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UnitingCare QLD **PAGES 9-12**
2008-2009 Annual Report

"The deepening effects of the GFC impacted most harshly on those people who are the least able to weather the gathering storm on their own." **Anne Cross**

RESOLUTION TIME? **PAGE 15**

Bringing in the New Year

"It's not New Year's Eve yet so I'll wait until then so I can make it a resolution - eat less cheese!" **Amy Goodhew**



NO DAM AT TRAVESTON - P6

CHOIR TRANSFORMS LIVES - P7

CREATION-FRIENDLY GIFTS - P14

BE MY GUEST

KENMORE UNITING Church recently ran *The Hospitality of God: Studies in the Gospel of Luke*, a 10 session course offered by the Pilgrim Learning Community.

Kenmore Uniting Church minister Heather den Houting and participants of Pilgrim Learning Community's Hospitality of God course explored how true hospitality is less about over-catering and more about abundance.

The course used Brendan Byrne's book of the same name.

In the final session of the course students reflected on some of the things

they had learned. This is the result.

There is something about the word hospitality that makes people think of cakes. Not that cakes are a bad thing, I love cakes and they are in fact a wonderful symbol of the generous host.

But this response to the notion of the hospitality of God is an immediate diminution of the grand gestures and overwhelming abundance that is divine hospitality.

I guess we have to use metaphors and stories to comprehend God.

As human beings we have a

tendency to break things down into small pieces we are able to handle.

So the notion of hospitality becomes something that we do for others that is under our control and at our convenience.

As guests we graciously receive that which is offered, up to a point.

Too much becomes overwhelming and we can start to feel uncomfortable if the host constantly urges us to accept more.

Hospitality fits within our social systems in a particular way: not too heavy, not too light.

Except, when it comes to the idea of divine hospitality, our genteel notions of the roles of guest and host can be blown out of the water.

Luke's Gospel sees the whole life and ministry of Jesus as a visitation of God to Israel and the world.

From the start this raises the question: "How will this visitor be received?"

Those who do receive him find that he brings them into a much wider sphere of hospitality – the hospitality of God, where the guest is revealed as the divine host, as in the story of the walk to Emmaus.

Continued P13



Jesus: the guest and the host

WHEN I was told that the Christmas theme was *Hospitality*, I thought: "Great, I can write about the hospitality of the innkeeper in the nativity story".

But then I realised that there is only one account in the Bible of Jesus' birth and there is no mention of an innkeeper.

All we are told is that Jesus was laid in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

There is no indication that anyone offered even the simplest hospitality to Jesus' family.

We enhance the story to make it more tolerable and help us believe that someone must have reached out to that pregnant mother.

It is almost unbearable to think that in Joseph's ancestral home there was no one to make them welcome.

Fortunately there seem to have been many who offered Jesus hospitality throughout his earthly life.

Why not look and see how many times we are told that Jesus was invited to share a meal?

There were even times he invited himself.

In the Iona worship book there is a poem used to invite people to share at the table of the Lord.

The poem notes that during his life on earth Jesus was always the guest.

He was an invited guest at a wedding in Cana; in Simon Peter's home; at the home of Simon the Pharisee; at the home of Zacchaeus; and at the home of Mary and Martha; but at the table of Holy Communion he is the host.

If our great welcoming program just makes people feel embarrassed and more like an outsider than ever, who is being helped?

In the Uniting Church we like to think that we have an open table; that all who love Jesus are welcome to come to this table where Christ is the host.

However we need to ask ourselves if that is as true as we would like.

Do we enhance our own story to make us feel satisfied about the way we welcome visitors?

Just as Bethlehem was Joseph's ancestral home, so the church is the ancestral home of all God's children.

Even those who haven't visited our congregations before are still coming to their own home to be with their Father.

At Christmas time there are hundreds of people who will make that journey to their ancestral home.

They will come to our churches to celebrate the birth of Christ; but will they feel welcomed or will they feel like intruders?

I am sure that we have all experienced attempts to welcome us that felt decidedly uncomfortable.

I insist on going to church when I am on holidays. My family often finds this particularly unnerving.

"What strange and bizarre rituals will this congregation have for making its visitors feel embarrassed?" they ask.

Message from the Moderator

Rev Bruce Johnson



The effectiveness of our welcome must be measured by the visitor, not the efficiency of our system.

If our great welcoming program just makes people feel embarrassed and more like an outsider than ever, who is being helped?

I encourage church councils and elders to give serious thought and preparation for those who will journey to their ancestral home to meet the Christ child.

Try to remember those times when you felt welcomed in a strange place.

I suspect it had more to do with the accepting and open attitude

of those you encountered rather than the efficiency of the system.

Encourage the regular members of the congregation to show warmth and acceptance to all who will share this Christmas season with us.

I pray that everyone who shares in the life of our Uniting Church in Queensland will feel at home with Jesus' family this Christmas.

I wish you all a happy and holy Christmas and as the new year begins I pray that God will richly bless you with his love, grace and forgiveness.

May your future be filled with God's holy presence.

Sign of the times



TOM BOYD snapped this month's winning Sign of the Times entry at Currumbin Valley Uniting Church in the Gold Coast Hinterland last month.

"Our love for God is best evident by our love to others," the sign reads.

Currumbin Valley Uniting Church was built in 1927 as a Presbyterian Church during the farming era of the valley. After union in 1977 the Church closed and the people joined with the larger Elanora congregation.

The Church reopened in 1988 and now has a service once a month. It continues to be a good centre for outreach in the Currumbin Valley.



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.

Welcome to the table

CHRISTMAS IS a time when people re-connect with the Christmas story. For some it is a time to hear it for the first time.

But there is a fine line between making people feel welcome and making them feel suffocated.

It is hard to understand how our well-meaning actions may be seen as overwhelming.

The strength of any church is its people. Guests will not leave your service remembering the building. They will remember the welcome received, hopefully the message and perhaps the quality of the coffee and conversation.

Here are a few ideas that could help you welcome guests:

- Make a simple flyer with notes like when to sit and stand during the service, participation in communion, where and when the Sunday School is, details about morning tea, bathroom location and other practical information. You could also

include your Church's web address and someone's phone number (not the office). Keep it as short as possible. A good opening sentence could be: "Hi! We're glad you are here".

- If you are sitting next to a visitor introduce yourself and make sure they have any books or papers needed. Go and get them the flyer and talk to them about the information in it.

- Read nonverbal cues. Some people will appreciate being welcomed multiple times; others may just want to sit down quietly.

- Make sure the first thing you say to a guest is not, "Are you a visitor?" There is nothing more unwelcoming than being labelled an outsider as you go in the front door.

- When there are a lot of visitors, it may be a good habit for people to say their name before doing a prayer, reading,

or sermon so visitors know who is speaking. Also print people's names on the order of service.

- Guests see the people up the front. In a way, during the service they get to know these people. Make sure the people who have had active roles during the service are free to talk to guests straight after the service.

We'd like to hear of things you already do that work.

On behalf of the *Journey* team - Osker, Sandra, Kristine, Phil and all our wonderful volunteers - thank you for your contributions to this year.

We wish you a blessed and peaceful Christmas full of welcoming hospitality.

Mardi Lumsden
Editor



UnitingCare targets disadvantaged in gift appeal

By Dot King

UNITINGCARE QUEENSLAND celebrated the launch of its 18th annual Christmas gift appeal in November in Brisbane's Queen Street Mall with jazz band SCAT and director of The Coffee Club Group John Lazarou.

Each year Christmas trees are placed at the entrance of all Target and Target Country stores in Australia, inviting the community to place unwrapped gifts or gift cards under the tree.

To date the appeal has donated more than 1.6 million gifts to children, people without a home, older people and families in crisis.

This year UnitingCare aims to collect more than 150 000 gifts at Target stores as part of the appeal.

Local UnitingCare agencies

and church groups will then distribute these gifts and gift cards before Christmas day to those doing it tough in their local community.

UnitingCare Queensland CEO Anne Cross said this Christmas will be a struggle for disadvantaged Australians.

"The continuing financial crisis means that this Christmas is going to be tougher than ever for families already under pressure and many Queensland children and young people will be facing Christmas this year without presents," she said.

"For families already under enormous emotional and financial pressure, not being able to buy Christmas presents for their children can push them to breaking point.

"We are hoping that Queenslanders will help make



The Target elves receive a gift for the UnitingCare Christmas gift appeal from Ella Schliebs. Photo by Osker Lau

a difference this Christmas and place presents under the tree at their local Target store."

UnitingCare is one of the largest health and community service providers in Queensland and supports more than 14 000 people throughout the State.

UnitingCare Queensland has

over 15 000 staff and more than 8500 volunteers in over 400 locations across Queensland.

The UnitingCare Queensland service network comprises Blue Care, Lifeline Community Care Queensland, UnitingCare Health (The Wesley Hospital, St Andrew's War Memorial

Hospital, St Stephen's Hospital – Maryborough and Hervey Bay and the Sunshine Coast Private Hospital) and Wesley Mission Brisbane.

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

Caloundra displays divine power

A NEW cross was erected on the roof of Caloundra Uniting Church on the Sunshine Coast in November.

It will give power to the Church for all lighting and service the energy needs for its programs and for the many groups who use its property.

Rev David Lowry is the convener of the Caloundra Uniting Church social justice group and said the 24 solar panels in the shape of a cross are one way for the congregation to live out its mission.

"As we are empowered in our life and mission by the cross, we will be helping to reduce our greenhouse gasses by 65%," he said.

"The solar panels will pay all of our power bills and earn the Church approximately \$2000

extra in surplus we will sell into the grid."

Mr Lowry suspected this was the first time solar panels have been deliberately placed in the shape of a cross in Australia.

A number of congregation members have also installed solar power systems in their homes.

The congregation hopes that the solar cross will remind the whole community of the importance of going green.

"This project came about as a result of a seminar we conducted with the Rev Dr Clive Ayre who presented us a challenge on the theme *The Church in the Eco-Crisis*.

"This led us to drawing up an eco-vision statement"

Congregation member Geoff Hacquoil performed a power audit on the Church building

and noted changes that needed to be made to equipment and in behaviour.

Mr Lowry said the congregation were initially restricted by the cost of going solar but applied for a rebate from the Federal Government and a grant from the State Government Gaming Community Benefit Fund (GCBF) to cover the estimated cost of \$40 000.

"Our first application from the GCBF was rejected, however our application was resubmitted to the next round of grants, which was successful. In the meantime the Federal Government rebate ceased, however in its place came the Renewable Energy Credit (REC) grants.

"We see the sun as a gift from God, as is all creation," said Mr Lowry.



Rev David Lowry watches as the solar cross is positioned. Photo by Robert Blackmore and courtesy of ABC Radio

"It is our task to use the power of the sun to help create a cleaner environment as we take a small

step towards the vital issue of climate change in our beautiful Sunshine Coast."

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Family campers celebrate 60 plus years at Alex

By Phil Smith

IN 1946 the Presbyterian Church purchased 300 acres of prime Sunshine Coast real estate near Alexandra Headland.

In the decades since, Alex Park has become a touchstone for thousands of people who attended camps and conferences there.

Even allowing for the year it moved to Hervey Bay during reconstruction, the Christmas to New Year camp is probably the longest running church camp in Queensland, drawing campers from across the south east.

David Freeland of Ipswich remembers when youth numbers dropped in the 1960s and the teenagers' camps gave way to family camps.

There are Uniting Church families with four generations who have enjoyed summer at 'Alex'.

Narangba's Colin Kessels is the Family Camp director again this year. His grandmother was the cook at the original camp site and his children will run around the grounds this summer.

Facilities have changed dramatically, with the grand old Queenslander long since replaced by modern conference rooms and accommodation. The long driveway studded with palm trees and blessed with ocean front views has given way to a more private bush setting back from the beach.

But the things that make memories have not changed.



The original Alex Park house on the Sunshine Coast circa 1953. Photo by Ken Hooper

Former Family Camp director Rev Bob Warrick recalls the team games and craft activities of the mid 1970s and an occasion when a hot air balloon narrowly missed a power pole.

The current Family Camp runs for approximately 10 days, welcoming members of the Uniting Church family for the whole time or for a few days at a stretch, and includes plenty

of relaxation, discussion and worship, craft and sports activities to see out 2009 and welcome in the new year.



Aaron Palmer (left), 4th Logan Company captain, and David Rogers, 18th Brisbane Company captain, prepare the rockets at the Boys Brigade Queensland state juniors camp. Photo courtesy of Aaron Palmer

Boys' Brigade blasts off!

By Phil Smith

AFTER 125 years the Boys' Brigade understands how to create good times and God times for young men.

Almost 100 eight to 11-year-olds gathered for this year's Boys' Brigade state camp at Somerset Dam in October.

They turned their hands to craft, canoeing and even building rockets propelled by compressed air.

For the older boys about to move into the Brigade's senior ranks there was orienteering and camping out in tents.

Boys' and Girls' Brigades provide a significant outreach opportunity for many congregations, often connecting with families who would otherwise not engage with a local church.

The state camp volunteer leaders reflected on some of the traditions and successes of the ministry.

Uniting Church member Graham Miller, junior section officer in charge at 1st Pine, said his adult sons Aaron and Nathan grew in faith through Boys' Brigade and now take on leadership roles.

Mackay Church sets youth on fire

SUMO SUIT wrestling, a concert and good food were only some of the ingredients at Iona West Uniting Church's annual Firestorm youth outreach event in Mackay in November.

Around 200 people turned out to enjoy Firestorm, with the congregation's Youth@5 and young adults groups supported

by Youth With A Mission from Townsville.

By working through networks established by local school chaplains, the Iona West congregation uses the event to connect with young people outside their church family.

The congregation's Youth@5 group incorporates fellowship

before evening worship on Sundays and a regular Bible study designed for youth and young adults.

By Phil Smith

Right: Firestorm participants enjoy some Sumo fun. Photo by Euan McDonald



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Beating around the bush

By Phil Smith

"COME OVER to Macedonia and help us" translated as "come out to Longreach and share a few clues" when some of the Church's isolated servants got together in Central Queensland for the National Rural Ministry Gathering in October.

There were definite parallels to the first century missionary work in the stories of pastors with 16 tiny congregations spread around WA's south west, one with 800 cattle stations on his patrol and mission consultants committed to Jesus' people working alone on farms throughout western NSW.

Tiny communities of faith and individual Christians are crying out for an expression of "church" that can bring the gospel into wider communities.

There were big questions.

Garry Hardingham, from Cloncurry, asked what will happen when the Mount Isa mine eventually closes?

Moranbah's Graham Woods



National Rural Ministry Gathering attendees enjoy a break in Longreach. Photo by Karyl Davison

told of new mines opening in a town where 12-hour shifts and eight-day rosters have wiped out sports and social groups and driven families to the coast.

Regular Sunday worship is not easy for miners caught in a routine of just sleeping and working.

Jeannette Gillam smiled

as she told of her Longreach congregation's worship and an informal chaplaincy to students at the Agricultural College. The local ballet teacher sang the praises of a church that opens its doors to community activities.

Wendie Wilkie from Albany, WA, began a discussion about

how the Uniting Church plans to enable sacramental ministry for the growing number of congregations who no longer expect to ever have an ordained leader to break the bread.

Journey asked Alistair Melville how he came to his particular ministry.

Mr Melville ministered in suburban Sydney before becoming a patrol padre.

He now cares for a handful of tiny bush congregations in inland Western Australia.

He had been a government scientist with no time at all for God. Sitting on the back step one evening his five-year-old son asked if he could go to Sunday School.

The little boy had heard about Jesus in Religious Education.

Mr Melville walked his boy three kilometres each way, each week to the nearest church but sat outside to wait.

Someone from that congregation came outside the church, sat with him and listened to his story before sharing the gospel.

How wide is the gap between city-based Uniting Churches and the remote rural places where two or three gather faithfully under whatever denominational banner they can find?

Can we hear their stories and respond?

Kiribati ministers look for our youth

By Phil Smith

FOR MANY observers the story of the low-lying Pacific nation Kiribati appears to be one of "Women and children first" as citizens watch water rise approximately five millimetres per year.

During a professional development visit to Queensland Kiribati ministers Rev Tioti Timon and Rev Nivanga Konono talked about preparing for their country to be flooded and fears surrounding recent tsunami warnings.

Mr Timon is Secretary for Mission with the Kiribati Protestant Church and Ms Konono serves in ministry to outlying congregations.

They are amazed at the lack of young people and men in congregations they have visited in Brisbane.

In Kiribati church attendance is high with most churches full and lay people being recruited to match the strong demand for ordained staff from Tangintebu Theological College – the only such college in Micronesia.

Mr Timon and Ms Konono bring a global perspective to Queensland with ministry and training experiences in India, Zambia and Israel.

Ms Konono is based at Chapel Hill Uniting Church in the Western suburbs of Brisbane.

"The life of people in Australia, and in the church, is very interesting," she said.

"At Chapel Hill at nine o'clock there is a service where most of the people come, even some of the youth but only some youth.

"It's good that there is a Sunday School, a place where children are brought up and can join in the church in their future life."

Mr Timon is based at nearby Kenmore Uniting Church and said he has been struck by the different lifestyle Australian families have.

"We live in extended families," he said.

"I have learnt that most of those around Kenmore are older couples living alone without children, not like us – we stay with our children.

"In the services I am really

surprised at those who attend. They are older people.

"The first thing I really wanted to see was young people coming in, but I found maybe only one or two young couples coming."

These cultural questions will be significant during the next 200 years as sea levels rise by a metre in a country whose highest point is five metres above sea level.

In February Kiribati President Anote Tong announced that he would follow the Maldives example and look for land to purchase in other nations in order to relocate entire communities.

Australia seems an obvious destination in the event of a Micronesian diaspora.

The church in Kiribati is engaged with its government but Mr Timon, the Secretary for Mission, said the life of the local churches must continue to be nourished in the coming decades.

"If you are talking about global warming and climate change, we don't think of this," he said.

"People come from other countries with grave concerns about the coming 50 years.



Kiribati ministers Rev Nivanga Konono and Rev Tioti Timon. Photo by Phil Smith

"But for us, I don't know.

"In our Church there is a Secretary for Church and Society who is dealing with climate change at big meetings in other countries.

"We know that something will happen, but our people are still building their homes and lives."

For Ms Konono that life is experienced in a church numbering

more than 100 households. That life is her immediate focus and she expects this time in Australia to bear fruit.

"My time in Australia will equip me to better serve in local churches, as I see in Chapel Hill the different kinds of work in pastoral care we will be able to organise our ministry much better."



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In over their heads

By Phil Smith

WHAT BEGAN at a Girls' Brigade devotional meeting with a group of Grade five girls came to a conclusion in a group baptism at Pine Rivers Uniting Church on 15 November.

In July Brigade leader Ros Mortimer told her girls about John the Baptist.

A number of the girls had not been baptised and asked plenty of questions. A leader and one of the mothers joined the discussion, which grew to involve Rev John Gill.

It was a powerful public statement of faith as the five young women were baptised into the Christian church.

Family members and friends joined hundreds at the Girls' and Boys' Brigade quarterly service.

LEFT: Cindy Farnell, Lauren Gilmour, Jessica Perks, Courtney Longhurst and Jody Anger.
Photo by Alex Butler

Church congratulates government on dam decision

By Mardi Lumsden

THE UNITING Church in Australia's Queensland Synod has congratulated the federal government on finalising a decision on the proposed Traveston dam in the Mary Valley in the Sunshine Coast Hinterland.

Queensland Synod moderator Rev Bruce Johnson said the Church, which has been supporting the Mary Valley community through the three-year process, was pleased that the uncertainty is now over for Mary Valley residents.

Mr Johnson said the Uniting Church welcomed the state government's commitment to giving people the option to repurchase their land.

"The Valley can now start to rebuild itself and look into the future," said Mr Johnson.

The Church's main concern about the Traveston dam project was the negative community impact with people selling property and leaving the Valley.

"Many of the social impacts

have already happened," he said. "The Mary Valley community will never be the same again.

"The Church reaffirms its commitment to support the people of the Mary Valley."

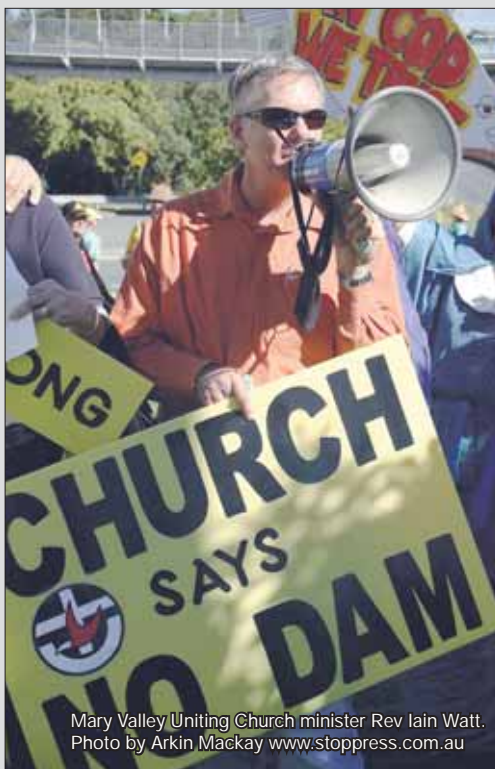
Much of this support comes through active local Uniting Church congregations and Lifeline Community Care Queensland.

Mr Johnson said the Church recognised the state government has a continuing challenge to secure water for South East Queensland.

"We recognise the significant challenge for the government in securing water for South East Queensland into the future. We encourage the government to explore all the options.

"But this is not just a government issue," he said. "As a community how do we address the larger issue of our water usage?"

"We applaud the way individuals have already reduced their water consumption and encourage people to continue to do that."



Mary Valley Uniting Church minister Rev Iain Watt.
Photo by Arkin Mackay www.stoppress.com.au

Lifeline marks 100 years of care

LIFELINE COMMUNITY Care Queensland celebrated 100 years of providing Out of Home Care services in November.

Initiated by a donation of a house and land at Indooroopilly to the Methodist Church for this purpose in 1909, the Church went on to purchase a much larger property at Coorparoo.

Lifeline Community Care QLD Families Plus Division general manager Shelley Neilsen said Lifeline is now larger than anyone could have predicted.

"Today Lifeline Community Care Queensland operates Foster and Kinship Care Services in Brisbane and Cairns which support over 750 placements per year and 13 residential care services in Toowoomba, Ipswich, Gold Coast and Brisbane," she said.

A new service, the Therapeutic Residential Care service, based at Goodna is expected to accept its first referrals before the end of the year.

State funding of these services represents the Queensland Government's significant investment in Lifeline.

The event also recognised the 20th anniversary of the closure of the Warilda residential facility and the establishment of the LCCQ Receiving Assessment Placement and Therapy program.



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Graham Clarke

Choir proves it's more than meets the eye

By Mardi Lumsden

IT MAY BE the Queensland version of Melbourne's Choir of Hard Knocks, but there is something unique about the Transformers choir.

A Reclink project, Transformers started in January and aims to create a community for those experiencing disadvantage who have a passion for music.

Lifeline Community Care Queensland assists Reclink with the group.

Lifeline social inclusion and community connection team member Brian Procopis said that people function best when they feel part of a community.

"Our intention was to use music as a vehicle to bring together people who are generally isolated and let music do its magic," he said.

"We do sound pretty good but our major priority is to give music a chance to unleash its power."

Rehearsals open with birthday wishes, thoughts for loved ones, and sharing how people

are feeling. It is this kind of connection that makes everyone feel like they belong, even visiting journalists.

Ben Pennings, Reclink community development coordinator, is head honcho at Transformers and said the group is seeing results.

"I have never seen anything like the atmosphere that is created," he said.

"It has taken a while but sometimes the energy is palpable.

"I really enjoy seeing the friendships and people having positive outcomes."

Mr Pennings said the majority of the choir members have a disability or disadvantage and about 25 per cent are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

He praised the numerous volunteers, including Shan Bauer who takes care of catering through donations and assistance from fellow shop owners at Emporium, an upmarket retail complex in Brisbane's Fortitude Valley.

Choir members have to be referred by a support agency to



Some members, carers and staff of the Transformers choir. Photo by Mardi Lumsden

join. One singer, Jo, was referred by many of her supporters who knew of her passion for singing and her powerful voice.

"Whilst I'm not able to work in a full-time job, I can work for my pension doing something I can do, which is sing," she said.

Jo said it is not just the choir members who get transformed.

"We transform the audience. They walk away thinking that somehow everything is going to be OK."

Jazz singer Monica spent two and a half years at risk of being homeless.

"I always feel very close to some of the people here. I feel very grateful that I haven't done it as hard as they have," she said.

"I go away feeling satisfied that I have mixed and sung with lovely people and we have shared things

that may not be so lovely."

Singer Darl said her health has improved since joining.

"It has been amazing. I think it has really kept me out of hospital," she said.

"It has given meaning back to my life and has taken away the very depressed thinking that I used to have because now I feel like I belong."

Music graduate and art student Jude stopped singing all together after being harassed whilst busking.

"It has been really beneficial for me. I've started writing songs again and making music," she said.

"Everybody here cares about everybody else so much. I just feel better about myself when I have left here."

Singer Michael enjoys the

camaraderie of the group. "For some reason I don't get nervous in performance. You are in a group so you feel safe," he said.

"It is a good group and the food is great."

Conductor Yani said she loved the growth that happens to the singers.

"I love hearing people go from saying they couldn't sing to feeling confident."

"I feel honoured and blessed to be in this group."

For more information contact Ben Pennings on ben.pennings@reclink.org

Transformers are performing in the Queen Street Mall, Brisbane CBD, at 11am and noon on Sunday 20 December

Going the extra mile for hospitality

By Elaine Rae

RECENTLY MY husband and I visited the United Kingdom.

In Kilmarnock, south west Scotland, the weather was miserable and we planned to spend a short time looking at the churches and then to drive on to the next town.

However as we approached one historic church we were greeted by a couple who had arrived to

set up for the service. Despite their obvious busyness they showed us their church, walked with us to another old church and invited us to their service.

We were so impressed with their welcoming but gentle approach that we joined them for worship.

People made sure we had the required books and knew what to do.

At morning tea time someone guided us to the venue where one of the tables had been set

for us with tea and biscuits.

We left wondering if others feel so welcome in our Church, particularly when, like us, they are just passers by.

Last year we worshipped at a small church on the outskirts of Canberra during the Easter weekend.

We were clearly the only visitors but within five minutes of the service ending everyone had gone and we were left quite underwhelmed. No one had

made an attempt to engage us in conversation.

There is a fine line between smothering newcomers and ignoring them.

Showing hospitality involves discernment and a real desire to leave visitors or newcomers with a good experience. Done well and sincerely it can be an experience of being shown Christ's love.

Elaine Rae is the Queensland Synod schools commission executive officer



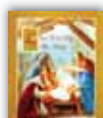
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Practice makes perfect

By Mardi Lumsden

PRACTICAL EXPRESSIONS of the hospitality of Christ are all around us.

There are countless stories of Uniting Church congregations doing great things in their local communities.

Margaret Darnell from the Warwick Uniting Church, on the Darling Downs, took advantage of the Church's location to provide a much needed service at the local Court House.

"Our Church property is across the road from the Court," she said. "The breaking point for us was when we saw a young child locked in a hot car.

"We were helpless to do anything except cause more trouble for the parents.

"At that point we thought maybe a cuppa and a pastoral care conversation would help."

Some congregation members completed a Hospital Chaplaincy Pastoral Care Course which taught them how to approach and communicate best with people.

"We meet people at a low point in their lives and hold out the helping hand of Christ," said Ms Darnell.

She said practising hospitality can be as easy as smiling at a

stranger.

"I'm sure Christ didn't walk around with a frown," she said.

Pastor Dennis Cousens is a Frontier Services minister for the Cunnamulla Patrol.

His area of ministry is roughly 150 000 square kilometres of the Downs Presbytery and is characterised by farms, mines, tourists, and long stretches of road.

"Many people are hungry for company and to share their faith and journey, many are very alone with the destruction and uncertainty of drought, others are imprisoned in debt, relationships or isolation and I visit them," he said.

He has a few ideas about how people can live out hospitality.

"Talk to the most unlikely person in your street, call on a neighbour you don't know, volunteer at a charity ... visit the local pub and be open to having someone talk to you and finally, or firstly, ask God what way your skills can be best used."

When Bill, a Bracken Ridge Uniting Church member, was collecting money for a UnitingCare agency in 1995 someone said to him: "Why should I help you, no one helps us".

So Bill asked who "us" was and

the idea for a support group for people with respiratory problems was planted. SWITCH (Support With Integrity, Thought, Care and Humility) still actively provides friendly conversation and assistance with the help of Reg Harris and many volunteers, including Reg's wife Pam, and the congregation's Ladies' Fellowship.

"We see this as an expression of the hospitality Christ demonstrated," said Mr Harris.

"We appreciate the interest our minister, Brian Kickbusch, has in the Group as he drops in for a chat whenever possible and frequently mentions the Group in our prayers for others during our Sunday service," said Mr Harris.

He said there are many ways to demonstrate Christ-like hospitality.

"Somewhere out there in the community someone is seeking help. Find them."

Sue McDougall is a Remote Family Care Service worker for Frontier Services.

"I've got a job that isn't really a job – it is a pleasure," she said.

Ms McDougall helps with the everyday life of rural families on properties in remote Queensland and the Northern Territory.

"We do the program with the children but also become a



Pastor Dennis Cousens of the Cunnamulla Patrol with the Mitchell family after their baptisms. Photo courtesy of Dennis Cousens.

member of the family."

The service is for families who don't have access to in-home child care during times of need.

"Mum might be behind in the normal everyday chores ... but you can pitch in and help.

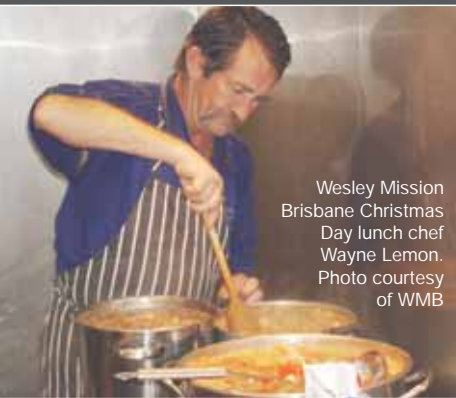
"To me that is part of spreading what you believe."

Ms McDougall said it is often the small things that are most appreciated.

"If mum comes home, she might have been teaching all day, and you offer to cook dinner ... I couldn't tell you how many times mothers have said that that would be really lovely."

She said as much as she gives to a family there is always a bigger reward.

"You always get back more than you give."



Wesley Mission Brisbane Christmas Day lunch chef Wayne Lemon. Photo courtesy of WMB

Spreading Christmas cheer

By Tim Hodgson

CHRISTMAS IS supposed to be a time of joy and celebration yet for many Australian families this Christmas will be difficult. They will struggle to scrape enough money together to have their own family Christmas meal.

Then there are the poor, the homeless, and the mentally ill who have fallen through the cracks of government

support.

We are called to make a response. Christ calls us to live a life of costly grace.

This Christmas Day, Wesley Mission Brisbane Albert St Uniting Church will hold its annual Christmas Day lunch for Brisbane's homeless and disadvantaged.

The lunch is about celebrating Christmas with those who can't afford their own Christmas lunch or presents.

It's about hospitality, fellowship and welcoming the stranger.

This year we are expecting 200 to 300 guests, including a number of families.

70 volunteers will serve food and sit with the guests.

Many of the volunteers come from the wider Brisbane community and some are from interstate.

Without the help of volunteers and organisations that donate food the Christmas Day lunch would not be possible. Of special note is the contribution of

Foodbank Queensland.

Gifts are also given to our guests by Wesley Mission Brisbane's Emergency Relief Service.

If you are interested in participating in a Christmas Day lunch have a look at what is going on in your community. If there is not one organise your own with your church.

Deacon Rev Tim Hodgson ministers to the homeless in inner-city Brisbane through Wesley Mission Brisbane

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Message from our CEO

Our strategic goal is to improve the wellbeing of individuals, families and the communities of Queensland which we serve. "Wellbeing" is a rich and challenging concept and one which demands a regular reflection on "what" we provide and "how" we provide services. Importantly it demands that we always remain focused on outcomes for those we serve.

It is fair to say that nobody could have predicted the extent of the global financial crisis (GFC). While we continue to be somewhat cushioned in Australia from its impacts, it has meant for UnitingCare Queensland that on the ground there is a growing need to respond to demand from people who are experiencing difficulty.

It is important to remember that while the media reported daily on the impact of the GFC on business and the economy, the real impact is on people and communities. The deepening effects of the GFC impacted most harshly on those people who are the least able to weather the gathering storm on their own.

During these times people compete for affordable housing and community services with a growing number of low and middle income earners who are being pushed into a significant period of disadvantage because of unemployment or reduced employment.

Not surprisingly, UnitingCare has experienced increasing demands for financial counselling services, general counselling services and emergency relief. Even before the official onset of the financial crisis, the combination of the crisis in affordable housing, easy credit conditions, and aggressive lending practices meant that we were seeing more and more people in financial difficulty.

At a national level as part of UnitingCare Australia, we have been closely involved in working with the major Churches and with Access Economics to forecast the impacts of the crisis on low income Australians and on service providers, due to the increase in demand.

I congratulate our staff and volunteers for a year of hard work. They are forever an inspiration to me, demonstrating the power of human kindness and generosity on a daily basis. I also thank the members of the UnitingCare Board; the Executive Leadership Team; and the Queensland Synod for their continued dedication, wisdom and guidance in making this organisation the best that it can be.



Anne Cross
Chief Executive Officer

Highlights of the year

- UnitingCare's shared values and behaviours are launched across the organisation.
- Lifeline Community Care wages a short, sharp and very effective campaign and secures an additional \$3m from the Queensland Government for financial counselling to aid struggling families and individuals in a very uncertain economic environment.
- Blue Care's reliable presence and outreach across Queensland is recognised by being officially named a "Queensland icon" in the state government's Q150 Icons list. Blue Care also receives a Premier's Award in the Queensland Great Awards.
- Valuable work linking families and children in the northern Gold Coast area – "Communities for Children" receives government funding to continue for another three years.
- The new East Wing at The Wesley Hospital is completed and patients and staff move into great new accommodation. Good progress is also made on the new wing at St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital.
- New Blue Care residential aged care facilities or wings are opened during the year at Wynnum (Melaleuca Place), Caloundra (Aminya), Ingham (Bluehaven) and on the Gold Coast (Labrador Gardens) and Wesley Mission Brisbane completes Parkview at Wheller Gardens.
- UnitingCare Health re-establishes its relationship with the Helena Goldie Hospital in the Solomon Islands supporting nursing staff to participate in training exchanges and fundraising for valuable hospital equipment.
- Lifeline Community Care partners with Lifeline in Fiji to support the development of Lifeline there. Two staff from Cairns have left to volunteer in Fiji.
- UnitingCare Health partners with MBF and The Baker Institute to launch the Young@Heart program - a pilot program aimed at providing patient education and home-based support to prevent further heart problems following an admission to hospital.
- Blue Care partners with Star of the Sea, a locally managed and controlled residential aged care service on Thursday Island and assists them to achieve accreditation.
- UnitingCare establishes a research committee, chaired by Professor Jill Wilson, UnitingCare Chair of Social Policy and Research. Research efforts in all parts of UnitingCare continues to grow.
- Perpetual Trustees partners with Lifeline Community Care to contribute \$80,000 to its Indigenous family support program in Toowoomba.
- Outstanding accreditation outcomes for all UnitingCare Health hospitals and all Blue Care and Wesley Mission Brisbane residential aged care facilities - accreditation during the year achieved the highest result possible – 44/44.
- Lifeline Community Care's Brisbane Bookfest matches its status as a Brisbane institution and raises a staggering \$946,000.
- Blue Care launches its "Sustainability Principles" and Lifeline Community Care launches its "Throw the Environment a Lifeline" campaign - informing the community about the environmental benefits of buying and recycling second hand goods and encouraging volunteering.
- Lifeline reaches out to the communities devastated by damaging storms and flooding at The Gap and in Ingham. Blue Care staff maintain services in Ingham during the extensive and prolonged flooding.



Who is UnitingCare?

UnitingCare Queensland is the health and community service provider of the Uniting Church and supports more than 14,000 people throughout Queensland every day of the year.

With over 15,000 staff and 8500 volunteers in more than 400 geographic locations across Queensland, UnitingCare Queensland is one of Australia's largest non-profit health and community service providers, with annual revenue in excess of \$950m.

UnitingCare Queensland also participates in the UnitingCare Australia network, contributing to social policy development and advocacy at a national level.

Our Mission

The mission of UnitingCare Queensland is to express in its work the Church's call to participate in God's loving transformation of people and the world through:

- reaching out to people in need
- speaking out for fairness and justice
- the care, compassion and commitment of its staff.

Our Values

UnitingCare Queensland believes the following values are fundamental to the work we do:

Compassion

Through our understanding and empathy for others we bring holistic care, hope and inspiration.

Respect

We accept and honour diversity, uniqueness and the contribution of others.

Justice

We commit to focus on the needs of the people we serve and to work for a fair, just and sustainable society.

Working together

We value and appreciate the richness of individual contributions, partnerships and teamwork.

Leading through learning

Our culture encourages innovation and supports learning.

Our Strategic Goal

In carrying out its mission as part of the Uniting Church, UnitingCare Queensland's principal objective is to improve the wellbeing of the individuals, families and the communities of Queensland that we serve.

Our Service Network

UnitingCare Queensland delivers quality and compassionate care through its service network. These are:

Blue Care

- Blue Nursing
- Residential aged care services
- Allied health services
- Personal care, social support and domestic assistance to people in their own homes
- Respite care
- Palliative care
- Pastoral care and counselling

Lifeline Community Care

- Counselling
- Family services
- Youth and children's services
- Disability services
- Telephone counselling (24 hour crisis counselling line)
- Support to communities following a disaster (Community Recovery)
- Prison Ministry
- Crossroads (Qld)

UnitingCare Health

- The Wesley Hospital
- St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital
- St Stephen's Hospitals – Maryborough and Hervey Bay
- The Sunshine Coast Private Hospital

UnitingCare Centre for Social Justice

UnitingCare's Centre for Social Justice uses research, education and advocacy to address social disadvantage

UnitingCare Queensland also works with **Wesley Mission Brisbane** to further the outreach of the Uniting Church in Queensland



THE WORK V



Caring for people's health through our five private, non-profit hospitals

UnitingCare Health delivers professional and compassionate health care through its five hospitals including The Wesley Hospital; St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital; The Sunshine Coast Private Hospital and St Stephen's Hospitals in Maryborough and Hervey Bay.

This year, UnitingCare Health continued its focus on quality and on investing in people and infrastructure. Accreditation audits were undertaken during the year at St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital, St Stephen's and at The Wesley Hospital. All hospitals achieved outstanding results, placing our hospitals amongst the very top hospitals in Australia.

The year for UnitingCare Health was marked by staff and patients moving into the \$102m Wesley Hospital East Wing development and the \$75m redevelopment project at St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital which is due for completion by the end of 2009.

Supporting older people to live at home longer

Consistent with the history, ethos and mission of UnitingCare Queensland to deliver community services is the commitment to serve, support and strengthen people in their own homes, families and communities. UnitingCare Queensland delivers extensive community support services through Blue Care. Blue Care is Australia's largest non-profit provider of community aged care.

Community nurses, health professionals and support workers made almost three million visits to people in their homes this year, delivering more than 3.25 million hours of care and travelling close to 31 million kilometres. Blue Care provided this care from more than 270 community centres throughout the state.

Providing older people with a comfortable, warm home environment and experienced and expert clinical care

The residential aged care sector continues to be incredibly complex and problematic. UnitingCare Queensland is committed to maintaining residential aged care services across the state and with this commitment has come a significant amount of work to ensure our future sustainability in this area.

As the population ages and community services grow, a larger proportion of residential care is "high care". This has exposed significant deficiencies in the funding models that underpin the service. UnitingCare Queensland is very clear that it will do all it can to continue lobbying federal and state government politicians for increased funding and regulatory reform.

Despite the residential aged care funding crisis, Blue Care and Wesley Mission Brisbane moved forward and completed some substantial development projects, including Labrador Gardens on the Gold Coast; Bluehaven Lodge at Ingham; a redevelopment at our aged care facility in Wynnum and Parkview at Wheller Gardens, Chermiside.

Strengthening families and children and building resilience

All children and families experience stress, adversity, crises, trauma and natural disasters from time to time. Lifeline Community Care Queensland, part of UnitingCare Queensland's service network, provides a suite of programs to help children and families who find themselves in difficult situations.

Lifeline adopts a resilience approach to service delivery, providing a structured way of assisting clients that honours their individuality; their family, community and cultural memberships; acknowledging the depth of their struggles through adversity; and supporting seeking solutions that lead to resilience.



WE'VE DONE

Supporting people with a disability to have a better life

UnitingCare provides disability services to Queenslanders every day of the year. We do this through four of our service agencies; Blue Care, Wesley Mission Brisbane, Lifeline Community Care Disability Services and Crossroads. All our disability services have the aim to empower those with a disability to live their aspirations and dreams within their community.

- Accommodation Support
- Respite
- Post-school options
- Residential support
- Alternative accommodation support to children with disabilities who are in the care of the Department of Communities, Child Safety Services
- Alternatives to residential aged care for young people with a disability
- Disability employment support
- Day time respite
- Family Support
- School Holiday support
- Foster Care

Supporting people and communities to grow and recover from pain and trauma

UnitingCare's counselling, crisis support and community recovery services are provided through Lifeline Community Care Queensland. Community demand is growing, and in response Lifeline Community Care is expanding its counselling and support programs.

Lifeline Community Care Queensland provided psychological first-aid during the second half of 2008 when residents of Collingwood Park suffered subsidence of their homes due to past undermining.

Lifeline also responded to community needs when violent storms swept through the Lockyer Valley, Ipswich, and Brisbane regions early in 2009. And then again Lifeline Far North Queensland worked to provide support to those affected by the floods in Ingham.

Speaking out for fairness and justice

Through UnitingCare's Centre for Social Justice (CSJ), UnitingCare works to achieve a just and compassionate community and service system through social justice advocacy, research and education.

Some of the advocacy and other work the centre was involved in included:

- establishing the Criminal Justice Network on behalf of the INCorrections Coalition Queensland (INCCQ).
- co-chairing the Anti-Poverty Week Working Group
- Close the Gap 2009 - campaigning for indigenous health equality
- the anniversary of the national apology to the stolen generations
- the Erosion of Prisoner Rights Equality forum
- the Housing and Homelessness forum
- social policy developed for residential aged care.



Message from our Board Chair

Reflecting back to when I was writing my message for the last annual report none of us could have anticipated the immense challenges that were looming in the year ahead. The term "global financial crisis" was just being coined and although we knew it was going to be an interesting and challenging year no one could have predicted the impacts of the financial crisis and the effect it would have on UnitingCare and our services. Our tagline "**Reach out, Speak out, Care**" has never had such resonance as it has this year.

However, overcoming challenges is something we do well as an organisation and I am very pleased to report as Chair of the UnitingCare Board that despite the difficult economic environment and the subsequent impact on financial results, there is much to be optimistic about and there have been many achievements this year.

Despite the financial challenges, our strategies retain a focus on growing our community services, maintaining our commitment to older people who are dependent on residential aged care, continuing our investments in our hospitals, and continuing system and process improvements that will support staff to deliver services into the future and position us well for the years to come.

Underpinning all the work of the Board is our absolute commitment to the values of the organisation. The Board uses the organisational values as a guide for all decision making which is why it is so fantastic that we now have one set of values across all UnitingCare service agencies. Our values – compassion, respect, justice, working together and leading through learning – are fundamental to the work we do.

I commit the Board to continue providing a clear strategic focus to lead the way forward and to support the skill and the passion of our people to **reach out, speak out and care** for the people we serve.

Heather Watson
Board Chair



Message from our Director of Mission

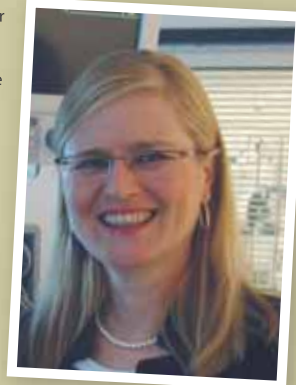
The essence of UnitingCare Queensland is summarised by the miracles that occur each and every day through the care we offer to those who need our services; the care we show each other in the corporate setting; the care we receive and give in our home lives; the care we have for our environment; and the care we receive from our faith communities.

Jesus said to his disciples, "Let me give you a new commandment: Love one another. In the same way I loved you, you love one another. This is how everyone will recognise that you are my disciples—when they see the love you have for each other." Jesus was acutely aware of the power of love, and implored those who would carry on his work in his name to love each other, as only then will everyone recognise genuine care.

As I travel around our community services talking to staff, clients, residents and patients, I see that genuine care and love everywhere. The care and love that exist is nothing short of a miracle to those who receive that love and care, yet these experiences may be seen as "ordinary" everyday events. Our services are about ordinary people doing extraordinary things. The stories of God's love for us set the example of how we are able to do extraordinary things, to love others: our partners, our families, close friends, casual friends, colleagues, those we professionally care for – and strangers alike. It is in relationship that we experience ordinary miracles.

Blessings for the upcoming year, and may you be inspired to conduct and receive ordinary miracles.

Rev Robyn Kidd
Director of Mission



We work together to...

reach out to people in need

speak out for fairness and justice

care with compassion, innovation and wisdom



Financial Performance

During the year there has been no let-up in the escalating demand for services driven by a combination of the ageing population and other social and demographic changes. UnitingCare has continued to extend its services in areas of community nursing and care, disability services, services to children and families, financial counselling and in acute health care.

The services provided by agencies of UnitingCare are primarily funded by government and health funds with increasing reliance on client funding and funding from other sources.

UnitingCare has been impacted by the significant reduction in interest rates brought about by the Reserve Bank response to the global financial crisis. This has reduced the income received on resident deposit bonds and to a much lesser extent reduced the interest expense incurred in relation to the significant ongoing capital expenditure program.

The performance of the residential aged care activities has also been a challenge because of the inadequate and flawed funding model for aged care placements.

Total revenue for the year (excluding Wesley Mission Brisbane) of \$986m has continued to trend upwards and was 8.3% higher than the previous year.

Expenditure for the year of \$974m has also increased and was 9.8% higher than the previous year. The impact of the significant capital expenditure program over recent years has resulted in the interest expense and depreciation cost increasing significantly.

UnitingCare is a service oriented organisation and with over 15,000 staff, employment related expenditure of \$600m represents 62% of total expenditure for the year.

UnitingCare has a significant investment in capital infrastructure represented by our five hospitals, and more than 300 Blue Care and Lifeline Community Care residential and community centres. It also has a significant portfolio of leased premises throughout Queensland.

During the year, capital expenditure on property, plant and equipment equated to \$183m with the majority of expenditure being on hospitals, aimed at increasing their capacity as well as modernising existing infrastructure.

UnitingCare has a significant capital expenditure program mapped out over the next ten years. The majority of this expenditure will be in aged care and retirement living.

Paul Mullooly
Chief Financial Officer



A national focus

As part of the UnitingCare Australia network, UnitingCare Queensland participates in and contributes to social policy development and advocacy at a national level.

This year UnitingCare Queensland has made significant contributions to the following national initiatives:

- Our concern around the inadequate aged care funding model has necessitated constant lobbying of federal government through meetings with appropriate ministers and formal submissions to the Productivity Commission and the Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee: Inquiry into Residential and Community Aged Care in Australia.
- Submission to the House of Representatives - Inquiry into homelessness legislation.
- Work with FaHCSIA (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs) on matters relating to building a better suite of services for people who are experiencing financial hardship and deprivation, including the development of services that promote longer term financial health and wellbeing.
- Response to the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Gambling.
- As a member of Major Church Provider Group, (this includes Anglicare, Catholic Social Services, The Salvation Army and UnitingCare) we responded to the government's call to cut back the stimulus spending on social housing arguing that the historic injection of money committed in the stimulus package to social and community housing comes nowhere close to meeting the growing unmet need.
- Significant input into the Productivity Commission report on the Contribution of the Not-for-Profit Sector which supports major reform to make social services sustainable.
- Pre and post budget lobbying to address issues affecting our most vulnerable and marginalised community members.

How you can help

If you would like to contribute to the work of UnitingCare Queensland as a volunteer at one of our service agencies, such as Lifeline Community Care; Blue Care; Wesley Mission Brisbane or our hospitals – The Wesley; St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital; St Stephen's in Maryborough and Hervey Bay or The Sunshine Coast Private Hospital, then please send an email to lea.kingdon@ucareqld.com.au to register your interest.

If you or your congregation would like to make a financial contribution to help us continue our work of reaching out; speaking out and caring, please make a donation to UnitingCare Queensland or any one of our agencies.

The work of UnitingCare Queensland would not be possible without the support and contributions it receives from individuals in our community who have been touched in some way by the work we do.

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Fostering hospitality

By Mardi Lumsden

PERHAPS ONE of the greatest examples of hospitality is welcoming a stranger into your home.

Thousands of foster-carers around the country do just that everyday – they invite a child into their home and welcome him or her as a family member.

Uniting Church member and former director-general of the Queensland Government Department of Child Safety Norelle Deeth said foster-carers are exceptional people.

"It takes a very special person to become a foster-carer," she said.

"They need perseverance, tolerance, good parenting skills and, most of all, unconditional love to rebuild faith, hope and love in an abused or neglected child.

"It can be a thankless role. Abused children can bring learned and dysfunctional self protective behaviours into a home.

"But with time, patience, endurance and love, foster-carers can turn around the lives of our most vulnerable young people.

"That is very rewarding."

Maureen Hamilton and her family have fostered 50 children in the last 10 years.

"Hospitality plays an enormous part in fostering," she said.

"When children first come into a home it is the impression of how they are respected that remains with them."

The family's first foster-child was a streetwise 11-year-old.

"My eyes, and those of my

"The joy of fostering is watching the children grow and blossom into fulfilled adults ... another joy is to see children being returned to their families."

own four children, were certainly opened to what it was like to live with a child who had been living on the street for some time," she said.

Ms Hamilton said challenges ranged from seeking support for the children to struggling with decisions made by the Department.

"Children coming into care are traumatised if not from the treatment they received at home due to neglect or abuse then from the mere fact of being separated from their family," she said,

"They are usually heartbroken when they are removed."

Ms Hamilton said support and training from groups like Lifeline Community Care Queensland's Families Plus has helped her to best understand and care for her foster-children.

Hayley Lingard is manager of Lifeline's Foster and Kinship Care, Specialist Care and Placement Support Services for Families Plus.

She said the Foster and Kinship Care program recruits, assesses, trains and supports foster-carers to meet the daily needs of foster-children.

"Being a foster-carer is an extremely challenging and rewarding role," she said.

"Our support is aimed at trying to make this role manageable for the entire fostering household as we recognise that this role impacts all members of the family."

Peter and Tanya Cranna are



Simple pleasures, like teaching a child to ride a bike, are some of the joys of foster caring. Stock image www.sxc.hu

foster-carers to three siblings in a long-term placement, meaning they will legally care for the children until each child is 18 years old and then longer if the children and the Crannas choose.

Mr Cranna said the joys and challenges of foster-parenting, like all parenting, can be summed up in the journey of a child's development.

"From aged-based achievements like learning to swim or ride a bike to looking people in the eye when talking to them and using good manners to sporting and academic achievements.

"It really is the joy of seeing the children reach their potential, develop the tools to tackle the challenges of going through their teenage years and ultimately be someone who contributes positively to society," he said.

Ms Hamilton agreed.

"The joy of fostering is watching the children grow and blossom into fulfilled adults," she said.

"Another joy is to see children being returned to their families."

After trying to have children of their own for many years the Crannas looked to God for guidance.

"We explored fostering because we wanted the parent experience," said Mr Cranna.

"Looking back it is easy to see the hand of God all through the journey.

"The support of family and friends was enormous and has remained so.

"We have the opportunity to continue to be a witness to Jesus through our role modelling and encouragement of faith conversations," said Mr Cranna.

Since her husband passed away Ms Hamilton, and her daughter Nicole, have continued to foster children.

"I guess it is because of my faith that I do fostering," said Ms Hamilton.

"I love the children but I also feel that God has been generous in giving me a wonderful family as a child and I have been blessed with four loving children.

"Fostering is my way of sharing this gift with other children and families and, at the same time, enjoying their children's company."

Ms Hamilton said it was important to remember that foster-children have families of their own.

"Families Plus instilled in us that the children who come into our care are not ours and we are only there as part of their journey – love them but let them go."

BE MY GUEST

From P1

Another good example is the story of the Prodigal Son.

Read this passage in Luke's Gospel again, but before you do, rename the loving father in the story as yourself.

You will find yourself concentrating less on the behaviour of the two sons and more on the hospitality of the father.

From this perspective, what the father does is beyond all bounds of reasonableness and all accepted standards of fairness or equity.

The nature of the father's abundant welcome and generosity to both of his sons beggars belief.

And yet this is one of the ways that Jesus sought to teach us about divine hospitality and about how we are asked to participate in this overwhelming relationship, both as individuals and as a community.

Firstly, we are asked to

participate as those who are readily able to accept the gifts of God, sometimes in ways and means not previously understood.

God's abundance is multi-faceted.

We are called to turn from a life which controls the means and methods by which we receive gifts, to one which recognises that we need the abundance of God to live.

In this we learn to approach each life encounter as having the potential of holding a gift for us and to give thanks for this.

Secondly, we are asked to behave as agents of God, to act as a host willing to welcome the stranger.

Again, to do this requires a relinquishment of our ideas as to who is an appropriate guest.

Security, fairness and equity have less to do with this than the extravagance of God as witnessed

through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Even when we act as host we should find ourselves in the place of guests of God.

This extravagance is one of the things celebrated in the communion service where, as a community of God, we are called to hold out the hospitality that we ourselves have received from God.

It is the practice of divine hospitality brought to us through Christ and acted out in our own lives.

Back to cakes – in both the Emmaus walk and the story of the loving father, the encounter with the divine involved the sharing of an abundant meal.

The notion of divine hospitality can be captured in the idea of over-catering: not because you are afraid of running out of food, but because you know there is always enough for what is needed.

That is a pretty big cake!

The Perfect Christmas Gift for Young Kids... or Grown ones!

Car Park Parables

The Stories of Jesus with cars in them

Visionbooks or
www.thehive.ucaweb.com.au

'Tis the season to give

By Jo Fuller

THE TWINKLE of red, gold and green is now well and truly in full decorative swing.

And no doubt wallets are having a major work-out too.

According to 2008 Australian Bureau of Statistics *Festive Facts and Figures* last year Australians spent \$10 million on Christmas tree lighting, \$70 million on stuffed toys and another \$18 million at retailers, with food taking a decent slice of the action cashing in at over \$7 million.

Perhaps we might have a bit of spare change to help others too?

Christmas is unquestionably a beautiful time of year to celebrate the birth of Christ, to thank God for all of our blessings and to enjoy the company of loved ones.

However there is no hiding the fact that consumerism reaches its peak at Christmas.

So how can we still buy gifts for loved ones while being socially conscious too?

Many people already give generously throughout the year, and particularly at Christmas, to various charities, organisations and mission groups.

But for those who are looking for some different gift ideas there are endless options to choose from.

Many charitable organisations produce a Christmas catalogue where buyers can purchase practical gifts that help those all over the world and within Australia.

Some of these include: UnitingWorld, World Vision, Oxfam, Tear Australia, Christian Blind Mission, Act for Peace and Christian Child Fund.

World Vision Australia's church relationship manager Theo Masselos said the main idea of the catalogue was to encourage people to be mindful of others less fortunate than they are.

"We are not opposing the idea of giving gifts at Christmas, quite the opposite, but it's about giving to others in greater need," said Mr Masselos.

He said the Christmas catalogue was a great way for churches to engage with the wider community and suggested taking the catalogues to playgroups, schools or workplaces to encourage people to act in the spirit of Christmas.

"Perhaps take it to your workplace and suggest using this catalogue instead of doing a secret santa this year," he said.

"It's all about the meaning behind it as much as it is about the message."

Jesus himself said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35)

UnitingWorld relationships manager Robert Lutton said the distinctive difference of UnitingWorld's *Everything in Common* gift catalogue was its link with Uniting Church partner churches.

"It is an opportunity to reframe gift giving in a way that supports the partner churches of the Uniting Church, alleviates poverty and supports our volunteers and peacemakers working for reconciliation," said Mr Lutton.

Other ideas include helping end global poverty through what can be done on a local scale.

This might include buying local produce from independent growers or even growing your own fruit and vegetables in an effort to become a more sustainable community.

Why not challenge yourself

through making a conscious effort to find certified Fairtrade products by visiting websites like www.fairtrade.com.au?

Act for Peace (the international aid arm of the National Council of Churches) is another organisation which stands to reduce poverty, protect refugees, prevent conflicts and empower communities.

The annual Christmas Bowl appeal aims to assist over one million people living in war-torn communities by supporting their ecumenical project partners to protect refugees, prevent further conflict and reduce extreme poverty.

Or you could get your creative juices flowing and make your gifts.

It is a thoughtful way of giving to others while feeling proud of your handicraft.

Perhaps gather your friends, family and members of your community for a craft afternoon.

You will be reaching out to your local community and having fun too.

Happy giving and happy Christmas.

Jo Fuller is a freelance journalist

Photos courtesy of Oxfam



Help fill the Christmas Bowl

act for peace

Montville shows true light of Christmas

MONTVILLE UNITING Church members have been busy preparing for the annual Christmas display.

The little country Church approaching its centenary will display hundreds of hand-made items crafted by members of congregations on the Blackall Range and in Nambour.

The Church is located in the centre of a busy tourism centre in the Sunshine Coast Hinterland and as part of its mission the congregation reaches out in a variety of ways to those who pass by.

Throughout the year, the

Church is open to the public and has a changing display on eco-theology.

Its garden is also open and has seats with signs about plants mentioned in the Bible.

In December, for three weeks leading up to Christmas Day, the Church is filled with banners, trees and other decorations, offering a haven of peace and reflection and a place for visitors to absorb the true spirit of Christmas.

Children can also explore and engage with an interactive nativity display.

This year's theme is *Jesus, the Light of the World*.



Mavis Boorman, Ruth Potter and Clare Reinhardt with one of the banners.
Photo by Daryl Reinke



Pilgrim Learning Community Lecturer in Christian Education

The Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod seeks a half-time (0.5) Lecturer in Christian Education. The successful applicant would be on the staff of Pilgrim Learning Community, the Synod's lay education body working within the Network for Christian Formation.

The main purposes of the position are to:

- assist Congregations, Presbyteries & the Queensland Synod to fulfil their responsibilities towards members of the Church by equipping them in the area of Christian education in ways that are accessible, understandable & pastorally supportive;
- assist Pastors to attain the General Competencies in the area of Christian Education, as required by the Ministerial Education Commission & the Presbytery;
- assist Ministers of the Word & Deacons to enhance their Christian education practice.

We seek a creative person with demonstrated expertise in teaching and modelling good Christian education practices to work with energy, enthusiasm and initiative.

For a further information, position description and selection criteria, please contact: Director, Pilgrim Learning Community, GPO Box 674, Brisbane Qld 4001, email: pilgrim@ucaqld.com.au or phone 07 3377 9724. <http://pilgrim.qld.edu.au>

Applications close 15 January 2010 and it is hoped to make an appointment soon after that date.



Give to the Christmas Bowl

The Christmas Bowl is a program of **Act for Peace**, the international aid agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia.

Free Call 1800 025 101

Visit www.actforpeace.org.au

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All that will change in the New Year

By Amy Goodhew

I EAT TOO much cheese. Too much cheese by half.

Oh, but I love it. Blue cheese, brie, aged cheddars, sweet, sweet emmenthal and jarlsburg, goats cheese, cheese spread. I love it all. But every once in a while I glance down sadly at my rounded middle section and see what the cheese is

doing to me. It is loving me back!

It's giving me a big hug right around the waist bands of my jeans.

Every once in a while I sternly reprimand myself that this has to stop. This is no longer a healthy relationship ... but it's not New Year's Eve yet so I'll wait until then so I can make it a resolution - eat less cheese!

It will definitely work in the new year.

Something about New Year's Eve confers a special power on resolutions.

Humans are creatures with a powerful need for ceremony and sense of meaning.

We also possess a marked disability when it comes to acting in our long-term best interests.

We acknowledge special occasions on the calendar with rituals: fireworks and parties on New Year's Eve, the giving of gifts and celebrating family time at Christmas, eggs at Easter, dressing as the dead for Halloween.

These are all ceremonies that have their roots in the very darkest reaches of human history and remind us of things vital to our humanity.

For New Year's Eve we celebrate the death of the year (this has more visual significance in the northern Hemisphere where the year dies out in the wintry and lifeless landscape) and the birth of the new one.

A new beginning is a very attractive prospect.

It speaks to whatever anxieties we may be experiencing at that moment ("You mean it can be like all that cheese never happened? I can start again?").

Personally I find this helpful.

The beginning of the year is a useful marker of time.

At the beginning of 2009 I thought to myself: "Things are getting a bit stale, I think this year

I need to take on as many new experiences as I can".

Since January I have gone overseas for the first time, started a new job, joined a gym for the first time, moved house, gone out more, experienced more, read more widely, experimented with new music and films and started drawing again.

I've also been more stressed, more challenged, more stretched and more dejected.

It's no coincidence that the situations I

have gained the most from, and that were very new and fresh, were also the most traumatic.

I think that the kind of resolution made is what matters.

The years where I've thought, "This year I will lose ten kilos" or "This year I will stop losing things" are the years I have failed.

The business of resolution making smacks of: "Be careful what you wish for, it might come true". The same applies for what you pray for.

Asking God: "Oh Lord, please smite the cheese" is both silly and short sighted.

I love cheese; I just want the power to say no to it more often.

This year, rather than smiting

the cheese, God sent me food intolerances.

I can no longer happily live on refined sugars and saturated fats alone and while cheese eating can continue (thank God!) it is at a diminished pace.

I think I've had success with my resolutions because they reinforced the direction I wanted my life to head in.

They weren't specific, which is fortunate because I don't think I could have imagined the wonderful experiences I've had this year.

My prayers gave me what I needed, not what I wanted. They also reinforced the direction I wanted my life to head in.

I was open to receiving opportunities that helped my goals so I recognised them when I came upon them. Perhaps there is a correlation here?

Possibly New Year's resolutions, like prayer or meditation, work best when you recognise what you want for yourself and open yourself up to the best way to receive it.

Amy Goodhew is the National Assembly communication coordinator



Amy Goodhew on the path to giving up cheese.
Photo courtesy of the National Assembly media team

There's a lot to be gained from pre-planning



There's a great sense of comfort knowing that everything is in order and when it comes to funeral pre-planning Metropolitan Funerals are the best people to help you.

We have been helping local families since 1941 and understand that taking care of things now, saves your family the unexpected expense and difficulty in a time of serious grief.

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Birdsville



Frontier Services is recruiting for custodian/caretakers for the Frontier Services museum in Birdsville (formally the old Birdsville Hospital), QLD. It is in need of an energetic and committed volunteer couple with an interest in Outback history to live in and maintain the facilities as well as provide a welcome to visitors.

If this opportunity is of interest to you or someone you know, contact Rosemary Young for more information on 02 8270 1320 or email rosemary.y@frontierservices.org.



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.

Applications 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 online in December at <http://news.nsw.uca.org.au/employment/> when the job description will also be available.

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



December 11-15, 2-9pm

7th Biennial Treemendous Christmas Festival

Treemendous Christmas Festival at 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.

Dec 1-3, 3pm-7pm. Display of trees. Brookfield Uniting Church. Contact George Barnes on 0407 178 919 or at geobarn39@hotmail.com.

Dec 3-9. Parliament of the World's Religions, Melbourne. First held in Chicago in 1893, the Parliament of the World's Religions brings together the world's religious and spiritual communities, their leaders and their followers to a gathering where peace, diversity and sustainability are discussed and explored in the context of interreligious understanding and cooperation.

Dec 5, 8pm. Handel's Messiah. QPAC Concert Hall. With the Queensland Orchestra conducted by Stephen Layton. Visit www.thequeenslandorchestra.com.au for more information.

Dec 11-24. Christmas Lights, Sandgate Uniting Church, Board Street Deagon. Contact Bruce Paterson on 3265 2412 or jeanandbrucep@gmail.com or visit www.sandgate.unitingchurch.org.au.

Dec 13, 7pm-9pm. "Follow The Star" Lantern Walk. Bayside Uniting Church Campus. Tickets available from Bayside Uniting Church office 420 Wondall Road, Manly West. For more information phone 3890 2392 or visit www.tcf.bayuca.org.au.

Dec 15-23, 7pm-9.30pm. Kawana Waters Uniting Christmas Festival. Thunderbird Drive, Bokarina. Theme: *Have I got a plan for you.* Contact Trevor Huth on 5491 6632 or at trevann@dovenetq.net.au.

Dec 25. Christmas Day. Journey wishes you a very merry Christmas.

Jan 10, 2010. Discoveries Camp for children. Camp Moogerah. For children in Years 3-7 (in 2009). For more information visit www.discoveriescamp.com or email info@discoveriescamp.com.

Jan 16-24. Lifeline Bookfest at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre, South Brisbane. 2 million books on sale from as little as 20 cents. Visit www.lifelinebookfest.com for more information.

April 17, 9am-1pm. Bremer Brisbane Presbytery Ministry EXPO at Glebe Rd UC. Contact Jenny Brecknell on 3378 5281 or at jenny@brecknell.name.

April 24, 9am-1pm. Bremer Brisbane Presbytery Ministry EXPO at Centenary UC. Contact Jenny Brecknell on 3378 5281 or at jenny@brecknell.name.

June 26-27. Celebrating 125 years in Clermont and Capella. 26 June - Dinner; 27 June - 10am service followed by time capsule opening and BBQ lunch. Contact David Ferguson on 4983 3445 or at david.ferguson@dovenetq.net.au.

See Christmas in a different light

Find your nearest Uniting Church Christmas service and events times at www.ucaqlid.com.au

Click on the *See Christmas in a different light* box and then *List of Churches*.



Chris Bell and Dawne Price. Photo by Keith Beitz

Singing for someone else's supper

A GROUP of performers from Glasshouse Country Uniting Church on the Sunshine Coast presented an evening of entertainment in Beerwah in November. The event, led by musical director Dawne Price, raised over \$1600 for UnitingWorld's aid and disaster relief work in the Philippines.

Schools changes

FOLLOWING LENGTHY deliberations and negotiations, the Uniting Church Property Trust (Q) Queensland Synod ceased to be a member of EDUCANG Ltd on 3 September 2009. The remaining member is the Anglican Diocese of Brisbane. The effect of this restructure is that Forest Lake College and The Springfield College will continue to be operated by EDUCANG.

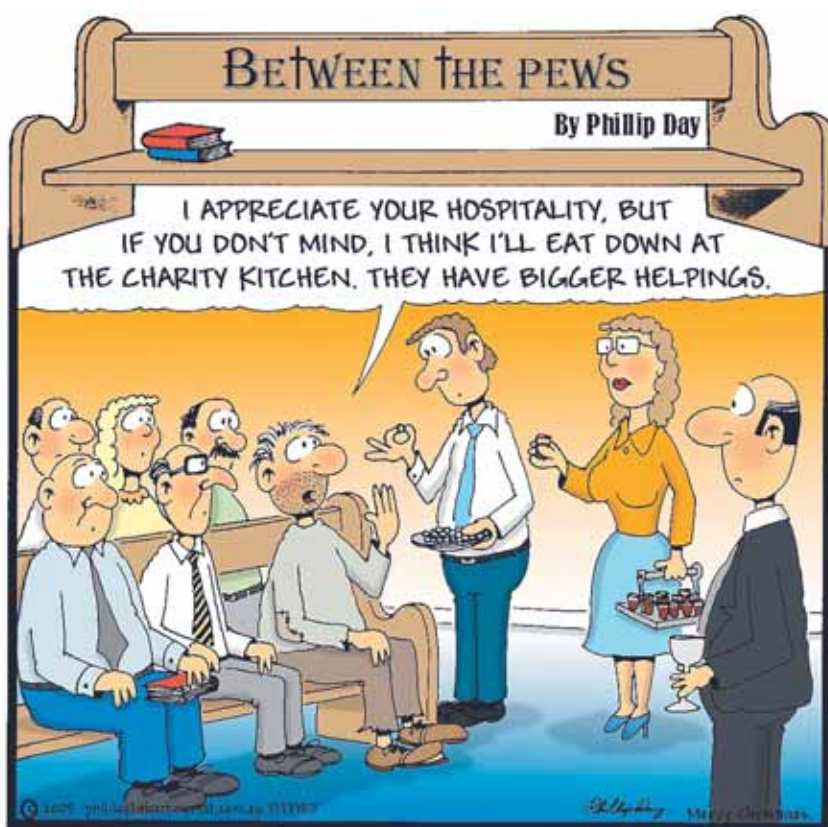
An agreement between both Churches outlines the nature of the continuing ecumenical relationship.

The Lakes College which was once also part of EDUCANG has been operating solely as an entity of the Uniting Church since 2008 and continues to do so.

By Elaine Rae,
Executive Officer Queensland
Synod Schools' Commission



Rev Andrew Gunton blesses some four-legged Church members during a pet blessing service at The Hills Uniting Church in Arana Hills, Brisbane, on 25 October. Photo courtesy of Lyndelle Gunton



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

Grandpa's Farm: A Summer's Day

Written and Illustrated by Rev Alan Robinson, New Frontier Publishing, 2009, RRP \$24.95

Reviewed by John Ruhle, minister at The Gap Uniting Church

GRANDPA'S FARM: *A Summer's Day* is written and beautifully illustrated by Uniting Church Minister Rev Alan Robinson.

It is also pretty cool to note that it has been dedicated to his three sons, including Tim Robinson who also serves in full-time ministry in Queensland.

The book tells the tale of farm life through the eyes of

city boy Matt as he spends time with his Grandpa.

It is not just any ordinary summer's day, it is a harvesting and bushfire day.

The illustrations and the story bring to life the drama, excitement and anxiety that go hand in hand with farm life and particularly life in summer when bushfires are present.

The joy of harvesting the wheat quickly turns to anxiety as the bush fire smoke gathers in the distance.

The back of the book says: "The story affirms the courage of people young and old when threatened with a bushfire."

At times the rhymes feel a little



pushed, however I read the book with my three little girls, aged seven, five and two, and they were captivated by the fantastic drawings, the images of farm life and the rhythm of the story.

Grandpa's Farm: *A Summer's Day* is a book that will appeal to city and bush kids and adults alike.

Songs in the Key of Be

By Dave Andrews
A Set of 4 CDs with music and lyric books
Frank Communications, 2006 – 2008, RRP \$25

Reviewed by Bevan Loble, a sometimes guitarist who has a passion for music in worship and is pastor at the Kirwan and Jensen Uniting Churches.

DAVE ANDREWS has brought us something very new in worship music. His simple yet effective style makes it easy for anyone to play.

The music is catchy, the lyrics obviously come from his background in community work and reflect the struggle and hope of God's love to all people.

This is not your usual style of worship material – but it does give us something to sing about in our own struggle with life as well as helping us to praise God for who God is.

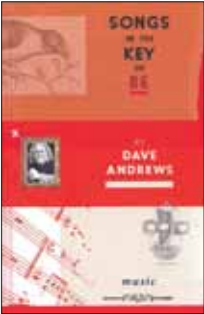
Played by a band and using

Mr Andrews' gravelly voice, it won't be everyone's cup of tea, however, it gives us an alternative style of worship music that would suit a community of faith trying to link with people's lives, especially those from outside the church.

I love Mr Andrews' own appraisal of his work: "These are not Hillsongs, but valley songs, easy-to-sing songs about the joys and sorrows of ordinary people working quietly for love and for justice".

It certainly sums up this production.

There are rocky heavy beat songs, right down to slower more



meditative songs.

I often have them in the car with me, listening and singing along.

Don't buy this if you are looking for something to sit comfortably in your house mellowing out your day – buy it if you are looking for a challenge, a new way of thinking – or as Dave would say, a revolution.

The Christmas Mystery: What on earth happened at Bethlehem?

By Charles Foster, Authentic Media, 2007, RRP \$18.95
Reviewed by Bob Warrick, a retired Uniting Church minister.

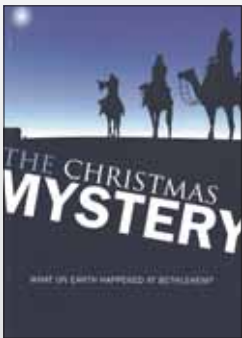
IT IS MANY years since I came across the Christmas IQ test comparing the Christmas story according to Christmas carols and popular myth with the Biblical Christmas story.

The Christmas Mystery includes the NRSV text of the Matthew and Luke stories, a one page select bibliography, nine pages of notes and a useful index.

Mr Foster's opening words give some indication of what is to follow. "The church by and large does not celebrate Christmas... Biblical Christmas is almost never mentioned."

Over eight chapters the story is examined from every possible angle.

Easy to read *The Christmas*



Mystery would make an excellent choice for an Advent Bible study – and it is a comfortable size for reading on the train or bus!

I think you will find that Mr Foster's book will provide much food for Advent reflection.

Light in the Darkness: Music and meditation (CD)

By Deanna Light and Paul Tate, World Library Publication, 2008 RRP \$29.95

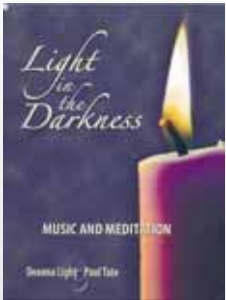
Reviewed by Barb Bailey, a retired Uniting Church minister based on the Sunshine Coast.

THIS CD is produced to reflect upon the promise of Advent and the joy of Christmas.

Six sessions, each ranging from seven to 15 minutes, make up the 69 minute presentation of speech, song and scripture.

The style is intimate and reflective suggesting its use for individual, group or retreat meditation.

Sensitively drawn together by the authors, the listener will be carried through prayer,



praise, intercession and song as the anticipation of Advent leads to the wonder and love of Christmas.

The spoken word is backed by orchestral instruments in this American production.

This is a timely offering of music, message and meditation as Christians prepare for the coming again of the Lord.

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

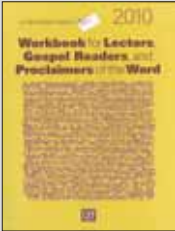
The Sky is Always There: surviving a kidnapping in Chechnya

By Camilla Carr and Jonathan James, Canterbury Press, 2008, RRP \$51.95



Workbook for Lectors, Gospel Readers, and Proclaimers of the Word

Edited by Lorie Simmons, Archdiocese of Chicago Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, 2009, RRP \$22.95



The Man from Little River

By Denise A. Austin (with George McArdle), Ark House Publishing, 2009, Paperback, RRP \$24.95



Chance or Dance: An evaluation of design

By Jimmy H. Davis and Harry L. Poe, Templeton Foundation Press, 2008, RRP \$40.95

Reviewed by Joel Corney, a physicist and member of Sherwood Uniting Church.

THIS COLLABORATION between professors of chemistry and faith and culture aims to give an informed background to the current debate about intelligent design.

It charts the development of conceptions of the physical universe and its origin over the centuries to the rise of modern science.

In the Christian West the designedness of the cosmos was linked to the concept of a



designer, namely the creator, God. However, it was only since the enlightenment that the apparent design of the universe was used as proof for the existence of God.

I would commend *Chance or Dance* to anyone wanting an introduction to the history and science of a concept that is at the heart of contemporary religion-science dialogue.

Material available from ... Many of the titles reviewed in *Journey* are available from 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

Pretty in pink

MARYBOROUGH UNITING Church and the Maryborough Branch of Queensland Cancer Council hosted a joint Think Pink morning tea on 28 October to raise awareness of breast cancer.

All 80 people in attendance embraced the pink theme, with prizes for best dressed, and helped raise money for ongoing cancer research.

The Maryborough Uniting Church ladies choir provided entertainment.



June McLachlan, Megan Beasant, Roger Bowden, Rev Graham Slaughter, and Dale Beasant enjoy the Think Pink morning tea. Photo by Diane Beasant

Gympie celebrates marriages

By Narelle Towner

IN AUGUST Gympie Uniting Church held a special service to honour those within the Church from Theebine, the Mary Valley and Gympie who had celebrated 50 years or more of marriage.

32 couples attended including Len and Lily Dakin who have been married almost 69 years.

Each couple was given a bouquet of garden flowers and a buttonhole before flower girls Sophie and Annabelle Collins, Jillena Mohyluk and Erin Neville led them down the aisle.

Pastor Graham Bizzell led the service by thanking God for

the institution of marriage and congratulating the couples.

A reception was held in the Church hall complete with bridal table, toasts, tossing of the bouquet and garter and singing.

The honour of cutting the cake, made and iced by Jan Martin, was shared by Len and Lily Dakin and Evan and Gladys Walters who celebrated 62 years of marriage on the day.

One couple said: "We never had a wedding reception so today was it for us".

A lavender posy or a buttonhole was presented to those who had reached 50 years of marriage but had lost their spouse.



Spring clean by Merthyr Church

By Desley Garnett

IN NOVEMBER a group of energetic members of Merthyr Road Uniting Church in Brisbane's New Farm assembled their skills and equipment to get a local

accommodation facility ready for new occupancy.

The house was spruced up inside and out ready for rental to a low income family through Bric Housing.

Celebrating 40 years in ministry

Bob Griffiths, Noel Park, Kevin Bachler and Gale Hall recently celebrated 40 years since they were ordained as Methodist ministers.

The men were ordained in October 1969 and celebrated their 40 years of ordination with their wives over a meal at Noel and Lyn Park's house.



Photo courtesy of Gale Hall

Doulos drops last anchor

By Matt Gees

ON 31 December the MV Doulos, the world's largest floating bookshop, will cease its ministry.

At 95 years of age the Doulos is also the world's oldest ocean going passenger ship, with the hull built just two years after the Titanic.

For the last 32 years Doulos has been a major part of the Operation Mobilisation (OM) ships ministry travelling to ports around the world spreading the gospel message through its volunteer missionaries onboard.

Repairs needed on the ship for it to continue sailing would cost over €10 million (around AUD \$16 million).

Chief executive officer of OM Ships International, Peter Nicoll, said: "The outcome of this is that Doulos will not be able to continue in ministry."

OM is committed to a two ship ministry with senior leadership working on plans for the next stage of their ministry journey.



The MV Doulos will cease operation at the end of 2009. Photo by Ian Worby

New Position First Third Team

The Uniting Church in WA is seeking to appoint a person to join the First Third Team. This appointment is for someone with specialist ministry skills in working with children, young people and families.

The appointee will serve within the Presbytery of WA and will be based with the Uniting Church in the City. The focus of this ministry is to initiate, support and promote ministry to children and young people under the age of 30. The Presbytery has set First Third Ministry as an intentional focus for the next 10 years.

This is the first team of its kind in Australia and it brings a new and exciting approach to ministry with children, young people and families.

This full time position will be under the terms of appointment as per specified ministry in the Uniting Church in Australia WA.

For a detailed profile of the roles and responsibilities contact the team co-ordinator, Rick Morrell rick.morrell@wa.uca.org.au (08) 9260 9800

Applications or expressions of interest close at 5.00 p.m. Friday 18 December 2009.

www.wa.uca.org.au/firstthird/about



SCHOOL CHAPLAIN 2010 CLONCURRY, NWQ

Want to experience life in the Outback? What is your calling? Cloncurry State School is a P-12, multicultural school located in the great NW and we are seeking a caring, experienced chaplain for approximately 450 students & teachers.

Would you like to be supported by a loving, caring community & a knowledgeable, flexible & financial LCC who will make you feel right at home?

SU Qld, a Christian interchurch youth & children's agency, invites applications for the above position starting Wed, 27 January 2010.

For more information phone the District Coordinator on 0437 040 161, or apply online at: www.apply-su-chaplain.com



Sunday 6 December: The Gap Uniting Church

THE GAP Uniting Church is located 10km west of Brisbane's CBD and is surrounded by the Mt Coot-tha National Park and Brisbane Forest Park.

The Gap storms of 2008 played a significant role in the recent history of our suburb. The one year anniversary was remembered on 16 November.

The storms decimated many parts of The Gap (including the Church's property) and gave the congregation an opportunity to reach out to people in our community who were in need of help.

Our congregation seeks to live out our worship, witness and service through: knowing God; building a relationship with God; nurturing our spiritual growth; celebrating and worshipping; growing our congregation; reaching out and

developing leadership.

Ministry occurs in teams at The Gap and we are committed to working together to bring God's love and grace to our community.

Please pray for:

- the Advent Services – including the Advent Family Tea and mural night; the Carols and Youth Night; New Year's Eve and Christmas services
- those still rebuilding after the 2008 storms
- a sense of good fun and fellowship in the end of year functions for each of the groups within the church
- safety and a sense of refreshment for all those travelling over the holidays
- God's guidance and wisdom as we plan and dream for 2010.

Sunday 20 December: Wesley Mission Brisbane Albert Street Congregation

ALBERT STREET Uniting is in the heart of Brisbane city. As an historic icon, Albert Street receives over 12 000 visitors a year.

The Open Church Ministry, where the Church is open each work day from 10am to 2 pm, is a vital part of our ministry.

The beauty of the Church makes it an attractive venue for people wishing to be married.

Often couples then bring their children to be baptised.

This ministry area offers particular challenges to the congregation, in ensuring that we keep the baptismal vows made during a baptism.

We also reach out to the many international people who are learning English. Some come not knowing very much about Christianity and are eager to learn about Jesus.

Our central location also means we are often a point

of contact for people seeking financial assistance.

Emergency relief, one of the Wesley Mission Brisbane activities, provided assistance to over 750 families between July and September this year.

Part of our ministry is a community meal where people are given a hot meal and the opportunity to share with each other. Please pray for:

- Open Church volunteers, for discernment as they speak to visitors
- visitors to the Church that they will experience the presence of God
- wedding and baptismal families
- international students as they settle into Australia
- the Servant Network ministry and the community meal
- the 12 days before Christmas celebrations.

UnitingWorld group arrives home

THE UNITINGWorld Support Group (Qld) have returned to Wesley House, 140 Ann St Brisbane, for their bi-monthly meetings. The group aims to increase awareness of UnitingWorld projects, promotes partnerships with overseas

churches and encourages people to consider volunteering with these churches.

Group members are able to speak at congregations by invitation. Contact Judith Finau on (07) 3711 4622 or email ljfinau@dovenetq.net.au.



Photo by Neville Clarke

The way, truth and life

IT IS ALL but impossible to take John 14:6 "out of context", (Rev Henderson, *Paths to Unity*, November *Journey*). The passage means what it says.

In John's Gospel it is confirmed from the very first sentence: "The Word was with God and the Word was God."

This is a wildly politically incorrect message, but it wasn't too politically correct when it was first uttered either.

Truth is not something we always like to face.

Yes God does love his creation, but that does not negate the truth. John 3:16 tells us that God loves the world so much that he did something to save it.

Brian McLaren (November *Journey*) asked ten questions.

I would reduce this to three: Who is Jesus? What

is the Bible? And what is the Church?

Martyr Paul Negrut said: "Those people who came to the conclusion that Christ is God incarnate, that the Bible is the word of God and that the Church is the body of Christ, those people were willing to spend years in jail and even to die."

Even the most unlikely people may have Jesus buried under all that rubbish they have painstakingly piled on the only true foundation.

Whoever we are, Jesus always is and always will be the way, the truth and the life. However frantically we seek, there never will be any other way.

Rob Pym
Mackay



Too many rights?

THE UCA President says we support a human rights act.

We are further enshrining in law matters so that there will be no need for the Father and faith.

There is already the Antidiscrimination Act, the Privacy Act, the Public Service Act, to name a few acts to protect us.

If we can't make the legislation we do have work, I don't see what this new legislation will solve.

We need to be more humble and serve our servant king, not argue among ourselves in court where the judges may not believe as we do.

Merilyn Thomas
Townsville



Creeds: expressions of grace

IN RESPONSE to the discussion initiated by Ted Stainsby's letter (October *Journey*), as I read the New Testament I am continually reminded of the opposition between faith and unbelief.

Jesus continually urged "believe" or "have faith" and often criticised "you of little faith" or "you who do not believe".

Nobody ever said truth has to be easily believed.

That is exactly what faith is – "believing what is unbelievable, because God has said it is true".

The truth and grace expressed in the creeds give voice to the faith held by the Catholic Church since its beginnings.

Without faith, the church would simply become a club for nice people, or a platform for a morals based code of behaviour, or something far worse.

RC Sproule said: "Truth is reality as viewed from God's perspective."

The invitation that God gives to us is to believe in his truth, revealed in Jesus Christ.

It's an invitation to faith.

Michael Brumpton
St George



A safe space?

"ISN'T IT exciting that the Uniting Church could have an evening of open discussion such as this?"

This sentiment was expressed by a Uniting Church member from the Gold Coast after attending last month's *Evening with Francis Macnab* in Auchenflower.

I pondered this remark in the light of earlier correspondence I had with another Uniting Church member who had been more hesitant about bringing discussion of core beliefs to the people in the pews.

He saw something unusual in having a forum not promoting any particular belief but having a mission to give non-judgemental expression to people's views.

Is it the general feeling of people in our Church that it might not work out if people start saying what they truly believe?

The March 2009 paper by the Uniting Church Assembly *The Nature of Doctrine and*

the Role of Assembly is hardly encouraging.

With regard to basic doctrine, what it seeks to class as dogma, implies that no change is to be contemplated in this area unless agreed to by worldwide councils.

Presumably this means that the Uniting Church has to wait until Pope Benedict and his cardinals make a move for change!

In a Church of declining and ageing membership the Uniting Church needs to make its message intelligible to young people with enquiring minds.

Do we do this by nurturing discussion of the fundamentals of our faith in their parents and other adults – those who still occupy the pews of our Churches?

Or, as one Presbytery officer suggested to me, are these matters best left to discussion at ministers' fraternals and the theological colleges?

Rodney Eivers
Uniting Church Lay
Forum



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

Letters may be edited due to space limitations.

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How will you practise hospitality this Christmas?

Anne Harley

IF HOSPITALITY means cooking, count me out!

I define it as a friendly and liberal reception of strangers or guests - now that is something very different.

For the past 11 years Mt Louisa House of Praise has liberally welcomed strangers and guests to a unique Christmas gift of love.

The Stable began at Mt Louisa in 1999 as a simple nativity display. In 2002 we joined with over 60 churches to create Stable on the Strand and moved to the popular Townsville foreshore.

Last year we welcomed over 36 000 people from around the

world to this amazing God-breathed event.

Visitors walk through a re-creation of the town of Bethlehem, watch the stage events, get involved in children's and youth activities or share in a cuppa.

Fruit cakes cooked by members of organisations such as the Mater Hospital and John Flynn College enable 40 000 pieces of cake to be distributed and over 5000 cups of tea and coffee are drunk in five days.

Our statistics indicate 40 per cent of the visitors do not attend a church.

For the first time last year we invited attendees to bring a tin of

food to create the world's biggest hamper.

Along with money raised from the 'beggars' in the market place, 4500 meals were provided to feed the needy.

So how will Mt Louisa House of Praise congregation members' practise hospitality this year?

Dressed up as shepherds, wise men or soldiers we will again be welcoming thousands of visitors to the streets of 'Bethlehem' and showing them the real meaning of Christmas.

Rev Anne Harley is minister with the Mt Louisa House of Praise, a Uniting Church in Townsville



Beatriz Skippen

"IF I GAVE everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would have gained nothing." 1 Corinthians 13:3

True organic hospitality is to share practical things wrapped in love.

It's not only about material things, although we need material things, it's about giving something of ourselves.

Prison Ministry has many opportunities to help broken people, families of inmates, and their children.

Year after year Prison Ministry has provided Christmas hampers for families and grandparents who support their grandchildren because mum and / or dad are in prison.

Hospitality is 365 days in the year. It's making connections with people who not only experience poverty in their physical circumstances, but are sick emotionally and struggle with a sense of inadequacy.

Hospitality is about how we can reach the

unreachable and transform lives to bring hope.

During this festive season our desire is to provide hospitality wrapped with the love of Jesus.

Today, as I came out of my office in the Fortitude Valley, a young lady was getting food from the bins, even cigarette butts. Why?

Many like her don't have the necessary life skills or coping mechanisms.

Many of the people who live on the streets need not only physical healing, but emotional and spiritual healing.

If we look around us, many are crying for an opportunity to change.

Let us share his unconditional love as it is only his love that will bring hope to the broken hearted.

Beatriz Skippen is the Lifeline Community Care Queensland Prison Ministry coordinator



Beatriz Skippen and Tricia Tschernetz (prison chaplain and administrator of State Chaplaincy Board) preparing Christmas hampers. Photo courtesy of LCCQ



Dinah-Louise Marrs

FOR MOST of us Christmas is a time for a flurry of hospitality as relatives and friends come together from far and wide to celebrate the season.

Being a general manager of The Point Brisbane, a 4.5 star hotel in Kangaroo Point, makes me well qualified to prepare for this period, personally and professionally.

During the year we host a steady flow of tourists and regular business travellers.

As Christmas approaches the mix of clientele changes and so does the mood in the hotel.

At Christmas the guests respond extra warmly to our welcome.

They have a little extra time for pleasantries and of course our staff reciprocate.

It creates a very warm feeling throughout the hotel.

The hotel modifies its presentation and operation over the holy period.

Seasonal decorations and menus make those away from home feel a little more comfortable.

The Hebrews verse, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" resonates with me.

Not all travellers can be at home or with their loved ones at this special time and

I'm sure some of them are quite lonely.

We soften the atmosphere in the hotel and encourage staff to have a chat with guests and make them feel part of the hotel's family.

It's a little something extra we can do for them.

There's no doubt about it: at Christmas time more people turn to God and attend church services in record numbers. The Point hotel assists by maintaining current information on local church services for all denominations.

Dinah-Louise Marrs is general manager of The Point Brisbane hotel

