

JUSTICE CONFERENCE

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Voices raised for justice

"In our churches we often talk about and raise money for poverty. Over two days we also raised our voices." **Andrew Johnson**

SUMMER MADNESS

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Youth camp 2010: Finding new ways to encounter God

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PATHS TO UNITY

By Mardi Lumsden

"WITHOUT EACH other we are impoverished."

Those are the words of the World Council of Churches (WCC) inviting churches to continue their journey together "as a further step towards full visible unity", adopted at their 9th Assembly in 2006.

The Uniting Church is one of the churches on a journey to unity.

It is easy to forget the massive achievement it was to bring together the Congregational Union of Australia, five denominations of the Methodist Church in Australia and three denominations of the Presbyterian Church in Australia to form not another denomination, but a movement for Christian unity.

This movement began in Australia in the 1850s within divided denominations and continued in 1901 when the Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches in Australia began exploring unity.

The foundational document of the Uniting Church, the *Basis of Union*, states in Paragraph One that the Churches coming into union were (and are) seeking fellowship with the whole church and "seeking to bear witness to that unity which is both Christ's gift and will for the Church".

Queensland Churches Together (QCT) General Secretary Glenine Hamlyn said that as Christians it is our responsibility to share that gift.

"This gift of unity has been given to us in Christ and in attempting to make that visible to the world we are showing a kind of foretaste of the fullness of reconciliation that is available in Christ," she said.

"What kind of witness is it when people see that churches are still divided?"

The argument against working with other denominations is often that we should sort out internal differences first.

"That means you will never get around to working with other churches, but, you might learn from them how to approach your own problems," said Ms Hamlyn.

World Vision Relationships Manager for Regional Queensland David Martin works with many denominations, which he said was initially a challenge.

"Working ecumenically has kicked my little Pentecostal pigeon-hole apart and helped me to see something much bigger than my own Christian group," he said.

"I didn't realise how insular my thinking was until I started talking to the various denominational groups.

"I have come to see all the various emphases in each group as being like the different facets of a beautiful diamond.

"They are different facets but the whole is the same diamond, which is a bit like the gifts of the Spirit listed in 1 Corinthians."

In recent years a new dialogue has begun between different faith traditions.

Interfaith dialogue, however, is not a modern concept.

When telling the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus was challenging his disciples and the Jewish leaders to accept that there needs to be dialogue with people of other traditions.

Ms Hamlyn said such parables set an example of how to work in interfaith settings.

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On the long road to unity

MOST OF us have seen the sign: "There are no strangers here, only friends we haven't met yet".

That might be true but we all know that sometimes it can be a long journey from stranger to friend.

We are naturally cautious when we meet with strangers.

What are these strangers like? Are they friend or foe?

Are they a threat to my peace and wellbeing or will they enhance my life?

What might they want from me?

Do we have anything in common?

There have been centuries of inter-religious conflict that have fuelled our fears and distrust of people whose beliefs are not the same as ours.

This is true of others who claim the Christian faith and even more so with people who belong to other religions.

In our desire to hold fast to the truth we feel uncertain about those who hold different beliefs.

Ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue challenge our confidence in God's capacity to guide and transform us.

If I build a friendship with someone who believes different things from me, am I approving their beliefs and actions?

Do I believe that God will work in them to bring them to the truth or do I fear that they might persuade me to their point of view?

I have grown in my confidence that God can and does teach me

Ecumenism then is an evangelical imperative ... I believe that being a catalyst for Christian unity was an important reason God called us into being.

and those with whom I engage in dialogue.

I have become confident that as I listen to the insights of those who express their faith in ways different from me, God will lead us both into the truth.

I am still convinced that this will be found in Jesus Christ, but it may be somewhat different from the truths that I have held to up until now.

The thing that drove me to

become part of the Uniting Church in Australia was the prayer of Jesus at the last supper.

He prayed for all those who would believe in him through the witness of the disciples.

In other words he prayed for you and me.

Jesus prayed that we might be completely one just as he and the Father are one.

When Jesus prayed for the unity of his followers it was so the world would believe.

Ecumenism then is an evangelical imperative.

The more we Christians can learn to work with one another, respect one another and come

closer to that unity for which Christ prayed, the more effective our mission will be.

Ecumenism is not an optional extra.

It should not be a religious sideline if we can't find something more important to do.

Building a culture of ecumenism that will lead to complete unity must never be allowed to fall by the wayside of the Uniting Church in Australia.

Message from the Moderator

Rev Bruce Johnson



I believe that being a catalyst for Christian unity was an important reason God called us into being.

I believe it is possible that all Christians will one day be one as Christ prayed.

My hope for inter-religious dialogue is that we build healthy respectful relationships that will enhance our capacity to work together for a more peaceful and just world.

Many have rejected all religious faith because they see so much war and violence carried out with divine authority.

I hope that across religious fences we can reach out to support and encourage each other so that no one will be able to use religious conviction as an excuse for violence.

As we learn more about each another, we will find that we can disagree and struggle without feeling the need to destroy one another.

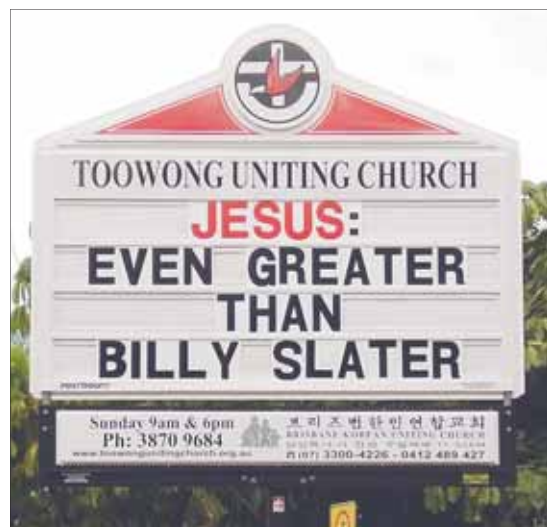
This will in turn create the sort of openness that allows for an honest exploration of faith.

Once again, in that exploration, I am willing to trust the power of God to draw all people into his realm.

As I listen to others I too expect that my understanding of God will be enriched and strengthened.

I hope that this issue of *Journey* will inspire you to look for opportunities for dialogue with other Christians and with people who hold religious convictions quite different from your own.

Sign of the times



DAVID WEDDELL snapped this month's winning Sign of the Times entry at Toowong Uniting Church in Brisbane last month.

"With all the excitement about the grand final, it's a helpful reminder that even though sportspeople are much admired (and rightly so) there is someone even more inspirational," he said.



Sign of the Times is now sponsored by Blackstar Coffee. The chosen entry will be contacted by Blackstar to receive their prize of freshly roasted organic fairtrade coffee. www.blackstarcoffee.com.au.

Cracking the church code

WHILE AT university I dabbled in the study of world religions.

I remember someone from my Church questioning me about it; he wanted to know why I wasn't studying the Old Testament.

The truth is that, as a 19-year-old, the Old Testament did not interest me as much as learning how my faith fitted into a world full of different beliefs.

I needed to not only understand what I believed, but why I believed it.

Throughout my life I have been fortunate to attend many different worship services.

It is always interesting to see how faith is expressed by different people.

When I was in primary school my family had an Egyptian

woman live with us who was Coptic Orthodox. We attended a worship service with her to meet her Priest.

It seemed so far from what I knew of Christian worship. The swinging incense made me cough, I was transfixed by the Priest in his long black robes, tall hat and long beard, and I had no idea when to sit, stand or kneel.

I'm not even sure I knew at the time that it was a Christian service. It was so far from what I had experienced in a suburban Uniting Church.

Thinking back, the Muslim service I attended with Uniting Church minister Garth Read at the Bald Hills Mosque last year almost seemed more familiar than the Coptic Orthodox

service.

There are so many different traditions it is easy to forget that some people in our midst may not know the code to our worship.

As a student at a Lutheran school I received quite a shock one day when I took a sip of communion grape juice only to discover it was port.

We can learn so much from each other, both ecumenically and in an interfaith setting, about breaking down assumptions and being clearer about what we believe and how we worship.

The sooner we can eliminate church speak and coded worship, the sooner new people will feel at home in our pews.

Mardi Lumsden

Pancake Day ends

UNITINGCARE HAS announced that it will no longer run Pancake Day as a national event.

A national review conducted earlier this year concluded that Pancake Day was not successful in achieving its stated objectives of raising awareness of UnitingCare and raising funds to support its work.

"The results of a survey conducted were telling. After five years as a national event Pancake Day has not raised the level of awareness of UnitingCare and its work to the extent that we would hope for," said UnitingCare Queensland CEO Anne Cross.

"We found that even when people knew about Pancake

Day, very few of them made the connection with UnitingCare," she said.

"We also found that the cost of running Pancake Day with all the administrative work required and the logistics of getting packs made up and sent out far and wide made it difficult to make a profit."

Ms Cross said in the current economic climate it was necessary to "make every cent count" and thanked organisers and volunteers of previous Pancake Days.

"We would like to take this opportunity to give our heartfelt thanks to all those people who have worked so hard organising Pancake Day events this year and in the past four or so years.

"We acknowledge their contribution to UnitingCare and are very grateful for their continued support," she said.

"We will now think very carefully about how best to proceed from here in our quest to raise levels of awareness of UnitingCare and the work we do.

"We will be making sure that we keep congregations informed as our plans take shape," she said.

Pancake Day will still be held in some states but not Queensland.

For more information contact
UnitingCare Queensland
Senior Communication
Officer Dot King
on 3025 2009 or
dot.king@ucareqld.com.au



Uniting Church welcomes human rights report

By Uniting Church National Assembly

AN HISTORIC report has found that human rights need greater protection in Australia, says the Uniting Church in Australia.

The National Human Rights

Consultation has received an unprecedented 35 000 submissions on the everyday human rights experiences of Australians, and has identified a number of areas where basic human rights are not protected.

Uniting Church President Rev

Alistair Macrae said: "I welcome the report from the National Human Rights Consultation and urge the Australian Government to begin work on implementing its recommendations, including introducing a human rights act."

The Uniting Church has been

a strong supporter of the national consultation process.

Mr Macrae said: "We are grateful for the hard work of the Committee and I congratulate them on the strength and breadth of the consultation process.

"The number of responses to this consultation is an extremely strong indicator that this is an issue Australians are passionate about.

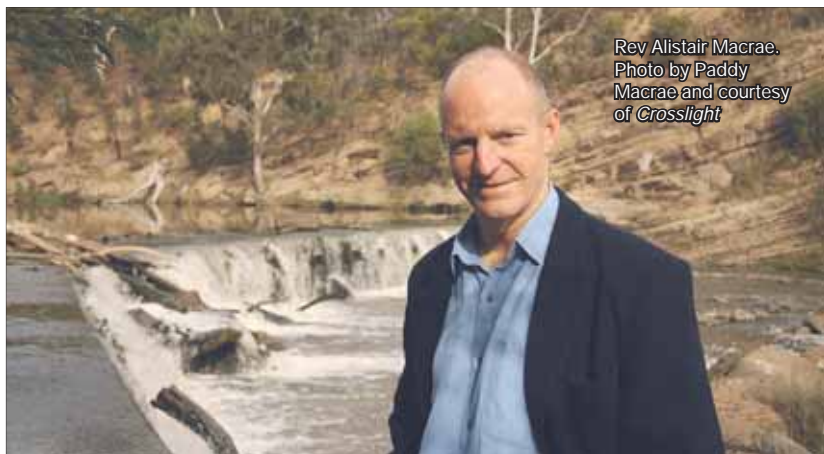
"The Uniting Church believes the report is a significant step in the process of ensuring that the law reflects the opinion of Australians; that every person is valuable and deserves to live with dignity and be treated with respect," said Mr Macrae.

The Uniting Church in Australia has been campaigning for the development of a human rights act for Australia to ensure that those most vulnerable in our society have their human rights upheld in federal government policies and practice.

"We are extremely pleased that the Consultation Report has recognised the experience of Indigenous Australians with human rights, recommended a comprehensive human rights education framework and acknowledged the importance of economic, social and cultural rights, as well as civil and political rights, to the Australian community," said Mr Macrae.

"The Uniting Church calls on the federal government to adopt and implement the recommendations in this report and better protect the human rights of all Australians, especially our most vulnerable, including people with disabilities, people who are homeless, elderly people and Indigenous Australians among others."

It is the hope of the Uniting Church that the federal government, the Opposition and all parliamentarians will support a human rights act for Australia.



Rev Alistair Macrae.
Photo by Paddy Macrae and courtesy of Crosslight

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Trainees get a taste for the land

MINISTRY WAS experienced in a whole new way for a group of candidates from Trinity Theological College in Brisbane on their rural field trip in September.

Lek Branjerdporn, Hayley Kitchener, Suzy Sitton, and Victor Wolfgramm travelled to the Twin Hills property located about 150kms north-west of Clermont, Central Queensland, where locals gathered for a big weekend of competition, fun and community.

Each year families and friends gather amidst the scrub from far and wide for a campdraft, a rodeo, picnic races, gymkhana and novelty events including one where men run attached to a bungy elastic to see how far away they could place a can of drink in the dirt.

The candidates, along with their host rural ministry coordinator for the Central Queensland and Mary Burnett Presbyteries, Karyl Davison, were invited to be part of one of the camping groups for the weekend.

"We were so warmly welcomed ... and embraced by their generous hospitality," she said.

The group also experienced an outback baptism conducted by Frontier Services Flinders Patrol padre Peter Harvey held outdoors under a sun shelter, the baptismal font a billycan resting on a stump, the water poured from a quarter pint pot.

One of the candidates reflected on how important and meaningful the simple service (dubbed 'her wetting' by the child who was baptised) was for the family and friends gathered.

On Sunday the students participated in worship services at Clermont and Capella, enjoying more warm hospitality and sharing stories with members of both congregations before spending the afternoon doing a spot of gem fossicking.

These four city dwellers experienced the richness of life and community in rural Queensland in a short time – the almost overwhelming dust and heat, the huge distances between towns, the grim reality of an open cut coal mine, and the honest openness and friendship that makes the country a great place to be.



Flinders Patrol Padre Peter Harvey baptising Geena Clark, while sister Allana and parents Amanda and Mick Clark look on. Photo by Karyl Davison

Have yourself an Aussie little Christmas



SHARE SOME festive cheer, outback style with this year's Frontier Services Christmas cards.

This year's collection all have a distinctly Australian feel from a traditional nativity scene to images of outback scenes representing peace, hope and joy.

Each card includes a relevant biblical Christmas greeting.

Cards are sold in packs of 5 for \$4.50.

Funds raised by sale of the cards will support the work of Frontier Services in rural and remote areas of the country.

Frontier Services, which grew out of the pioneering spirit of its founder John Flynn, works with people across 85% of the continent and provides aged and community services to some of Australia's most challenging environments including Aboriginal communities, isolated properties and mining sites.

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Visit www.frontierservices.org for more information.



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Summer brings madness

By Anna Mulcahy

WHAT HAPPENS when 400 teenagers, a rock band, a handful of funky funsters and a smattering of inspiring speakers take over one of the country's most idyllic locations?

You have the recipe for the ultimate summer experience.

Youth camp Summer Madness 2010 *Ctrl-Alt-Delete* promises to take everything you thought you knew about encountering God, and all your thoughts of a tranquil holiday, and smash them to pieces as it takes over Alex Park Conference Centre on the Sunshine Coast from 15 to 18 January.

The camp will inspire this tech savvy generation to take *control* of their lives, provide them with positive lifestyle *alternatives* and encourage them to identify and *delete* the things in their lives that are hindering their relationship with God.

Electives will cover topics including understanding other faiths, addictions and compulsions, how to read the Bible, social justice and finding God in the surf.

Whether you are a creative mover, deep thinker, music or nature lover, confused about life, stressed about school or have just been dragged along by a friend; there will be ways to help you



Tom Kerr gears up for the Summer Madness youth camp in January 2010. Photo by Osker Lau

recognise how God is relevant in the world and how you can connect with God in a way that works for you.

It's time to get real, get focused, get loud and get alongside other Uniting Church young people to show just how much we matter to God and to each other.

If this sounds like something

you would like to be a part of there are a few things you can do.

Campers need to register as part of a youth group, so if you haven't already, organise a group as soon as possible.

Each group will need to provide enough leaders to cover the size of their group. Numbers are limited to 400 so get in early

to secure a place. Elective leaders, chaplains and first aid volunteers are also needed.

Book your place today.

For more information and registration packs for Summer Madness 2010 contact Tom Kerr now at tom.kerr@yacmu.ucaqld.com.au

Church future lies in thinkers on the move

By Mardi Lumsden

AUTHOR, PASTOR, and leader of the emerging church movement, Brian McLaren visited Australia in October to challenge people to think about their faith and its relation to the world.

As a guest of World Vision Australia, Mr McLaren spoke on a range of topics including some of the main issues he sees facing the church in today: the prosperity crisis, the equity crisis, the security crisis, and the spirituality crisis.

Whilst speaking at a breakfast to church clergy and leaders Mr McLaren focused on the importance of intelligent thinking and questioning in the church.

He said that he was continually asked the same set of questions by people on their way out or on their way into the church.

"What seems to happen is that often, highly committed people ... have a growing sense of disillusionment and a growing set of questions that they either

aren't allowed to ask or, when they do ask they are completely disappointed by the answers.

"So there is this very significant movement out of the church and often from some of our brightest people," he said.

"The people coming in have a remarkably similar set of questions and these are the speed bumps they need to get over before they are ready to come into Christian faith.

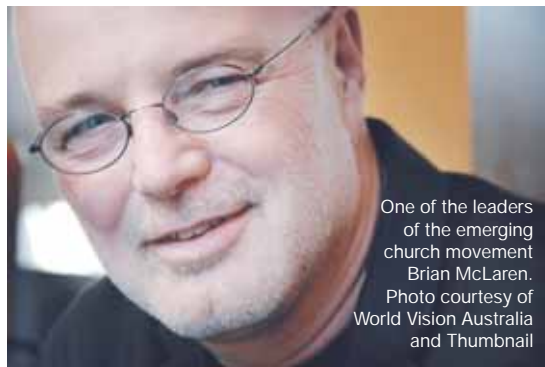
"The questions people ask on

their way out and on their way in are having a profound affect on the renewal of our faith."

In his new book *A new kind of Christianity*, due for release in Australia in February, Mr McLaren sets out to inspire people to discuss the following 10 questions.

The first question is: what is the shape of the biblical narrative?

"We have been answering that question the same way for about 1600 years," he said.



One of the leaders of the emerging church movement Brian McLaren. Photo courtesy of World Vision Australia and Thumbnail

"My personal belief is the way we have been answering that is not with a Christian answer but with a Greco-Roman answer.

"We are at a point ... where we have to rediscover a Jewish and Christian answer."

The second question asks: what is the Bible and what is it for?

He said one of the top three questions asked is: "How can you believe in a book that is so full of violence?" Closely related is the third question: whether or not God is a violent God.

Mr McLaren said in America the people most supportive of torture (like that inflicted by American soldiers at Abu Ghraib prison) are "evangelical Bible-believing Christians".

The next questions are: who is Jesus, why does he matter; and what is the Gospel?

He then looks at what we are going to do about the church.

The seventh question certainly resonates with many churches all over the world: "How do we

engage with issues of human sexuality without descending into fruitless and divisive arguments?"

"I strongly believe that our arguments about sexuality are the tip of the iceberg to a far larger issue of anthropology," he said.

Mr McLaren stated the theory of Eschatology, the end time and purpose of the world, had the greatest separation of thinking between theologians and people in the pews.

"Eschatology shapes everything we say and do," he said.

The ninth question is how do we relate to people of other religions?

Finally he asks how we discuss these questions without killing each other?

"I hope people will see how grappling with these questions becomes formative to the Christian faith," he said.

"The failure to grapple with these questions will hasten the demise of certain sectors of the church."

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Festival enhances reconciliation

By Lin Hatfield Dodds

GARMA IS a festival of culture, put on by the Yolngu Yothu Yindi Foundation.

I knew Yothu Yindi as the name of a seminal band, but it turns out the band used the name because it means mother-child, culture-land; the interconnectedness of things.

Yolngu people map their country onto their bodies, for example, the words for throat and river are the same.

There is a bone-deep connection to their country.

The Garma festival happens once a year for a week at Gulkula on the Gove Peninsula in Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory.

I was invited by Reconciliation Australia to participate in a women's program.

My experience is best described as a cultural immersion rather than a festival, despite the

fabulous music we heard every night.

There are about 3000 people on this remote site, about half Yolngu, the rest Aboriginal and non-Indigenous people from throughout Australia.

Our hosts, the Yolngu people, were astonishingly generous in opening up their land and culture for us to experience and learn about.

We were camping in tents, eating in an outdoor dining space, engaging in bush university forums and participating in many traditional cultural rituals and activities that have taken place here for thousands of years.

Their hope is that we will leave here with a deeper heart and gut knowledge of the challenges facing Aboriginal clan nations and a commitment to be ambassadors for change.

The main thing I took away was a gut knowing about the

importance of country and language.

It's one thing getting the theory; it's entirely another forming relationships with people and learning, heart to heart, about what matters to them.

My understandings that most of the issues facing Aboriginal communities are of distance, poverty and exclusion, have been validated.

In the city we view the outback as somehow threatening or alien, and Aboriginal people, whether urban or remote dwellers, as the other.

Garma was an opportunity to learn, connect and celebrate.

I had the opportunity to connect deeply with women there and will take away a gut and heart understanding of their lives and hopes which will make a difference in my thinking and my actions.



Garma participants are shown how to weave. Photo courtesy of the Yothu Yindi Foundation / Garma Festival. Photo by Lin Hatfield Dodds

Lin Hatfield Dodds is the National Director of UnitingCare Australia

This is a short excerpt. Read the whole article at www.unitingcare.org.au

Conference voices justice issues

AROUND 270 people from Australia, the Pacific, South East Asia and Africa gathered in Canberra for the fourth annual Voices for Justice Conference in Canberra in September.

Unlike most Christian conferences the aim of this conference was not to talk to ourselves but to talk to our Australia's leaders.

After a weekend of worship, training and workshops,

participants were unleashed on Parliament House to lobby the nation's leaders on behalf of the poor.

Organised by Micah Challenge, a coalition of over 30 aid and development agencies including UnitingWorld, the participants met with 130 politicians over two days and delivered around 6000 letters to the Prime Minister asking for better aid and action on

climate change to protect those in extreme poverty.

Guests from the Pacific, including Tuvalu, told of their personal pain knowing that unless urgent action is taken their nation will be flooded.

Andrew Johnson from West End Uniting Church said: "It was exciting to see so many people from across faith traditions come together for a common cause.

"In our churches we often talk about and raise money for poverty. Over two days we also raised our voices."

Mr Johnson said the group met with politicians from all parties, including Cabinet members.

"We also told stories of our personal passion and experience with those in poverty."

Participants ranged from expert lobbyists to local church members who had never met a politician before.

World Vision Australia Relationships Manager David Martin said this year's conference was exciting because there were visible signs that politicians were engaging with the Micah Challenge message.

"Many politicians are positive towards our message and supportive of what is being done through the Micah Challenge and Make Poverty History," he said.

"Many politicians feel that our advocacy really gives them the mandate to act on pushing for more foreign aid, which would normally be sidelined through the urgency of other more pressing matters."

Mr Martin was particularly moved by the launch of the

Poverty and Justice Bible at which The Gap Uniting Church youth worker Richard Cassidy offered a prayer.

"The *Poverty and Justice Bible* launch was one of those historic occasions that one felt incredibly humbled to be at," said Mr Martin.

"To see our key political leaders there and see Prime Minister Kevin Rudd launch the *Poverty and Justice Bible* was wonderful. "This was capped off by Richard Cassidy's involvement and leading us in prayer."

A fifth birthday event, hosted by The Hon Bob McMullan MP and Senator Marise Payne, highlighted the child mortality statistic that 8.8 million children die before the age of five.

Mr Johnson said: "Despite this tragic statistic progress is being made. That is down from 9.7 million in 2007."

Following the Voices for Justice Conference the Senate passed a motion in September calling on the Australian Government to "further intensify its efforts and actions towards alleviating global poverty, in line with the ideals and aspirations at the heart of the Millennium Development Goals".



The Gap Uniting Church youth worker Richard Cassidy presents a letter to Prime Minister Kevin Rudd. Photo courtesy of Theo Masselos and World Vision Australia

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Adhering to the Basis of Union

By Rev Peter Lockhart

AS A MINISTER in the Uniting Church, who promised to adhere to the *Basis of Union* at ordination, I believe that one aspect of my role that is non-negotiable is my involvement in ecumenism.

The *Basis of Union* describes how the three Churches that came into union recognised their separation as denominations as unfaithful to the gift and will of God described in the scriptures.

The witness of our union was a witness given to the church catholic (the universal church) and to the world at large that the church is called to be one.

To be faithful to who we are as the Uniting Church means that it is necessarily a part of our ongoing witness.

As Christians we are given the gift of the same relationship that exists between the Father and the Son and are bound in that very relationship by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We are the church, and only the church, because the Spirit makes us one with God and each other.

The divisions in the church are contradictory to our existence in the one body of Christ.

They have compromised our ability to faithfully represent God's love to the world.

Seeking union and co-operation with other Christians, ecumenism, is not an optional extra to doing mission but is a constitutive aspect of what mission is all about.

If we were the one church that

Christ calls us to be then maybe the world would believe.

On a practical local level this means that as a minister I see it as my responsibility to initiate open relationships with other clergy and congregations in order that together we might show forth God's love.

For me personally it has also meant serving on Synod and Assembly groups working towards closer relationships.

Acknowledging that we are a pilgrim people, and that certain barriers still impede our relationships, the quest locally for the Uniting Church must include to explore "what is possible if we go to the limits of what is permissible" (National Council of Churches in Australia).



Image by
G & A Scholiers



Church lives on in rural Queensland

IT HAS been thirteen years since the release of the document *Being Church in Rural Queensland* (BCIRQ).

This document was signed by leaders of the Anglican, Catholic, Lutheran and Uniting Churches, a number of whom gathered at Highfields near Toowoomba in September.

BCIRQ was designed to provide "a framework for action" and to inform lay people in rural areas of Queensland about possibilities of ecumenical cooperation that were endorsed and encouraged by the leaders of the four denominations. While this document is still very relevant, participants at the Highfields gathering decided to

initiate a new document affirming BCIRQ and building on it.

A first draft, entitled *Living Church in Rural Queensland – Bringing our Treasures to the Table* was prepared at the meeting and will be refined before presentation in March 2010 at the annual ecumenical meeting of Church leaders from all over Queensland.

Story courtesy of Queensland Churches Together

PATHS TO UNITY

From P.1

"Those examples of how Jesus lived are examples of how we are to overcome our prejudices and constantly challenge our presuppositions and to talk to people of other faiths and discover the richness there is in their traditions," she said.

"Of course Jesus wants us to talk about the message of the kingdom of God ... but it would be against Jesus' example to try to ram it down somebody's throat or to try to get them to give up their own faith."

Former Uniting Church President Rev Gregor Henderson told the *One Humanity, Many Faiths* summit, at Griffith University Multi-Faith Centre in Brisbane in February this year, that the Uniting Church has been intentional about interfaith dialogue since 1988.

"The motivation was the acceptance of living in a multicultural and multi-faith society, the need to understand each other's faiths, and a firm commitment to live in Australia with respect for

people of other faiths and in peace," he said.

The document *Living with the neighbour who is different: Christian vocation in multi-faith Australia*, which stemmed out of the 8th Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia in 1997, gives a theological guide to interfaith dialogue.

"In a world of human division, in which conflict is often fuelled by religious difference, it is imperative that Christians grow in their appreciation of other faiths and find ways in which we can work together with people of other faiths for the common good," it stated.

The document draws attention to biblical passages

such as Acts 4:12: "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved" and John 14:6: "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" and suggests that these passages can be easily misread if taken out of context.

"A better approach is to view the Scriptures in their entirety.

"The love of God finds a particular and defining focus in Jesus Christ, yet that same love is present in the act of creation. Every person and every nation is embraced by that same love."



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Seeking unity in an Orthodox setting

By Juan Michel for the World Council of Churches

"THE SEARCH for Christian unity is very costly, as well as slow and painful," said Prof Dr Metropolitan Gennadios of Sassima, of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

"And yet there is hope for the quest of church unity by God's grace," he said.

Dr Gennadios, a vice-moderator of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches (WCC), spoke at the WCC Plenary Commission on Faith and Order meeting in Crete in October.

The Faith and Order Commission is regarded as the widest Christian theological forum in the world owing to the number of ecclesial traditions involved, the regions represented and the fact that its members are official representatives of their Churches.

The 120 members come from all over the world including Rev Dr Richard Treloar who, through a co-operative agreement, represents both the Anglican Church of Australia and the Uniting Church in Australia.

Despite the particular difficulty the Orthodox Church has when engaged in ecumenical dialogue, Dr Gennadios said the Orthodox contributions to the dialogue included the concept of "conciliarity", which refers to the relation in communion and unity in the faith between individual churches, the theology of the Holy Spirit, and an emphasis on the communion of the Holy Trinity.

Given that the ecumenical movement works mainly with western patterns of thought, Dr Gennadios said: "Orthodox participants were, from the very beginning, forced to express their positions and points of view within



World Council of Churches members stand during the opening of the Standing Commission on Faith and Order meeting in Crete in October. Photo by Peter Williams for the WCC

a theological framework alien to ... the Orthodox tradition."

Dr Gennadios acknowledged a certain "stagnation" in the present day ecumenical movement, leading sometimes to a "sense of frustration" regarding the lack of achievements in terms of church unity.

However, he said: "We do have to bear in mind for how many centuries we have been divided!"

For Dr Gennadios the crucial question in current theological

debate is ecclesiology, in other words our understanding of the one church and its nature.

Dialogue on their different ecclesiologies has enabled the churches in recent decades to reach a better understanding of one another and of themselves.

Today what is needed is a renewal "to promote an ecclesiology of more convergence".

According to Dr Gennadios, for the Orthodox the aim is "not a naive rapprochement", but

unity in Christ.

"The unity of the church will be achieved only if we, with repentance, humility and discernment, return to our common sources of the undivided church," said Dr Gennadios.

Juan Michel is Media Relations Officer for the World Council of Churches

For more information visit www.oikoumene.org

Online help for running interfaith events

AT THE 12th Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia in July former Uniting Church President Rev Gregor Henderson called on Uniting Church members to take up the challenge of building interfaith relationships.

Speaking at the launch of the Relations with Other Faiths (ROF) website and DVD, Mr Henderson said: "The 21st Century has to be a century of increasing interfaith understanding, interfaith respect and interfaith peacemaking together."

The website was three years in the making and addresses many aspects of working with groups of other faiths including resources for running interfaith events and a What's On section for churches to list interfaith events.

Mr Henderson reminded people of the importance of interfaith relationships at a local level.

He told a moving story to express how different faiths can

lead the way in peacemaking in Australian society.

Last December Mr Henderson attended the reopening of a church hall in Auburn that burnt down in an arson attack after the Cronulla race riots.

The local Muslim and Christian communities worked together to raise the funds to rebuild the hall.

"It is crucially important that we continue to work together as people of faith across what used to be divisions but what we see are increasingly becoming bridges of faith among us.

"The more we find ourselves being challenged about our own beliefs, teachings and practices, the more we realise that some of them need refining as we learn from each other."

Assembly President Rev Alistair Macrae said the theological and ethical imperative to engage in interfaith relations is based in the commandment to love our



neighbour. "In order to love your neighbour, you need to know your neighbour," he said.

Convenor of the working group on Relations with Other Faiths Rev Seforosa Carroll said the launch of the website and DVD was a continuation of the Uniting Church's commitment to interfaith relations.

"Interfaith relationships challenge us to deepen our understanding and tradition so that we can competently and confidently express who we are," she said.

Visit the Assembly Relations with Other Faiths website at assembly.uca.org.au/rof

Fast facts What do you mean?

Interfaith - People of different faith traditions (e.g. Hindu, Christian and Jewish)

Ecumenical dialogue - People of the Christian faith (coming from different denominations) in dialogue with each other with a commitment to developing further unity.

Interdenominational relations - Christian churches working together on projects or events.



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Youth find key to interfaith work

IN JULY Minister of the Word intern (St Mark's Mt Gravatt Uniting Church in Brisbane) and Synod Interfaith Relations Committee (SIRC) member Jock Dunbar participated in the Youth Interfaith Leadership Institute at the Multi-Faith Centre at Griffith University, Nathan Campus.

The event brought together 20 people aged between 18 and 30 from many faiths including Muslim, Baha'i, Sikh, Buddhist, Pagan, Sufi, and Christian.

"It was truly an amazing experience of building community with respect, integrity, honesty and love," said Mr Dunbar.

Facilitated, organised and led by Griffith University Multi-Faith Centre founding director Professor Toh Swee-Hin, the week long event enabled discussion with the whole group as well as in small groups.

Mr Dunbar said the week provided more than just a chance to ask questions about other religions.

"It gave me motivation to work toward building relationships with people and groups of other faiths in our local area.

"Attending the summit also allowed me the opportunity to ask questions and practise interfaith communication and dialogue.

"What I did not anticipate is that we not only learnt from people of other faiths, we also became friends.

"Another significant lesson for me was recognising the importance not only for interfaith dialogue but also cross-cultural engagement.

"This is an area that we can offer leadership for the sake of social integration for many of our migrant communities.

"We can take the lead in offering

opportunities for our respective faith communities to meet and greet where possible, so that fear and suspicion may decrease, and trust and understanding may increase."

Mr Dunbar said there were many aspects of sharing over the week including sharing meals, worship and music from different traditions.

He said the tour of different places of worship was particularly moving.

"We went to a Buddhist temple, a Sikh temple, a Muslim mosque, and a Hindu temple," he said.

"This was for me the highlight of the week.

"In particular visiting the Buddhist and Sikh temples was impressive.

"Lots of people were involved in welcoming us, showing us around the grounds, and making meals for



Participants in the Youth Interfaith Leadership Institute visit the Brisbane Sikh Temple. Photo by Dianne Wu

us.

"At the mosque we were welcomed by the local Imam and at the Hindu temple we were welcomed by the Priest and his associate.

"The Buddhist temple was very impressive with its architecture and also its use as a place of learning and education."

Participants at the Youth Interfaith Leadership Institute were also introduced to Buddhist, Christian, and Hindu meditation and invited to participate.

For more information visit www.griffith.edu.au/community/multi-faith-centre

What's in a name?

By Dorothy Demack

OUR NAME is Uniting.

It is also the way we came into being and, most importantly, our ongoing calling within the total family of Christ's church.

The church preaches good news of reconciliation: God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself ... so we are ambassadors for Christ.

We must never forget that the church is both the messenger and the message. If we preach reconciliation, but are not reconciled with the churches from

whom we are presently divided, our message is hollow.

When the Uniting Church came into being we placed a semi-circle in the lower half of our logo to remind ourselves that we must keep on working for the unity that Jesus prayed for, and not stop until it is restored.

To be true to our calling we should be working for unity at every level of our Church's life.

We can trust the Assembly Christian Union Working Group and the Synod Ecumenical Relationships Committee to do this but it may be at the congregational

level that ecumenism is most deeply experienced.

Congregations should be intentional about using the *The Ecumenical Question* document when planning activities.

It simply means always asking about planned activities: "Can we do this in co-operation with other churches in our neighbourhood?"

Be aware that working ecumenically may mean that your original idea gets changed and that it may take longer to come to fruition. We need to be patient with our ecumenical partners and they need to be patient with us.

We should also try to have a living relationship with our neighbouring churches.

This means being active in a local council of churches or starting such a council if one does not already exist.

In Rockhampton, for many years now, the Churches have organised three ecumenical evening worship services a year.

We also pray for one another in our Sunday worship services, following our local ecumenical prayer cycle.

We invite guest speakers to speak at public meetings on topics that connect the Christian good news with the life of the community.

We also organise ecumenical small groups to study together

using material such as the *Christians in Dialogue* series.

Recently Rockhampton Churches Together organised a Round Table Discussion on the World Council of Churches statement *Called to be one Church*.

People came from the Roman Catholic, Lutheran and Uniting Churches, and the depth of their desire for unity and commitment to continue building good relationships was very evident.

Dorothy Demack is a member of the Parish of Rockhampton

South. She serves on the Synod Ecumenical Relationships Committee and is the Secretary of Rockhampton Churches Together

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Who is Jesus? An Islamic perspective

By Mardi Lumsden

JESUS IS the figure that defines Christianity and is one of the main distinctions from other Abrahamic faiths such as Islam and Judaism.

Retired Uniting Church minister Garth Read has a close friendship with members of the Bald Hills Mosque and said that understanding different perspectives of Jesus is very important in interfaith dialogue.

"Answers to the question 'Who is Jesus?' are central to any Christian religious faith and commitment," said Mr Read.

"Answers to this question are also significant for Muslims as they see him as one of the prophets of Allah.

"Adherents of some other religions may be curious about Jesus. However, beliefs about him do not have a place in their religion.

"Interfaith dialogue is conversation about religious beliefs by people of different religions.

"All who participate in interfaith dialogue need as full an understanding as possible of their own and other people's religions."

He said the differences between

Jesus, the young Jewish man, and Jesus, the Christ, can be explored through interfaith discussions.

"It is also important for Christians to hear what others believe to be some of the more hurtful, even disastrous, consequences of Christian beliefs about Jesus Christ as God's only Son, 'the (only) way, truth and life,'" said Mr Read.

The sacred text of Islam, the Qur'an, mentions Jesus some 90 times in a very positive light.

Dr Mohamad Abdalla is Director of the Griffith University Islamic Research Unit and Director (Griffith Node) of the National Centre of Excellence for Islamic Studies.

Dr Abdalla said Jesus is a central figure for Muslims.

"Muslims respect and revere the Prophet of God, Jesus (peace of God be upon him)," he said.

"They consider him as one of the greatest of God's messengers to humanity.

"All Muslims love Jesus, honour him, and believe in him.

"No Muslim can be a Muslim unless he or she believes in Jesus."

But who exactly do Muslims think Jesus is?

"The Qur'an confirms his virgin birth, and a chapter of the Qur'an

is entitled *Maryam* (Chapter 19: Mary) and is dedicated to his noble and chaste mother, and his sublime status," said Dr Abdalla.

"The Qur'an states that Jesus was born miraculously by the command of God, the same command that had brought Adam into being with neither a father nor a mother, that he spoke while he was still a baby, that he healed the blind and the leper, and that he raised the dead by God's leave."

One of the biggest differences in belief between the Islamic and Christian views of Jesus is that Muslims do not believe that Jesus is the son of God.

They also do not believe that Jesus was crucified.

"Muslims believe that these (Jesus') miracles testify to God's greatness and majesty, not to the divinity of Jesus. Nor do they mean that Jesus is the son of God," said Dr Abdalla.

"Jesus came to teach the same fundamental message which was taught by previous prophets from God, to shun every false god and worship only the one true God.

"Jesus taught that he is the servant and messenger of the God of Abraham."

Dr Abdalla said these teachings in the Qur'an can be compared



The Tribute Money c. 1625 by Anthony Van Dyke (1599-1641). Oil on canvas. Image courtesy of Dover Publications

with accounts of Jesus in the Gospels of Matthew (26:39), Mark (10:18) and John (14:28, 17:3, and 20:17).

"Islam teaches that Jesus is the Messiah who will return.

"He is a word from God and a spirit from Him.

"The Qur'an says that Jesus is honoured in this world and in the hereafter, and he is one of those brought nearest to God."

Uniting Church opposes weaker pollution reduction



UnitingJustice Australia National Director Rev Elenie Poulos. Photo by Kim Cain

THE UNITING Church in Australia has written to MPs and Senators urging them to vote for a strengthened Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS).

National Director of UnitingJustice Australia Rev Elenie Poulos said the Uniting Church was unable to support any further weakening of the CPRS which "compromises its integrity, increases support for polluting industries, and holds back Australia's transition to a low carbon society.

"The future of the global economy will rest on green and clean energy," she said.

"Amendments which do not support such economic development in Australia are both misdirected and short-sighted.

"We fail to see how more assistance for coal-fired electricity generators will do anything other than compensate for bad investment decisions and hinder the uptake of renewable and low-emissions energy alternatives at a cost to the Australian community of billions of dollars.

"Funds should instead be directed to assisting low-income households with direct compensation and energy-efficiency measures, and for assistance to communities that will bear the brunt of Australia's transition to a low energy-intensive future."

The Uniting Church regards climate change as a serious threat to the future of life on earth.

"We believe it is vital that Australia does all it can towards an international agreement to stabilise and reduce global greenhouse gas emissions," said Ms Poulos.

"It is overwhelmingly in Australia's national interest to see a comprehensive, effective global agreement at the United Nations climate change talks in Copenhagen this December.

"It is the hope of the Uniting Church that the federal government, the Opposition and all parliamentarians will put the environment first when considering this scheme.

"The future of our children and our grandchildren depend on it."

Ashburton Uniting seeks a Minister to lead a dynamic congregation in its mission



Ashburton Uniting Congregation is looking for a full time Minister of the Word to lead us in our mission to enjoy God's grace, grow in discipleship together and join Jesus in his ministry to the world. Our Minister will need the ability to:

- Preach and lead worship in a variety of styles
- Assist others to share their faith in Christ
- Work with young people and the marginalised
- Nurture people in their Christian faith and spiritual development
- Develop small group and other leaders in the church
- Foster congregational mission and development
- Lead pastoral care team

Ashburton congregation serves a diverse and changing demographic with a growing number of young families in the area. Our suburb is located approximately 10km southeast of the Melbourne CBD and is blessed with educational, health, community facilities and public transport.

Enquiries to: Mal Joseland on 0417 015 025 or email to jnc@joseland.com.

Expressions of interest should be put in writing to: Rev Dr Peter Blackwood, Secretary of the Placements Committee Uniting Church Synod of Victoria & Tasmania, at peter.blackwood@victas.uca.org.au.



Minister of the Word Terrigal Uniting Church

A large congregation situated on the Central Coast of NSW is seeking a full time Minister of the Word who will work with the many gifted members that God has given this church. Terrigal Uniting Church is a church that is moving ahead with God and we are excited about where God might be moving us next.

We are a community open to all, enjoying community with each other, working well together, embracing different views and co-existing with different theological understandings.

Some of the qualities we seek are:

- An ability to work with teams of staff and lay people
- An engaging communicator and preacher of God's word
- A valuer of both traditional and contemporary styles of worship with adults, youth and children
- A permission giver and risk taker enabling and inspiring growth and maturity
- An ability to co-ordinate the development and implementation of the Church's vision

Applicants are required to undergo a child protection check. The position will become available as of 1 February, 2010. The closing date for applications is 31 November, 2009.

For more information see our website: www.terrigalunitingchurch.com or contact Rev Greg Woolnough, Chair of the Joint Nominating Committee (02) 4329 2932. Applications are to be sent to Mrs. Meg Herbert, Synod Associate Secretary (Ministry), Synod of NSW and the ACT, PO Box A2178, Sydney South NSW 1235.

From torment to Christ

Herbert Yunkaporta is a man on a mission. A mission to transform others just as the 36-year-old Royal Flying Doctor Service support worker and Aurukun resident was transformed in a way he could never imagine.

By Herbert Yunkaporta
Full story first printed in
Message Stick

"I HAD a happy childhood growing up in Aurukun and was very close to my older brother.

I had a keen interest in music and formed a band called Black Magic when I was a teenager.

We used to give any earnings we made to the Royal Flying Doctor Service at the encouragement of my aunt Gladys Tybingoompa who was famous for dancing in front of Parliament house.

She knew the importance of the Service to remote communities when serious health issues prevented local care.

My life was going smoothly but things started to change around the age of 17.

It was at that time that I had the opportunity to leave the community and head to Adelaide where I enrolled at university.

It was supposed to be a three year course but that was cut short when I learned of my brother's sudden death.

Losing him was like losing half of me. I was going crazy with the pain and questions.

I left Adelaide and returned north and turned to drugs and alcohol as I saw them as a painkiller.

Two years later and still grieving I met someone and we fell in love.

It was one of the best times of my life, I had a new focus for my life. She helped me heal my pain and the future was looking good.

Just eighteen months later I

lost her in a tragic accident. My spirit was crushed to the core, the pain came racing back and it got all too much for me to take.

There was nowhere to turn, it was a living hell once again.

I had not really got over my brother's death and then this.

I decided to take my own life as I had once again slipped back into alcohol and drugs.

I remember waking up in hospital.

It was the Royal Flying Doctor Service that rescued me. They were the wings of an angel.

After being released from hospital I went home and thought all was normal but it was not.

Deep down I was in deep pain and could see no future.

I met another girl and I used to take my anger out on her as I wanted others to feel what I was going through.

That is when I ended up in jail.

When released from jail I enrolled in a Certificate IV in Mental Health.

It was the Royal Flying Doctor Service who saw something in me and flew me down to Cairns to attend the 15-month course.

My turning point came when another tragedy hit me.

My younger brother had taken his own life.

I could feel the pain resurface but this time I did not turn to drugs and alcohol. Something inside me led me away.

I really felt God wanted to turn me from my old life at which time I accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as my saviour.

I started attending church

regularly and fellowshiping with others.

The Royal Flying Doctor Service offered me a position as a Community Support Worker to help support clients through drug and alcohol problems and hospital visitations.

My life has changed from being trapped in hell to finding a good way in life.

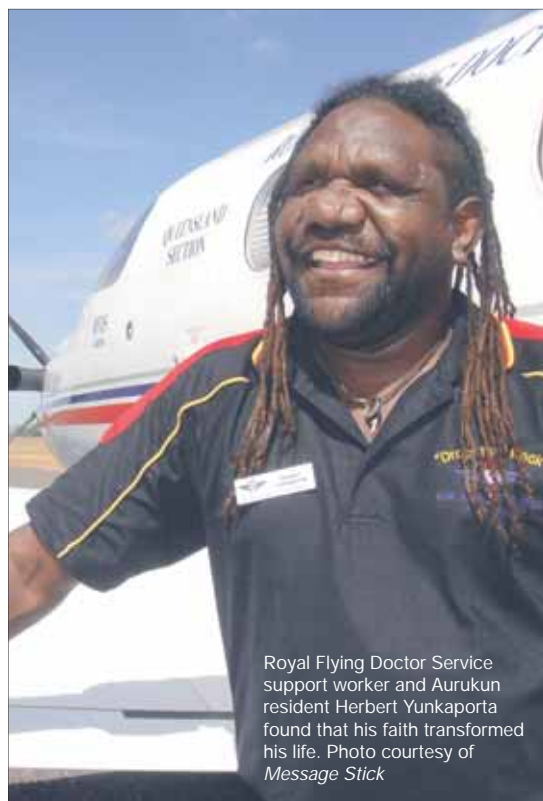
I am enjoying life and enjoy helping others who are struggling.

God planned everything out really well for me.

Without the pain I went through I would never have known him.

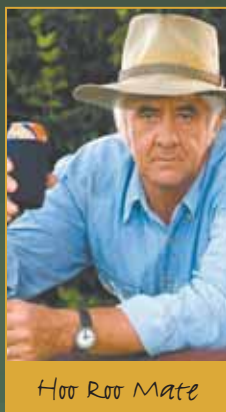
Message Stick is the quarterly magazine of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress. It is available in hard copy or electronically by emailing your preference to rpaicc@bigpond.com or by calling Ramon Peachey on (07) 4773 5077

If you are feeling depressed and need to talk to someone call Lifeline on 13 11 14



Royal Flying Doctor Service support worker and Aurukun resident Herbert Yunkaporta found that his faith transformed his life. Photo courtesy of *Message Stick*

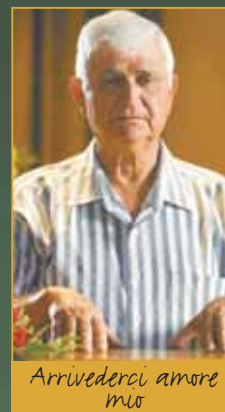
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Further information and Job Description available from Heather Bald 08 8236 4243 or hbald@sa.uca.org.au. Applications addressing the criteria in the position description and person specification will be received up to the close of business 21/11/09.

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Uniting Church in South Australia
Presbytery & Synod

November 18, 6.45pm

Jubilee Australia film screening

Dendy Cinema Portside, Hamilton Brisbane.

\$30/\$25.

Anti-poverty NGO Jubilee Australia has exclusive rights to screen the award winning documentary *The End of Poverty? (Think Again)*.

Narrated by Martin Sheen and featuring Nobel Laureates Joseph Stiglitz and Amartya Sen, the film debuted at the Cannes Film Festival in France and has been dubbed an *Inconvenient Truth* for global economics.

The End of Poverty analyses the structural causes of poverty featuring interviews with authors, economists, activists, politicians, and historians from all corners of the world.

For more information contact Adele Webb on (02) 8060 4404 or adele@jubileeaustralia.org or book tickets at www.treeoftruth.org.au/theendofpoverty.

Nov 1, 2pm-4pm. Public lecture on Interfaith Dialogue and Reconciliation. Bicentennial Community Centre, Nerang, Gold Coast. Contact Peter Robinson 5577 2142 or pdrob15@optusnet.com.au.

Nov 1, 2.30pm-4.30pm. Choral Concert with an Australian theme. Redcliffe Uniting Church Come A Waltzing Matilda. \$15/\$12. Contact Doug Linnett on 3269 3282.

Nov 1, 9am-1pm. Annual Mini-Market at Trinity Wilston Uniting Church. Cnr Kedron Brook Road & Hawdon Street. Contact Thelma Lane on 3352 6082 or aussiepick@bigpond.com.

Nov 7, 10am. Dedication of Pioneer Cemetery Restoration in Caboolture. Upper Caboolture Uniting Church. Contact Rhona Collinson on 3482 5120 or rcoll@nlrr.com.au.

Nov 15, 9am-1.30pm. 30th Anniversary celebration, Ashmore Uniting Church. 144 Cotlow St, 4214, Gold Coast. Contact Lu Evans on 5594 4803 or lme7aa11@tpg.com.au.

Nov 15. Teaching series by David MacGregor, Music's faith-shaping role in worship. Indooroopilly Uniting Church. Contact Sam Teo 3878 9535 or email ipillyuc@bigpond.com.

Nov 16, 7pm. Adult Fellowship, Moreton Rivers Presbytery, Sandgate Uniting Church. 116 Board Street, Deagon, 4017. Contact Bobbie Jeays on 3269 6565 or djeays@bigpond.net.au.

Nov 17, 9.30am-12.30pm. UnitingWorld Support Group (Qld) AGM. Wesley Hall, 140 Ann Street, Brisbane. Congregation representatives welcome. Contact Judith Finau on 0407 746 225 or ljfinau@gmail.com.

Nov 19-21, 8.30am-12pm. Wheller Gardens Auxiliary Rummage Sale. Uhl Hall, 930 Gympie Road, Chermide. Contact Merril Herbert on 3857 4668 or billmerr@bigpond.com.

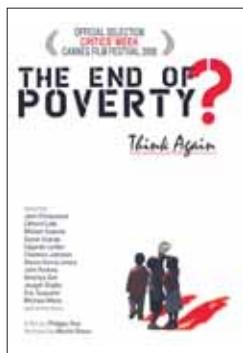
Nov 21, 10am-8pm. Creative Arts Day. Chapel Hill Uniting Church. \$10/workshop, \$25 all day. Contact Dona on 3203 5445 or dona.pal@gil.com.au.

Dec 11. Christmas Lights, Sandgate Uniting Church, Board Street Deagon. Contact Bruce Paterson on 3265 2412 or jeanandbrucep@gmail.com. www.sandgate.unitingchurch.org.au.

Dec 11-15, 2pm-9pm. The 7th Biennial Tremendous Christmas Festival. Bayside Uniting Church 420 Manly Road, Manly West. Theme: Celebrate Christ with people everywhere. Contact Glenys Davey on 3890 2392 or bayuca@tpg.com.au. www.bayuca.org.au.

Christmas service times. Individual service times will not be printed in *Journey*, however a special section of the Synod website has been created. To add your congregation's Christmas service and event times to the Queensland Synod website go to www.ucaql.com.au.

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



Forty days of trivia with a purpose

By Phil Smith

PINE RIVERS Uniting Church, north of Brisbane, found a novel way of building their fellowship using Rick Warren's *40 Days of Purpose* resource.

A congregation doesn't have to number in the thousands for members to bemoan the fact that it's hard to get to know one another.

Pine Rivers Uniting Church (PRUC) members were faced with a challenge to raise a few hundred dollars to help local young people attend Scripture Union's Splash Out camp in September.

PRUC had an idea with a bonus - they embarked on 40 Days of Trivia with ten questions



Pine Rivers Uniting Church members tackle the hard questions at 40 Days of Trivia. Photo courtesy of Phil Smith

each week designed to get people mixing and talking.

Published in the pew sheet, online and on the congregation's Facebook page, the questions ranged from history to family news, worship and the various groups and ministries of the congregation.

Home groups and individuals paid one dollar to enter each week. The winners were announced on a ladder system.

The final event was a trivia night, hosted by the youth group, that attracted a number of members' friends and visitors from the neighbourhood.

Presbytery Patchworkers

THE MORETON Rivers Presbytery Patchworkers first got together in April this year.

The original idea was that the group could provide a venue where members of any congregation could come and have space to create banners or learn how.

Recently the group was invited to create the altar cloths for the new chapel at St Andrews War Memorial Hospital in Brisbane.

These will be handed over on 17 November at the Presbytery Centre on Kennedy Tce in Paddington.

For more information contact Phyllis on 3264 4436 or Sara on 3369 8929



Johnny Barker

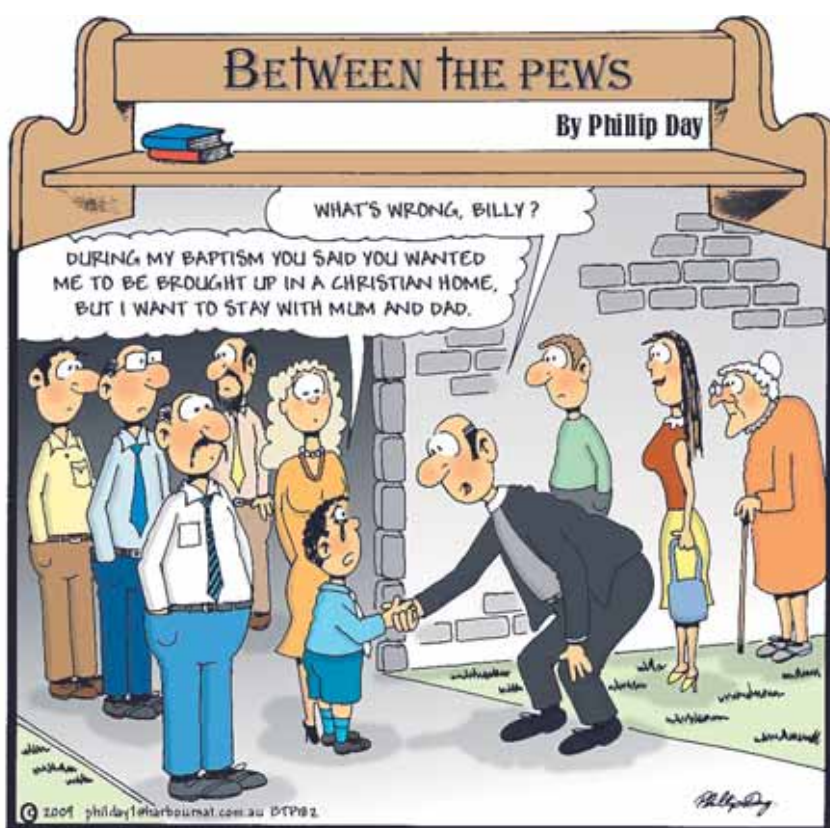
Photos see the unseen

MINISTER FOR Community Services, Housing and Women, Karen Struthers announced the winners of the Anti Poverty Week photo competition *Seen and Unseen* in October.

Gail Middleton from the Welfare Rights Centre thanked

the people who were willing to share their lives and stories with the photographers and said she was amazed by the quality and respectful nature of the entries.

The above photo by Johnny Barker is called *All my Possessions* and is courtesy of the Welfare Rights Centre.



The Vicar of Baghdad: Fighting for Peace in the Middle East

By Andrew White, Monarch Books, Oxford, 2009, RRP \$22.95

Reviewed by Rev Dr Marian Zaunbrecher, Associate General Secretary of the Queensland Synod

NEVER JUDGE a book by its cover.

Expecting a tale of a chaplain attached to an armed forces regiment I presumed *The Vicar of Baghdad* would be easy night-time reading.

Instead I discovered a challenging and inspiring diary of peace seeking efforts.

Author Andrew White first trained as a surgeon before becoming a vicar.

In 1998 he was appointed Director of International Ministry at Coventry Cathedral.

During this time he worked towards the signing of the First Alexandra Declaration of the Religious Leaders of the Holy Land.

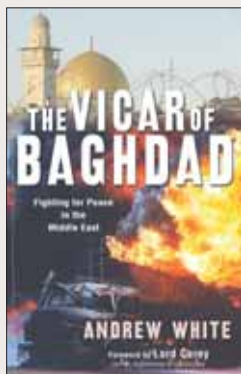
Mr White's work then led him to negotiate the release of more than 200 Palestinians held hostage by the Israeli army in 2002.

Mr White charts his involvement with Iraq's political and religious leaders and his contributions to peace movements in war torn Iraq.

Recognising that bringing the religious factions together is vital to peace in Iraq he worked tirelessly towards this.

Believing that Godliness matters more than doctrinal correctness; Mr White highlights the difficulties of peacemaking.

My main criticism of this book is that Mr White names many people, which becomes hard to follow.



The Vicar of Baghdad is an inspiring book for anyone concerned about peace.

It is all the more inspiring when one discovers that Mr White suffers from MS and has often had to flee Iraq because of death threats. For anyone interested in an informed Christian perspective on the situation in Iraq this is compulsory reading.

Historical Atlas of the Bible Lands

By Caroline Hull and Andrew Jotischky, Penguin Books, 2009
RRP \$35

Reviewed by Karyl Davison, Rural Ministry Coordinator for the Central Queensland and Mary Burnett Presbyteries

WHAT A wonderful resource!

The Penguin *Historical Atlas of the Bible Lands* is a concise yet comprehensive survey of the relationship between the books of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures, the Bible, and the lands from which they came.

This is achieved through some 50 detailed maps, a timeline, and a reasonably brief commentary on each period throughout the history of these lands before the Bible right up to contemporary times.

It describes humanity's shift from hunter/gatherers to farmers, the earliest alphabet, the amazing wanderings of Abraham, tribal divisions and the territory of the great



Kings, the Crusades, Islamic conquests, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the establishment of the state of Israel and much more.

As I looked at the maps of contemporary Israel and Palestine, including one of current day Jerusalem, it's no wonder peace seems impossible to achieve.

The Penguin *Historical Atlas of the Bible Lands* is a must for anyone who wants to increase their knowledge of the foundations of our faith.

Rabbi Harvey Rides Again:

A graphic novel of Jewish folktales let loose in the Wild West
By Steve Sheinkin, Jewish Lights Publishing, Woodstock, Vermont, 2008, RRP \$27.95

Reviewed by Greg Ross, Nambour Uniting Church

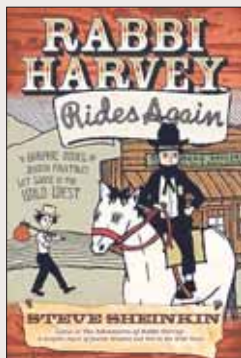
RABBI HARVEY Rides Again contains 10 stories that have been adapted from their traditional Jewish setting and situated in what North Americans have come to know as the Wild West.

Each story is both humorous and wise; individually illustrated with cartoon strips.

The stories teach truths about living in relationship

with your neighbour, with the environment, with members of your family and community, and about issues of justice and equal valuing of all people.

The stories may be used for personal reading or could be useful as discussion starters with groups of young people about issues that confront them in the home, school, work and in community situations.



Alzheimer's: A love story

By Vivienne Ulman, Scribe Publications, Melbourne, 2009, RRP \$32.95

Reviewed by Rev Dr Marian Zaunbrecher, Associate General Secretary of the Queensland Synod

AUTHOR VIVIENNE Ulman decided to journal her Mother's journey with Alzheimer's disease.

As it became harder to communicate with her Mother she wrote her letters.

These letters became the basis of her chronicle.

As we read each letter we also read about the events leading up to the letter and their aftermath.

It was the title of this book that grabbed me initially.

"A love story"?

How does one have a love story with Alzheimer's?

At first I thought this was about her relationship with her Mother and then I realised the love story was that between her parents, who having wed when she was 18 and he 24, continued a love that only deepened with the advent of Alzheimer's.

Her Mother lost the ability to recognise anyone except her beloved husband.

Her eyes shone when she saw him and he stayed by



her side for the whole long journey.

I am not easily emotionally affected by books but *Alzheimer's: A love story* moved me.

Even if, unlike me, you have never had any contact with the disease, it will move you. The book traces the life journey of her parents as immigrant Jews in Melbourne to the establishment of the famous Glow-Weave shirt factory and becoming leading lights of the Australian Labor Party, to the nursing homes and hospital.

But fame, money or status are no protection from this horrific disease.

Alzheimer's: A love story is a beautiful book. It made me cry.

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

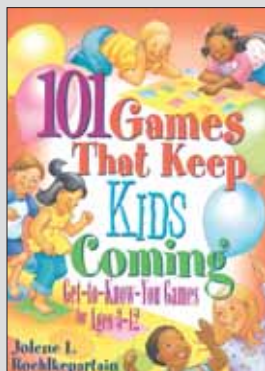
Mao's Last Dancer

Film, Directed by Bruce Beresford, 2009, PG (infrequent mild violence and coarse language)
Film is in English and Mandarin



101 Games That Keep Kids Coming: Get to know you games for ages 3-12

By Jolene L. Roehlkepartian, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 2008, RRP \$22.95



Faithful to Self

By Allan Cope
A & A Book Publishing, 2007, RRP \$24.95



Reviews available from ...

Many of the titles reviewed in *Journey* are available from C.M.S Bookstore, St Paul's Bookstore, or Christian Supplies in Brisbane city. Books can usually be ordered from Vision Books at Broadwater Road Uniting Church, Mansfield, or may be available from www.mosaicresources.com.au



Peter Woodward blesses a four-legged congregation member. Photo courtesy of Ipswich City Uniting Church

THE IPSWICH City Uniting Church congregation has had a busy month.

On 11 October they held a White Sunday service at Leichhardt Uniting Church led by the Samoan members (and those of Samoan descent) in the congregation.

A White Sunday service is a Pacific tradition that celebrates children.

Rev Peter Woodward said visitors came from Sydney to join in the celebration and the service included the baptism of Brooklyn Peirce Tahitahi.

Later that afternoon Mr Woodward ran a pet blessing service where people brought their pets, from dogs to chickens, to be blessed.

Clermont proves engaging ... again

THERE MUST be something in the water around the Clermont and Capella Uniting Church congregations.

For the third time in a row congregation members are celebrating the engagement of a minister.

Previous ministers Rev David Savage and his wife Julie Savage as well as Rev Andrew Gillies and wife Heather Gillies were married during their time with the congregations.

Now it is intern minister Dr David Ferguson's turn.

Dr Ferguson will marry Anita Middleton at St Stephen's Uniting Church in Toowoomba in April next year.

Mr Gillies will be the minister at the wedding.



David Ferguson and Anita Middleton celebrate their engagement. Photo courtesy of David Ferguson

Sunday 7 November: Uniting Church partner churches in Samoa

PLEASE PRAY for the Uniting Church in Australia's partner churches in Asia and the Pacific who are struggling with various recent adversities.

The Congregational Christian Church of Samoa and the Samoan Methodist Church make up about half the population of Samoa and are taking a key role in the disaster response after the 30 September earthquake and tsunami which killed so many people and caused great devastation.

- for those who have lost loved ones and family, homes and livelihoods
- for those who support and care for the injured and bereaved and are working on the immediate response
- for the long term rehabilitation of the people and the community and for the Churches' key role in that
- give thanks for the generous response to UnitingWorld's appeal for help.

Sunday 22 November: United Church of Christ in the Philippines

FOR THE United Church of Christ in the Philippines who are providing short term aid and long term support for thousands of victims of the worst flooding in the Philippines in more than 40 years after Saturday, 26 September's Typhoon Ketsana brought the equivalent of one month's rain in just 12 hours.

- for those who have lost their family, homes and livelihoods
- for the ongoing needs to provide food, medicine, sanitation, clothing and bedding
- for the long term rebuilding and rehabilitation effort.

Sunday 29 November: Methodist Church in Fiji and Rotuma

FOR THE Methodist Church in Fiji and Rotuma as it struggles to be faithful under the repression of the military government which refused to allow the Church's annual conference and fundraising "solevu" and choir competition.

- for the Methodist President Rev Ame Tugaue, General Secretary Rev Tuikilakila Waqairatu and other Church leaders still on bail and facing trial this month
- for those leading the Church as it struggles to continue its work under the Public Emergency Regulations
- that the Methodist Church can reach out with respect to the other faiths of Fiji in order to develop good personal relationships among leaders of different faiths and contribute to the peace of Fiji
- for the staff at UnitingWorld as they seek to support the leadership of the Methodist Church in Fiji and other partner churches.

Sunday 15 November: Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga

THE FREE Wesleyan Church of Tonga is taking a key role in the disaster response to the damage and destruction on the northern most island Niuatoputapu hit by the Samoan Tsunami on 30 September. Nine people lost their lives.

- for those who have lost family and friends and property
- for the Free Wesleyan Church as it cares for this remote community
- for the rebuilding of confidence and infrastructure for the island of Niuatoputapu.



General Secretary
Synod of New South Wales and the ACT

The Synod of New South Wales and the ACT is seeking a new General Secretary to commence from August 2010 due to the retirement of the Rev. Paul Swadling effective next July.

Expressions of interest are encouraged in writing to the Moderator, the Rev. Niall Reid (on behalf of the General Secretary Nominating Committee).

A full advertisement will be published in December when the job description will also be available.

Please mark correspondence with the title General Secretary – Expression of Interest to kathyjam@nsw.uca.org.au or c/- the Secretariat, PO Box A2178, Sydney South NSW 1235.

Youth Pastor
Orange Uniting Church Parish



Turbulence Congregation (www.myspace.com/turbulencechurch) within the Orange Uniting Church Parish, in the Central West NSW is a vibrant and dynamic faith community of young people. We are committed to biblical teaching, personal devotion, servanthood, heart-filled worship and constant prayer.

We are seeking to appoint a Youth Pastor for a two year period to:

- Lead and pastor our youth congregation
- Train, resource and develop new leaders
- Lead outreach into the community

The position would suit a Minister of the Word, Deacon, Youth Worker or a trained or experienced lay person.

Applicants must be prepared to work within the polity and ethos of the Uniting Church in Australia as described in the Basis of Union.

For an information package please contact:
Parish Office, Orange Uniting Church, PO Box 70, Orange, NSW 2800
ph: 02 6362 5788; ucorange@tpg.com.au

Applications close: Friday 4th December 2009.

Under the Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998 it is illegal for prohibited persons to apply and a "Working with Children Check" will be required.




Truth seeking

SURELY TED Stainsby (October *Journey*) must have touched the hearts of thousands of thinking members of our beloved Church.

I am glad he has the courage to go public and I gladly support his view.

Spong said Christianity must change or die.

Some people say that myths contain an element of truth.

This depends of course on ones interpretation but we live in the days of enlightenment and the truth is far more beautiful than any myth.

Let us be seekers of truth; for the truth will set us free.

However, we must seek truth in the right places.

Jehovah's Witnesses (JW), for example, seek it amongst biblical myth and call these

myths truths only to find themselves captives.

If Mr Stainsby spoke in a JW meeting, like he wrote in our paper, he would immediately be 'disfellowshipped'.

Let it not be so in our Church.

Yes, I have been asked by some members to have the courage of my convictions and to leave the Church.

Courage, however, does not walk away from a problem like that.

Love, courage, and truth combined are a formidable force.

Add a little wisdom and knowledge to that and we shall stand strong.

Len Notenboom
Elanora



Church membership

THESE DAYS there seems to be great emphasis on attracting people into the church congregation.

It appears that most people mistake the building where people worship as the church.

According to the Bible the worshippers are the church.

As I see it there is nothing wrong with bringing people into the congregation; in fact, as Christians it is our responsibility.

However, we need to question why we are zealous about the number of members we have, why we are bringing them in, and what do we do when they come.

Are we bringing them in because of the church budget;

so as to get more money or to compete with the church up the road? Or so we can boast about having the biggest number in our district? If this is the case we are doing it for the wrong reasons.

We should do it as the spirit gives us liberty, counting not the cost, personal gain or glory, but for the love of God in return for his love for us.

We also do it in love for others.

There is a need for everyone to choose whom they will serve: the world, religion or God.

Max Schulze
Gatton



Faith in the word

MAY I reply to the letter: Jesus in my heart: not the creeds by Ted Stainsby (October *Journey*)?

How good to read that you are grateful that you had Sunday School as a child and came to love Jesus and his teachings (I did too).

Later, when you had cancer, God gave you confidence that all would be well, and it was.

Our God is good!

However, I felt puzzled when I read that, despite saying that you came to love Jesus and his teachings, you doubt Jesus' teachings.

Jesus was very strong in his teaching about the authenticity of God's word.

When Jewish leaders tried

to trick him with questions about the resurrection of the dead his answer was: "You are wrong, you know not the scriptures nor the power of God ... have you not read what has been said to you by God?" (Matt 22:29)

To the Jews the first five books of the Old Testament were written by Moses.

Jesus is saying we need to be very serious about believing what Moses wrote.

Friend, have you ever read the longest chapter in the Bible, Psalm 119?

Every one of those verses speaks about the wonder and power of God's word to us.

You'll read about God's precepts, decrees, promises, commandments: all referring to

God's word being faithful and true.

It is many years now since I personally asked Jesus into my heart.

I was taught to trust and believe his word implicitly.

What a comfort his rock solid word has been to me.

I challenge you to read it daily too and ask God to show you his truth.

Allow him to show you what he wants you to believe.

"Great peace have they who love your word and nothing can confound them." Psalm 119:165.

E. Hawkins
Mannum



Biblical truth lost?

TED STAINSBY'S (October *Journey*) apparent denial of the importance of certain biblical truths in our Christian walk with Christ is of grave concern to me.

Once we start casting doubts on God's ability, indeed his right, to use whatever means he chooses for his own purposes and glory (whether it is making of woman from a rib of man or raising Christ from

the dead) we cast a huge question mark over the whole of his being God and his sovereign authority of all creation, as well as the authenticity of the Scriptures.

As Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15:12-13 (KJV): "Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen."

The central theme of our hope of eternal life and entry into paradise with our Lord rests upon Christ conquering sin and death in his resurrection.

Without Christ conquering this last enemy (death) on what basis can we claim our inheritance (eternal life) in paradise with our Lord?

It is either believing with all our heart and soul in its entirety what is recorded in God's word, the talking of the snake, the chariot literally going up to heaven with Elijah, or we throw it all out with the baby's bath water.

Merv Hurse
Kallangur



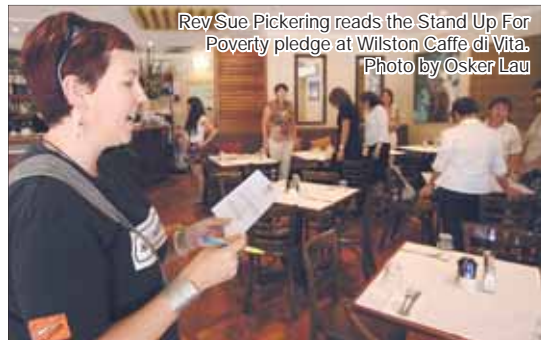
Churches won't stand for poverty

THE ANNUAL Stand Up For Poverty event in Wilston, Brisbane, proved even more popular than last year with 77 people participating.

Part of the *Make Poverty History* campaign the event asks people all over the world to stand and read a pledge over their lunch break and is often a community event involving local businesses including cafes and restaurants.

Minister Sue Pickering said: "It was great to see so many community members participating and the church getting out there."

215 people in the Sherwood area, Brisbane, also stood up against poverty in a joint event by the local Uniting and Anglican Churches.



Rev Sue Pickering reads the Stand Up For Poverty pledge at Wilston Caffe di Vita. Photo by Osker Lau

Wesley Mission Brisbane open Parkview

FORMER NAMBOUR State High School students Treasurer Wayne Swan and Moderator Rev Bruce Johnson officially opened the new Wesley Mission Brisbane residential aged care facility Parkview in October. Parkview is at Wheller Gardens in Chermerside, in the northern suburbs of Brisbane. Photo by Aileen Wallace and courtesy of Wesley Mission Brisbane



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Email your classified advertisements to journey@ucaqld.com.au



Where do you see ecumenism in the world and how do you express your faith in a pluralistic society?

Wendy Francis

WE LIVE in a pluralistic society and as a Baptist I recognise and respect the right of people to hold a variety of faiths whilst believing that a significant part of holding to the Christian faith is a willingness to share the message of Christ which I believe has the power to transform people's lives.

I also believe that the sharing of our faith is in fact an act of obedience to the command of Christ who told us to take this message to all the world.

In the Church I attend we

have people who come to us from a variety of faith traditions to participate in programs such as our Tab Tots play group and conversational English classes.

Each individual is fully respected.

At the same time we happily seek to share with them the message that motivates and sustains our life and ministry.

Our Church is also responsible for the Lord Mayor's Christmas Carols program in Brisbane televised on Channel 9.

Whilst Christmas is a time celebrated by many cultures around the world it is also a time in which the broader Christian community can unashamedly present the implications of the message which we believe can bring hope and joy into an at times troubled world.

Wendy Francis worships at the City Tabernacle Baptist Church in Brisbane and is the former editor of the *Queensland Baptist* magazine



Photo courtesy of Wendy Francis

Elaine Rae

EARLIER THIS year I was privileged to be at the opening of the Hub, a new building, at Jubilee College.

Jubilee College is an ecumenical school owned and operated by Brisbane Catholic Education and involving the Gold Coast North Anglican Church, Living Rivers Uniting Church, St Mary's Catholic Community and Southland Christian Centre (Apostolic Church Australia).

As Father Pat Moloney gave his address and reflected on his early years, I couldn't help but do the same.

It seemed absolutely incredible that I could be standing on the platform alongside representatives from the other Churches, and my name present on the opening plaque.

Growing up I did not even know anyone who called themselves a Roman Catholic. Those children went to a different school which I passed everyday.

Very few, if any, would have attended the local state school and we certainly didn't mix socially.

Even as a teenager ecumenical relationships were frowned upon and there were very strict

conventions about how such marriages and subsequent child-raising occurred.

It was only as a young married woman that I first set foot inside a Catholic church in the context of social justice work.

How could we have foreseen then that today participatory worship could be shared together in a school working ecumenically?

Praise God!

Elaine Rae is Executive Officer of the Synod Schools' Commission



Elaine Ray, fourth from left, on stage at the opening of the Hub at Jubilee College. Photo courtesy of Jubilee College

Jock Dunbar

THE WAY I try to remain faithful to Jesus is understanding the centrality of God's activity and work in every area of my life rather than the centrality of going to Church on Sunday.

Being part of a worshipping community now occupies a place within that wider context that reminds me I am not my own, but I belong to God and to God's people.

God calls me, as God calls all people, to offer all I am and have for his will and purpose.

There is no part of my life that God is not part of, though I may not recognise God's presence or activity at the time.

I also try to remain faithful to Jesus by understanding my place within Creation.

I understand that I am part of a wider body and my action, or inaction, have consequences for myself and the body.

Jesus instructs me to be

responsible for my part within the body which includes my care for the environment, my neighbours, my vocation, and my family.



Jock Dunbar is an Intern Minister at Mt Gravatt Uniting Church and a member of the Synod Interfaith Relations Committee. Photo by Osler Lau

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

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