ministry by developing a culture of courageous and generous mission.

"What is clear to us all is that the changes we're looking at take years to develop and embed," said Mr Macleod.

The Vision for Mission project has helped the Queensland Synod partner with congregations seeking



Vision for Mission Advocate Rev Duncan Macleod makes his point at the recent Synod meeting. Photo by Osker Lau

to engage with their communities in new ways through the appointment of key staff.

"Caloundra Uniting is supporting Jan Reid as she develops communities of faith associated with Unity College, and Emmanuel Cairns is supporting Irinale Taudula working with new ethnic faith communities in Mooroooboo.

"Sunnybank Uniting is working with David Kim to develop a mission-focused Korean worshipping community and Esteban Lievano to develop a Spanish-speaking community in partnership with St Paul's Stafford.

"The goal in each case has been to develop a learning community which will provide insights for the

wider church's engagement in the community," Mr Macleod said.

Generosity and Courage

The Vision for Mission advocate and team have also sought to encourage small budget and short term projects that encourage generosity and courage at a local level.

"Pioneer Valley Uniting Church sought the advice of the local dance school using their facilities about how best they might partner together.

"They learned that parents waiting for their children were anxious about the safety of their toddlers.

"With the encouragement of a

\$500 'Go Grant' the church council set out to raise funds for safety fencing around the property."

Living Faith congregation in Carina, Brisbane, heard about the project and decided to ask the same question with their tenants.

They now provide hospitality for dance club parents two days a week, building friendship and community connections.

People on the Way Together

Mr Macleod said one of the downsides to a Synod-wide grants scheme is the danger of dependency on faceless, costless funding, with little sense of local ownership.

For this reason the Queensland Synod is exploring 'grassroots

funding' as a concept in which sacrificial giving is inspired by real-life stories of transformation.

Mr Macleod spoke about the need for embedding the vision for mission at every level of the church's life, from that of individuals carrying out their daily lives, through to the decisions made by Synod gatherings, Presbyteries and church councils.

"The focus over the next two years will be on sharing the stories of people and their expression of the mission of God."

Those stories will include the ways in which people are being equipped to share their faith, engage in their communities, and connect worship, witness and service together.

We're on a mission from God

WHAT IS mission? Vision for Mission Advocate Rev Duncan Macleod addresses this important question.

The word 'mission' is thrown around in many circles, not just in the church. When I quiz people about it I get a range of answers:

- Mission, as an English word, comes from 'missio', a Latin word describing 'sending', from the verb, mittere, to send.
- Mission as a project (often sent from HQ). "Your mission, should you choose to accept it..."
- Mission as a goal. "We set ourselves a mission of raising \$5000."
- Mission as an aspiration. "We see our mission as healing the lives of the broken."
- Mission as a group of people sent as missionaries to a different culture. "I am joining the mission in Thailand."
- Mission as a service provided for the needy. "I have joined up with the Mission to Seamen."

We have secret missions, missions to Mars, and military missions. Many companies have mission statements.

So what do we mean when we talk about having a vision for mission in the Uniting Church in Australia?

The Blues Brothers, in a movie made in 1980, featured two recently released convicts who took on the challenge of raising funds for a Christian school. Their slogan was, "We're on a Mission from God".

Christian mission belongs to God. Christian mission is centred in God's engagement with the world, highlighted in the sending of Jesus into the world.

The people of God are called to join in the mission of God in worshipping, witnessing and serving in the wider community.

This participation is inspired by the gospel story and the words and actions of Jesus (Matthew 28:18-20).

The fruit of God's mission is brought about by the Holy Spirit acting in, through and beyond the people of God.

The results are lives transformed, communities changed and people made whole (Luke 4:18-19).

The mission of the Church embodies God's sending character in action and community.

People on the way together

THIS LIFT-OUT has been developed as a resource by the Vision for Mission Advocate and the Uniting Church Foundation Manager, the first of many resources expressing the theme, "People on the Way Together".

To share your story in print, video or photography, or to explore ways of developing your local mission focus, contact Duncan Macleod, Vision for Mission Advocate, 0439 828 718 or 07 3377 9809
E-mail duncan.macleod@ucaqlld.com.au

www.visionformission.org.au

To talk about joining the newly formed network of UC Foundation volunteers or to explore funding ideas contact UCF Manager Robyn Allcock, 07 33779726
Fax 07 33779716 E-mail: robyn.allcock@ucaqlld.com.au

www.ucf.org.au

Adverts and puppets bring Burdekin alive

BURDEKIN MINISTER in North Queensland Rev Paul Clark said his congregation had been blessed with funding from the Uniting Church Foundation for two Mission projects that are slowly changing people's lives and their perceptions of God and the Church.

The first project was an innovative approach to Religious Education in local primary schools.

"The usual approach to Religious Education can tend to stimulate groans of boredom from students, especially as they

approach Year 7, so we decided to do something different," Mr Clark said.

The Burdekin congregation developed an Information Technology – Religious Education unit they affectionately call "Godverts."

Mr Clark explained that Godverts is a 10 week course where students use technology to develop 'advertisements' based on a verse of the Bible.

"The teacher takes a Year 7 class for an hour each week and in groups of four the kids are given a verse of the Bible for which they have to write a script for a 90 second 'Godvert' that shows the value of the verse.

"We've looked at verses like 'love your neighbour', 'it's better to give than receive' and even, 'as a dog returns to its vomit so a fool repeats his folly', Mr Clark said.

"We've made over 50 videos in the past two years."

Along the way children learn about the power of story, advertising, storyboarding, filming and computer editing.

"They also learn something about faith," said Mr Clark. "We've gone from about 60% participation in Religious Education in Year 7 to 100%.

"The schools have bent over backwards to fit us into their schedules, once they realised what we were giving them.

"Any extra information technology expertise they can get they will grab with both hands

– it has also turned around student attitudes to Religious Education.

Mr Clark said after the first course they asked students what they had learnt from Godverts.

"When one student said, 'God is fun', I nearly cried."

"We now have three people teaching the unit and I'm busily trying to write it up in a form anyone can use. We use the videos in worship and in Religious Education seminars."

Mr Clark said there have been so many spin-offs from the program and the relationships the course teachers develop with students are priceless.

It has been very valuable to our chaplains who now teach the unit and has led to students attending the congregation's youth group, and even families turning up for worship.

"Last year we finished the unit with a 'red carpet night' at one of the schools, where students dressed in their finest and families watched as we 'premiered' the videos on the big screen.

"Here we were gently proclaiming the gospel and parents were thanking us for it.

"This year we're having two red carpet nights."

The UC Foundation has also sponsored the development of drama and puppet resources through 'The Hive' resources.

The five books were written by Mr Clark together with Emerald Minister Rev Russell Reynoldson.

"One of the ways we use these resources in the Burdekin is through a Creative Ministries Group," Mr Clark said. "This is a group of 12 upper primary and high school

students who meet each week to prepare drama, puppets and other creative media for worship."

Mr Clark said this group is vital in the life of the Burdekin congregation breathing life into their worship and community.

"The kids never miss it and are sometimes hard to settle down as they enjoy it so much!

"It has been inspiring for the older members of our church to see our youth leading worship, displaying their talents and being excited about their faith."

The group has also performed in the community to much praise.

"People will engage with the gospel when it's presented through drama and puppets."

Mr Clark explained that in reality the group is a discipleship group.

"We read the Scriptures the drama is based on, and discuss what it means.

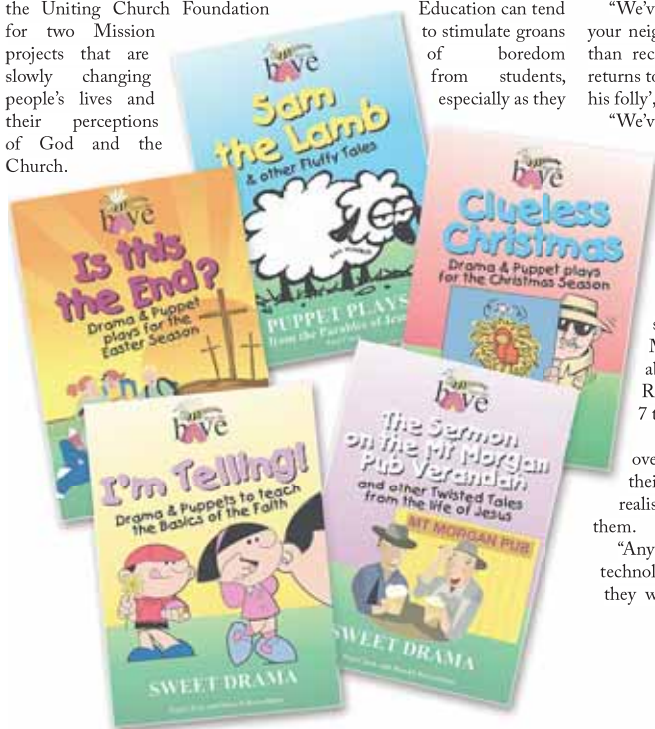
"The kids have asked far deeper and more searching questions than I've ever received in a kid's club or youth group. They are beginning to write their own drama too."

The drama books have also inspired many other ministries around Queensland.

"Since publishing we've run two puppet making workshops and a children's ministry morning with Scripture Union.

"The number of churches now starting puppet and drama ministries has been humbling. It's been great to partner with the UC Foundation to get some innovative ideas for mission up and running."

The 'Hive Resources' drama books are available from Vision Books in Brisbane on 3849 8548 or mguca@ozemail.com.au



UC Foundation helps Charters Towers congregation reach out to families

FOR FAMILIES living in remote locations, finding the most basic Christian education materials for children is a challenge.

So a project developed by Charters Towers Uniting Church has been well received by people in that area.

Working with families who ask for their children to be baptised, the Church has taken the initiative of providing Christian resources and making the most of the opportunities provided to interact with family members.

Charters Towers Minister Pastor Viv Chapman said the church organises barbecues and conducts baptisms on remote rural properties.

Mr Chapman said some families were located up to 150 kilometres from town.

"They especially loved the support and the Christian CDs and DVDs which are very hard to find out here," Mr Chapman said.

"We make contact with every current child on our register on his or her birthday. That's about 40 children."

It's seen as a way for families to connect with the Charters Towers Uniting Church

and to witness to them. He said there was a new openness now with families and new expectations on both sides.

Mr Chapman told *Journey* he'd had three enquiries about baptism in the past week including one from a 24 year old man.

Another was from parents from a remote Gulf property who will be having their children baptised when they come to pick them up from the local Boarding School in November.

"Many of the families will drop in when they're in town for a cuppa and to say hello.

"We valued the Uniting Church Foundation grant; it gave us new vision."

Applications for the next round of grants close on 30 March, 2009.

For assistance in completing an application for funding, please contact UC Foundation Manager, Robyn Allcock on 07 3377 9777 or email robyn.allcock@ucaqld.com.au.

Charters Towers Minister Pastor Viv Chapman baptises Mitchell Thomas on his parents' remote family property near Charters Towers



To think about

Christian mission begins and continues with personal and communal everyday discipleship.

How are the lives of people growing and developing through the faith journey that they are on?

What are your stories of transformation?

What are the stories of perseverance that have led to transformation (in the person persevering or the people impacted by the it)?

What commitments are being undertaken or made by people to assist the development and growth of their own faith, that of others, or both?

Christian mission involves sending, commissioning and recognising that we are on the move, not static.

How do your members give witness to their faith beyond the gathered congregation or faith community?

How does the congregation or faith community support them?

Walking for a new global understanding



Laura Moore with her friends in Mwandia



Children at work and play on Smokey Mountain in the Philippines. Photos by Laura Moore

LAURA MOORE, a 27 year old school chaplain in Deception Bay north of Brisbane has long had a desire to travel and see the world.

When she ran short of funds for a KonTiki trip, she asked a dangerous question, "How might God use my urge to see the world?"

Laura began to seek alternatives to the usual young adult focus on "collecting experiences".

In 2006 Laura was asked by her congregation to consider joining Global Walking, a short term exposure trip organised by Uniting Church youth worker Jason Bray in collaboration with Vision for Mission and the Justice and International Mission Advocate.

Despite being briefed before leaving Australia, Laura was not prepared for the mind-blowing experience she had in the Philippines.

Laura was introduced to 'in-your-face poverty' from the moment she stepped off the plane.

Walking through Manila, she came across a mother and two boys lying in the gutter.

At first she thought they might be dead but she soon discovered that this was where they slept.

Ninety minutes with Manila's huge rubbish dumpslum community

on Smokey Mountain changed Laura's life forever.

Here the team witnessed a whole community living, working and playing among the layers and layers of black rubbish, collecting and recycling material for sale.

Laura's understanding of 'church' was changed by a visit with a tiny church on one of the islands of the Philippines.

The majority of the members of the church had left when the pastor had been murdered for standing up for the rights of local fishermen.

The only people that remained were the family of the pastor and a group of faithful persevering Christians with a passion for justice and righteousness.

Laura was challenged to rethink the comfortable expectations she'd grown accustomed to in her own local suburban congregation.

The most difficult part of a cultural exposure trip was returning home.

Laura found herself deeply disturbed by the realisation that while she had been changed inside, the everyday life in the suburbs was continuing as though nothing had happened.

Everywhere she looked, people seemed to be focused on the same

meaningless pursuits, with little awareness of the world beyond their comfort zone.

Initially, Laura was overwhelmed with a sense of guilt associated with the level of affluence that she had taken for granted.

Over time she began to become more focused, engaging with her home environment with new eyes,

"With a new way of looking at the world young adults return home to live transformed lives that transform their community."

changing the way she watched television and the choices she made while shopping.

Laura is still infected with the travel bug, but with a difference.

While talking about her experience with young people at the Summer Madness camp earlier this year, she heard Jason Bray talk about the Global Walking trips to Bali and Zambia in 2008.

"All of a sudden it was as if God had poured molten lava through my veins", she said.

Laura signed up to join the team which visited Lasaka and Mwandia.

The three weeks in Africa provided an experience of more subtle and yet more dire poverty.

She was totally engaged by whole villages which appeared to be resigned to inescapable, perpetual malnourishment.

"God wants to use us where we are", Laura said. "Maybe part of that call from God is to find alternatives to accumulating material possessions, focusing instead on sharing with the world."

Laura's approach to reading the Bible has been radically changed. As she explores the teaching and lifestyle of Jesus she looks for ways in which she and her community might become agents of change.

The Global Walking project has emerged over the last four years as a shared partnership between Mr Bray, local congregations, Justice and International Mission Advocate Andrew Johnson, YACMU and Uniting International Mission, with funding and support from the Vision For Mission project and the UC Foundation.

The visionary behind the Global Walking project Mr Bray said the goal of cultural exposure trips is first and foremost changed hearts and minds.

"With a new way of looking at the world young adults return home to live transformed lives that transform their community."

Minister at Centenary Uniting Church in Brisbane's west Rev Paul Walton said he had been inspired by the way people of all ages have got behind the sending of those able to go.

"The connections with The Philippines, Bali and Zambia have confirmed and focused our existing commitment to mission".

Singer/songwriter Katie Wallis returned from Zambia deeply impacted by her experience there with a Global Walking team.

With support from members of Centenary she was able to write down her reflections, shaping them into an album, "Contemplating A Change".

Through a series of concerts at churches and cafes she and her band raised over \$13,000 for the Mwandia Orphanage.

Mr Bray said Global Walking encourages people to embrace the diversity and differences and discover God.

"A revelation of God in a new culture takes us out of our comfort zone and provokes us to ask questions and explore our faith in new ways."

Jason Bray 0407 574 883

Plan Be

WHAT WOULD it look like if Christians carried out the intent of Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount? Is it possible to use the Beatitudes as the framework for the way to live?

Plan Be, a resource developed by Dave Andrews, provides a framework for individuals, small groups and whole congregations to explore and live out Jesus' challenge: "Treat others as you would have them treat you".

Dave's vision is for transformed congregations which have the capacity to influence their communities through their changed attitudes and behaviours.

One congregation in that process of transformation is Ashmore Uniting Church on the Gold Coast.

A group of women in the congregation caught the vision when they heard Dave Andrews speaking at a Presbytery zone meeting held at their church.

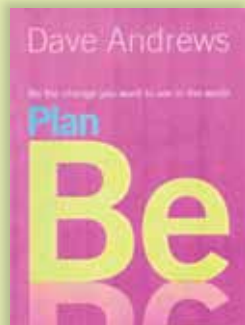
They were so energised by the night that they bought the book and set up an accountability group to explore the Beatitudes.

Ashmore Minister Rev Bradley Foote dedicated a month of sermons to the Beatitudes, inviting members of the congregation to share stories about the difference Jesus' words were making in their everyday lives.

The Bible Society of Queensland is partnering with churches in 2009

to promote the resource.

The book is available for purchase at Christian bookshops or direct from www.lastfirst.net. A guide for action/reflection can be found at www.wecan.be.



Something old, something new ...

MANY UNITING Church members will remember a time when so many of the Church's activities were supported through the efforts of volunteers attached to Fellowship groups and Church agencies. Our Churches and Halls filled regularly with community members buying handmade clothing, toys and homewares, and we all knew where to buy the best biscuits.

In modern times, an influx of cheap, mass-produced goods has lowered the profits we can raise through these kinds of events; and a faster pace of life has decreased the hours people have available to donate their services, so many of the old volunteer groups have gone.

However, for some people, the demise of volunteering has removed the fun from their participation in the Church and left them with few opportunities

to become more involved in supporting our work in the community.

The UC Foundation's new manager, Robyn Allcock, is determined to reverse this trend.

According to Robyn, "changes within the workforce mean that today's volunteers come with a very different set of skills. Many are capable of handling leadership roles and this is where they are needed."

And in coming months, Robyn is hoping to recruit volunteers throughout Queensland to assist in promoting the Church's work.

"We need speakers, organisers, and people with a flair for marketing in particular," she says, "but everyone is welcome – with an economic crisis looming, we will need all the help we can get."

Interested Church members are encouraged to contact Robyn on 07 3377 9777 for more information.

Mission training

THERE WILL be a number of mission-related courses on offer at Trinity College in 2009.

Building Community is being taught by Dave Andrews, using his books *Compassionate Community Work* and *Not Religion But Love* as the main texts. Thursday afternoons, 1 – 4 pm, February 26 to June 4.

Mission of the Church is being taught by Neil Sims. The course text is *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today*, by Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder. Wednesday evenings, 6 – 9 pm, July 22 to October 29.

Members of the Uniting Church can enrol as audit students in these courses, for \$150.

Audit students participate fully through discussions, questions and other in-class learning but do not undertake any of the assessment tasks and do not receive credit for a course.

Postcard Radio

MANY OF the stories of mission-focused churches come from the United States and the United Kingdom but what is God doing in Queensland to re-energise the church in the call to mission?

Churches of Christ youth worker and church planter Steve Drinkall interviews people who are exploring fresh approaches to mission.

The thirty minute interviews were recorded in mp3 format and have been made available as podcasts available to download at www.postcardradio.com.

Contact Duncan Macleod for a free sampler CD, including interviews with Mark Cornford on The Greenhouse Project, Duncan Macleod, Dave Andrews and Randy Edwards on Sustainable models of Church.

Simply Living Retreat

MARK AND LEESA Cornford struggle with how to live lives that are environmentally sustainable, hopeful, good news for people and still enjoyable. They are facilitating a weekend retreat for others who share that challenge.

"The Simply Living Retreat is an opportunity to reflect on how God calls us to be good news to all the world by the way we live", said Mark.

The Simply Living Retreat is being held from January 16 to 18 at Camp North Pine on Lake Samsonvale, just north of Brisbane, and will be suitable for individuals and families.

Mark, a deacon currently in placement in Deception Bay, has spent the last five years developing *The Greenhouse Project*, a set of resources for individuals and groups exploring the connection between faith, evangelism and justice in everyday life.

He is available to work with small groups and congregations who want to develop their local mission plans into action.

Contact Mark Cornford on 07 3203 3235 or e-mail markrc@primus.com.au

Compassionate Community Work Course

DAVE ANDREWS is the author of *Compassionate Community Work*, a workbook designed for individuals and groups exploring a faith-based approach to engaging with the local community.

The companion volume, *Not Religion But Love*, provides a set of readings and group exercises.

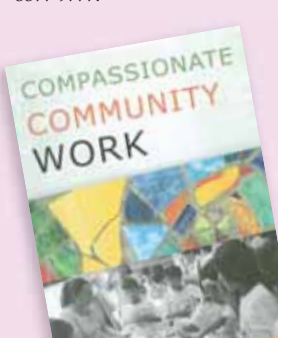
Twenty-five members of Elanora Uniting Church covered the course in two sets of six weeks, while house groups focused on the *Not Religion But Love* material.

Sessions were led by Tim Hodgson, Dave Andrews, Mark Cornford and Duncan Macleod.

The course provided members of the congregation with tools to connect Christian faith and community development, explore breaking barriers,

building bridges, problem solving, prayer and prophetic transformation.

To host this course in your area contact Duncan Macleod, Vision for Mission Advocate duncan.macleod@ucaqld.com.au or contact Rob Bos, Pilgrim Learning Community Director rob.bos@ucaqld.com.au or call 07 3377 9777.



UNITING CHURCH FOUNDATION GRANTS

The Board of the Uniting Church Foundation met in October to examine applications for Foundation grants. The following projects were approved for funding.

GROUP	PROJECT	AMOUNT
Dayboro Uniting Church	Improved access to church	\$3,500
Glebe Road Uniting Church	The Marriage Course	\$2,000
Murgon Goomeri Uniting Church	Portable Sound System	\$1,182
Queensland Synod Bioethics Committee	A qualitative study to develop a resource for patients and families to assist them with emotional, spiritual and ethical end-of-life issues	\$10,000
Kawana Waters Uniting Church	Community-focused pre-evangelism outreach program	\$2,750
Thursday Island and Horn Island Uniting Church	Sunday School and Religious Education teacher training materials	\$1,380
TOTAL		\$20,812

Applications for the next round of grants close on 30 March 2009. For assistance in completing an application for funding, please contact UC Foundation Manager, Robyn Allcock on 07 3377 9777.

Library Resources on Mission



RESOURCES RECENTLY added to the Trinity College Library include a set of audiovisual congregational resources produced by investigative journalist Rob Harley in New Zealand. You can borrow the DVD and leader's manual from the library and order your own copies of the participants' manuals from

Church Resource Specialties, www.crsnline.com.au.

Journeys

A five week DVD journey exploring the Christian faith through real people, amazing stories and changed lives. Designed to introduce interested 'spectators' to Christianity utilising a unique blend of stories of faith told by regular people whose lives have been impacted by God. *Journeys* features powerful interviews about spiritual encounters, and shows how faith works at 'street level'.

Friends for Life

A five week DVD journey using real life stories to help Christians explore practical ways to share their faith with their friends.

Life Stories

Explore what it means to walk with God by examining the real-life stories of Christians from around the world as they grapple with life's challenges through their faith in Jesus Christ. *Life Stories* tackles tough questions: Why should I forgive people who hurt me? Where is God when it hurts? And does prayer really work?

The Big Ask

Rob Harley confronts three leading Christian thinkers with questions that have no easy answers. Rob Bell, Lee Strobel and Phil Yancey, appear in eight powerful interview sessions, twenty punchy edited clips and three uncut encounters.

Creation care It's on the evangelical agenda

Included in 2008 in TIME magazine's list of 100 most influential people for his work in bringing together scientific and evangelical communities, leading US Christian lobbyist and climate change convert Richard Cizik spoke to Journey during his recent visit to Queensland.

By Bruce Mullan

DUBBED THE 'Earthy Evangelist' by *The New York Times*, Mr Czik was here to highlight the need for urgent action on climate change.

Mr Czik said the evangelical movement's current interest in the environmental movement was not really surprising as there is now a critical mass of people who think deeply about the idea of creation care.

"A small number of people persuaded by an idea who come on the scene at the right time create a cascading effect that not only influences the people around them but the whole world," he said.

"A social movement arises when out of the hearts millions of people they decide something's not right – the church or the evangelical church in this case hasn't spoken to this issue and it should – and they are not going to permit the status quo to continue."

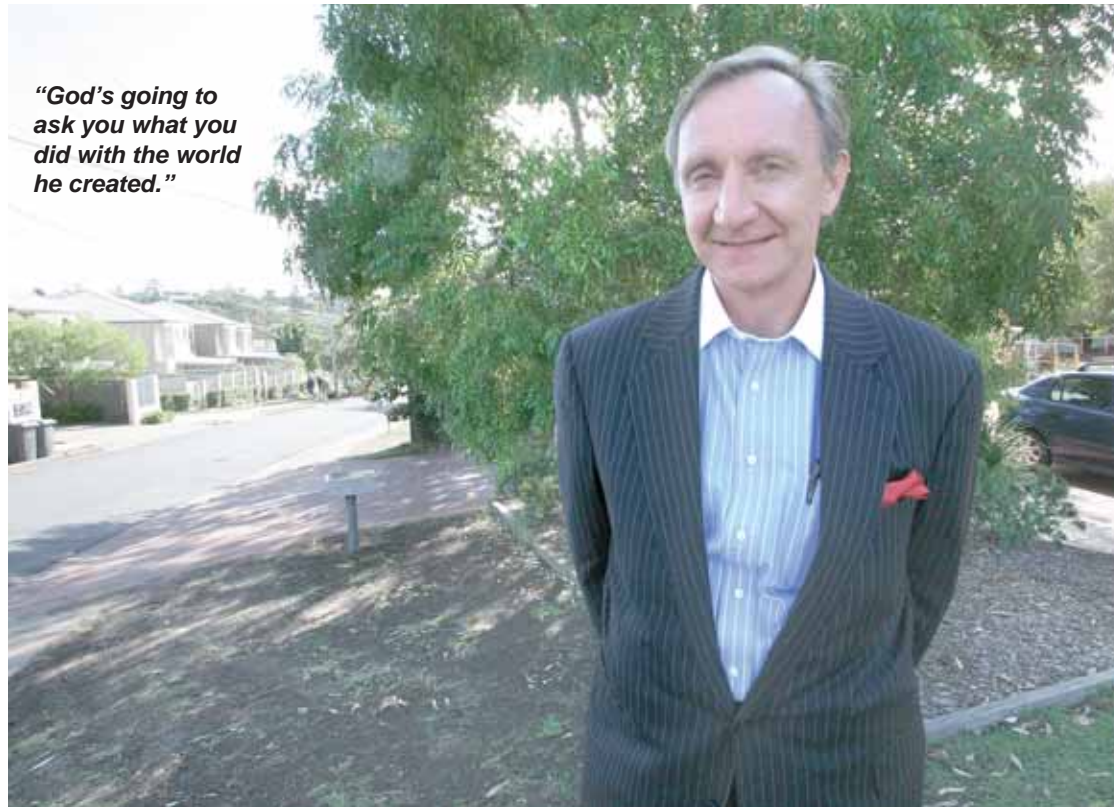
A self-confessed "Ronald Reagan conservative", Presbyterian Minister Mr Czik describes himself as a people hugger rather than a tree hugger.

He was first "converted" to the cause of climate change when he heard distinguished climate scientist and evangelical Christian Sir John Houghton speak in Oxford in 2002.

Since that time, he has been an advocate for action on climate change within the US evangelical community and beyond.

Mr Czik came back from Oxford committed to changing himself and his family.

"We sold our recreational vehicle and bought a Prius and over the



"God's going to ask you what you did with the world he created."

Leading US Christian Lobbyist and Climate Change "Convert" Rev Richard Cizik. Photo by Osker Lau

course of the subsequent years we have replaced our appliances with the most efficient we can buy.

"We have decided to live a carbon neutral lifestyle.

Though known as a proponent of a variety of conservative causes, his insistence that climate issues were a vital 'pro-life' concern caused controversy among some US conservative evangelicals.

Undaunted by the criticism, he was instrumental in the creation of the Evangelical Climate Initiative, a coalition of evangelical Christians who work and pray together to combat climate change.

Mr Czik said he is troubled by what he sees as evidence that we

have reached a critical tipping point when it comes to the environment.

"I took a group of leading scientists and evangelicals to Alaska last summer.

"When you see parts of the Arctic as big as American states disappear it is truly frightening."

Mr Czik is Vice President for Governmental Affairs with the US National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) and responsible for setting the Association's policy direction on issues before Congress, the White House, and the US Supreme Court.

While in Australia he met with Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and key Christian leaders, and spoke

at a series of public meeting on the need to work together to tackle climate change.

"By our actions we are changing the planet in ways that are irreversible," Mr Czik said.

"By mid-century half of our known species will be either extinct or on the way to extinction."

In his advocacy for urgently tackling climate change, Mr Czik is motivated by the conviction that there is a strong biblical mandate to care for the creation.

He believes "the earth is the Lord's" and human beings are called to be "stewards of the earth."

"Most people think we own it and that it was given to us, but

the resource God has given us to steward is his.

"It's not about stewarding my money, it's about stewarding God's resources."

Mr Czik also believes that we will be eternally answerable to God for our care for the environment.

"When you die God isn't going to ask you when the earth was made, or whether it was in six days or six million years.

"God's going to ask you what you did with the world he created"

Mr Czik's visit was jointly sponsored by The Climate Institute, World Vision, TEAR Australia, and the Australian Evangelical Alliance.

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ARE YOU PASSIONATE ABOUT EDUCATION?

The Synod Schools Commission is seeking expressions of interest from persons in active association with the Uniting Church who have a heart for education and are available to serve on a Uniting Church school board from the beginning of 2009. Schools with vacancies include Moreton Bay College, The Lakes College (North Lakes) and Calvary Christian College.

Amongst other responsibilities, the Boards have oversight of the broad strategic direction of the particular College, its policies, financial matters and compliance with legislation.

All applicants will be required to submit a resume and be available for an interview.

For further details or to submit an application, please contact the Executive Officer of the Schools Commission, Mrs Elaine Rae at elaine.rae@ucaql.com.au, on 07 3377 9820 or 0400 752 416.

Have yourselves a conservative Christmas

By Scott Stephens

CONSERVATIVE POLITICS is now in retreat almost everywhere. Or rather, it has been routed.

Across the Western world, conservative parties are in disarray after suffering a catastrophic series of electoral defeats.

Just think of the fate of the Liberal Party after Howard, or the Republicans after Bush, or New Labor in these final, dying gasps of the Blair-Brown regime (which has been overtly Thatcherite in its approach to economic policy).

In large part, Conservatism's now dismal outlook is due to the rather fickle affections of the free-market economy to which it has wedded itself.

Even during the bad times, it finds itself in a position where it has to keep talking up the benefits of capitalism for fear of losing its political pedigree – that of being the best at managing the economy and generating massive surpluses.

But while political conservatism is everywhere being rolled back, many commentators and even economists find themselves looking to the likes of President-elect Obama for a different kind of conservatism: domestic or economic (in the traditional Greek sense of *oikonomia*, or 'household management') conservatism.

Take Chris Patten, former Tory and now Chancellor of Oxford University, who has recently written that "the new president's first task will be ... to restore the real family values of saving, thrift, responsibility, and fair reward."

Fareed Zakaria has expressed the same sentiment. "This crisis — dramatically, vengefully — forced the United States to confront the bad habits it has developed over the past few decades. If we can kick those habits, today's pain will translate into gains in the long run."



In other words, the new conservative hope is that the current credit contraction will force people to begin living within reasonable means once again, and thus will begin rectifying nearly three decades of fiscal insanity.

The figures that measure the extent of our madness over this period are truly terrifying. In

the United States, the ratio of private debt to income is 290%. In Australia, it is 165%.

Admittedly, these ratios include people's mortgages. But far from ameliorating these figures, it is the mortgages themselves that prove to be the problem.

On the back of the dramatic escalation in home equity due to

the housing bubble, one of the most notable trends over the past decade is people's willingness to convert their mortgages into yet another line of credit for spending on luxury items and retail.

And so, while under relatively normal economic conditions the escalating prices of certain staples like food and fuel and clothing would cause a down-turn in domestic economic growth and thus a slowing in the retail sector, in the United States and Australia 'consumer confidence' and retail

But instead, at the first sign of a drop in consumer confidence and a slackening off of retailmania in September, the Federal Government promised to pump \$10.4 billion into the pockets of the Australian public at a time of the year when they are guaranteed to spend up big and not pay down debt.

Merry Christmas, indeed!

So, before we spend it up and thus deepen our present addiction to an unsustainable and self-centred way of life, try reflecting on how we got here.

Think, just for a moment, about having yourselves a conservative Christmas, in which we decide that we've probably spent more than enough on tat and trinkets, on leisure and gadgets, most often to the neglect of the common good and our moral obligation to care for one another.

And think about what it says about our government that, at the very time when we should begin reshaping our habits and practices, orienting them toward others and toward the future, we are given just what we need to deepen our addiction to unrestrained spending.

In the United States Wendell Berry put it beautifully when he lamented that "the most alarming sign of the state of our society now is that our leaders have the courage to sacrifice the lives of young people in war but have not the courage to tell us that we must be less greedy and less wasteful."

The last President to do that was Jimmy Carter, just before he was voted out of office in a landslide.

His replacement? Ronald Reagan. And there began our present malaise.

Scott Stephens is the minister at Forest Lake Uniting Church. He also teaches theology and ethics at Trinity Theological College, Brisbane.

“We’ve probably spent more than enough on tat and trinkets.”

spending has gone through the roof!

And this brings us to perhaps the most obscene political decision made by Kevin Rudd in his first year in office.

Rudd inherited a \$17.3 billion budget surplus from the Howard-Costello decade, a surplus that already had been amassed by paying down public debt (and thus ignoring social infrastructure) and by converting public debt into private or household debt, which now exceeds \$150 billion.

In order to bolster Labor's credentials as 'economic conservatives', Rudd-Swan then presented the Australian public with \$21.7 billion budget surplus for the 2008-2009 financial year – again, money that could have been invested toward the future in the form of infrastructure, schools, universities, clean energy, and research and development, or even money that could have been used to honour our commitment to the UN's Millennium Goals.

Christians fear Indonesian Anti-Pornography Bill

By Bruce Mullan

Uniting International Mission Executive Secretary (Asia) Rev John Barr has expressed concern that the adoption of an Anti-Pornography Bill by Indonesian legislators highlights fears about a move in Indonesia from a secular, pluralist state to an Islamic state with the widespread implementation of Syaria law.

In October, the Indonesian parliament passed a controversial anti-pornography law which defined pornography as "pictures, sketches, photos, writing, voice sound, moving pictures, animation, cartoons, conversation, gestures, or other communications shown in public with salacious content or sexual exploitation that violate the moral values of society".

While there are some exceptions

concerning sexually explicit cultural and artistic material, offenders will face up to 15 years in prison.

The maximum penalty for lending or downloading pornography is four years in prison or a \$190 000 fine while anyone caught "displaying nudity" in public could spend up to ten years in jail.

Rev Phil Erari of the Evangelical Church in Irian Jaya said the law could legitimise actions by groups in all parts of the country, including Papua, in order to 'restore order' among people who wear only the *koteka* (penis gourd) or women in their traditional dress, who will be fined from Rp. 500 000 to Rp 1 500 000 or given custodial sentences.

"It will also kill the artistic endeavours of the Asmat people which display the human body in full," Mr Erari said.

Some observers are concerned the law will encourage vigilante groups like the Islamic Defender's Front who have targeted night clubs, and brothels over the past few years with the use of violence.

The predominantly Hindu



province of Bali and the predominantly Christian provinces of North Sulawesi and Papua have rejected the Anti-Pornography Bill.

Several provinces will refuse to enact the bill while others say they will not enforce it.

They believe the Anti-Pornography Bill is an attack on the Pancasila State (that promotes religious pluralism) and it will threaten "cultural harmony" of the nation. Some say the bill will lead to a "process of disintegration".

The President of Indonesia is being called on to annul the law.

Mr Barr believes the Anti-Pornography Bill threatens the future of Indonesia as a secular, pluralist state.

Left, Uniting International Mission Executive Secretary (Asia) Rev John Barr. Photo courtesy of UIM

Church urges green agenda

THE UNITING Church has continued its involvement in the climate change and emissions trading debates with a submission to the Australian Government's Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme consultation.

The submission argued that protection of the environment for its own sake and for the sake of our children and future generations should take precedence over growing the already large profits of big industry.

Uniting Justice National Director, Rev Elenie Poulos said it also placed greater priority on the development and use of renewable energy sources than on cleaning up existing carbon polluting energy industries.



Santa (Target Indooroopilly store manager Stuart Estreich) and his helpers with (from left to right) Target Indooroopilly Operations Manager Lisa Perry, Target Regional Manager Chris Dansie, and UnitingCare Queensland CEO Anne Cross. Photo by Mardi Lumsden

Targeting care at Christmas

UNITINGCARE launched their annual Christmas Gift Appeal in conjunction with Target again this year.

Channel 7's Queensland Weekender presenter Dean Miller hosted the event at Indooroopilly Target in November.

The launch was complete with Santa, elves and members of the Australian Girls Choir.

Each year Christmas trees are placed at the entrance of all 285 Target stores in Australia, with the local community invited to place unwrapped gifts or gift cards under the tree.

To date, the appeal has donated

more than 1.5 million gifts to children, the homeless, the elderly and families in crisis.

This year UnitingCare aims to collect more than 150 000 gifts at Target stores throughout Australia as part of its Christmas Gift Appeal.

Local UnitingCare agencies and church groups then distribute these gifts and gift cards to disadvantaged people in their community.

UnitingCare CEO Anne Cross said this Christmas will be even harder for many families given the current financial climate.

"For families already under enormous emotional and financial

pressure, not being able to buy Christmas presents for their children can push them to breaking point," said Ms Cross.

"We are hoping that Queenslanders will be especially generous this Christmas and place presents under the tree at their local Target store.

"These will be donated to families doing it tough in their local community before Christmas Day."

Gifts can be donated beneath UnitingCare's Christmas trees at all Target stores nationwide until 23 December

Keeping all in common

UNITING INTERNATIONAL Mission and its aid and development division, Uniting Church Overseas Aid have relaunched their Gifts of Love catalogue as 'everything in common / gifts of love to a world in need'.

The catalogue provides numerous Christmas gift options with Uniting Church partners in Asia, Africa and the Pacific.

Gift areas cover projects connected to Church Partnerships, Aid and Development, People in Mission and Young Ambassadors for Peace.

For example, \$50 will provide health care for one child in North Korea, \$80 will equip an evangelist in India with a bicycle, \$120 buys a goat herd for a family in East Timor, \$200 supports Fiona Dixon-Thompson in Zambia to give Hospital treatment for sick children, and \$500 sponsors a peace seminar in Ambon, Indonesia.

These gift options provide individuals and congregations a simple way to express solidarity with those who are poor and have been marginalised, and to share what we have with people in need.

For more information visit www.everythingincommon.com.au or call 1800 988 122



Christmas Bowl acts for peace

THE INTERNATIONAL aid agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia, Act for Peace, has produced gift cards for the Christmas season to help support the Christmas Bowl Appeal.

The gift of money spent on the card is passed on to Christmas Bowl and supports the activity shown on the card.

Queensland Churches Together Project Officer Tanya Richards said it is a great way to give a gift that keeps on giving.

"This is one way that you can help people around the world, to let them know that God loves them and that someone is thinking of them this Christmas," she said.

Act for Peace cards are available from Queensland Churches Together. Contact Tanya Richards on cws@qct.org.au or 3369 6792

So what are we waiting for?

By Mardi Lumsden

ADVENT IS a four week period prior to Christmas.

It is a season of preparation in which the church recalls its hope and expectation in the coming of Christ, past, present and future.

The word Advent is a derivative of the Latin word 'adventus' meaning 'arrival'.

The liturgical colour for the season is purple.

Advent is the beginning of the official Church year and has two main themes associated with it.

The first is an emphasis on Jesus' final coming in glory and the need for Christians to be vigilant and ready for that coming.

The second is the theme of immediate preparation for the ministry of Jesus, embodied in the preaching of John the Baptist.

The Gospel readings for the fourth Sunday of Advent always prepare for the Christmas season by recalling the events in the life of Mary and Joseph prior to Jesus' birth.



Stock image by Karen H. stock.xchng www.sxc.hu

According to www.thisischurch.com the season of Advent came into being toward the middle of the sixth century.

Originally the six Sundays leading up to Christmas, this was reduced to four by Pope St Gregory the Great (591-604).

Christmas and Advent were originally secondary Christian feasts, but around the seventh century became important in the Christian calendar.

Advent became less of a solemn preparation of the coming of Christ (similar to Lent) and more a celebration of the second coming as well as the preparations for the Christmas feast.

Queensland Synod chaplaincy coordinator Rev John Cox said the season of Advent is more than a simple celebration of the coming of Christ.

"Advent is the season in which we recognise the multi-dimensional coming of Christ," he said. "Jesus Christ 'coming' into the world 2000 years ago, continually 'coming' into our world in the present, and the

anticipation of Christ's 'coming' again.

"Advent then, far from being a simple remembering, is a celebration of God's in-breaking grace in Jesus Christ, experienced through God's Spirit every day as we choose to live, anticipating the coming reign of God," said Mr Cox.

"Exploring our faith in Advent will have us asking questions as to what it means for Christ to have come into the world, personally, socially, politically and spiritually.

"What does it mean for Christ to be entering into our present circumstances, our hopes and our struggles? What does it mean for us to anticipate Christ coming again; for our priorities and choices?

"Advent challenges us to hope, to look for more than what we see, and live in a way that we are the future that we expect in Christ our Lord."

WHAT'S ON

December 6, 2.30-6pm. Trinity Ipswich UCA Multicultural Festival, North Booval. Come and taste Pacific Island culture with dancing, music, a Pacific feast and much more. \$10 entry. Contact the church office on 3812 3110 or email viliami_anamila@bigpond.com.

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

December 6-24, 10am-3.30pm. Montville Uniting Church Christmas display, Main Street, Montville. This year the theme will be 'Joy to the World' presented by banners, trees and floral art. Contact Ruth Potter on 5478 6484 or email rpotter@westnet.com.au.

December 7, 12 noon. Final Sunday concert for 2008 at Albert Street Uniting Church, Brisbane. Jubilee Singers will perform a light-hearted program. Organist Greg Hartay-Szabo will also play some Christmas organ music. Donations appreciated. Contact Carolyn on 3378 3316.

December 12-23, 7-10pm. Christmas Lights at Sandgate Uniting Church, Board Street, Deagon with craft stalls, sausage sizzle, free face painting and entertainment. Visit www.sandgate.unitingchurch.org.au.

December 13, 6-9pm. Inaugural Banyo Christmas Carols at Earnshaw State School Oval, Banyo. An activity of the combined churches of Toombul District. Contact Keren Seto on 0404 482 132 or email setokeren@hotmail.com.

December 14. Trinity Ipswich Christmas Chorals, North Booval. A special service with a light luncheon following. Contact the church office on 3812 3110 or email viliami_anamila@bigpond.com.

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

December 15, 7-9.30pm. Christmas Festival at Kawana Waters Uniting Church, Bokarina. See the Christmas story through display, drama and music. Contact Rosemary on 5437 6786 or Ann on 5491 6632 or email trevann@dovenetq.net.au.

December 16-17, 6-9pm. Follow the Star Christmas Festival Glasshouse Country Uniting Church. Nativity displays, free sausage sizzle, damper, stalls, carols and story telling artist Lynton Allan. Contact Chris Bell on 5494 1555 or chrisbell@stadust.org.au.

December 17-18, 6.30-8.30pm. Stroll through Bethlehem at Indooroopilly Uniting Church. Children will love the live animals and a real baby in the manger. Free. Contact the church office on 3878 9535 or email dingle1@bigpond.com.au.

December 18, 7-9pm. Bribie Island Christmas Story at Bribie Island Uniting Church. Displays, stable with live animals, kids craft, supper. Contact Tony Curtis on 5497 5848 or email curtisabem@internode.on.net.

December 19-23. The 10th Stable on the Strand at Strand Park Townsville. An activity of the Combined Churches of Townsville. Contact Richard Hosking on 0407 231 690 or email rsklhosking@bigpond.com.

December 21-23, 6.30-9pm. "Jesus, Light of the World" Advent Event at Beachmere Uniting Church. Contact Joyce and Ernie Gehrke on 5495 7497 or email ernjoy3@bigpond.com.

December 27-January 6. UCA Beach Holiday Family Camp at Alexandra Park Conference Centre, Sunshine Coast. Contact Debbie Pollard on 3500 9200 or email debbie@retirewealthy.com.au.

January 3-11. International Festival of Sacred Music (IFSM) in Brisbane. Organised by the Royal School of Church Music. For more information visit www.rscm.com.au, or phone director Ralph Morton on 3336 9104.

January 10-11. Radical Difference Conference at Newlife Uniting Church, Robina, with special guest Shane Claiborne. For more information, including online registration options visit <http://newlifeuniting.com/12twoconference>.

January 11. Discoveries Camp (for Primary age children) at Lake Perseverance Recreation Centre. Summer holiday camp for children in Years 3-7 (in 2008). Visit www.discoveriescamo.com.

January 16-17, 7.30-9pm. Christian Endeavour Study, "Passionate Disciples" presented by Rev Bob Miles. Free. Open to all. Contact Peter Jenkins, National President Christian Endeavor.

Want to promote an event?

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

Finding Fiji a lifeline

LIFELINE FIJI is down and almost out so Lifeline Queensland is trying to raise \$100 000 to give them a hand.

Richard Johnson from Lifeline Coral Coast, based at Bundaberg, has been to Fiji to provide local people with training and support.

Mr Johnson's needs assessment said the biggest issue is youth suicide, and he cited Australian National University research suggesting the youth suicide rate in Fiji is among the highest in the world.

Following a succession of military coups, international sanctions, civil unrest and ethnic tensions, the Fijian economy is on the skids. This means more people than ever before are poor, subject to violence, and struggling to make their way.

In such situations, the role of "civil society organisations" such as Lifeline in ameliorating conflict, anxiety, despair and poverty, is quite critical.

Lifeline Fiji, founded in 1993, has also suffered collateral damage from the decline in social capital, trust and community engagement.

The Suva branch closed down in 2000. The branch at Ba on the north-western coast of Viti Levu has struggled on. The telephone counselling service in Ba is run from the home of one of the dedicated volunteers, Pushpa Nair.

Mr Johnson said, "Funding for Lifeline in Ba has been a constant struggle."

For some time the organisation was able to do fundraising by running a small tea shop in the original Methodist Chapel in the Mission Hospital grounds, and by

selling second hand clothes.

However, Mr Johnson said, "Due to some administrative difficulties with the Church, Lifeline lost the use of this."

"Recently members of the Church initiated talks with the Church administration with the possibility of Lifeline re-tenancing the old building but this proved logistically impossible."

The recent week long training program conducted by Mary Parissons from Lifeline International was successful.

Two counselling training workshops, including fundamental skills of counselling, personal and interpersonal counselling, and suicide prevention were conducted for Lifeline volunteers in the township of Ba, and for professional workers in Nadi.

The Fiji Council of Social Services helped with the organisation.

Conversations with workshop participants, Lifeline members, a representative of the Ba Local Government Council, members of the clergy from different Christian denominations, people from Islamic and Hindu backgrounds, officials from the Ministry of Education, and officials from the Fiji Council of Social Services were productive and led to the current appeal.

The appeal is based on a strategy designed to re-establish Lifeline Fiji as a functioning and independent community service organisation.

For more information write to Lifeline Community Care Queensland Fundraising PO Box 108, Fortitude Valley QLD 4006, or phone 3250 1934



Lifeline Fiji counsellor in training.

About FACE 09

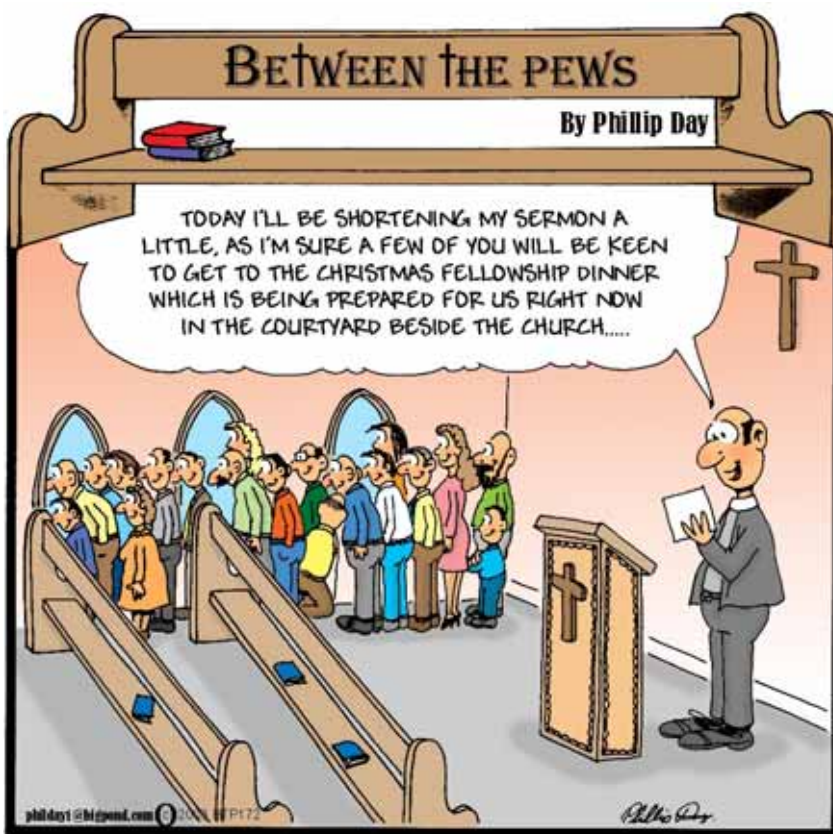
ABOUT FACE 09 is an activity of the Uniting Church, which brings young adults between 18 and 30 years old together for a Faith and Culture Exchange with Indigenous communities in Australia and Partner Churches in the Asia-Pacific.

About FACE 09 runs from 28 June – 19 July, 2009.

To learn all about it visit the About FACE website www.aboutface.org.au.

For more information contact About FACE coordinators Jill Cooper or Tess Keam on (03) 9251 5271 or email info@aboutface.org.au.

Applications close on Friday 13 February, 2009.



Disaster Spiritual Care: Practical Clergy Responses to Community, Regional and National Tragedy.

By Stephen Roberts and
Willard Ashley
Skylight Paths Publishing 2008
RRP \$40US

Remember the Beaconsfield mine disaster in Tasmania? For me, the presence of Jesus there will always be represented by Frances Seen, the town's Uniting Church community minister.

I guess disasters are one aspect of ministry dreaded by all clergy.

Having spent time living in mining towns gives one a heightened sense of the possibility of catastrophe in such places. And it does focus the mind.

I can recall being grateful during the most recent Mourammine disaster in 1986, that the town's industrial chaplain, Denis Vanderwolf, was well versed in the lore of mining and its communities.

The Americans have suffered several large natural and human disasters over the past decade: September 11, Hurricane Katrina and the presidency of George W Bush.

Willard Ashley, a Christian theologian, and Stephen Roberts, a rabbi, have put together this terrific book called *Disaster Spiritual Care*.

It's not so much the individual chapters, though most of these are good.

There is a saying in crisis management that when the crisis occurs the plan is useless; it's the forethought provoked by the exercise that is valuable.

Just reading the book changes the mindset. I don't agree with everything said, but that matters not.

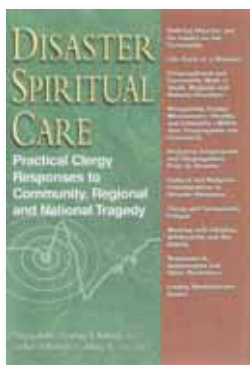
This book is practical, uses many examples, many of them US, but useful nonetheless.

Perhaps the most important chapter is that on compassion fatigue.

Only in recent times has our community taken seriously the psychological risks run by those engaged in disaster response.

For any minister in a community

REVIEWS



prone to disasters – flood, fire, pestilence and disease – this is a good book to read before the inevitable happens.

Reviewed by John Harrison,
lecturer in crisis communication
and issues management at
the University of Queensland
School of Journalism and
Communication

Time

By Gavin Gardner
CD Small House Records
RRP \$15

Tamworth-born son of a country musician Gavin Gardner has recorded five honest offerings on his first CD production by independent recording label Small House Records.

With a smooth pop sound Gardner explores his understanding of the grace of God and the difficulty of moving beyond self to consider the bigger world picture.

The backing is simple and uncluttered and the production high quality with a clean design presentation.

This EP offering won't set the world on fire and while the songs are strong they are not particularly memorable.

Sales will no doubt depend on Gardner's commitment to travelling the hard road of live performances for building his audience.

Hear samples or order the CD from Small House Records www.smallhouserecords.com.au (\$15 plus \$4 postage and handling). Also available on iTunes.

Reviewed by Bruce Mullan,
editor of *Journey*. Thanks to
Small House Records *Journey*
has two copies of the EP Time
to give away. To win email your
name and address to journey@ucaql.com.au and tell us where
Gavin Gardner was born



Gavin Gardner

The Book of Revelation for Dummies

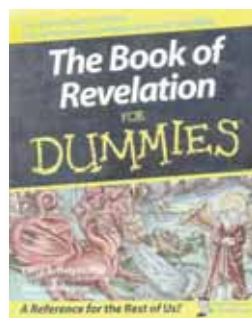
By Larry R. Helyer and
Richard Wagner
Wiley Publishing Inc
RRP \$29.95

This book is a continuation in the popular *For Dummies* series. The authors have produced a highly readable, easy to follow and at times humorous 'tour' of the book of Revelation.

With the use of scholarly interpretation and supporting diagrams the context, symbols and possible understandings of Revelation are explained.

The Book of Revelation for Dummies is separated into four parts. These look at setting the scene for the end of the biblical story; interpreting Revelation; a grand tour of Revelation; and finally questions and answers about Revelation.

A balanced approach is given to



understanding the various schools of thought that are held while trying to understand Revelation

The dominant views of the futurist, preterist, historicist and idealist are explored in Parts I, II and IV of the book. However, in Part III, the 'commentary' section of the book, the 'futurist' view tended to dominate.

Having said that it is pleasing to see that *Revelation for Dummies* doesn't aim to give the 'answers' to the book of Revelation, as the authors have admitted, "only time will tell". Rather it aims to help equip the reader with the tools to delve deeper, understand more and not end up with Post-Traumatic Revelation Reading Disorder!

My wife entered the room while I was reviewing the book and asked, "What is the book like?"

My immediate response was that it provides a balanced and fair understanding of Revelation.

If I gave this answer to my wife then I will be in trouble if I don't give it to others as well.

Reviewed by John Ruhle, Uniting
Church minister in Forbes, NSW



The Wager

Director Todd Barron
Heritage HM DVD
Rated M

Here's a movie that had promise with central character Michael Steel (an actor nominated for Best Actor at the upcoming Academy Awards) played by country music superstar Randy Travis who was two times winner of the Grammy Award for Best Male Country Vocal Performance.

A Christian, the character Steele refuses to participate in a steamy love scene with the female star, Cassandra (Candace Cameron Bure) and is kicked off the set.

At the same time his personal life falls apart as his wife wants a divorce, his co-star tries to seduce him, his sister dies, and he is caught up in a paedophilia scandal.

When the interpretation comes down to his troubles being the result of a supernatural wager between God and Satan we find it is actually a modern day Job story as the tested Steele tries to live his life according to the Sermon on the Mount.

Based on a best-selling book by Bill Myers and boldly exploring areas not usually covered in "Christian" cinema *The Wager* sadly just doesn't manage to deal with the issues at enough depth.

With its low budget production and average script, *The Wager* is not a great film.

In the USA *The Wager* made its debut at number one on the Association for Christian Retail Sales figures but I think it will be just too "down home" for the Aussie market.

The soundtrack is great and yes, Travis does pick up his guitar briefly for a nice a cappella version of 1930s Gospel hit *Precious Lord, Take My Hand*.

Reviewed by Bruce Mullan,
Journey editor and Randy Travis
fan. Thanks to Heritage HM
Journey has two copies of the
DVD *The Wager* to give away.

To win email your name and
address to journey@ucaql.com.au
and tell us the name of a
Randy Travis song

Theology for Pilgrims: Selected Documents of the Uniting Church in Australia

Edited by Rob Bos and
Geoff Thompson
Uniting Church Press
RRP \$69.99

One of my abiding passions about the Uniting Church is our *Basis of Union* – our faith-statement of who we are as God's people.

It offers us a Christ-centred vision of our pilgrimage.

Theology for Pilgrims gives us a very helpful look into the journey of three denominations travelling towards the union in 1977.

Twenty-one Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian theologians, lay and ordained, were entrusted with the awesome responsibility of drafting a basis on which to unite.

They chose not to look for ways in which the union would be an amalgam of those denominations – which would have been an exercise in 'ecclesiastical carpentry'.

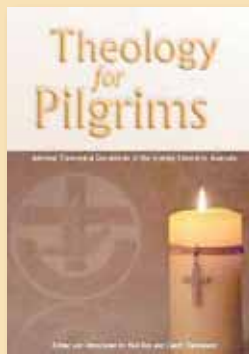
Rather, they asked us to go back to the sources of our faith in Jesus Christ: in the Scriptures, the Creeds, the Reformation Confessions, John Wesley's Sermons, and the faithful and scholarly interpreters of Scripture through the ages.

All that we might confess our faith in fresh words and deeds for our own time and place.

A new church, they said, had to begin afresh with a recommitment to the Gospel.

They offered their work to the uniting churches saying that "Faith comes by hearing, and our hope is that people may hear afresh."

Theology for Pilgrims gives us the



background to their journey – and ours. Their work was published in two documents: *The Faith of the Church* (1959) and *The Church: its Nature, Function and Ordering and Proposed Basis of Union* (1963).

Theology for Pilgrims gives us

the texts of those documents, which are still for us important background to our *Basis of Union*. Introductions to them – and the *Basis of Union* that we know – are invaluable helps to understanding and appreciating the formation of the Uniting Church.

Since 1977, we have travelled through many issues that have required of us that we respond theologically, with faith that is open to be informed by the Gospel.

Many of the theological papers produced to help us discuss, understand and respond to the issues are in *Theology for Pilgrims* – with very helpful introductions setting out the contexts of the issues under discussion in the Uniting Church.

Among the papers are those on Ministry and Ordination in the

Uniting Church, Lay Presidency at the Sacraments, Understanding and Using the Bible, Baptism, being a Multicultural Church and the Covenant with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress.

I've sometimes heard people say that the Uniting Church does not have any clearly-stated theology. The documents in *Theology for Pilgrims* give a very different view – they invite us to go back to the sources of our faith and inform our understanding of who we are as the pilgrim people of God.

Thanks, Rob and Geoff – you offer us an invaluable resource for our journey of faith.

Reviewed by Rev Don Whebell,
Secretary of the Queensland
Synod Ecumenical
Relationships Committee

Music wars

Thanks Yvonne McRostie (November *Journey*) for telling me something of the story behind the hymn "It Is Well with My Soul".

I have known the hymn all of my life (I am 85) so, probably, because of that, I did not question how it came to be written.

It was one of many we sang as we helped dad with the cows at milking time, and some Sundays as we gathered around the piano, where we learned to sing it in parts.

I can still hear Dad's fine tenor voice whenever this hymn is sung. Perhaps, not surprisingly, it was sung at his funeral 37 years ago.

Mabel Walker
Brassall

Congratulations on the great items in the November *Journey*. So many things were said that needed saying.

Fancy Geoff Bullock after all these years has now recognised the poor doctrinal base for many modern songs. You can add to that very poor musical structure.

Standards of music from both points of view have been sacrificed over the last decade and have

resulted in much mindless music being sung robot fashion.

To me there has been a total failure to appreciate that music requires knowledge and expertise as well as spiritual leading.

Ray and Barbara Gray
Paradise Point

I refer to the claim by Rev Jenny Tymms that "and it was when the pipe organs...took over...the music was slowed down" (November *Journey*). This is entirely incorrect.

I have been a pipe organist for over 53 years and am also a devotee of the theatre organ which is used to play popular music.

There has always been pressure to play hymns fast believing this makes them more attractive.

However the speed of a hymn depends on a multiplicity of factors.

Firstly, what is the hymn about? While some are joyful, others are thoughtful, reflective or even solemn and the music must characterise the words.

Secondly, the rhythm has to be accentuated. Some hymn tunes

e.g. Hyfrydol or Warrington are in triple or waltz time, so you could dance to them at the church social.

Thirdly, how well do people know the hymn? Even though *AHB* and *TIS* provide a melody line, people have to read up from the words to the music which requires much effort if unfamiliar.

Fourthly, if the hymn is being sung in a large building, time has to be allowed for the reverberation to be completed so the sound is fully effective.

William Fraser
Holder ACT

Rev Jenny Tymms' article (November *Journey*) makes some good points, but her comments about the slowing down of old hymns and the implied benefits of disappearing organs are misconceived.

The human voice is an instrument (a wind instrument) and well-controlled breathing is needed to sing well. You also need to know how to sustain musical tone.

Wind instruments including

LETTERS

organs (and bowed instruments), without doubt are the best kinds of instruments to use in leading congregational singing.

It's a matter of physics - not aesthetics! To rely on guitars, lutes, harpsichords or even pianos may be fashionable, but it is also misconceived.

Such instruments of themselves do not sustain tone and do not provide the necessary tonal undergirding for good congregational singing.

Show me a church which relies solely on percussive instruments, and I'll show you a church where the singing is either uncertain, anaemic or unmusical.

Over 50 years experience as a church organist, as well as plain common sense, leads me to the view that reliance on percussive-type instruments to lead congregational singing is a musical misadventure.

Long may the wind blow.
John Barrie, Vice-President, Old
Organ Society

A challenge for the church

Whether individuals, families, congregations, synods, or the wider Church, none is immune from the current financial crisis.

Many of us, in December, will receive an unexpected "windfall" as the Federal Government gives a one-off payment, ranging from \$1400 to \$2100, to pensioners and other Social Security recipients.

The purpose of the payment, we are told, is to stimulate the

economy. Undoubtedly, our church is also in need of urgent financial stimulus.

Many congregations are finding difficulty in meeting ever increasing running costs, as well as their Mission and Parish Services' obligations.

My challenge to those of us who receive this Government payment is to give at least a tithe of it to the service of God through our local congregations or direct to the Synod for use in the wider mission of the church.

We didn't expect it; we didn't budget for it; we won't miss at least a tenth of it! Will you accept the challenge?

Keith Lawson
Redcliffe

PRAYER DIARY

14 December:
Chermside Kedron
Community Church

Chermside Kedron Community Church (CKCC) is a regional church on the busy corner of Gympie Road and Rode Road.

There are four worship services each week. We are blessed by a great tradition of music and an orchestra.

CKCC is a busy place with constant activity and events.

The facilities are used by a variety of community groups so there are many opportunities to connect with people in the complex.

Currently we are seeking God's direction for the next stage of our journey together.

Chatters Coffee shop attracts a steady flow of satisfied diners.

Open five days a week, it includes an ecumenical team of volunteers.

Pray for the Coffee Shop manager Kathy, assistant Beryl and the whole team, as well as the support committee chaired by Rev Bob Warrick.

Pray also for members of the local community who visit Chatters.

Another long-time ministry is the Grapples' Thrift Shop - a ministry developed over 20 years, also run by dedicated volunteers.

One-third of all funds raised is set aside in a special 'Grapples Community Fund' to support projects, needs, welfare and emergency assistance to people in our local community, mostly outside our church.

We are a diverse group with a great pool of gifts. There are so many opportunities and possibilities for us as the people of God.

Pray that we will be responsive to God's vision and the challenges of being the Body of Christ and continuing the ministry of Christ in this place.

Pray for the ministry team, Glenn Mulcahy, Jenny Sims and minister in association Pat Darby as well as the Church Council and Elders as they provide leadership at this time of discernment.

21 December:
People in Mission

The Uniting Church International Mission is in partnership with many overseas churches, with some partnerships going back almost 100 years.

Each year volunteers (People in Mission) go from Australia for periods of three months to one or two years to work hand in hand with our partner churches.

Placements are now available for 2009.

These placements reflect the needs of our partner churches as the requests have come from them.

In almost twenty countries in the Asia/Pacific region, India and the African continent at least sixty-six placements have been identified in the areas of education at all levels.

These include theological education, medical and health related positions, rural development, IT development, child development and administration.

We ask for your prayers that God will call volunteers who are willing to engage in mission with the people in our Partner Churches.

We also ask for your prayers for the work of Uniting International

Mission in our Partner Churches that the lives of our volunteers and our friends overseas will be enriched spiritually, materially and intellectually.

Comprehensive placement listings and reflections from past participants are at www.uim.org.au/peopleinmission/welcome.

28 December:
South Rockhampton
Uniting Church

South Rockhampton Uniting Church draws people together from across Rockhampton into Campbell Street as well as offering worship in outlying centres.

Different worship styles are offered in the city along with weekly services at Bushley, Mt Morgan and a new fortnightly fellowship at Gracemere - places that are undergoing many changes.

South Rockhampton values the three predominant generations in worship: the retired, the growing number of families and singles and its children's ministry.

Having formed one congregation three years ago we are a people in transition seeking God's direction for our future.

Our fingers of prayer are di-

rected towards growing leaders and developing contemporary worship; encouraging cell groups and developing further our children's ministry in preparation for a Youth ministry.

With the enthusiasm of our Youth Pastor we prayerfully began H.O.M.E (Home of Mission and Evangelism) in 2008.

H.O.M.E accommodates young adults and helps develop their spiritual life and challenges them to be a real Christian presence that connects with community.

South Rockhampton Uniting Church constantly seeks to develop ecumenical links with other Christians by sharing in several yearly events which we pray offer a united presence to the community.

At another level this took the form of a recent meeting drawing together those interested in better understanding our homeless situation.

While in its infancy, deep challenging questions are being asked about the social difficulties constantly on our doorstep.

Altogether these form part of the challenge God has given us in being a vibrant presence in life around us and we value the prayers of the church.



Propitiation debate

Undeniably, Charles Hodge of Princeton was a great theologian.

He had already forcefully argued in his Systematic Theology that propitiation was an essential element in the Apostolic proclamation of the Atonement.

He had also shown that since the time of Calvin it has been a focal point of Reformed and Evangelical teaching about salvation.

He did acknowledge that many of the early Fathers held to the bizarre doctrine that Christ's death was a ransom to Satan.

He recognised, too, that the inadequate moral influence theory of the Cross went right back to the Middle Ages to Peter Abelard (1079-1142).

Nevertheless, to show that propitiation was an integral part of orthodox Christian spirituality, he not only cited Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109), he also elaborated on the way convictions about propitiation are revealed in the confessions, liturgies, prayers, and especially hymns of the people of God from the time of the Apostles on.

As I see it, it is another sign of the decline of mainline Protestantism that we have theologians who have not only personally turned their backs on this fundamental aspect of the Gospel (propitiation) but actually would like it removed from the worship of local churches.

Lloyd Williams
Caloundra

Vale Geoffrey Collins

'NO MATTER what happens, God is with us.' This is how Rev Geoff Collins ended his Sunday service only two days before his unexpected death on 14 October. He was 49-years-old.

While family and friends have struggled to understand why his life ended too quickly, the outpouring of love and respect for Geoff and his ministry has been extremely comforting.

Gentle, creative, faithful and compassionate – these four words have been used many times in the last few weeks to describe his life.

He firmly believed in justice for all and was not afraid to stand up for those in need.

He became an advocate and friend to many and in doing so shared Christ's light and love in the most practical of ways.

Geoff ministered in both Queensland and South Australia. His final call to the Seaford Ecumenical Mission in Adelaide was the perfect match.



Rev Geoff Collins

Throughout his ministry he had been passionate about strengthening relationships amongst different church denominations.

Geoff was a devoted husband to Liz, wonderful father to Liesl (19) Joshua (17) and Felicity (14), loving son to Rene and much-loved brother of Gae and Ralph.

Together with family and friends, we remember a man who lived what he believed.

Read more at

www.journeyonline.com.au

Vale Beryl Foster

THE TEAM at the Queensland Synod Communication Services Unit give thanks for the life of Beryl Foster who for the past few years has packed around 14,500 copies of *Journey* each month ready for postage.

Beryl was a faithful member of the Anglican Church and died on 6 November 2008 after a long and courageous battle with Motor Neurone disease.

Beryl was buried from the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist where she had served for many years as a Cathedral Guide.

She loved God and her church, and served as part of the *Journey* team with dedication and ruthless



Beryl Foster

efficiency. Farewell Beryl, we will miss you.



Bob Mitchell, Jane Moad, and Heather den Houting. Photo by Osker Lau

The law leaves Trinity

THE TWO students who graduated from Trinity Theological College in November have more than their graduation date in common.

Heather den Houting and Bob Mitchell, both deacon graduates, both have a background in law and a passion for international development.

Former Synod international mission advocate, Ms den Houting will take up a full-time placement at Kenmore Uniting Church.

Ms den Houting has been working part-time with the Kenmore congregation this year.

The congregation have welcomed fresh leadership and will

continue to work together with Ms den Houting at being a relevant church in their local community.

Mr Mitchell will take on a position as General Council and Head of Risk and Governance for World Vision Australia in Melbourne.

The former Price Waterhouse Coopers partner said he has had a long time passion for international development, particularly in East Timor through his work with the Timor Children's Fund.

U.C.I.S representative Jane Moad presented both graduates with portable communion sets to assist them in their work.

By Mardi Lumsden



You can find wonderful things at garage sales. The Samford Valley Uniting Church had all sorts of treasures at their recent sale. Here Rev Don McKay takes up his shearing tools. Photo by Steve Hughes

Brisbane Wesley House construction

CONSTRUCTION IS moving along quickly at Wesley House in the Brisbane CBD as the Albert Street Uniting Church looks forward to using the modern building from February 2009.

The original Wesley House was built in 1940 to facilitate the activities of the congregation and Wesley Mission Brisbane, founded in 1907.

The new Wesley House has a number of innovative design features and the building has been awarded a '5 Green Star' rating.

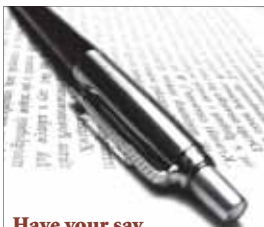
The Architectural Design Statement also explained that Wesley House was designed to complement the architectural aesthetics of the church.

The ground floor of the building will house a 170 capacity function room for the use of the church and the wider community. The church will occupy one of nine floors with the remaining seven being available for tenants, providing a regular income stream to support the mission of the Albert Street Uniting Church.

NCYC09: you are invited to pray

THE ORGANISERS of NCYC09 have issued an invitation for congregations and individuals across Queensland to pray for the National Christian Youth Convention 3 to 9 January in Melbourne. A National Day of Prayer for NCYC is being encouraged for Sunday 14 December.

Congregations are also encouraged to download a Resource Pack from <http://ncyc.org.au>, which includes a small group study guide for Shane Claiborne's book, *The Irresistible Revolution*.



Have your say

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

Post: Journey GPO Box 674
Brisbane 4001

Email: journey@ucaqld.com.au

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



LECTURER

IN WORSHIP AND PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

United Theological College Sydney is seeking to appoint a lecturer responsible for the teaching and oversight of Worship and Practical Theology.

The appointee would be expected also to demonstrate an academic interest in the way in which worship intersects with theology, biblical studies, ministry and practical theology.

The appointee would be involved in the formation of candidates for specified ministries and would become an academic associate of the School of Theology, CSU.

United Theological College is the constituted college for the Uniting Church in the Synod of NSW-ACT. It is also a partner in the School of Theology, Charles Sturt University.

The position is available from 1 July 2009. Full details of the position may be obtained from: the Principal, Revd. Dr Clive Pearson, United Theological College, 16 Masons Drive, North Parramatta NSW 2151 Australia.

Phone: +61 2 8838 8927; Fax +61 2 9683 6617 or email utc@nsw.uca.org.au.

Applications for this position close on **20th February 2009**.

JOURNEY asks...

What encouraged you during your time at Synod?

**Jackson Gill
(Central Downs)**

What can I say? God might be shaking, breaking and reshaping us but God will never forsake us.



**Michelle Leggo
(Logan)**

The circle of friendship that happens at Synod has greatly encouraged me.



**Elaine Rae
(Bayside)**

I have been inspired by prophetic preaching, and the demonstrated humility and respect for one another.



**Dennis Robinson
(Beenleigh)**

I have been very encouraged because of the attitude built on transparency. Our church is in good hands.



**Peter Crispin
(Noosa Coastal)**

The honesty of the participants in the various questions considered.



**Glenn Louttit
(Innisfail)**

To share joys and pain, to laugh and cry – for me this has been a time of healing.



**Mei Perkins
(Aspley / The Gap)**

I was encouraged by the spirit of hope in so many stories.



**Siimalevaa E. Manu-Sione
(Goodna Samoan)**

It encouraged me to think outside the square and act on it.



**Russell Clark
(Mareeba)**

What has encouraged me has been the resilience of the church.



**Alyson Madsen
(Bayside)**

It was a joy to be part of a community expressing God's love in many ways.



**Rosalyn Smail
(Brisbane Valley)**

Amazing times of worship of our God, warmth and friendship among members, and heartfelt concern for others as seen in many of the proposals passed by the Synod.



**Bruce Warren
(Wellington Point)**

This Synod more than any other has finally moved beyond the system and begun to deal with Kingdom issues that will make a difference.



**Andrew Gunton
(The Hills)**

I was encouraged that as a gathered people of God we heard, grappled, prayed and took ownership of the issues that currently face the church.



**David Ferguson
(Ipswich City)**

Seeing people who have been hurt by recent events speak with grace and a continuing passion for the mission of Christ in the Uniting Church in Queensland.



**Shirley Doyle
(Emu Park)**

The stories of what God is doing in and around our state was a source of encouragement.



**Bob Harriman
(Lifeline Community Care)**

I have been encouraged by the open and honest communication that we have heard from people in leadership positions throughout this Synod.



**Philipa Core
(Emerald)**

Some of the business of Synod was difficult and painful, the financial situation is greatly problematic but throughout the Synod there was a sense of hope and determination to move forward.



**Robert Weyer
(Southport)**

We thanked God for the years of abundance and now turned to God in our time of financial struggles that have impacted on us all, especially the staff members of the Synod.



**Joy Agnew
(Allora)**

I came away with the firm conviction that the Synod has strong leadership, a growing sense of togetherness and is seeking to discern God's will for its future.



**Eddie Gresham
(Gympie)**

Although it took some time, the Synod reached agreement on the critical issues and is prepared to move on in optimism and faith.



For those who have an awareness of the benefits of planning ahead...

South East Qld's most comprehensive funeral guide the "Executor Funeral Plan – A Guide to Thoughtful Funeral Pre-Planning" contains all the information you need to know about arranging or pre-arranging a funeral.

Record your personal information and funeral details in this guide and you will have a permanent record ensuring peace of mind for you and your family. For your **free** copy of the guide, call us on **3852 1501** or complete the coupon and mail to us.

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