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Talking to a young adult near you

"Somehow Jesus has survived all the embarrassing things Christians have done in his name." **Shane Claiborne**

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Coming to Brisbane's Sexpo

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WHO IS JESUS?

Christianity is built around a faith in Jesus the Nazarene carpenter and Christ, but who was this founder of our faith and what was he really like?

By Bruce Mullan

THROUGHOUT RECENT history there has been an energetic pursuit underway to find who the "real" Jesus actually was.

Sometimes described as the "quest for the historical Jesus", this search has been the attempt to use historical rather than theological methods to construct a verifiable biography of Jesus.

The most recent version of this quest has been the work of the Jesus Seminar, a group of about 150 individuals including scholars with advanced degrees in biblical and religious studies who are leading the charge to distinguishing between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith.

Their first findings were published in 1993 and concluded that of the various statements in the gospels attributed to Jesus, only about 18% of them were likely to have been spoken by Jesus himself.

Director of Studies in Systematic Theology at Trinity Theological College Rev Dr Geoff Thompson said the idea of an historical Jesus is not new but the continuation of a search with origins in eighteenth and nineteenth century German scholarship.

Continued P.10



Identifying a real scandal

JOURNEY'S CHRISTMAS card campaign was taken up by many congregations and has enabled us to invite non-church people into relationship with us.

I heard that one of our ministers received a complaint about this year's Christmas card.

For those who have forgotten or never saw it, the card had a picture of a baby being unwrapped like a Christmas present. The way the wrapping was ripped formed a cross, which was a reminder of the cross that awaited Jesus.

One member of the public found this image offensive and demanded an apology from the church for distributing such an offensive image.

Yet it is the centre of our faith that this Jesus whose birth we remember at Christmas was the one rejected, hated and crucified only a few decades later.

Paul says that the cross is a scandal to the Jews and folly to the Gentiles; and it is still so.

It is an important reminder to Christians that this story which we treat with such familiarity is one of great importance and it still has power to confront and challenge.

My fear is that we, who have lived so long within the church and heard the story so often, are no longer moved by it. The story of Jesus life, death and resurrection has been overshadowed by the necessity to maintain the church.

We become trapped within the church, spending our time sustaining that with which we are so familiar, so that we don't even bother to tell others about Jesus and his power to forgive,

to change, to renew and give abundant eternal life.

It is no longer the story of a crucified King that offends us, but any threat to our comfortable familiar church life.

I recall a conversation with a woman who had been a faithful member of the church for years. She had faithfully prepared the communion table every month for her congregation. Now, she told me that she could no longer attend worship because the person who had taken over from her in this task did not launder the communion table cloth properly.

We, who have
lived so long
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Somehow the way the communion cloth was laundered seemed more important than participating in the sacrament which remembered the one who died on the cross.

What are the things that scandalise, or offend you? Is it the crucifixion of the baby who was laid in the manger? Is it the pain and suffering of the hundreds of children who are destroyed by the generational hatred of the Middle East? Is it the absence of young people in your congregation? Is it a society that is lost and confused now that their financial security is threatened?

Message from the Moderator

Rev Bruce Johnson



Surely if we are to live as those whose lives have been transformed by the one who died for us, it should be these things that upset us rather than the frequent frustrations that come from living and serving within a community of redeemed sinners.

Our congregations will always be tainted by our sinfulness, but the one who died on the cross has freed us from the guilt and power of that sin.

Jesus is the one who calls us to live abundantly, generously and with passion. He calls us to reach out as he did (and still does) to those whose lives are broken, confused and tormented.

He calls us to proclaim his love, forgiveness and new life so that the reign of God might be known among us.

When you find yourself becoming frustrated, offended or hurt by the actions of a brother or sister in Christ, ask yourself how this scandal measures up against the scandal of the baby whose life ended on an awful instrument of execution.

The person who complained about the Christmas card is still in conversation with the minister to whom he complained.

I am glad that the thought of Jesus on the cross still causes a scandal, since that scandal has led to a productive dialogue between the one offended and one who follows that baby born as a gift to the world.

Let us have courage to proclaim Jesus crucified and risen, and may the offence caused still bring people into relationship with the living God.

Sign of the times



THIS BANNER is a quote from Pope Benedict XVI, and was in the news recently after it was hung outside St Mary's Catholic Church in South Brisbane. This inclusive message is a challenge to all churches. Please send your Signs of the Times photos to journey@ucaqld.com.au. Photo by Tony Robertson



Mrs Crystal Turner from Elanora Uniting Church greets Cynthia Bitibule, one of eleven delegates from the Solomon Islands who missed the National Christian Youth Convention in Melbourne due to visa difficulties, but spent two weeks as guests of Newlife Robina Uniting Church on the Gold Coast. Photo by Bruce Mullan

From the Editor

*Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
look upon a little child;
pity my simplicity,
suffer me to come to thee.*



AS A CHILD, the first prayer I can recall being taught to memorise and recite each night at bedtime contained a simple and comforting message

It was a Jesus I could cope with.

As I grew older I began to understand that there were many different interpretations of who Jesus was, some of which are explored in this issue of *Journey*.

The doctrinal enquiries were a nice head trip and even in the Uniting Church I found a common basis of Christian understanding.

God was revealed to the world in Jesus and through his life, death and resurrection are the keys for building successful relationships with God and with each other.

As a theological concept Jesus

was a comforting presence and assurance of acceptance and self-worth.

This was the Jesus whose teachings were the foundation of our Western society and imbued in me a commitment to human rights, democratic politics and freedom of conscience.

It was all very supportive and cosy.

It was at the point of considering Jesus ethical demands that I began to feel uncomfortable and began to stumble; particularly when he called me to turn the other cheek, love my neighbour and specifically to love my enemies.

And then there was the implication that, as a rich Westerner, I probably couldn't even hold out much hope of

entering the Kingdom of Heaven.

This Jesus was a lot more demanding than the gentle, meek and mild assurances of my formational faith.

And did I really want to hang out with prostitute and tax collectors, or bikies and drug addicts, or whatever the contemporary equivalent is?

I don't think so.

Because, if you live a life of uncompromising, courageous love then you're guaranteed to upset a whole bunch of people.

Gosh, if I took it too seriously I might end up like him... dead!

There was a mild tsunami on talkback radio just two years ago in response to a poster that was stuck on the wall of a Baptist Church in Sydney.

It said, "Jesus loves Osama".

Now I'm surer than ever that that's exactly how Jesus does feel about Osama bin Laden.

It's offensive, confronting, uncomfortable and downright annoying, but that's how Jesus is.

Not meek and mild but assertive and challenging.

And as I reflect on my insipid and comfy style of Christianity, I am blown away by the thought that, just like in my childhood prayer, he might still be prepared to suffer me to come to him.

Bruce Mullan

This month's cover image of Jesus the Good Shepherd is from a window in the Sanctuary of Chappell Hill United Methodist Church, Texas. Other Jesus images are from ArtistLight Images, Grover Beach, California

Faith and justice converge at NCYC

A DAY OF demonstrations and protest was a highlight for 1,500 young people who 'converged' at the Methodist Ladies' College at Kew in Melbourne for the six-day National Christian Youth Convention (NCYC) held in January.

Uniting Church National Assembly Communications Officer Nicole Reardon said at this NCYC delegates were given the opportunity to go beyond the walls of MLC into Melbourne's wider community to express their faith in a range of public activities.

Young people immersed themselves in communities by volunteering, participating in street performance, art, protests, and community and environmental projects.

Along with 70 delegates NCYC Chaplain, Graham Harrison was engaged in one of the most challenging public demonstrations, a 'flash mobbing' production.

"We went out to crowded public spaces in Melbourne with a drum.

"The drum would sound every three seconds at which point one of us would drop to the ground, to represent the one child that dies every three seconds from preventable causes around the world.

"After two and a half minutes we were all lying still on the ground," Mr Harrison said.

"Afterwards, delegates would explain it to the crowd that had gathered...the youth were just a



The NCYC crowd gathered for justice in Federation Square in Melbourne city centre (above). Photo by Kim Cain

Queensland NCYC delegate Phil Johnson wearing a pink hat to promote the 2011 Gold Coast convention (top right). Photo by Emma Nicholls

Queensland NCYC delegates Megan Palmer; Shauna Swanepoel; Dominique Kuylaars made up for a self-pic by Shauna Swanepoel (right)



really great responsive group."

The events of the immersion day culminated in a large public rally in Federation Square where cries of appreciation were heard for American evangelist and 'ordinary radical' Shane Claiborne as he called on Christians not to compromise their faith.

This was tempered by the prayerful silence of the crowd as

Uniting Church President Rev Gregor Henderson prayed for Israeli and Palestinian civilians suffering from the chaos of war.

Uniting International Mission Communications Coordinator Amy Goodhew said NCYC had welcomed some 50 overseas delegates as a way of connecting young people with the world beyond Australian shores.

"Every delegate we spoke to, we asked the same question: Where do you come from and what have you learnt at NCYC to make the world a better place?

"For an event centred on the theme 'converge' it was great to see so many connections made - overseas delegates from Uniting Church partner churches connecting with youth from

Australian church communities, including indigenous Australian, all coming from different directions to share and grow."

The next NCYC will be held on the Gold Coast from 29 December 2010 to 4 January 2011. Get in quickly to secure the cheapest early registration prices. www.ncyc11.com.au.

By Bruce Mullan

Learning to be radically different

By Rohan Salmond

WITH HIS dreadlocks and home-made clothes, headline speaker Shane Claiborne couldn't have stood out more from the South-East Queensland young adults who came to hear him speak at Newlife Robina Uniting Church on the Gold Coast in January.

'Radical Difference' was a small conference with potential for a big impact on delegates' lives.

Mr Claiborne talked about the experience of living out his faith in a way that doesn't follow the patterns of this world and how living in community is central to this aim.

Some stories were funny and

others were sad and provocative, but they all demonstrated an infectious love for those in need.

It would be easy to feel guilty on hearing Mr Claiborne's message, but instead delegates felt empowered to help others rather than themselves.

The message was particularly relevant to young adults who are just now figuring out what to do with their lives, and to make an impact for the better.

Conference organiser Rev Ralph Mayhew was thrilled with how 'Radical Difference' went.

"Shane was excellent, the band was sensational, our army of Newlife young adult volunteers were superb.

"I couldn't fault it from start to finish.

"I think it began and continued a conversation that the Holy Spirit wants to have with us about becoming part of a community in order to follow Jesus into the dark places of this world.

"People were equipped for mission, but now it's up to them to take that first risky step."

Mr Claiborne said when he is asked how a conference went he replies, "ask me again in a year".

By that time it will be obvious if any changes have happened in the lives of attendees.

'Radical Difference' couldn't have given delegates a better start.



Jenni Morgan, Sarah Batt and Michael Batt were just pleased to be at the Radical Difference Conference at Robina in January. Photo by Jeanne Pienaar

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XXX Church visits Brisbane expo

By Mardi Lumsden

SEVEN YEARS ago Pastor Craig Gross and Pastor Mike Foster decided that part of their ministry to young people needed to deal with the issue of pornography and addiction.

"I just noticed this common theme amongst kids that they were caught up in this and there was no outlet, no place that told you the other side of the story, but there were a lot of places to go to if you want to look at porn," said Mr Gross, fresh from speaking at the Gold Coast Schoolies festival.

"It was like, let's create a place where people can go to get help. It wasn't, let's shut down the industry.

"We wanted to show the other side of the coin - that this hurts people, this destroys relation-

ships, this won't satisfy you long term."

They started *XXXChurch.com*, a name Mr Gross said is a combination of the "seedy and the sacred" and by using one of the most searched for terms online (XXX) have found themselves where people needed them most.

"Our target market was young men. Then we realised that it doesn't just affect young men, it affects women, married couples, senior citizens.

"Eleven is the average age someone sees [pornography].

"About a third of the people who look at porn online now are women.

"Ministers aren't immune; they are caught up in this as well."

This month Mr Gross and his team are back on our shores to attend sex industry trade shows

(or Sexpo) in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne.

No stranger to such trade shows, Mr Gross has been doing this for the past seven years and has been to 24 shows across the world.

His first was in 2002 at the Las Vegas expo, the American sex industry's largest.

"To a lot of people it made no sense, why would you go there? Are you supporting this?

"No, we're not supporting this. We might as well go to where the people need the most help.

"We figured we would go for a day and we'd get kicked out. Instead they asked us back."

The team doesn't give out anti-porn literature though; they give out Bibles.

"The most fun thing for me over the past four years is when

we changed our approach from talking about porn to getting down and talking about the answer to that. We know that it can be found in Christ.

"From our Bibles to our approach, we are not your typical pastors that come in on a moral crusade.

"We are not judging people. We are trying to engage them in conversations... and give them something they can take away."

The Bibles are a special edition with a cover that says 'Jesus loves porn stars', a cover that proved very difficult to get made.

"No one has asked to do that before, no one had given out Bibles in this environment so the Bible publishers were going, 'wait, that could be misinterpreted!'

"It is right on that edge, but we have seen that it works.

"No matter how many we take, we run out of Bibles within a couple of days into the show."

One of the aims of Mr Gross and his team is to integrate the church in their work.

"We have tried to help the church realise that this is a problem that even church people are dealing with."

Steve Davies of the Bible Society of Queensland agreed.

He initiated a program for young men at Easterfest and brought Mr Gross out to Australia to talk about porn additions.

"I have done hundreds of camps around Australia and it is the common theme and the thing that pushes young men away from God. They think they are scumbags and that they have this dirty little secret that they can't get over," said Mr Davies.

The Bible Society of Queensland has gone out on a limb and printed Mr Gross' 'Jesus loves porn stars' cover on the New Testament Bibles for the Australian sexpos.

"The title is quite controversial, but it actually gets people to open the thing," Mr Davies said.

The special edition copy also

has a 'help' section and includes testimonies.

"It is a great thing to give people (particularly people outside the church) some answers."

Both Mr Davies and Mr Gross have been impressed with the number of young people who have offered to help.

"It is exciting to see young people who see there is a problem and they want to be part of the answer," said Mr Davies.

Not surprisingly, most of the backlash Mr Gross has encountered over the years has been from churches, but he lives by the principle that Jesus said to take his word into all the world.

"Our team goes in with a whole wealth of knowledge more than most. We have seen first hand this [pornography] affect people in a horrible way.

"When we go in we are not going shopping, we're going with a mission.

"You have to be smart about it. A lot of people pray and fast while we are at these shows, we don't take it lightly."

Mr Gross said we need to see the people in the sex industry as people, not puppets on a computer screen or a girl to pose with at a photo booth.

"When you see a girl that is half naked in front of you... the guys walk away and they get that picture of her, but she remains at that booth and you see that underneath she is this broken girl who looks like she just left youth group."

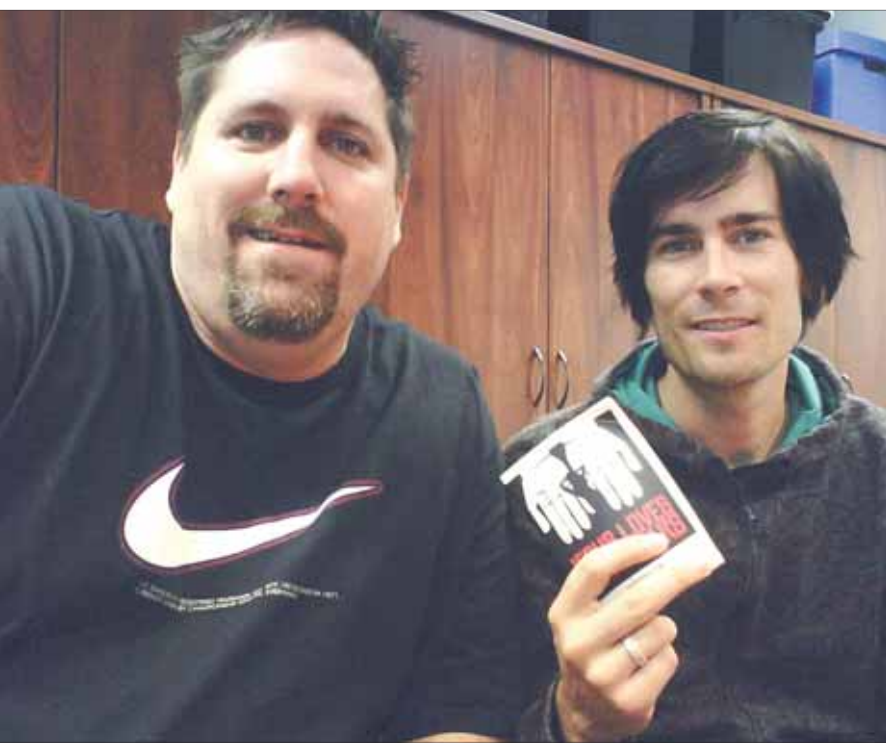
Mr Davies said one of the most important things for the church to do about pornography is to start talking about it.

"It is about starting the conversation," said Mr Davies. "Just do it. I think you will see some great things happen."

Visit www.pornsunday.com

for Craig Gross' 30 minute message on the issue and an 80-page manual. Both

are free for churches to download and use



Bible Society of Queensland director Steve Davies (left) and XXXChurch founder Craig Gross.
Photo by Mardi Lumsden

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CLAYFIELD COLLEGE

CHAPLAIN

Clayfield College, located in inner Brisbane, is a School of the Presbyterian and Methodist Schools Association in Queensland. This P-12 day and boarding school of 950 students has an excellent reputation and a proud heritage as a Christian learning community.

The school now seeks a new Chaplain to commence as soon as possible. Interested candidates are asked to discuss this opportunity, in the first place, with the Principal, Mr Brian Savins.

Tel 07 3262 0229 or
Email bsavins@clayfield.qld.edu.au

Disaster floods Fiji

FIJI IS struggling to respond to the worst flooding in 50 years that has already left 11 people dead and over 10 000 people homeless as well as destroying crucial infrastructure.

Preliminary estimates place the cost of damages at approximately \$32 million.

The poorest have been hardest hit by the storms and thousands of affected people are pouring into schools and churches seeking aid, but little is available.

Fijians have not received the considerable support once offered by the Australian government and are struggling in its vacuum.

This situation is a nightmare for the Fijian people who are facing political problems, economic decline and now a natural disaster.

UnitingChurch Overseas Aid is calling for donations to assist Fiji in this crisis.

Call 1800 000 331 to make a tax deductible Credit Card donation.

<http://uim.uca.org.au/ucoa/donate> to donate online.

Send your cheque to Uniting Church Overseas Aid, Reply Paid 2266 Sydney South NSW 1234.



want the
real
story
?

hop in to church this Easter!

www.ucaqlld.com.au

Connecting with the community at Easter

TWO BREEZY young adults in fluffy bunny ears will be inviting people to worship with Queensland Uniting Churches this Easter.

High-quality, low-cost invitation postcards and posters for Easter and Christmas have been regularly used by Queensland congregations to present the local Uniting Church as a great place to connect with faith.

The 2009 campaign will invite people to think about the real story behind the Easter season.

Synod Communications Manager Bruce Mullan said congregations could order a starter pack of 3000 postcards and 30 A3 full colour posters for only \$185.

"The postcards have each congregation's individual contact information, Easter service times and events and an invitation to

'hop into church this Easter,' he said.

Mr Mullan believes the posters and cards are a world-class promotional resource.

"Postcards can be distributed by contract letterbox delivery services or can be hand-delivered by congregation members.

"Even if people don't take up the invitation this Easter, the campaign reminds them that they are always welcome at their local Uniting Church."

The deadline for orders is Monday, 9 February 2009. Late applications cannot be accepted due to strict print deadlines. Information is available and orders can be placed on the Synod website. Visit www.ucaqlld.com.au

Youth do their mission online

DOZENS OF churches around the world are planning to participate in a very different mission trip this year.

So far, nearly 2,000 teens have signed up for the 'Online Missions Trip' to bombard popular social networking sites with stories about God.

"This is a two-week opportunity for all of us to bombard Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, Twitter or whatever social places you go to online, with the Gospel of Jesus Christ," explained Tim Schomoyer, organiser of the missions trip.

From 1-14 February, students from the United States, Canada, Australia and elsewhere will use the power of the internet to share Christ with people not only on the other side of the world but with friends in their school.

The Christian Post

UC Safaris take to the air

UC SAFARIS Coordinator Mr Doug Fergusson is enthusiastic about their first ever trip to Lord Howe Island.

"While most UC Safari tours travel by bus this one is two hours by plane heading east," Mr Fergusson said.

The eight day tour will include most meals, guided walks, coral reef visits, and a circumnavigation of the island by boat.

There have been over 40 tours organised by UC Safaris since founder, the late Jim Smallbone, organised the first trip to North Queensland in 1983.

Mr Fergusson said the tours are particularly popular with retired people.

"We offer friendship, fellowship and security. Because we look after each other, people who haven't travelled can do so with confidence as part of the group."

UC Safaris is a generous supporter of rural ministry in the Uniting Church in Queensland.

To find out more about the Lord Howe Island Tour on 20-27 September 2009 contact Mr Fergusson on 3273 2689 or email doug_fergusson@hotmail.com

Lay Forum challenges ex-Moderator

By Bruce Mullan

MEMBERS OF the Uniting Church Lay Forum have called for a frank discussion about church decline in response to the retiring Moderator's address to the 27th Queensland Synod.

In his speech Rev Dr David Pitman said he rejected the "language of decline" describing it as "theologically bankrupt" because it "seeks to interpret the life of the church without reference to God".

Spokesperson for the Lay Forum Dr Rod Jensen said recent research showed that the Uniting Church is not doing well at all.

"It's because of our failure to come to grips with the massive changes in society which have occurred in recent generations and dissatisfaction among many attendees with the way in which the Gospel is presented to modern laypeople," he said.

Dr Jensen said many church members see church attendance statistics as a realistic indicator of the state or 'health' of the church.

Quoting the National Church Life Survey and reports from the Christian Research

Association, Dr Jensen pointed to the Uniting Church having the 'oldest' adult church attendees of all denominations with about one-third of attendees 70 years or older, and about half of all attendees 60 or more years of age.

"We are one of the weakest of all churches in the under-40 age group.

"The Uniting Church is the denomination (apart from the Catholic Church) where attendees are least likely to experience in church a sense of God's presence, a growth of understanding of God, joy, inspiration, or awe and mystery.

"These research results are widely available for inspection by all. They are realities and no longer mysteries.

"Whenever we see - at work, at home, in the family, in a personal relationship, in a social context - things not going well, we spend time and effort to identify the problem, to consider the problem, to work out ways to address the problem and to act to do so."

Dr Jensen said that this seems to apply in every context except when we identify things not going well in the church.

"Then it is virtually forbidden to mention the problem. We simply say that we can leave it to God to fix."

Dr Jensen was speaking for the group currently known as the Lay Forum which seeks to "introduce a progressive dimension into the church and make it relevant to the needs, aspirations and consciousness of people in the 21st century".

Dr Pitman said he greatly values the work the Lay Forum and Rod Jensen in particular have undertaken in reflecting on both the history of the Christian church and the issues and challenges alive in the Uniting Church today.

"However, I stand by my assertion that statistics are only one of a number of indicators that need our attention and, in many instances, may well have little to do with the movement of the Spirit in church and society," Dr Pitman said.

"Personal experience, especially in certain situations, can be just as misleading.

"Some of what I have seen and experienced over the past three years confirms the concern of those who believe the Uniting Church is in decline, but there

is abundant evidence in many places of life, vitality, vision, commitment, purpose and growth."

Dr Jensen said it is a positive and healthy step to recognise and frankly discuss the process of church decline which is occurring "despite the devotion and dedicated service of so many clergy and laity in our churches".

"Reflecting on the process of decline and the reasons for it is essential in determining the directions we should take, and are taking, rather than simply ignoring this decline because of the risk of being termed 'theologically bankrupt'.

"In fact, it seems that we could well be bankrupt in some other way when we fail to do this."

Dr Pitman said he had no doubt that the Uniting Church will be a significant presence and influence in Australian society into the future.

"Though not necessarily in ways with which we are familiar and comfortable."

The full text of Rev Dr David Pitman's final address to the 27th Synod is available at www.journeyonline.com.au

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Boarding and day school for boys in Prep to Year 12
(07) 3309 3500 www.bbc.qld.edu.au

Now it's UnitingWorld

UNITINGWORLD WILL be the new badge for the national overseas partnerships and aid and development work of the Uniting Church in Australia.

After extensive national consultations, Uniting International Mission (UIM) and Uniting Church Overseas Aid (UCOA) National Director Rev Dr Kerry Enright took the proposed changes to the Assembly Standing Committee in November 2008 where it was unanimously endorsed.

He said UIM had held forums, focus groups, conducted a survey and consulted across the Uniting Church and partner churches to help discern the future of the organisation.

"People said they wanted a single focused organisation and nearly 80% were lukewarm or negative about our current overarching name."

Dr Enright said many had suggested the name UnitingWorld would more accurately describe the work that was done.

"We are the part of the National Assembly of the Uniting Church that focuses on the world beyond Australia; we link the church in Australia to that world beyond our shores."

"Our work includes relief and development, advocacy, human rights, peace building, sharing of people and standing alongside the Uniting Church's partner churches."

Dr Enright guaranteed that donations will still go to the project specified by the donor.

"What is currently Uniting Church Overseas Aid will become the relief and development unit of UnitingWorld."

"It will continue to be accredited by AusAID, a member of the Australian Council for International Development and a signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct."

"Therefore it is required to meet high standards of corporate governance, public accountability and financial management."

"This is our commitment across the organisation."

Dr Enright was quick to point out that the name was not suggesting an ambition to 'unite the world'.

"Uniting' is the name of our Church," he said.

"It describes God's ongoing mission of reconciliation in which we seek to share and 'World' describes the scope of our work."

"We will continue to focus on Asia, the Pacific, and Africa, although we engage with churches beyond those areas."

Current *Journey* Editor and Queensland Synod Communications Manager Mr Bruce Mullan will commence as the manager of Pacific Partnerships for UnitingWorld in March 2009.



Uniting Church President Rev Gregor Henderson led the NCYC 2009 delegates in prayer for Middle East peace in Federation Square in Melbourne in January. Photo by Kim Cain

Uniting Church calls for peace in Gaza

By Bruce Mullan

IN A PUBLIC statement released within days of the commencement of the Israeli bombardment of Gaza, Uniting Church President Rev Gregor Henderson expressed dismay about the Israeli rocket attacks.

"We deplore the brutal military action of the Government of Israel, not least its killing of defenceless civilians."

"We deplore the fact that Israel did not take the opportunity afforded by the ceasefire last year to begin peace talks with Hamas alongside the peace talks with the Palestinian Authority," Mr Henderson said.

"The most likely outcome of the current military action is the creation of yet another generation of Palestinians without hope, with deepened hatred for Israel, who

will know and want only the ways of violence."

"An immediate ceasefire and a commitment to talk with Hamas, as well as with the Palestinian Authority, to find a mutual permanent solution is the only way forward."

Mr Henderson said that Christians believe every human being is loved by God and is precious in God's sight.

Mr Henderson also led NCYC 2009 delegates gathered in Federation Square in Melbourne in a prayer for Israeli and Palestinian civilians suffering from the chaos of war.

The Moderator of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmanian, Rev Jason Kioa, was one of the guest speakers at a public protest in Melbourne in January where he addressed thousands who rallied for peace in the Middle East.

Mr Kioa said the Uniting Church supports the right of the state of Israel to exist within secure borders, but this did not give Israel the right to destroy its neighbours with impunity.

"Let me remind us all that the Christian, Jewish and Muslim faiths are each committed to peace and to peace-making," Mr Kioa said.

"People who engage in violence while claiming to be people of faith are in fact denying that faith."

"The Jewish prophet Micah thousands of years ago cried out to his nation of Israel that what God wants from us is to 'do justice and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God'."

"There's no justice, no mercy, no humility and no godliness in the killing and destruction going on in Gaza."

Patrol Ministry is on the right track

"To offer service and ministry in the name of Christ to the people of remote Australia through compassionate care, justice and nurture of the spirit."

FRONTIER SERVICES Associate National Director Rev David Thiem said this Frontier Services' "purpose statement" encapsulates the ministry currently offered by 22 Patrol Ministers.

Mr Thiem said while it is a challenge raising the \$1.4 million required annually to keep Patrol Ministers on the road, finding appropriate ministry

agents is a big task for the Uniting Church.

Flexibility, a preparedness to travel, camp out, be away from home, listen, network widely with non-church people and look for opportunities to encourage people in both their faith and personal lives, are fundamental to this ministry. It is not for everyone, but the increasing number of Patrol Ministers love the opportunities they are given.

Patrol Ministry is not for the faint-hearted as it is on the edge of the margins to those in remote Australia.



There are some big boots that need filling in Australia's Outback – boots that will take you to amazing places as you embark on a ministry that is as diverse as the vast and varied landscape in which you'll serve.

Frontier Services would like to hear from Ministers and Deacons who might be interested in serving as a Patrol Minister. This is a role in which you'll travel thousands of kilometres providing friendship, comfort and spiritual guidance and, sometimes, 'hands-on' assistance to people on remote properties, mine sites and Aboriginal communities. We currently have 22 Patrol Ministers and will have vacancies this year in WA's West Kimberley Ministry (Derby) and Gascoyne Patrol (Exmouth). Also, the Mobile Aboriginal Patrol out of Port Augusta is looking for a suitably qualified and skilled Indigenous person.

To find out more about Patrol Ministry, contact the Rev David Thiem on (02) 8270 1322 or david.t@frontierservices.org



Meet Shane Claiborne

a not so ordinary radical

By Bruce Mullan

HE MAKES his own clothes, has long dreadlocks and looks for all the world like a 1970s hippy dropout, but he's been on a stage near you talking with Uniting Church young people and firing them up with some very radical ideas.

Shane Claiborne looks, speaks, and dresses like an Old Testament prophet or John the Baptist, and he makes the same sort of crazy sense.

Mr Claiborne describes himself as a "Red Letter Christian" who tries to take the words of Jesus seriously.

"Somehow Jesus has survived all the embarrassing things Christians have done in his name... and young people in particular are reading the words of Jesus and asking, 'What if he meant it?'"

Tall, gaunt and decidedly weird looking he moves comfortably among the Billabong generation with their middle class upbringing and materialistic value system.

At only 33 years of age, Mr Claiborne is young to be on the guru youth speaker circuit but he's currently flavour of the month, speaking this year in England, Canada, Australia and New Zealand as well as his home USA.

It's not hard to see why this basically quietly spoken young man has achieved such notoriety and significant book sales – he walks the talk.

His impressive CV includes time working with Mother Teresa in Calcutta, a peace mission to war torn Baghdad (during the war), and being a founder of the Simple Way community (now called the Potter Street community) in downtown Philadelphia which has as its mission: to love God, to love people and to follow Jesus.

"I feel sorry that so many of us have settled for a lonely world of independence and riches when we could all experience the

fullness of life in community and interdependence," Mr Claiborne said.

"Why would I want a fancy car when I can ride a bike or a TV when I can play outside with sidewalk chalk?"

More than believing

Mr Claiborne talks winsomely about radical community life and young Aussie adults applauded his stories.

"We reclaim abandoned lots and make gardens amid the concrete wreckage around us. We plant flowers inside old TV screens and computer monitors on our roof.

"We see our friends waste away from drug addiction, and on a good day, someone is set free.

From conservative Christian origins Mr Claiborne is a harsh critic of contemporary Christian life.

"Many spiritual seekers have not been able to hear the words of Christians because the lives of Christians have been making so much horrible noise."

Mr Claiborne sees himself as theologically orthodox but believes it is hard to hear the gentle whisper of the Spirit amid the noise of Christendom and pushes for a more radically activist faith.

"You guys are all into that born again thing, which is great. We do need to be born again, since Jesus said that to a guy named Nicodemus.

"But if you tell me I have to be born again to enter the kingdom of God, I can tell you that you have to sell everything you have and give it to the poor, because Jesus said that to one guy too."

A really 'rad' guy

So how do middle-class young people respond to Mr Claiborne's message?



Shane Claiborne believes young people are hungry to live for something bigger than themselves.
Photo by Erik Stenbakken

They are intrigued, a little unnerved but tentatively interested.

Volunteer youth worker Crystal Pritchard (19) was blown away by Mr Claiborne's passion and energy. "He was amazing, a really 'rad' guy."

But she didn't feel she had to give up everything and go and live with the poor, just more motivated to do better where she is.

"A lot of people were kind of shocked with how he's actually lived but were inspired by him and want to start making a difference in their world," said Ms Pritchard.

Like a true prophet Mr Claiborne is not fazed by the potential gulf between his radical worldview and the socially conservative consumerist youth culture he speaks to.

"This generation is very aware that the world that we've been handed from our parents is very fragile and needs to be re-imagined.

"Young people are very hungry to live for something bigger than themselves."

Mr Claiborne seems almost naive about the radical nature of his message and potential impact of his call to downward mobility.

"I'm pretty gentle and I don't tell people what to do but I kind of stir up the right questions and it's a very natural conversation and invites people to think through their own lives."

A new monasticism

People have described Mr Claiborne's community approach as a "new monasticism" and he believes their lifestyle is both disciplined and accountable to the larger church.

"We tend to be very immersed in the larger body of Christ and in our local congregations in the neighbourhood."

It's an integrity that's endearing and there is a steady stream of visitors lining up to experience life at the Potter Street community.

"Sometimes we have evangelicals (usually from the suburbs) who pretentiously ask how we 'evangelise people'.

"I usually tell them that we bring folks like them here to learn the kingdom of God from the poor, and then send them out to tell the rich and powerful there is another way of life being born in the margins.

"For Jesus did not seek out the rich and powerful in order to trickle down his kingdom.

"Rather, he joined those at the bottom – the outcasts and undesirables and everyone was attracted to his love for people on the margins."

In brief... SHANE CLAIBORNE is one of the founding members of a community called the Potter Street Community (formerly The Simple Way) in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

He is also a prominent activist for nonviolence and the redistribution of resources to the poor.

Mr Claiborne worked alongside Mother Teresa during a 10-week term in Calcutta.

He spent three weeks with a peace team in Iraq where he witnessed the military bombardment of Baghdad as well as the militarised areas between Baghdad and Amman.

Mr Claiborne's books and views have come under criticism from many Christians for his radical theology, his disdain of free market capitalism and his activist political views.

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How Jesus has been featured in art

MEMBERS OF the Uniting Church are less likely than their counterparts in the Orthodox, Roman Catholic, or even Anglican or Lutheran churches, to look at images depicting Jesus.

There are historical reasons for this.

In the eastern church, there was over a century of fierce debate about whether it was right to make icons of Jesus, Mary and the saints.

Although the Second Council of Nicea in 787 decided that icons should be made and venerated, this decision was only implemented in 843.

Since then the Orthodox churches have always used icons in church and home, as channels for prayer or "windows into heaven".

The "Holy Face" of Jesus is a key icon.

The main argument of the iconoclasts was that, because Jesus is both human and divine and no image can show divinity, images of Jesus are false.

The theology of those supporting icons was that, because the Word became flesh, icons must be made in order to witness to the reality of the incarnation.

In the western church the rationale of Pope Gregory the Great (c. 600), that images are the books of the illiterate, was always an important understanding.

At the time of the Reformation, Zwingli and Calvin opposed images in the church.

Calvin, in particular, drew upon the arguments of the earlier iconoclasts. For centuries the Reformed tradition was suspicious of images of Jesus, fearing that people would use them idolatrously.

However Protestant artists like Rembrandt (1606-1669, the Netherlands) depicted Jesus in paintings and etchings of many New Testament stories for private use.

In the last 150 years Protestants have become more open to having images of Jesus in the church. Towards the end of the nineteenth century St. Peter's Cathedral in

Geneva had a side chapel restored to include images in the windows and on the walls. St. Andrew's (then Presbyterian) Church in Brisbane in 1922 had stained glass windows installed depicting the crucifixion.

David Morgan's research project in USA (see *Visual Piety: A history and theory of popular religious images*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) asked people to write about religious images and their importance for their faith.

For Protestants the most popular image was Warner Sallman's *The Head of Christ* (below). I have seen it used here often e.g. in the vestry of Merthyr Uniting Church, reproduced as a mosaic. People wrote that it helped them realise Christ's presence watching over them.

For others, however, that image is not attractive. Some prefer a very different style of art, perhaps semi-abstract or abstract art, which allows them to form their own mental images. Sallman's style

is realistic, contrasting with icons whose deliberately non-realistic style of representation points to a reality beyond our visible reality.

We live in a society today saturated with images. Images depicting Jesus in a diversity of cultural and artistic styles may function for different people in a range of different ways.

By Rev Dr Geraldine Wheeler, a retired minister of the Word with an interest in visual art, and its relation to worship and theology

Sallman's Head of Christ

BY FAR THE most popular of Sallman's pictures, *The Head of Christ* has been reproduced more than 500 million times according to its publishers (Kriebel & Bates).

Anthony Kriebel and Fred Bates, employees of the Gospel Trumpet Company of Anderson, Indiana, arranged to market the image late in 1940.

Reproductions subsequently carried their imprimatur and the copyright date of 1941.

Chicago Offset Printing Company printed the image in a six colour separation lithographic process that preserved what many admirers consider unique about the picture; its radiant, incandescent glow.

During the years of the Second World War, one press at Chicago Offset continuously printed *The Head of Christ* under the operation of two shifts of labourers.

In a document written in 1945, the publishers indicate that by the previous year a total of 14 million single pictures had been printed.

One run of the image, which required three to four weeks to complete from start to finish, consisted of five thousand sheets and concluded with a variety of sizes of *The Head of Christ*, ranging from 50 x 40 to 9 x 6.5 centimetres.

Several runs were already completed in 1941. By 1944, the market supported increasing the size of individual prints to 101 x 76 centimetres for large images to be used in public spaces such as churches and YMCA's.

The image was marketed in an inexpensively-framed format; as cards bearing devotional texts; and on church bulletins, greeting cards, clocks, lamps, buttons, and funeral announcements to name only a few examples.



Jesus Junk

FROM 'WHAT Would Jesus Do' bracelets to the face of Jesus waffle irons, there is a massive industry in Christian merchandise, often called 'Jesus junk'. In an essay on the proliferation of 'Jesus

junk' blogger, founder of *SharperIron.org* and evangelical preacher and author Jason Janz said many people think the merchandise will start conversations that will lead to evangelism.

Mr Janz also said that wearing Jesus merchandise is thought to create a kind of Christian community.

"This is a false and shallow idea of community," he said.

"Acts 2:42-47 describes community in terms of sharing in doctrinal teaching, meeting one another's needs, and breaking bread. When we advertise our faith for purposes

of identity, we are truly cheapening how the Gospel plays out in our lives. And it can also be very misleading. Just because the 'outside of the cup' wears a Jesus Junk shirt means nothing about the condition of the heart."

Los Angeles Times reporter Stephanie Simon attended the 2006 International Christian Retail Show in Colorado.



Jesus on the net

Bruce Mullan takes a quick look at how Jesus can be found on the World Wide Web.

A GOOGLE search for the word "Jesus" produces a not-surprising 205 million results for the character described by Wikipedia as "The central figure of Christianity... much revered by most Christian churches as the Son of God and the incarnation of God".

But what does the web say about Jesus? Just about anything that can or can't be said.

The site www.jesusedressup.com shows Jesus hanging on a cross in his y-fronts and gives you the chance to dress him up by dragging various clothing items to him with your mouse. "They'll snap right into place!"

Many of course tell the familiar story: Jesus is Lord. God himself, was crucified for YOU!

You can receive (yes, that's how it is spelled) eternal life if you'll accept his free gift. He is coming (spelling again) soon. Are you ready?

I'm certainly ready for them to start using their spell-checker.

The site www.rejesus.co.uk talks about Jesus as one of those most talked-about and influential people who has ever lived and explores his life, character, teachings and followers.

If Jesus had been killed 20 years ago, they suggest, Catholic school children would be wearing little electric chairs around their necks instead of Crosses.

The site included online games: "You may have pitted your wits against the Spanish Inquisition in our regular pub quiz."

School of Rock star Jack Black appears playing Jesus in an internet film, *Prop 8 - The Musical* (Google it), written by Marc Shaiman (*Hairspray*) as a protest

against a new piece of Californian legislation limiting gay rights.

Mr Black appears to a bunch of evangelical Christians (played by John C. Reilly and *West Wing's* Allison Janney) and points out that they seem to pick and choose which parts of the Bible they follow.

Jesus goes on to suggest that they should pick the bits that talk about love and not those that are about hate.

The film gained an incredible 1.2 million hits in its first day, and reached the 2.5 million mark within just five days.

Complete with the traditional Sunday School picture of Jesus

There is a lot of work to do to help people find their way through this e-volving maze of information

suffering the little children to come, is the "Parenting in Jesus' Footsteps" website that claims to be a resource for gentle Christian parents and other caring adults.

Now we all know Jesus didn't have his own offspring, but this website examines the teachings of Jesus and applies them to the parent/child relationship, explaining how the Golden Rule, the Beatitudes, the Prodigal Son story and other teachings teach us how to treat children?

There's ethereal looking Carrie Underwood's video for her country music song *Jesus, Take the Wheel*; the website "Jesus of the Week" –

this is the kind of Jesus that would bite his lip and snap his fingers while dancing; "What would Jesus buy?" – Rev Billy and the Church of Stop Shopping Gospel Choir on a cross-country mission to save Christmas from the Shopocalypse; and "What would Jesus drive?" – a discussion initiated by the Evangelical Environmental Network on preferred transport options for Christians.

And then of course there is Marcelino de Jesus Martinez from California who was arrested after arranging for his 14-year-old daughter to marry a neighbour in exchange for beer, meat and \$16 000.

One can't help feeling that the Church has a lot of work to do to help people find their way through this e-volving maze of information in an online world that has dethroned the theological gatekeepers who used to extol some things over others and help people to sift the wheat from the chaff.

As Marshall McLuhan said years before there even was an internet, "All the conservatism in the world does not afford even a token resistance to the ecological sweep of the new electric media."

MATTHEW

MATTHEW PAINTS A PICTURE OF JESUS AS THE FULFILMENT OF THE LAW GIVEN TO ISRAEL. THIS HAS FOUND FULL EXPRESSION IN JESUS. GOD'S FAITHFUL RELATIONSHIP IS CONTINUED IN JESUS WHO IS TRULY EMMANUEL – "GOD WITH US".

MARK

IN MARK WE HEAR A GREAT DEAL ABOUT CASTING OUT UNCLEAN SPIRITS – JESUS IS LORD OVER THE DEMONIC. IN MARK, WHILE WE SEE MORE OF JESUS' HUMANITY, THERE IS GRADUALLY AN OPENING UP OF HIS IDENTITY AS THE SON OF GOD, SOMETHING WHICH IS FINALLY CONFESSED BY A HUMAN AT JESUS' DEATH. IN MARK WE SEE MORE OF THE PAIN OF HIS DEATH AS WE GAZE ON THE SUFFERING SERVANT SPOKEN OF LONG AGO IN ISAIAH.

Finding the real Jesus in the Bible

WHAT IS your picture of Jesus? Is it of a blue-eyed hippie-looking angel? Is it a picture of glory? Maybe you remember pictures of Jesus in pain and agony on a cross.

Trinity Theological Director of New Testament Studies Rev Dr Malcolm Coombes says most people don't realise how much the pictures of Jesus painted in each of the four Gospels are different from each other.

Dr Coombes said while each of the gospel writers wishes to point

us to the same Lord they do it in different ways.

While whole libraries of books have been written on the topic, Dr Coombes suggests people should go back and read the four Gospels for themselves to get an understanding of the differences.

As well as seeing the similarities it is helpful to tease out which particular aspects of Jesus gain emphasis in each gospel in its own right so that our understanding of Jesus may deepen even further."

LUKE

IN LUKE WE OFTEN HEAR OF JESUS SPENDING TIME WITH WOMEN AND THE POOR. WHILE PRESENT IN THE OTHER GOSPELS IT IS MORE MARKED IN LUKE. IT IS ONLY HERE THAT WE HAVE JESUS SPEAKING OF THE FULFILMENT OF HIS BRINGING "GOOD NEWS TO THE POOR ... TO LET THE OPPRESSED GO FREE". LUKE DEMONSTRATES JESUS AS THE SAVIOUR (THE ONLY GOSPEL BESIDES JOHN TO GIVE THIS TITLE TO JESUS). MORE SO THAN THE OTHER GOSPELS, JESUS IS A PERSON OF PRAYER, FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT.

JOHN

FOR JOHN, JESUS IS THE WORD OF AND PRESENCE OF GOD WHO COMES FROM ABOVE AND BRINGS LIFE AND LIGHT TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE. JESUS IS ESPECIALLY DESCRIBED AS SHARING A DEEP INTIMACY WITH GOD, SOMETHING TO WHICH ALL FOLLOWERS ARE CALLED. IN JOHN, THERE ARE NO EXORCISMS AND EMPHASIS IS GIVEN TO JESUS' DEATH AS GLORY.



In her report Ms Simon spoke to political scientist Alan Wolfe who told her Christian merchandising can create a world that allows Christians to withdraw from society rather than engage in it.

"It's as if they're saying the task of bringing people to Jesus is too hard, so let's retreat into a fortress," said Mr Wolfe.

"Evangelism is about reaching out and converting the unsaved. This is about putting a fence around people who are already saved. It strikes me as if they're giving up."

There is a myriad of 'Jesus junk' available.

You can get a connector for the top of an iPod shuffle that makes it look like a cross (called the iBelieve), candles

with a scent that will remind you of Jesus' presence, Jesus action figurines, Jesus night lights for children, lollies with Bible verses on the wrapper, even thongs with printing on the bottom of them so when you walk along the beach the words "follow Jesus" are left in the sand.

While some of these products may legitimately

remind people of their faith and assist them in further growth, the question has to be asked... How and where were these products made? Were they made in sweat shops in China? Are they made from recycled materials?

Perhaps the real question should be, 'What would Jesus buy?'



Jesus: were the miracles real?

By Bruce Mullan

A LEADER of the Synagogue comes and asks Jesus to heal his dying daughter but while they are en route to his house the girl dies.

Jesus continues to the house and brings her back to life, or in his own words, awakens her with the Aramaic phrase "telitha cum" meaning, "Little girl, I say to you, get up".

This story told in all four Gospels is just one of many miracles Jesus is reported to have performed.

He raised the dead, made the blind see, multiplied a few fish and some bread to feed 5000 people, made insane people sane, calmed a storm, made a multitude of fish appear in Simon Peter's fishing net, caused a fig tree to wither, healed the sick, crippled and lepers, replaced the ear that Peter cut off the man that came to take Jesus to be crucified, and rose from the dead himself.

These miracles can be grouped as medical cures (17), exorcisms (7), examples of dominion over nature (6), instances of raising the dead (3), and some others.

Jesus' ability to know things such as the woman at the well's marital history could also be classed as miraculous.

One particularly problematic Gospel account is found in Matthew where Jesus specifically admits that he did not perform miracles in his home town Nazareth because of the lack of faith among its residents.

For many Christians, the miracles represent actual historical events, while others consider them to be figurative and scholars generally agree that



This image of Jesus healing a sick child is from a window in the First United Methodist Church in Rushville Indiana

normal historical and scientific methods are inadequate for determining the authenticity of Jesus' miracles.

While the miracles can be interpreted literally or as purely fiction, other explanations of the events have been offered.

Some have understood the miracle stories as allegories rather

than factual events.

For example they suggest healing the blind is a metaphor for people who could not see or refused to see the truth being shown, and healing the deaf as simply referring to people who did not listen to the truth.

Those who see the miracles through a more literal lens suggest

that non-biblical sources support the belief that Jesus was widely accepted as having performed miraculous works.

Walter Wink suggests that even during the last century as understandings of psychosomatic healing and the powers of the mind became more acceptable in the scientific community, the

willingness to accept miracles has again become greater.

"We have received not one more shred of evidence from the first century," Mr Wink writes.

"What has changed is our contemporary conception of what is possible."

Mr Wink says what we have the capacity to believe has shifted and with it, historians' judgments.

However literally they are interpreted, the miracles are generally regarded as important for a balanced understanding of Jesus.

In the same way as his hunger, tiredness and death were evidence of his humanity, the miracles are proof of his deity.

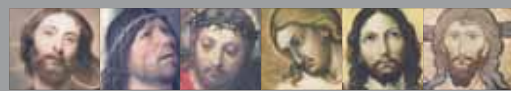
While it might be assumed that sceptical attitudes towards the miracles of Jesus have been a fairly recent phenomenon the Gospel of John certainly indicates at the time they were being performed there were plenty of Jesus' contemporaries who doubted his miracles.

Jesus was obviously well known as a miracle worker and performed what he and his contemporaries regarded as miraculous healings and exorcisms.

The feats of Jesus must have been impressive and, although Jesus lived in a time of superstition and religiosity, no other historical person of that time period is recorded as having anywhere close to the attestation Jesus received as a miracle worker.

Even those whose philosophical beliefs preclude them from believing Jesus actually performed miracles which contravened the laws of nature are reluctant to question his ability to perform feats that convinced his contemporaries he could.

Who is Jesus?



From P.1

"There was this growing conviction that the church had made Jesus less of a human figure than he actually was, and therefore it was possible to peel back all of the alleged embellishment that the church had added on over 2000 years and so supposedly get to what Jesus was actually like," Dr Thompson said.

"This is an idea that has a very particular starting point in the history of ideas and for particular ideologically driven reasons."

Evangelical theologian and Bishop of Durham NT Wright is one of those who has encouraged the search for an historical Jesus, although unlike the Jesus Seminar Wright uses historical research rather than polling as the basis for his work.

"It is not only possible, but actually highly likely, that the church has distorted the real

Jesus, and needs to repent of this and rediscover who its Lord actually is," he wrote.

Some still fondly imagine the Gospel accounts of Jesus are a collection of actual facts written by eye-witnesses to the events told and some of the most recent work lends support to this authenticity.

Other modern scholarship has claimed they are more like a collection of treasured memories, edited by the writers and others who embellished and reconstructed them to convey a particular set of theological beliefs.

Dr Thompson claimed there is a difference between the historical Jesus and the human Jesus.

He said some people would argue the modern thinkers were right at least in pointing out we had lost sight of the humanity of Jesus.

"But what they tended to do

was think the way we discover the real humanity of Jesus was to reconstruct an historical Jesus.

Dr Thompson said the New Testament documents themselves keep alive the human Jesus.

"They don't use what we recognise as 'history' but use the literary devices available to them to narrate who Jesus actually was."

Dr Thompson said history is not anywhere as neutral as the scholars who invented the idea claimed it was.

"The scholars who worked on the historical Jesus were working on their own perceptions."

The famous theologian, philosopher and missionary to Africa Albert Schweitzer was highly critical of the quest for an historic Jesus claiming those who sought to isolate an historic figure were creating a Jesus that was almost a copy of themselves.

Schweitzer is reputed to have described theologians involved in the search for the historical Jesus as people peering into a deep well and seeing their own reflections.

Dr Thompson said this remains the standard criticism of the search for the historical Jesus.

"Basically, history is not objective but we bring all our

own presuppositions to historical enquiry so the work of such scholars risks being just as much an invention as they claim the church's account of Jesus to be."

So what are we to make of the quest for the historical Jesus?

In the end each Christian is confronted with a range of theological beliefs, doctrines and opinions about who Jesus really was and must ask to what extent the church has loaded Jesus with dogmas and rituals that create merely a shadow of his real God-self.

What unites us will probably not be a common or even accurate understanding of the historical and theological Jesus.

Rather, our unity may be found in searching together to discover both the humanity and divinity of Jesus and to find ways to live that with integrity and mutual respect.



How others see Jesus

We all see Jesus differently and Mardi Lumsden spoke to some non-churchgoers to find out how they see Jesus. You may not agree with them but they have some very interesting things to say.

SINGER, SONGWRITER, mother of three and vegan cup cake guru Rachael Brady doesn't attend church but has been on a 16-year spiritual quest and said that finding the true Jesus is only the beginning.

"The world is filled with people who have loudly and enthusiastically accepted Jesus as their saviour and are content to let their spiritual journey end there instead of realising that's where the journey begins," she said.

Ms Brady may not classify herself as a Christian, but she has a lot of respect for Jesus.

"Jesus was indeed the son of God but I hasten to add that we are all sons and daughters of God – having no more and no less worth than Jesus.

"The difference between Jesus and most of us (with the exception of other 'realised' individuals) is that he was (is) an enlightened master.

"In other words a human being who has fully realised his own true nature and thus the true nature of God."

Another non-churchgoer, Psychology Honours student, research assistant and songwriter Cameron Elliott also sees Jesus as an enlightened individual but rejects the idea of his virgin birth.

"Jesus was a man, born of two run-of-the-mill people (in an entirely natural conception) who through some unknown manner came to a full awareness of his divinity and the divinity in others," he said.

"What has perturbed me for a long time is how he attained this enlightenment. With folks like Siddhartha (Gautama Buddha) and Lao Tsu (the founder of Taoism), we have records of how

they attained their enlightened state, however Jesus' attainment of such a highly evolved level of consciousness remains a mystery.

"I am inclined to believe that he was one of the rarest of individuals who was born with an innate understanding of human nature and ultimate truths."

For Mr Elliott, Jesus was the ultimate incarnation of the saying, 'God is love'.

"He was so free of fear due to his unshaken faith in the love of God that he went through immeasurable pain to show us all that there is nothing to be afraid of. And if we could only believe him we too would have nothing to fear.

"That is what it means to believe in Christ.

"It means to live courageously and lovingly, completely free of fear because you know you have nothing to fear because God is everywhere and he is nothing but love."

While far from Sunday going church worshippers both Mr Elliott and Ms Brady are fans of Jesus and talk about him without awkwardness or embarrassment.

According to Ms Brady, Jesus was a rebel and revolutionary.

"If we think about his behaviour; decrying the establishment,

The truth is not afraid of honest examination and dissection

speaking out against the church, giving public speeches to large groups of people, all of which resulted in his assassination; the man was a serious political and spiritual agitator.

"Yet therein lies the irony of religion today. Question the church or the Bible and you're labelled a non-believer, a heathen, a devil worshipper.

"I can't help but wonder how many of the self proclaimed faithful would embrace such



Spiritual seeker Rachael Brady has great respect for Jesus. Photo by Ruwan de Silva

a person today or whether they would crucify him again (metaphorically speaking) for being too subversive – too radical?"

Ms Brady believes Jesus' example shows faith built upon a very personal and undeniable connection with God which doesn't fear inquiry but invites discussion and disagreement.

"The truth is not afraid of honest examination and dissection and if it is, then it isn't the truth."

While enthusiastic about Jesus, neither Ms Brady nor Mr Elliott places much weight on the need for factual historical evidence of his existence.

"Whether Jesus was a man or something of a myth is not important," said Ms Brady.

"It has to be understood that not all symbols and stories can be taken literally."

Mr Elliott agreed.

"The story of Jesus, whether it is fictional or not, serves to inspire us to be better than we are.

"He set a benchmark which the overwhelming majority of us will never reach in this life-time."

Both of these articulate, well read, spiritual people find the thing that bothers them about Christianity is not Jesus, but rather, the church.

"This need for forgiveness of sin and its attendant guilt was created by Augustine's doctrine of Original Sin hundreds of years after Jesus was crucified," said Mr Elliott.

Mr Elliott thinks the doctrine of original sin has been the greatest ever cause of emotional suffering and anguish.

"Belief in it makes people completely dependent on the church for the relief of inescapable guilt."

Mr Elliott believes Christianity needs to be redefined.

"It needs to move from a faith based structure steeped in doctrine that no one with an open mind can still believe in, to one based on a true personal understanding and relationship with the divine both within oneself and the world."

The lack of acceptance of teachings from other faiths is one issue Ms Brady has with the

church (and not just the Christian church).

"I feel the majority of churches are close-minded when it comes to understanding and accepting the teachings of other faiths and denominations and that runs contrary to my personal experience of God," she said.

"I don't like being around people who think their way is the only way to God.

"If one's perception of God does not include all beliefs and all paths then I would contend it is too narrow a perception for something that has no boundaries."

It only takes a brief conversation with these two young adults to realise there is a lot of enthusiasm amongst non-churchgoers for Jesus even if it is doctrinally at odds with our traditional beliefs and creeds.

As Mr Elliott says, "God is Love. God demands nothing and needs nothing because God is already whole, perfect and complete.

"The purpose of life is to live consciously as an expression of God."

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. John 1:14

The atonement is absolutely essential and central to the Christian faith.

In a faith that rejects the atonement out of hand, the serious question has to be asked whether that faith can be authentically described as actually Christian.

Rob Brennan

I think that most of our theological abstract discussions (and yes talk of classic evangelical sin/salvation is mostly a theological abstraction) have little or no meaning to people – especially a generation which has grown up with no Christian teaching background.

Mark Cornford

I think people today may well be inspired by the ethic of Jesus and the fact that he lived as he taught. That may well be a good starting point which attracts (particularly young) people, who are looking for a spiritual compass by which to live their lives. But Christianity is not just a code of ethics.

Rob Bos

I have not moved away from the orthodox understandings of Jesus' death on the cross and its value for us.

I think it is a big part of the core of Christianity, and you are left with something less than Christianity if you let that go.

Wayne McHugh

I think we carry the analogy of 'God was in Christ' and make of it something not intended in the beginning.

In the same way we take other metaphorical statements in the Bible and add our own literal meanings to them.

Joan Cook

March 13 - 15 Rural Muster

Roma Uniting Church



Designed for leaders (lay and ordained) in rural congregations to get together, learn ways of doing ministry and hear stories from churches in similar contexts. Guest speaker is Rev Ann Scull, Presbytery Resource Person for the Uniting Church in Australia. To register visit www.mypresbytery.com. Contact Marius Kruger on 0447 161 457 or email marius.kruger@bigpond.com.au.

February 3, 7pm. Lent Resource Preview Night at 127 Kennedy Terrace, Paddington. An ideal way to familiarise yourself with a wide variety of options. Good for small group leaders, ministers, and people interested in Christian education. Contact Aaron Ghiloni on 3369 8929 or email aaron@moretonriverspresbytery.org.au.

February 17, 9.30am-12.30pm. Uniting Church International Mission Support Group (Qld) meeting at St Andrew's Uniting Church, Ann Street, Brisbane. Congregations are invited to send representatives. Contact Judith Finau (Secretary) on 3711 4622 or email ljfinau@doventq.net.au.

February 19, 8.30am-3pm. Rummage sale at Uhl Hall, Wheller Gardens 930 Gympie Road Chermide (opp Westfield Chermide). Pre-loved clothes, books knick knacks, and craft. Half price on Saturday (closing at 12noon). Contact M. Herbert on 3857 4668 or email billmer@bigpond.com.

March 12-13. PREPARE/ENRICH Administrator training at Chermide Kedron Community Church, Rode Road and Gympie Road. For a Registration Form, contact Bob Warrick on 3857 7101 or email nolabob@optusnet.com.au.

March 16, 9.30am. Moreton Rivers Presbytery Adult Fellowship communion service at Sandgate Uniting Church. Guest Preacher is the Moderator Rev Bruce Johnson. Morning tea will follow the service. Visit sandgate.unitingchurch.org.au or contact Bobbie Jeays on 3269 6565 or email djeays@bigpond.net.au.

March 17, 7am. Elders' Workshop at 127 Kennedy Terrace, Paddington. You are invited to a workshop focusing on helping Elders in their ministry of pastoral care, leadership and assisting in worship. Contact Aaron Ghiloni on 3369 8929 or email aaron@moretonriverspresbytery.org.au.

March 31, 10am. Brisbane Presbyteries retired ministers meeting at Geebung Uniting Church (note change of location). Morning tea available from 10am. Guest speaker is Thom Blake, Old Brisbane Historian. Sub \$14. Contact convenors Jim and Jill Tame on 3801 6462 or email jinjtame@bigpond.net.au.

April 4, 2pm. Cloncurry Uniting Church 50th Anniversary celebration with the official opening of the church building. Volunteers who assisted with the project and previous Ministers and members are invited to celebrate with the Cloncurry community. Billeting or caravan sites can be arranged. Contact Helen Govan on 4742 0920 or 0427 729 523 or email grooveygran2@hotmail.com.

April 9-13. Easter Family Venture Camp at Lake Atkinson Glengarry Education Centre, 370 Watsons Road, Mt Tarampa. A wonderful opportunity for people who enjoy getting away with like minded people for Easter in a camping environment. Contact Clive Finter (Secretary) on 3287 2659 or email clive.finter@bigpond.com or visit www.qldeastercamp.ucawe.com.au.

April 18 - 19. 150 year anniversary of the church in the Lockyer Valley hosted by Laidley Uniting Church. All with a connection to the church in this area invited. Contact Alan Brimblecombe on 54652665 or email agaebtrim@bigpond.com or Bob Heathwood on 54657659 or email rheathwood@bigpond.com.

Upload your 'What's On' entries at www.journeyonline.com.au. Items may be shortened due to space limitations.



Part of the group from West Papua in Brisbane in December. Photo by Osker Lau

West Papuan visitors get a taste of Brisbane

By Mardi Lumsden

A GROUP of young people from West Papua were in Australia for three months over Christmas thanks to Uniting International Mission.

The students are part of an English language program sponsored by UIM in West Papua. They do the English program part-time while studying to attain higher education degrees.

There are currently around 80 students participating in the program in West Papua.

Uniting International Mission volunteer in placement Shelly Houghton has been working in West Papua over three years.

Ms Houghton said while in Brisbane the group's aim was to immerse themselves in the English language.

"The aim of the program is to practise speaking and conversation," she said.

The political situation in West Papua makes it hard for Westerners to get working Visas,

so there are few native English speakers for the students to practise their English with.

22 year-old mathematics student Fred has been doing the English program for two years and he said knowing English benefits his study. He wants to be a teacher.

"A lot of mathematics books are in English. It is very useful for me," he said.

Jackson is 23 and a political science student focusing on public administration.

"Speaking English is a way to get the best future for me, but also for my country," he said.

Isaac, also a mathematics student, wanted to thank UIM on behalf of the touring group.

"Thank you to the Uniting Church and thank you to Shelly.

"We hope after we go back to Papua we can help other people to learn English."

Isaac said the group were shocked by the lack of young people at church in Australia.

"In Papua every Sunday if you

go to worship you can find all young people.

"I think this is our burden to pray for young people here so one day they will come back to church and praise our God Jesus Christ."

Matthew is from the highlands of Papua where villagers live in mud huts.

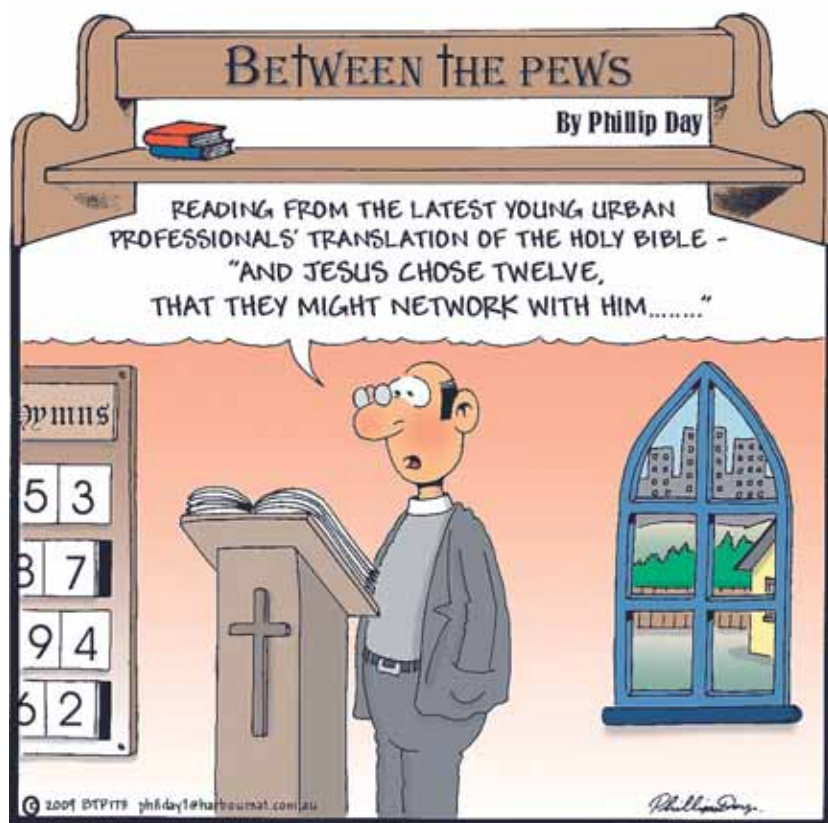
"Life here [Brisbane] is very different because of livelihood and everything [infrastructure] is already here. It is easy to find work here," he said.

Matthew works in community development and helps run the clean water project that is assisted by Uniting International Mission.

He said it was important that people in Papua speak English so they can communicate with the outside world both for political purposes and to maintain links with church and aid organisations.

"In Papua there are a lot of human rights problems.

"When we study English it will help the partnership here [with charity groups in Australia]."



Human Rights Overboard

By L Briskman, S Latham & C Goddard, Scribe, 2008, RRP: \$35

Reviewed by Rob Brennan, minister with the Banora Point congregation

Would you be outraged if you were told about a country that imprisoned people indefinitely without trial and without charge? I hope so?

What if that country was Australia?

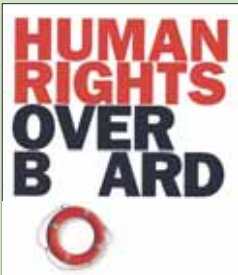
Our High Court ruled that a stateless man could be held in mandatory detention indefinitely because the only legal ways out were to be granted a visa or be deported.

He failed to get a visa and had no country to which he could return. Just one case in an exhausting litany of injustices documented in this book dedicated to the hundreds of people who died while seeking to escape persecution and death.

The sad comparison is they were held longer and in worse conditions than if they had been locals who committed armed robbery or assault.

Human Rights Overboard is an important but not an easy read. This report details the human cost of the practice of mandatory detention of refugees from the infamous children overboard incident through the Cornelia Rau scandal.

Human Rights Overboard suggests changes but cannot



adequately answer why these evils happened in a country that “believes in the fair go”.

Human rights alone are not enough without grace, decency and honesty. In this shameful period of our history we allowed concern about a perceived threat to lead us to act gracelessly towards people running in fear of their lives.

This gracelessness was compounded by bureaucratic legalism, where ordinary people inflexibly enforced rules with little competence, accountability or decency.

Then our leadership took it further, committing the too-common organisational sin of revising the truth.

Calling razor wire, walls and guards “detention” doesn’t stop it being a prison.

Some days it is easy to be proud to be an Australian.

Pondering the content of *Human Rights Overboard*, today is not one of them.

The Resurrection: history and myth

By Geza Vermes, Doubleday (New York), 2008, RRP: \$24.95

Reviewed by Peter Harvey, Frontier Services – Flinders Patrol

This small book is an outstanding even-handed look at, and evaluation of, the many forms and stories of resurrection in the Bible.

The Resurrection: history and myth does not seek to prove or disprove the resurrection, it just aims to present the facts.

Mr Vermes gives us a scholarly, yet readable and easily understood work in which he outlines the ideas and concepts of resurrection and life after death in the Jewish world in Jesus’ time.

He looks at the understanding of resurrection in the Jewish scriptures and in the inter-testamental period, and then examines what the Gospels say - and don’t say - about Jesus’ resurrection.

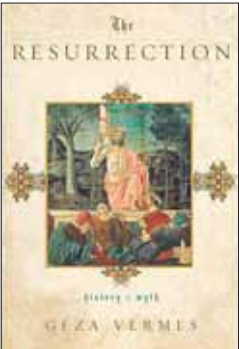
The Resurrection: history and myth looks at the earliest

development of a Christian understanding of resurrection in the writings of Paul, and then at how critics have sought to explain it away.

But in the end as a good teacher should, it leaves it to the reader to decide what is true, what isn’t, what is fact and what’s tradition.

There are those who will criticise this work because it doesn’t attempt to justify their view of truth, and there will be others who will attempt to discredit the book because it even bothers to consider that resurrection might be real.

But in the end *The Resurrection: history and myth* is right where I think Mr Vermes intended it to be and presents a clear and concise compilation and evaluation of all the resurrection stories cited in the Bible; not just those regarding the resurrection of Jesus.



This is a very useful resource for Christians who want to use their God-given mind and think.

Those who take a literalistic view of Scripture may find it challenging as it outlines all the resurrection narratives with respect and reverence, pointing out differences and similarities, and letting the reader - the thinking Christian - determine what he or she believes.

Who on Earth was Jesus? The modern quest for the Jesus of History

By David Boulton, Brumby Books, 2008, RRP: \$44.99

Reviewed by Rodney Eivers, member of the Uniting Church Lay Forum

The quest for the historical Jesus goes on and a recent contribution comes from former BBC journalist, of Quaker background, David Boulton.

Mr Boulton continues the tradition of seeking to discover the historical person behind the layer upon layer of devotional ardour which has turned the itinerant Jewish sage of Galilee into the divine King of Kings, Redemptive Saviour and supernatural monitor of everything we do or say.

With this one person having so much influence on the course of human history it is not surprising that there should be intense interest in finding out, “What was Jesus really like?”

It is a difficult and potentially frustrating task for, despite all that has been

written about Jesus of Nazareth, there is remarkably little of substance that can be regarded as truly historical.

Mr Boulton makes the point, as did Albert Schweitzer, that the Jesus which does emerge from the scholarly studies has a strong tendency to match the personality or the ideals of the particular scholar doing the research.

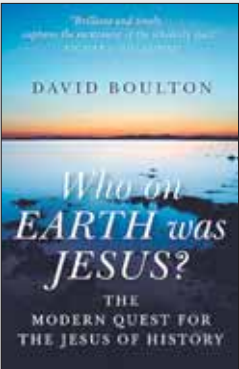
An important segment of *Who on Earth was Jesus?* describes the differing portraits of Jesus that the various investigators have come up with including one from the current Pope and an analysis from the Jesus Seminar.

Although Boulton has his own views he does not allow them to unduly influence his attempts to give an objective picture of what historians have been able to establish about the life of the Galilean or the conclusions that others have come to.

As would be expected from a professional journalist, Mr Boulton maintains a readable style in dealing with complex issues.

I would certainly recommend *Who on Earth was Jesus?* to all those who seek to present Jesus as a man with a message for the 21st century.

Reference to volumes such as *Who on Earth was Jesus?* can greatly assist in ensuring that we know what we are talking about.



From Jesus to Christ: the first Christians

PBS Online documentary from the TV series “Frontline”
Director: William Cran, Writer: Marilyn Mellowes
Original broadcast date 6 April 1998

Reviewed by Bruce Mullan, editor of *Journey*

PBS have put Frontline’s full program *From Jesus to Christ: The First Christians* online where it can be accessed for free.

From Jesus to Christ tells the story of the rise of Christianity and explores the life and death of Jesus, and the men and women whose belief, conviction, and martyrdom shaped Christianity faith as we know it today.

Drawing upon historical evidence, the series challenges familiar assumptions and conventional notions about Christian origins through on-camera interviews with twelve scholars including New Testament theologians, archaeologists, and historians.

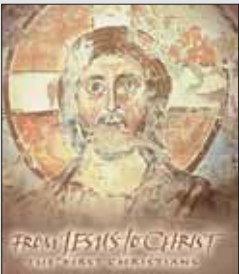
The scholars represent a rather narrow range of viewpoints and discuss the value of an historical approach to Jesus and the Bible and whether Christian faith can be reconciled with such an approach.

From Jesus to Christ is a little one-dimensional from a theological perspective leaning strongly on the work of more liberal scholars and when first broadcast received criticism from the conservative evangelical lobby for ignoring their particular viewpoint.

The video runs smoothly on ADSL but is not so clear when on full screen. The two part program is conveniently broken down into 23 relatively short segments and moves easily from one to the next.

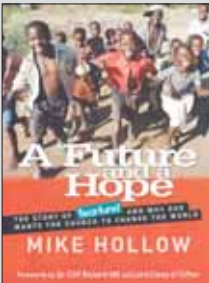
From Jesus to Christ is worthwhile viewing for anyone interested in the historical aspects of Christian faith. It runs for a long four hours but is both convincing and scholarly.

To view *From Jesus to Christ* go to www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/watch



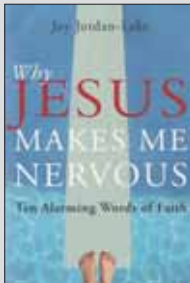
A Future and a Hope: The story of Tearfund and why God wants the Church to Change the World

By Mike Hollowfield
Monarch Books
RRP: \$29.95



Why Jesus Makes me Nervous - Ten alarming words of faith

By Joy Jordan-Lake
Paraclete Press
RRP: \$24.95



To Bless the Space Between Us - A Book of Invocations and Blessings

By John O'Donohue
Doubleday
RRP: \$39.95



Developing new ways of community

By Mardi Lumsden

A RADICAL way of community building was shown to be an achievable task at the Community Development course run by Dave Andrews and the Queensland Synod in December.

The course focused on how to enact change in the community, whether that be church, school or where we live.

Moreton Bay College chaplain

Jenny Busch attended the course along with ten senior students of the College.

"As seniors in the College they have a key role in developing community in our College and that is a key objective," she said.

"As a Uniting Church school I think it is important that we do that from a Christian foundation."

Ms Busch enjoyed the theological education the students

received during the week long course and that their eyes were open to thinking outside their own backyards.

"It is also about helping the culture of our school to be more engaged with the community and to move away from responsive actions that are just meeting immediate needs to building long-term relationships between the school and the community that transform both."

2009 Moreton Bay College school captain and Bayside Uniting Church member Lauren Ash has many plans for the school community, including a change in the way student leaders are perceived.

"What Dave has taught us is about being a great person of God, that doesn't mean being in the spotlight," she said.

"In the past the school captain has been portrayed as someone who is just there to make speeches and have everyone look up to them, but I think we have the potential to be role models and get to know different people so we can represent them better."

Ms Ash was particularly interested in the Trinitarian model and hopes to implement its ideals at the College.

"With one person you can talk about it, with two people you can think about doing something, but with three people you can actually demonstrate God's love," she said.

"At school... instead of setting up more programs and events, we want to infiltrate the school and gradually build up relationships."

"It is a slow process and about small steps that are going to be sustainable."

Facilitator Dave Andrews said the course helped people get in touch with their dreams of

creating the kind of communities they want to live in. He said the group was a mix of genders and generations.

"It is great for people to have the chance to exchange ideas together and have conversations together," he said.

"I want people to leave thinking, 'Hey, I really think this stuff is important'."

"It is great for that to be affirmed and clarified and I want people to leave feeling confident that they can do some simple, practical things to make it a reality."

Church member Stephen Henderson said the course showed him a "different way of looking at what is very obvious."

"The gospel talks about community and about loving, but one thinks about it so often, one forgets about how simple it actually is," he said.

"We get so busy acting like the church, we forget to be the church."

Mr Henderson was looking forward to building bridges in his community.

"Bridges between people who need something, rather than trying to organise things. The aim is to do things, set the example and to draw other people in at the same time."



Brooke Maskey, Lauren Ash, Dave Andrews, Katherine Hubbard, Lorna Cook, and Stephen Henderson at the Community Development course in December. Photo by Mardi Lumsden

Face to face mission

ABOUT FACE 09 is a faith and cultural exchange for young adults aged between 18 and 30 years.

A national activity of the Uniting Church, participants spend two weeks in a placement with either an Aboriginal community in Australia, or with the United Church of Christ in the Philippines.

Hosted by the Commission for Mission of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, About FACE 09 will be from 28 June to 19 July.

The program is an exciting and strategic opportunity for young adults to participate in the reconciliation and covenanting process with Aboriginal communities in Australia, and to share with partner churches in the Asia-Pacific.

For more information and to download an application form visit www.aboutface.org.au, contact Jill or Tess on (03) 9251 5271 or join the About FACE Facebook group. Applications close on Friday, 13 February 2009.

Is this the end?

JOURNEY HAS copies of Paul Clark's new book of dramas and puppet plays for the Easter season to give away. To secure your copy please email your name and postal address to journey@ucaqld.com.au. First 3 emails will receive their own copy *Is this the End*.

Pancake Day here again

REGISTRATIONS ARE now open to host a Pancake Day fundraising event on Tuesday 24 February to help UnitingCare support over 14 000 Queenslanders every day.

Anne Cross, CEO of UnitingCare Queensland said Pancake Day was a practical way for the Uniting Church community to "support and promote UnitingCare's mission of working together in reaching out to people in need, speaking out for fairness and justice and caring

with compassion, innovation and wisdom through our health and community organisations."

UnitingCare's network of care providers includes Blue Care, Lifeline Community Care, Crossroads and UnitingCare Health facilities including five hospitals.

For more information or to register to an event, log onto www.pancakeday.com.au or call 1800 060 543

Sunday 1 February: Trinity Wilston Uniting Church

Trinity Wilston Uniting Church is located on the corner of Kedron Brook Road and Hawdon Street, Wilston. We currently have one Sunday Worship Service at 9am.

We run a Well Balanced program, which is an exercise group for older women in the local area. Well Balanced runs each Monday and Tuesday and both are well attended.

Each Thursday our hall is home to the Wilston Wombats, an opportunity for parents and babies to gather together and socialise.

Our hall is well utilised throughout the week with yoga, keep fit classes, music maestros, and for one group in particular

it becomes the practice ground. That group is the Brisbane Symphonic Band which last year volunteered their time and gifts for our ecumenical carols evening. The church has a regular Bible study group, craft group and social group (CAMEO).

Please pray for the Well Balanced Group and their facilitator, for the Wilston Wombats as they continue to gather each Thursday and for all the group activities in the Church.

Pray for the congregation of Trinity as we continue to look at ways of engaging the community, continuing to explore what it means to be church in the world and in particular the 21st Century.

Pray for new and challenging opportunities for participating in the community of Wilston.

Sunday 15 February: Longreach Uniting Church

Longreach Uniting Church is the second most western Parish in the Central Queensland Presbytery and has a working relationship with the combined Anglican/Uniting Congregation at Winton, the most western centre.

The Longreach Congregation includes approximately 50 members who live in the town or on nearby properties, and a scattered number of members who live on distant properties.

Attendances at Sunday School have reached up to twelve children on some days, with children from 2-12yrs of age.

Depending on the weather and property work schedules, a monthly Service is held on an

outlying property, 'Glendon', with a regular attendance of 12 members.

The Service is followed by a shared meal and fellowship.

There is also a monthly Service conducted at the Pioneer's Nursing Home.

Each month the clergy of Longreach meet for an hour of devotions and intentional prayer. This ecumenical connection provides support for clergy members and presents a combined Christian presence in the community.

The Longreach members are involved closely with the Blue Care Centre and Frontier Services Centre.

Chaplaincy at the Longreach Agricultural College is provided on a weekly basis, involving casual contact during dinner and at special functions.

Please pray for:

- Challenges of being 'church' in a changing society to our isolated members with increased financial costs and a decrease of people on the land.

- Continued spiritual growth and enthusiasm among the members.

- Church Council as they strive to find answers to financial commitments that are forward looking and more sustaining.

- Givethanksfor the dedication of members; for increased rain and the benefits that will flow from it; strong pastoral support that members provide for each other and the community.
- Strength and reassurance for the people who have missed out on rain and still struggle with day to day living.

- The new start of a 'Priority 1' group for 2009.

Worship Wars

We've had history wars and cultural wars, and now Worship Wars (November 2008 *Journey*)! I take this title as tongue-in-cheek.

I, for one, feel fortunate as I deeply appreciate both traditional hymns and more contemporary styles of worship songs.

When we sing the great hymn "All Creatures of our God and King", we reflect on the thoughts of St. Francis of Assisi. When we sing "A mighty fortress is our God" we join with Martin Luther and others who led the Reformation movement. We identify with early Methodists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians when we sing the hymns of Charles Wesley and Isaac Watts.

So I am comfortable with a mix of hymns and songs that might loosely be described as traditional and contemporary, and with the notion expressed in many of the articles in *Journey* that it is good for congregations to have a balanced diet when it comes to worship songs.

I favour the use, but not the exclusive use, of piano and contemporary instruments. I don't see the disappearance of organs in worship any time soon.

And organ playing need not be slow. If hymns are slowing down that's a problem for organists to address, and has little to do with organs themselves.

I very much appreciated all the articles on church music and I learned about the websites of David MacGregor and others.

Well done *Journey*!

David Allen
Kenmore



More organ notes

I see there is a little debate going on in *Journey* about the way we sing hymns and whether they should only be sung to organs.

The questions I ask myself are, does God really care about whether we sing hymns this way or that way? Does God really care about whether we sing hymns led by an organ or led by a group made up of drummers, piano players, keyboard players, guitar players, trumpet players, etc?

Does God really care about whether we sing hymns or modern contemporary songs?

I don't think God gives a bull's roar really about how we sing and what instruments lead us in our singing.

I believe that God is more interested in whether or not we are singing with a heart full of love for him, or whether we are just going through the motions

However, I have been known to be wrong and it may be that God does only accept the singing of hymns led by an organ as praise to him, in which case I will stand corrected.

Evan Joyner
Beerburum



Research needed

In the circumstances as we find ourselves and our church today, and to know where we are as well as where we may seek to go, I suggest that informal and formal depth analyses and

research is utterly vital.

On this basis I ask, who or what committee is responsible for such in depth analyses of significant issues in the life of the Church please?

Paul Wildman
Virginia



Organ support

I was surprised to see what appears to be almost a "book burning" attitude to the use of the organ in leading congregational singing.

My experience is that some music in some buildings is best supported by an organ and the addition of 'other available instruments'.

My experience is that an acoustic piano alone is inadequate in most instances unless played with many "fill-in" notes and supported by a group of singers with amplification.

As a singer I know that once I or a congregation begin to sing, the tone produced in our heads will make it difficult to hear a solo piano.

Dawn Reilly
Graceville



Personal God

A recent observation of a father enjoying playing in a pool with his son reinforced for me the essential nature of these rich relationships for maximising mental, emotional and physical wellbeing.

Many of us who were privileged to have grown up in the mainstream church were imbued with a deep and abiding sense of the majesty of God but rarely, I suspect, gone on to develop that richness of relationship with God similar to what I observed in that pool between father and son.

Aspects of what I observed

included trustfulness, pleasure, risk and a sense of abandonment; obviously a real challenge to compare these with our relationship with God.

A high level of intellectual and theological competency is no compensation when it comes to those occasions when the emotions cry out for intimacy.

It's encouraging that our church is recognising this and slowly moving to reclaim a theology which emphasises the interpersonal nature of our relationship with God.

Ken Wakeling
Scarborough



Send your letters to journey@ucaqld.com.au or
Journey GPO Box 674, Brisbane Qld 4001.

Letters may be edited due to space limitations.

Pensioner housing needs

Land, development and construction costs have escalated such that pensioners without the ability to own or purchase a home do find it near impossible to find affordable accommodation.

December's *Journey* reported Synod's concern and urging congregations to find solutions.

Governments used to build Commission and Trust Homes for low income residents, but have not done so in decades and there does not seem to be the will or finance (or both) to do anything about it.

Rents have gone through the roof, leaving low income people behind. There is currently no safety net for them and private investors are not interested.

Our church can do something about it. Churches everywhere, particularly in rural areas, are situated on large parcels of land able to accommodate four or more houses.

I suggest that housing be built on them (subject to congregational approval) with rents not exceeding 30% of pensions received. It is feasible that loans be arranged with rents repaying principal and interest over a period of up to 30 years in full.

It seems that the biggest hurdle could be obtaining Council approvals.

Ben de Nys
Toogoolawah



Lay leadership training for all

TWENTY-SIX people from ten different cultural backgrounds completed a lay preachers' course on New Testament studies offered by the Pilgrim Learning Community (PLC) of the Queensland Synod in December.

The participants were men and women from Samoa, Tonga, Papua New Guinea, India, Thailand, Burma, Fiji, South Africa, Sudan and Australia.

The participants expressed gratitude and satisfaction with the course describing it as intensive, interactive, informative and helpful.

This program is the first of its kind in Queensland and the

completion of a lay preachers' course is a positive achievement for the Pilgrim Learning Community.

It was clear from the start of the course that there was great enthusiasm, dedication and willingness demonstrated by the participants to learn and interact with a diverse range of people and take on leadership roles in their respective congregations or groups.

The organisers Rev Dr Apichart Branjerdporn, Rev Devadosan Sugirtharaj and Rev Leva Pat were confident the Presbytery would recognise these people as lay preachers in their communities.

The Multi-Cross Cultural committee thanks Carol Bennett, David Baker, Ian Smallbone, David Fender, Robert Bos, Malcolm Coombes and Devadosan Sugirtharaj who presented sessions and Terani Lima, Leva Pat, Devadosan Sugirtharaj, Apichart Branjerdporn, and Siao Semaia for tutorial assistance.

Dr Branjerdporn said the course was a valuable experience for all who attended.

"The cross sharing and cross learning has brought about much vitality and enthusiasm amongst the students and enhances a greater sense of belongingness and ownership in the church."

CLASSIFIEDS

Accommodation

Holiday unit, modern, pool, 100m from Kings Beach Caloundra from \$300/wk. Ph Ray 0427990161.

Brick Holiday House – Sunshine Coast QLD. 3 bedroom fsc house at Coolumb Beach, walk to patrolled beach and shops. Seniors & Ministers 25% discount. Book online: <http://users.tpg.com.au/coolumb> or 0418889657.

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

London B & B. Easy city access; lge double room, ensuite, self-catering. Reas rates. rachel@brockleybandb.fsnet.co.uk Ph/Fax: 001144.2086946538.

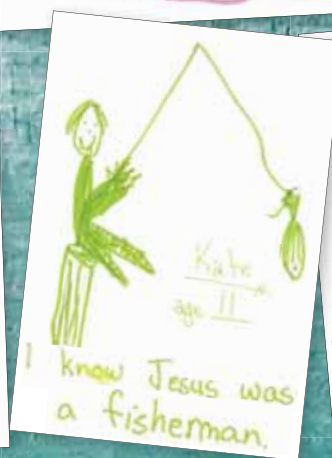
Email your classified advertisements to mardi.lumsden@ucaqld.com.au or fax 3377 9717



Jazz band Scat, including keyboardist Chris Poulsen, helped celebrate the Christmas season by performing as part of UnitingCare's Christmas Gift Appeal at Target Indooroopilly. The State-wide appeal collects thousands of Christmas gifts for children in need. Photo by Mardi Lumsden

JOURNEY ASKS: What do you know about Jesus?

He ~~was~~ is our Saviour!
Sophia 12



Journey thanks the children and leaders of Glebe Rd Uniting Church and Newlife Robina Uniting Church for their contributions.

He helps people.
(Shaun Age 9)

I know Jesus wore sandals.
(Emma Age 4)

The people hung Jesus on a piece of wood.
(Jamie Age 7)

His parents are Mary and Joseph.
(Leah Age 9)

He was born 2008 years ago.
(Mich Age 9)

I love Jesus.
(Isabella Age 8)

Jesus was born at Christmas time. He died at Easter.
(Ellie Grade 6)

Jesus ate bread with cheese.
(Olivia Age 12)

HE GOT BORN ON THE 25TH OF DECEMBER.
(ELLIE AGE 10)

Jesus is love, faith and hope. (Austin Age 7)

Jesus loves me.
<Cherith Age 4>

Commemorating 100 years of our family's funeral care...

In 1909, Alexander Gow made a commitment to Queenslanders. In 2009 that commitment continues, and we're celebrating by doing something special. Whenever our family company conducts a funeral service for your family, and everything is settled - we'll honour our 100 years of tradition by donating \$100 to your favourite charity.

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