



## UNITY IN TONGA PAGE 4

"The whole experience is life-changing for the students: they saw how people of a very different culture live." **Lisa Farrell, Unity College**



## EXPERIENCE UNITINGWORLD

"Be prepared to be challenged and changed."  
**Elizabeth Mullan**

PAGE 5

CHURCH VISION FEATURE - P3

TIMOR CHILDREN'S FOUNDATION VISIT - P6

LAUGHTER THE BEST MEDICINE - P10

# SEEKING ASYLUM

By Phil Smith and Mardi Lumsden

FORTY-FIVE nautical miles north-east of Scott Reef is the middle of nowhere.

It's not the place to be one of 92 people adrift in a leaky boat.

The passengers experience crowding, seasickness and fear, and the constant self-doubt about the decision to deal with people traffickers and run from violence and war.

On the mainland we see a few seconds of telephoto news video and an official media release from the Minister for Home Affairs:

"HMAS *Bundaberg*, operating under the control of Border Protection Command, boarded a suspected irregular entry vessel north-east of Scott Reef this afternoon. Initial indications suggest there are 20 passengers and one crew member on board." (22 August 2010 - Border Protection Command intercepts vessel)

Reality is adrift somewhere between cold factual information, hyped-

up media coverage and political grandstanding.

In 2009 the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) report *Asylum Levels and Trends in Industrialised Countries* said arrivals to Australia were very low by world standards.

Last year 377,200 asylum claims were recorded in 44 countries with Australia receiving 6170 – less than 2 per cent of the total asylum applications.

Australia had a 29 per cent increase in asylum seeker applications.

By comparison, Denmark experienced a 59 per cent increase, Hungary a 50 per cent increase, Finland a 47 per cent increase, and New Zealand a 36 per cent increase.

But behind the numbers are stories of individuals – men, women and children who have fled persecution and possible death to claim their legal right of asylum in another country.

If there's such a thing as a typical experience for the small number of asylum seekers who come by boat to Australia, a *Journey* source said it would be something like the following.

The price to smuggle a small family out of Afghanistan is around USD \$15,000; the value of a family home.

One well travelled route is via Pakistan and Malaysia to Indonesia.

Many people are simply dumped in Jakarta, often without their belongings, the local language and any kind of map.

The family then goes to the United Nations office to discover it will take months to even schedule an interview during which they can apply for asylum.

If a local charity cannot find a place for this family in Jakarta they may end up in one of 15 detention centres throughout Indonesia.

They may find a place aboard one of the boats and risk their lives on

a week-long voyage to Ashmore or Scott Reef.

Like every other nation, Indonesia is under no obligation to offer permanent homes to refugees in transit.

In 2008 the UNHCR helped 88,000 people resettle and worked with 10.5 million recognised refugees worldwide.

In Sudan there are more than 60,000 Eritreans whose families arrived at those refugee camps in the 1960s.

The unhelpful rhetoric that asylum seekers coming by boat have jumped a queue is often bandied around.

Research into finding a "queue" in Afghanistan found the Australian Embassy in Kabul operates from a number of undisclosed locations, but Australians could call the Consular Emergency Centre in Canberra.

After eight minutes on the phone to Canberra none of the Consular staff were able to explain how or where to go to join a queue.



Moderator Rev Bruce Johnson is recovering well from heart surgery. Our prayers are with him and his family.

# Finding shelter

THE FEDERAL Election *Hot Issues* flyers stated that in 2009 Australia received 6170 applications for asylum.

Not all of those applicants arrived by boat, but 90 per cent of those who came by boat were found to be refugees and were granted permanent protection visas.

Refugees and humanitarian entrants make up just 6.6 per cent of the places in Australia's immigration program, the lowest it has been in 35 years.

What has happened in Australia to turn the tide against some of the most vulnerable people on the planet?

Asylum seekers are people who have left their country of origin, applied for recognition as a refugee in another country, and are awaiting a decision on their application.

Some time ago I met Abraham who was originally from Sudan.

As I listened to his story I realised that it was through no fault of his own that members of his family were killed and he wound up spending his childhood in a refugee camp in Kenya.

His new start in Australia and the opportunity to study at university here would change the future for his wife (who also grew up in that refugee camp) and the relatives they were saving up to sponsor.

When Methodist minister Rev

Albert Swarnaraj came to talk to members of the Queensland Synod placements committee he told us about his escape from Sri Lanka when his life was threatened because he reported the illegal activities of the local police.

I thought, "Golly, even ministers of the gospel can suddenly find themselves without a home or work and cut off from family and homeland".

There are many examples in the Judeo-Christian scriptures of people fleeing an unsafe environment to an uncertain future.

Adam and Eve leave the security of life in the garden of abundance to a life of hard labour.

Then we meet Noah and his

## The family of the infant Jesus fled from Palestine to Egypt to avoid the slaughter ordered by King Herod.

family, boat people fleeing a wicked generation, facing ridicule for their actions and trusting their lives to a vessel of untested seaworthiness.

Moses led the exodus from Egypt and later received criticism from the people because at least in Egypt they had meat to eat.

Through reading the prophets

we hear about the exile: God's people forced from their homes by invading armies.

They had time to pack little more than memories.

At Christmas we are reminded that the family of the infant Jesus fled from Palestine to Egypt to avoid the slaughter ordered by King Herod.

The hospitality customs of the Hebrew Scriptures required people to open their homes to strangers to provide food and a bed to the sojourners.

The Psalms remind us of God's favour for the oppressed, widowed and the orphaned.

In Romans 12:13, Paul urges church members to share belongings with needy fellow Christians and open their homes to strangers.

So why do members of this nation find it so hard to welcome refugees and asylum seekers?

What is the fear that underlies the attitude our politicians have embraced?

It is not so long ago that tall ships arrived in this country—explorers, invaders, convicts, colonisers.

I wonder how our Indigenous brothers and sisters feel about the rhetoric of resistance to refugees and asylum seekers?

There are many active people in Australia who get involved in support and friendship for asylum seekers and refugees.

Some Christians have seen the

## Message from the Moderator-elect

Rev Kaye Ronalds



opportunity to raise awareness for the plight of asylum seekers and get involved in the political process to influence public opinion and decisions made by politicians.

Some congregations have built friendships with families who have chosen, or were assigned, Australia as their place of refuge.

I know of groups and individuals who go out of their way to assist those people to settle here and have fruitful and productive lives.

It begins as hospitality to the stranger and becomes a sharing of culture and friendship.

It is not always easy to support people who have experienced trauma, violence and loss in their land of origin.

My work with soldiers who served in Vietnam and recent deployments has demonstrated that trauma leaves the mind scarred.

How sad that sometimes people become even more traumatised by being sent to detention centres for long periods of time before having their applications considered.

I also wonder how fair it is to consider locating detention centres in countries that are struggling with a host of challenges as they rebuild their own nation after conflict.

I think the verse of Eric Bogle's song *Shelter* (Larrikin Music Publishing) would be my prayer in regard to asylum seekers:

"To the homeless and the hungry may we always open doors.

"May the restless and the weary find safe harbour on our shores.

"May she always be our dreamtime place, our spirit's glad release.

"May she always be our shelter, may we always live in peace."

## Sign of the times



PINE RIVERS Uniting Church prides itself in being a vital part of their local community. This sign is a great example of looking out, rather than in, and acting in love.

Congregation members often do odd jobs, such as mowing the lawn, for community members who are unable to do it themselves.



## Boundless plains

ACCORDING TO the Australian Government Department of Immigration, up until mid 1989 Australia processed fewer than 500 refugee applications a year.

In June 1989 the Tiananmen Square massacre in China brought the issue of asylum seekers abruptly into the Australian consciousness.

Then Prime Minister Bob Hawke made an emotional speech after the Tiananmen Square massacre and granted permanent residency to 40,000 Chinese students studying in Australia.

The number of people claiming refugee status in Australia peaked at 16,248 during 1990-91.

Compare that to the 6170 refugees Australia received last year (2 per cent of the world's

refugee population). We are not 'overrun' as media and political reports would have us believe.

The Australian Immigration Department estimated that in the 2007-08 financial year around 14,000 people overstayed their visa.

According to the Australian Visa Bureau most illegal overstayers are young British men. Americans are also high on the list.

In 2006 I interviewed a remarkable Ethiopian refugee who had been on temporary visas in Australia for 16 years, living with the constant threat of deportation.

A journalist, Ephrem Dehne Wold-Mariam was told he would be executed on the spot if

caught by the wrong people in Ethiopia.

At the age of 63 and with deteriorating health Mr Wold-Mariam was granted a permanent Australian Visa.

He was finally able to work in Australia, but after a breakdown and a stroke it was unlikely that he would be physically able to.

This is a man who has done two masters degrees, neither in his first language.

Imagine the knowledge Mr Wold-Mariam brought to Australia in 1990. Since then he has been marginalised and reliant on charity.

Is this what we do to refugees in our land "with boundless plains to share"?

Mardi Lumsden  
Editor



## Embracing a future not our own

By Bruce Cornish

AS I WRITE this reflection we are in the last days of an election campaign where the "forward together" slogan became a bit of a joke.

The process of discernment and visioning that we as a Queensland Synod are involved in at the moment, *Together on the way, enriching community*, is not a joke but a very serious engagement with God.

We simply cannot afford, in money or missional terms, to continue as though it is business as usual.

God is calling us to a new future which may well have a radically different shape to the past.

At the 27th Synod meeting we repented as a Church and committed ourselves to being

ready to see what God is doing and ready to yield to and seek the will of God.

My question to myself, and all of us is: How ready are we to die in order for us to allow resurrection?

Are we willing to put everything on the table and allow the possibility of God radically reshaping everything that we are familiar and comfortable with?

Let us engage with God in the future, for God is already there.

It is God's future for us, not our future that we want.

Rev Bruce Cornish (below) is Chairperson and Presbytery Minister in the Presbytery of North Queensland



# On the way

By Douglas Jones

OUR *TOGETHER on the way, enriching community* discernment and renewal process continues.

Most people in the Uniting Church across Queensland will by now be aware of the Call and Gospel Values that we have affirmed:

### The Church's call at this time

In response to God's Call at this time, the Uniting Church in Queensland is committed to:

Uniting in Christ  
acting with love  
living with hope  
witnessing in faith  
working for justice.

### Gospel Values

In response to God's gracious and reconciling action in Jesus Christ,

we are also called to live out the following Gospel Values:

Faithfulness  
Compassion  
Humility  
Truthfulness  
Justice

These commitments are the basis for continuing to the next stage in the process, namely, the discernment of a Vision and Directions.

A Vision workshop on 31 July was attended by 35 people from across the state.

It was encouraging to know that many people were praying for the workshop participants on the day.

That workshop engaged with the Call and Gospel Values and sought to discern a Vision for the

Church in Queensland in 2020 that gave expression to the Call and Gospel Values.

What 2020 Vision do you believe God is giving to the Uniting Church?

Over the next three months Vision workshops will be held across Queensland by those who participated on 31 July.

You are invited to participate in one of those workshops or run a workshop using the resources at [together.ucaqld.com.au](http://together.ucaqld.com.au).

Several congregations have committed to praying for the whole Church over the coming months as it engages in this discernment and renewal process.

You are invited to become a prayer partner as we ask God for renewal, guidance, and direction for the whole Uniting Church in Queensland.

## Together in prayer

By Rev Lynne Davis

THE UNITING Churches at Redcliffe and Samford are intentionally praying for the *Together on the way, enriching community* process.

At Redcliffe we have started a special prayer time on Wednesday nights specifically for this purpose.

Some of us were able to go to the Synod office and pray onsite

during the last *Together on the way* visioning day.

We are finding as we pray that God is calling for a change of heart and a widening of our vision of what our church can be into the future.

Our future depends on our seeking God's will for our church and not our own.

Please join us as we together make prayer for this process a priority.



Lynne Davis is minister at Redcliffe Uniting Church

## Being the change

By Sharon Kirk

It is tempting to stand outside the *Together on the way* process; to be cynical and negative.

What will it achieve anyway?

For me active participation in a process like *Together on the way, enriching community* achieves a great deal.

I expect together we will learn something about God and God's purposes for the world and its people.

I expect together we will learn something about the church, the good news we are commissioned to share and the context in which we are called to tell it.

I do not want to miss out on an opportunity to come before God, together with my brothers and sisters in Christ, to listen, pray, think and act in response to God's call to mission.

Join me and all who choose

to engage in this process with the expectation that God will speak and direct our path.

Let's discover where God is leading us with the sure knowledge that, as we seek to see more clearly the road ahead, God has promised the company of the Spirit so we do not lose the way.

Sharon Kirk (right) is Presbytery Minister in the Downs Presbytery



together on the way  
enriching  
community



Together on the way, enriching community worship and workshop resources available at <http://together.ucaqld.com.au>

Where is God leading the Uniting Church in Queensland?

# Uniting schools in Tonga

By Judy Morrison

"MALO E lelei", Unity College's Tongan Travellers called out, flaunting their new language skills as they emerged from the airport in July.

This was the second trip that students from Unity College, a joint Uniting and Catholic Church school in Caloundra, have made to visit their twinning school, Peteli Middle School, a school of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga. They arrived in the middle of the night to a welcome fit for a king: special garlands of

flowers for each visitor and a huge banner with 'Welcome to Tonga' emblazoned on it.

The warmth of the welcome was a taste of the flavour of the whole visit.

Tongan host families took the Unity students to their hearts and gave them an experience never to be forgotten.

There were demonstrations of traditional Tongan crafts, sightseeing, feasts, celebrations and dancing.

Reflecting the ecumenical spirit of the College, students worshipped at the Free Wesleyan



Unity College students Ellen Brodrick (left) and Jason Butler, with teacher Lisa Farrell and Peteli Middle School Principal Komisi Fihaki (right). Photo by Judy Morrison

Church in Pea village and explored the wonderful architecture of the Catholic Basilica in Nuku'alofa.

Students were overwhelmed by Tongan generosity.

Ellen Brodrick said, "They said that this mat is worn by nobles – and they gave it to me!"

Jason Butler's homestay parents took him to town to buy him an appropriate (Tongan) outfit to wear to church on Sunday.

"They bought me two!" he said, a little bemused.

Bryce Hilton's host family

were delighted with his obvious enjoyment of the food they provided for him.

In return, the students from Unity gave the Peteli Middle School educational materials and money to use to purchase things not included in their limited school budget which will help the learning of the Tongan students.

Teacher Lisa Farrell, who hosted two Tongan students when they visited Australia last year, found the experience enriching and was able to renew special friendships while there.

"The families and students from Peteli Middle School were so warm and welcoming," she said.

"The whole experience is life-changing for the students: they saw how people of a very different culture live.

"They experienced first hand their warmth, generosity, their sense of family and the depth of the Christian faith on which their lives are based."

Students are already lining up to register for the next trip.

## Leaving Toa's legacy

By Judy Morrison

IT WAS A deeply emotional time for Judith Finau when on 18 June she stood in the John and Charles Wesley hall at the Sia'atoutai Theological College in Tonga to donate the library of her late husband Rev Dr Samiuela Toa Finau.

She and Mr Finau had worked there before they went to Fiji and many memories flooded back as she shared some of their experiences.

The occasion was the graduation of the Kolotapu students who were completing their one-year internship prior to ordination.

Ms Finau presented Mr Finau's library as a gift to the College for the benefit of the many students who pass through its doors.

Quite a scholar, Mr Finau had collected theological texts from his study and work throughout the Pacific, America and Australia.

Since his death in 2007 Ms Finau has carefully sorted Mr Finau's books and had them shipped to Tonga.

She was accompanied to the ceremony by her daughter, Petunia.

The boxes of books stood proudly at the front of the stage and were received by the President of the Conference of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga, Rev Dr 'Ahio, and the College Principal, Dr Mohenoa Puloka.

Following the ceremony there was much singing, dancing and reminiscing.



Members of the original Evening Guild: Mildred Morris, Gus Galletty, Coral Bryant, June McLaren, Esme Housman and Blanche McPherson. Photo courtesy of Rosemary Chamberlain

## Celebrating 50 years of friendship

THE BOWEN Uniting Church Ladies Fellowship celebrated 50 years of their Friendship Club last May.

Since 1960 the Club has tried to keep in touch with elderly members of the Church, who were no longer able to attend services.

Now between 35 and 45 senior ladies of Bowen come together once a month for devotions, morning tea, and entertainment.

Many members of the original Evening Guild

were there to celebrate the milestone that they had started.

Minister at the time, Rev Allan McLaren, and his wife June, who was president of the Evening Guild, travelled from Melbourne to attend.

The Dedication Service on 9 May was overflowing with past and present ministers and members.

Almost 100 people attended the 11 May Friendship Club, the highlight being the cutting of a celebration cake.



President of the Conference of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga Rev Dr 'Ahio (left), Judith Finau and Sia'atoutai Theological College Principal Dr Mohenoa Puloka. Photo by Judy Morrison



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# Pinpointing property prospects

By Jane Moad

THE UNITING Church in Queensland is embarking on a process to gain a fresh understanding of how it can use property resources for mission, beginning with an online Property Assessment Tool.

All congregations and faith communities with beneficial use of property have been requested to provide information in the online survey about their current property usage and how well each property meets their needs, both now and looking to the future.

Mary Burnett Presbytery Rural Ministry Coordinator Rev Karyl Davison said the process was important to help gain a whole Church view of properties and mission.

"While many people will think the review is about discovering what property can be sold to alleviate the Synod's current financial crisis, I see the review as being more a way of looking holistically at the life of the Church across the Synod," said Ms Davison.

"It is not simply about how many people attend worship, but about how the congregation see their mission and service within the wider community and therefore whether the buildings meet their mission goals."

The information, due early September, will be compiled and analysed by external property consultants Savills to place all Uniting Church worship buildings, manse, halls, vacant land and other properties on a matrix of optimisation and long term potential.

This objective and benchmarked data will be fed back to presbyteries to inform further conversations with congregations about missional usage and property review.

Synod Property Resources team member Gary Adsett hopes the process will prompt presbyteries and congregations to come to a new understanding of how property can be used for mission.

"Is the best way to achieve our mission through property ownership, or by leasing a space,



Synod Property Resources team members Gary Adsett and Stephen Peake. Photo by Holly Jewell

or through a local partnership?" asked Mr Adsett.

"What is the right type of presence to have in new and growing areas?"

Fellow team member Stephen Peake said it is the first time such an extensive review of property has been undertaken.

"We want to strategically and proactively help the Church understand the resources it needs

for mission," said Mr Peake.

Mr Adsett said the process aims to tie in with the *Together on the way, enriching community* process.

"Property is a resource to support the delivery of mission—but it is being a servant of the mission or the determiner of mission?" said Mr Adsett.

The review of properties is not merely about identifying

properties to sell.

"We need to get much better at reviewing the real value of our properties to our mission—selling properties with only a short term view of their usefulness or potential is not what this is about," stressed Mr Adsett.

More information about the review and next steps can be found at [www.faps.ucaqld.com.au/PropSurvey](http://www.faps.ucaqld.com.au/PropSurvey)

## UnitingWorld launches 2011 experiences

By Tom Ganderton

UNITINGWORLD'S 2011 Experience opportunities are now on the UnitingWorld website.

More than 100 placements are available in a range of exciting locations for participants to experience a diverse array of cultures in places such as Tonga,

Papua New Guinea, India, Zimbabwe and South Korea.

There are many new opportunities available for volunteers to spend anything between four weeks and three years working alongside a Uniting Church partner in Africa, Asia and the Pacific.

UnitingWorld Associate Director for Experience Programs Katy Pereira said, "For placements in 2011 we've actively listened to the needs of our Church Partners, identified their needs and developed placements that will meet these needs."

Former Gold Coast local Elizabeth Mullan served as a UnitingWorld Experience volunteer with the United Church of Christ in the Philippines as a

primary school teacher at Smokey Mountain II in Tondo (see May 2010 *Journey* for full story).

Ms Mullan's placement was supported by Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development (AYAD), an Australian government AusAID initiative.

Ms Mullan had some advice for anyone thinking of taking up a placement.

"Be prepared to be challenged and changed," she said.

Fellow Queenslanders Gary and Lynn Wallis have a longtime involvement in pastoral care, most recently as UnitingWorld Experience volunteers to the Madras Diocese in 2009.

They worked particularly in pastoral support for Dalit children at the Church of South India's Jessie Moses School and are looking forward to leading an InSolidarity short-term group

exposure trip later this year.

Leslene Woodward has been working with the Tangintebu Theological College in Kiribati to assist in setting up their library.

She has previously served as a volunteer in Bali and an English teacher and librarian at Nadu Theological Seminary in South India.

Ms Woodward's skills have gone a long way to improving future theological education in Kiribati.

UnitingWorld needs inquisitive people who want to learn more about other cultures and are genuinely passionate about mutual learning, sharing, giving and experiencing great change in the process.

For more information visit [www.unitingworld.org.au/participate/experience](http://www.unitingworld.org.au/participate/experience)



Elizabeth Mullan with staff and students of Smokey Mountain II school in the Philippines. Photo courtesy of UnitingWorld



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# Music community strikes a chord online

By Jane Moad

IN A FIRST for the Uniting Church a new online Christian community has been launched, with a focus on music and worship.

The site, [www.ncycmusic.com.au](http://www.ncycmusic.com.au), allows composers and songwriters to upload songs, lyrics and chord charts and allows attendees of the National Christian Youth Convention (NCYC) and people in congregations to browse, listen to and download music for use in worship.

The site aims to take the next step from the National Assembly's *Songs that Unite* competition by building an online composer and songwriter community which includes forums where people can share music writing ideas and challenges, as well as discussing issues relating to music and worship.

Created for ncyc11, the designers behind the site hope it will be useful beyond ncyc11 which is being held at the end of this year on the Gold Coast.

Rob Adamson, co-creator of the site and member of the ncyc11 music team, said the site aimed to promote a range of music.

"Our early ideas were that the site would help to give exposure to all the songs that get submitted for use at NCYC, not just the 12 or so that are selected for use in worship at the event," he said.

"Our idea is that the site will be passed onto the next NCYC or grow into something else, that it's a resource that gets built on."

In the past, NCYC attendees could purchase a CD and music books to share the music with their congregation. This site allows people to access all the submitted music for free and play in worship with their Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI) or other license.

"One of the big things that we will look for is that the music will be transferable, not just on a big scale with a full rock band, but music that you can take back to your congregation as a piano player, guitarist or vocalist and play," said Mr Adamson.

"Music inside of worship plays a big role—some people don't have the style and variety of music that you will find at NCYC—and music will be used to help set the mood or theme for the day."

Coordinator of worship at ncyc11, Megan Thompson agrees.

"Music is a universal language that can transcend language and cultural boundaries," said Ms Thompson.

"It is good to learn new songs. The website will be an excellent forum for attendees and their congregations to prepare for and follow up from the convention."

"I encourage music leaders within congregations to visit the site to learn new songs and let us know which ones work well in their settings."

Composers have until 20 September 2010 to submit their MP3 files, chord and lyric charts to the site, to be considered for use in worship at ncyc11.

Full details, including copyright and licensing information can be found at [www.ncycmusic.com.au](http://www.ncycmusic.com.au).

The National Christian Youth



The co-creators of [ncycmusic.com.au](http://ncycmusic.com.au) Caryn and Rob Adamson.  
Photo by Jane Moad

Convention is a biennial event of the Uniting Church for young people aged 16-25. This year the event is being held on the Gold

Coast, from 29 December 2010 to 4 January 2011.

For more information visit [www.ncyc11.com.au](http://www.ncyc11.com.au)

## Foundation building for Timor children

IN MAY Rev John Ruhle and Rev Tanya Richards led a team to visit projects in East Timor

supported by Uniting Church congregations. This included the work of the Timor Children's

Foundation which has its support base predominantly located in Queensland.



The Uniting Church team, with drivers (from left): Bill and Estelle Gibson, Rod and Merle Ruhle, Tanya Richards, John Ruhle and family, Noel and Noela Rothery. Photo courtesy of John Ruhle

The Timor Children's Foundation continues to be engaged in two long term projects: supporting the St Mary's Children's Home and the Scholarship Project.

During the crises in 2006 the Children's Home was burnt down forcing the children to flee to the East.

They stayed as refugees in Bacau, living in sub-standard conditions and sleeping on the concrete floor.

In 2009 the Timor Children's Foundation held an appeal to refurbish the home.

Mr Ruhle said through generous donations the appeal enabled work to be done to allow the children to return to Dili and live and go to school in their own community.

"It was a joy to visit the children and their home and join them on

a celebration picnic," he said.

2010 represents 20 years of support for the Timor Children's Foundation Scholarship Project.

This project continues to provide much needed support to high school, technical college and university students mostly from rural areas of East Timor.

"We were able to meet with many of the students who are currently supported and it was humbling and a privilege to hear their stories," said Mr Ruhle.

"Many of the students expressed their thanks to us and also to God for the support they have received to allow them to receive an education which otherwise would have been impossible to attain."

For information or to support the Timor Children's Foundation visit [www.timorchildren.com](http://www.timorchildren.com)

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Glen Waverley UCA is a large regional church located in the heart of the main shopping and business precinct of the thriving and growing multi cultural suburb of Glen Waverley.

This energetic and well-resourced congregation is looking to add to its ministry team; to develop its multiple worship services, grow its outreach programs to the wider community, nurture its faith development, and help grow and support the 400+ active members of the congregation as an inclusive and caring community.

The Glen Waverley UCA seeks a person who has regional congregation experience, gifts in strategic and pastoral leadership, and a willingness to work as part of a developing team, which includes a Minister of the Word and a specified Minister of Youth and Young Adults.

A Christian community in the Presbytery of Port Phillip East and Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, information of the Church can be found at - [gwuc.org.au/joinourteam](http://gwuc.org.au/joinourteam)

Expressions of interest should be addressed to the Chair of the Placements Committee, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, Rev Allan Thompson, 130 Lt Collins St Melbourne Vic 3000 or [allan.thompson@victas.uca.org.au](mailto:allan.thompson@victas.uca.org.au)



# Why stopping the boats won't help

By Andrew Johnson

THE POLITICAL orthodoxy that any of the policy solutions offered by the two major parties will "stop the boats" demonstrates some clear misunderstandings of international law.

It is not illegal to enter a country for the purposes of seeking asylum.

The major difference between Australia and most other countries is that we are surrounded by water, hence the need for a boat.

The idea that turning back the boats is a viable solution is also

misguided. Both Julia Gillard and Tony Abbott have condemned coming to Australia in "leaky boats" because it is unsafe to do so.

One of the foundational principles of international maritime law is safety at sea.

The notion that unsafe, leaky boats would be "turned back" (presumably removing them to international waters) is likely to be so unsafe it would breach international law.

Captains at sea have substantial authority and their first obligation is to the safety of all at sea not to domestic Australian law or policy.

The notion of a regional processing facility is very unlikely to reduce the number of refugees who resettle in Australia.

It is important to note that Nauru is not a signatory to the Refugee Convention.

Becoming a signatory to the Refugee Convention means you accept the responsibilities placed upon you as a party and the rights of those to seek asylum.

Nauru has no obligation to accept any of those found to be refugees.

East Timor on the other hand,

in the event that a processing centre was ever set up, is a signatory.

Nevertheless if they were processing asylum seekers on behalf of Australia they would rightly argue that Australia's obligations are greater than their own.

But surely Australia has a moral responsibility extending far beyond any legal obligations.

We claim in our national anthem, "For those who've come across the seas we've boundless plains to share."

Finally our Church in its proposed new preamble reaffirms the truth that those of us who are Second Australians came from many lands.

Most of our ancestors came from somewhere else, many by boat.

I thank God they didn't turn back the boat on which my grandmother's family came.

Andrew Johnson is the Community Justice Minister at West End Uniting Church in Brisbane



# Treasuring freedom

By Phil Smith

BEYOND OUR traditions of hospitality or even Christ's command to be generous, there's something that stirs compassion and controversy within the church when the matter of asylum seekers is raised.

Part of what comes to the surface is our own history, a story of being on the run: glancing over the shoulder one moment, staring hopefully ahead the next.

The Bible is full of refugee stories, like Jesus, Mary and Joseph bolting for Egypt, one step ahead of Herod's hit teams.

Yet there's something deeper in the wider story of God calling and humankind seeking a new home.

From Eden to Egypt and on into exile, there seems to be little but the longing and struggle to be in the Promised Land, the presence of God, the place of rest – and nothing even devout

people can do for themselves.

There must be grace.

When God called our spiritual ancestors to risk everything and escape slavery they faced the Red Sea, not the Indian Ocean.

When the forefathers of our faith were becoming comfortable, first persecution drove them from the temple and then siege forced them out of Jerusalem altogether, looking for asylum in the cities of Samaria and on as far as Antioch.

Even the enormous, supposedly multicultural city of Rome wasn't safe when Claudius wanted to revive the old state religion.

So the Church moved among the Gentiles in Corinth and elsewhere.

But the writer of Hebrews warns us not to get comfortable here in 21st Century Australia. "For this world is not our permanent home; we are looking forward to a home yet to come."

Does the story of asylum



seekers confront us in more ways than one?

It would be shameful to admit that we hold tight the trappings of our wealthy lifestyle: unwilling to share jobs, places in schools and universities, health care or room in our suburbs.

This is not a matter of us and them. The church in which there is no Greek or Jew, no slave or free, has a long history as refugees in the world.

There are people in our congregations whose families fled

here from religious and political persecution in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

Sitting in a position of worldly power and comfort while I say, "You don't belong here," is not the only sin.

Behind that statement is the idea that I do belong here; I have earned the right to the things I have.

Do those asking for refuge in Australia remind us that the good life can so easily be stripped away? Many seeking asylum had

houses, careers, qualifications and businesses in the place where they were born and raised.

So did the people of Britain, France and Germany in the 1940s, Korea in the 1950s, Vietnam through the 60s and 70s, Yugoslavia in the 90s.

Are we trapped by the freedoms we tout?

Or are we free to admit we too are aliens and strangers – longing for a better country, not the Commonwealth of Australia but the Kingdom of God?

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# Explaining big issues to little people

By Mardi Lumsden

AUTHOR MORRIS Gleitzman remembers the point when he decided to write children's books that dealt with big issues.

His 2002 book *Boy Overboard* told the story of a young Afghani boy seeking asylum in Australia with his family.

"The government of the day were telling what I thought to be very unkind, one-sided stories about the people on the boats," he said.

"I wanted to write a story for young people about the experience of being a refugee, to invite young readers to consider that whole life experience.

"The Howard Government's mantras always involved name calling terms like queue-jumpers, health risks, criminals and terrorists; the implication of course that they were the inhumane souls who would hurl their children into the seas."

His starting point with *Boy Overboard* was to humanise the people on boats, such as the *Tampa*, at a time when the media

were not allowed direct access to the asylum seekers' stories.

It was, and still is, all about the boats, not the people.

Mr Gleitzman said teaching children about asylum seekers is, like most aspects of parenting, a long lesson.

"I would encourage parents to invite the young people in their lives to consider the circumstances that might cause a family to become refugees," he said.

"Say 'how do you think we would feel if we had to become refugees' or 'what might happen to us in contemporary Australia to make us refugees?'"

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 2009 nearly 43.3 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced due to conflict and persecution.

This number includes 15.2 million refugees and nearly one million individuals whose asylum application had not yet been adjudicated.

"We're talking about huge numbers of people who are essentially looking for what we in

Australia take for granted," said Mr Gleitzman.

"There are so many people who potentially need our help, so immigration policy is not a simple, easy-fix situation."

In his books Mr Gleitzman's characters are much like his readers.

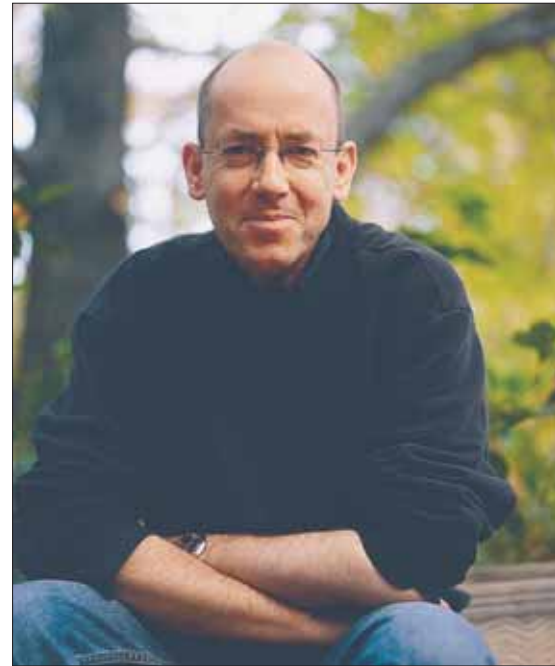
"Every good story will take readers inside the world of the characters, and no matter how different to us the characters are on the surface, we will always find some area of commonality.

"No matter what our cultural, religious or socio-economic backgrounds are ... we all share at least some of the same basic human needs and wants."

He uses humour to avoid some confronting stories becoming crushing.

"My characters always have available to them and alive in them this capacity for love, friendship and, perhaps most importantly, optimism.

"I think young people who are coming to terms with the daunting aspects of the nature of the world deserve the opportunity to stay in



*Boy Overboard* author Morris Gleitzman tackles issues such as asylum seeking in his children's books. Photo by Tim De Neef

touch with those positive aspects of being human, which will hopefully fuel their optimism and their determination to make the world a better place.

"In the age group I write for, primarily eight to 12 years, that's the time of life where we are beginning to develop our capacity for empathy and, if we're allowed

to, it becomes one of our strongest characteristics.

"Empathy is a resource that in the adult world can sometimes become depleted.

"Young people can remind all family members that it is something we're all capable of and need."

## Friendships break down barriers

By Ruth Hacquoil

THE 2001 *Tampa* incident made my husband Geoff and me aware that Australia was dealing unjustly with powerless people fleeing torture, trauma and terror in their own countries.

My own personal faith in a loving and compassionate God told me that it was just plain wrong

to treat anyone like this.

In 2002, through Buddies Refugee Support Group on the Sunshine Coast, we got to know three asylum seeker families: an Afghani Hazara family, a young Pakistani woman, and a Vietnamese couple.

Geoff and I went through some very fast learning curves as we listened to their harrowing stories.

All are now wonderful Australian citizens, loving this country, and contributing greatly to it.

The first time the Afghani family came to stay overnight, Geoff and I knew nothing, and were nervous – as was the family.

We were their first experience of an Australian home and a beach. One thing we simply hadn't

realised was that to invite people like this family into your home starts a continuing and developing relationship.

We quickly became "family", and our lives have been hugely enriched in the process.

In 2007 this family came to our church and the father and 11-year-old spoke of their lives.

Our congregation supported the school-aged children of this family for all educational costs for over two years.

It was wonderful for all involved.

My faith certainly shaped my support for asylum seekers and I am thankful for that. But these asylum seekers also shaped my faith, challenging me to rethink, prioritise, and appreciate.

There is certainly no doubt at all in our hearts that God is giving us this quite amazing and often humbling opportunity.

Ruth Hacquoil is a member of Caloundra Uniting Church

## Families find their feet

By Mardi Lumsden

GWENDA SPENCER of the Helen Black group and The Gap Uniting Church has been volunteering to help refugees for over twenty years.

The waves of refugees she has assisted settle in Brisbane mirrored traumatic world events; first from Vietnam, then Yugoslavia, Bosnia, and countries in Africa and now Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Africa and Burma.

The Helen Black group's role in settling refugees is flexible but can include finding housing, English classes, or attending a medical appointment. But Ms Spencer said being a friend to people was the most important thing.

"One member of our group

stayed the night with a woman who was by herself with two children; it was such an overwhelming thing to be here.

"Then there was a child at high school who was having a Grandparents' Day and they asked me to go along.

"One woman was short of all sorts of things, like bowls ... because every time she got something she would sell it to repay the people in Yugoslavia who lent her money to get here.

"They threatened to attack her relatives if she didn't keep paying."

She said it was particularly hard for teenage boys who were often the bread winners of their families because they were treated like children in Australia.

"Some don't have much

education and feel rather resentful and bitter."

Families also have to deal with different expectations of young people and different levels of parental authority.

Ms Spencer said many of the young Muslim women she knew chose to wear a head scarf even if their father didn't insist on it.

Australians could learn a thing or two about family values from many asylum seekers.

"They have very strong family values and pride in their homes."

To volunteer to help refugees contact the Multicultural Development Association in Brisbane or Amnesty International throughout Australia



Gwenda Spencer. Photo by Mardi Lumsden



# Plans, pains and promise

By Mardi Lumsden

IT IS often easy to dismiss refugees and a group rather than individual people. Media reports rarely tell individual's stories.

Amnesty International Australia Community Campaigner Tracey Foley said it was important to remember that these people had possibly survived oppressive governments, torture, the destruction of their home and deaths of their loved ones.

Chaman Shah Nasiri is one such person.

An ethnic Hazara, Mr Nasiri's family organised for him to flee Afghanistan in 2001 after the Taliban killed his father and eldest brother and kidnapped his other brother.

He went a well-travelled route via Pakistan to Indonesia, then by boat to Australia.

"Hazaras have been persecuted in Afghanistan for more than a century," he said. "On the same day Julia Gillard took control of office about nine Hazaras were beheaded in Oruzgan province, where most of the Australian troops are."

At the age of 19 and with three years of schooling he knew nothing about Australia or the world outside Afghanistan.

"Fleeing the Taliban, we can't go to them and ask them to give us a proper documents to flee and go and complain against them."

Mr Nasiri said despite the bad reputation of people smugglers, many people have no choice but

to use them as their "travel agents."

"All the countries we are coming through, like Pakistan, none of these countries are signatory to the United Nations Convention for Refugees so there is no proper channel for us to go through," he said.

People smugglers give asylum seekers strict instructions not to go out in public during the journey for fear of being caught with fake travel documents.

"They are sending you wherever they want.

"We don't know how to swim so it is really shocking to be in the middle of the ocean in a small leaky boat.

"222 people sitting there and you don't know where you are going."

Mr Nasiri's boat crawled towards Christmas Island just days after the *Tampa* incident and weeks after the attack on the World Trade Centre.

A speedboat headed to the boat and the captain was given a note saying the Australian Government would not accept the boat and to turn back.

"The captain just kept going and after a few hours we saw a big Navy ship."

After three days the women and children were transferred to the Navy ship while the 160 men spent nearly two weeks in the hull while people tried to fix the engine to send them back to Indonesia.

"We went two or three hours back towards international waters, but the engine was not

properly fixed."

The Navy was forced to take the boat back to Christmas Island and process the asylum seekers.

After two months on Christmas Island he was transferred to Nauru, where he spent nearly three years in detention.

"When we got there we were put in long houses they made with plastic sheets, with no proper electricity, food or medical facilities.

"We were rejected because they said the situation in Afghanistan had improved. If the situation had improved then what is the point to have the Australian troops there for the past nine years?"

He said someone with no education does not know what to say to fit the asylum criteria, for example that family members had been killed because of their race.

"When you are outside Australia, in a detention centre like Nauru, you do not have any legal representation.

"When you sit in those detentions centres you are thinking of your family, your children."

Romero Centre director Frederika Steen said detention centres such as these are "mental illness factories".

After a UNHCR worker was killed in Afghanistan, the situation was declared worse and Mr Nasiri was granted refugee status.

Mr Nasiri was brought to Brisbane and left in the hands of charitable organisations like the Romero Centre.



Romero Centre director Frederika Steen with Chaman Shah Nasiri at an Amnesty International and Helen Black group seminar at The Gap Uniting Church in August. Photo by Mardi Lumsden

His first experience of Australian life was the month he spent at a member of The Gap Uniting Church's home.

He is now a welder and refugee rights advocate and speaker.

He has traced half of his family to Pakistan and continues to support them from afar.

The brother who sent him from Afghanistan and one of his sisters are still missing.

## Global events cause new waves

By Greg Mackay

AUSTRALIA has been opening its doors to a wide range of people for a very long time.

The social, cultural and economic life of our nation has benefited immeasurably from those who have arrived here to make a new life for themselves after fleeing persecution in their own countries.

Despite World War I's creation of a massive refugee problem in Europe, Australia admitted only small numbers of refugees from 1901 to 1921 under the general immigration program.

In the 1930s Australia conceded to admit 7000 European Jews fleeing Hitler's persecution. This may have been Australia's first significant refugee intake.

Since 1945 more than 170,000 refugees have been admitted to Australia, mainly

under the International Refugee Organisation's Displaced Persons' scheme.

About 6000 Czech and Slovak refugees arrived following the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

The first non-white refugees admitted were 198 people expelled from Uganda by Idi Amin's regime in 1972.

In 1973 the Whitlam Government abolished The White Australia Policy.

A refugee crises in East Timor and Vietnam in 1975 saw 400 Vietnamese refugees selected for Australian settlement from camps in Guam, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia.

Violent civil war in East Timor in August 1975 sent about 2500 evacuees to Darwin.

Lebanon's 1976 civil war resulted in 800 Lebanese people coming to Australia, a number that continued to rise with the worsening war.

From 1975 to 1976 Australia admitted 4431 refugees of whom 1037 were Indo-Chinese.

The late 1970s saw the arrival of the largest ever numbers of unauthorised "boat people": from 1977 to 1978, 1430 people travelled in 37 small boats, mainly from Vietnam.

An oft-quoted concern is for the need to stop people smugglers. While that seems perfectly reasonable it leaves me with two questions.

What happens to those people who resort to people smugglers due to their appalling and dangerous circumstances?

And is the concern about people smugglers a thinly disguised dislike to admitting others into 'our' country?

While refugee status is a twentieth century invention, the institution of political asylum is at least 2500 thousand years old: the

Greek city states knew about and respected it.

Historically a nation's capacity to grant asylum was a mark of its international standing.

Apart from the Indigenous custodians of this vast

land, all of us have come (ourselves or our ancestors) from somewhere else.

Within this ever-expanding scenario there has, and will, always been those who have chosen to come and those who had no choice.

Greg Mackay is Director of UnitingCare's Centre for Social Justice



# Sexuality secrets set church door swinging

*Journey* continues its exploration of Brian McLaren's 10 questions he says are transforming the church. This month is the sexuality question.

By Kaye Ronalds

MATTERS TO do with sexuality are of the most intimate human interactions.

That is why people in churches have responded to sexuality issues with such energy and emotion.

The Uniting Church has established clear processes to deal with sexual misconduct by lay people and clergy.

We have rituals to establish marriage and have a Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice that requires ministry agents to uphold the laws of the land.

Nevertheless, there is still a range of sexual behaviours practised by people who claim membership within the Uniting Church.

There is a level of discomfort about admitting that. There have been many discussions about homosexuality and leadership.

Some people have left the Uniting Church because of it and some have joined this Church because of it.

Many people like to have a set of rules to live by; it gives legitimacy to our choices especially if we can use a scripture passage to support our decisions.

Unfortunately, the Bible doesn't take into account many aspects of life in our era which affect sexual practices such as contraception, inheritance patterns, family law, IVF, porn, sexually transmitted infections and treatments.

Homosexuality is only one aspect of a larger conversation about sexual ethics for adults in this era – both within the Christian church and beyond, in a multi-faith and multi-cultural society.

In conversation we might be willing to consider the deeply held beliefs of another person.

Although it is not easy for me, it requires that I am willing to suspend my hold on "the truth" in order to really hear the perspective of another person.

What are their motivations, assumptions, hopes and fears and why do they matter to this person?

Is there a yearning for a biblical basis for living and exploring what that might look like?

Is there a desire to protect vulnerable people in the family, church and community?

Is there a fear about the consequences of giving ground to

a different strongly held belief?

Is there a hope that the rules will change human behaviour?

Most people I have met would not identify with the views expressed on either pole regarding homosexuality.

They are looking for protection for the vulnerable, guidance in the choices they make and some stability in society.

However, that means that people who are different sometimes remain isolated.

At times I struggle to know when to be the bearer of the grace of God and when to apply a strict boundary.

I am not keen to let go of the truth as I see it, but I know that to remain in company with other Christians I need to make an effort.

The consequence of not moving beyond paralysing polarisation when considering these issues is that secrecy will remain.

People will be unable to be honest and open about their sexual orientation.

In 25 years of pastoral ministry I have encountered many people who are hurting because of their own or someone else's difficulty



in accepting homosexual orientation.

Men and women have married and had children, maintaining a facade of heterosexuality, while their practices within and outside the marriage indicate another reality.

What about adults unable to speak openly to family and church friends about their life choices without fear of rejection, exclusion and isolation?

There are also plenty of heterosexual people in the church, even clergy, whose sexual behaviour has led to broken

relationships, fragmented families and distressed congregations.

Not discussing these issues will make more people feel like they are unable to talk about what is happening or feel that they need to move away to explore their sexuality or leave the church in search of a community of faith that understands the grace of God as well as the joys and difficulties of being human.

Rev Kaye Ronalds is Central Queensland Presbytery Minister and Moderator-elect of the Queensland Synod

## Laughter still the best medicine

By Aileen Wallace

CLIENTS OF Wesley Mission Brisbane's Hadden Place Dementia Day Therapy and Respite Centre at Sinnamon Village, Brisbane, are taking advantage of a new humour therapy program thanks to \$50,000 funding from the Department of Health and Ageing.

Hadden Place Program Manager Lenore Eggins said people with dementia don't lose their sense of humour.

"But they may forget how to instigate it," she said.

"When they are engaged and laughing it triggers endorphins, improving wellbeing and helping

them feel good about themselves which is extremely important.

"That is where the Humour Intervention Program (HIP) comes in."

The HIP has a small team of carefully selected professional performers trained to work in healthcare environments with people who have dementia.

Hadden Place works closely with the Humour Foundation and their ElderField program to implement the HIP to engage clients one on one, twice a week, and will directly involve up to 60 clients over the term of the project.

Although the HIP is only in its early days the program is already

having a positive effect, re-engaging those at Hadden Place and increasing the opportunities for communication, interaction and socialisation.

Humour Foundation Creative Director Jean-Paul Bell said they were delighted to see the ElderField program starting at Hadden Place.

"ElderField is aimed at encouraging residents and their carers to celebrate life by participating in fun and humour," he said.

In Australia one in fifteen people over 65 has dementia.

Hadden Place is the only centre of its kind in metropolitan Brisbane.



A Hadden Place client enjoys the ElderField program. Photo courtesy of Wesley Mission Brisbane



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Graham Clarke



# Uniting in Christ

By Mardi Lumsden

THE 28TH Synod affirmed a five line Call for the Uniting Church in Queensland in discerning the future of the Church.

This is the first of a series of discussion starters that will explore what each of the five phrases in the Call mean to different people.

This edition we look at the first phrase: Uniting in Christ.

Rev Allan Thompson, *Together on the way, enriching community* steering committee secretary, said Uniting in Christ immediately identifies us with Jesus Christ the living head of the Church (*Basis of Union* para. 1).

"The phrase is reminiscent of biblical teaching affirming that we are baptised into Christ, united with Christ in baptism, and are made one in Christ.

"This concept of being united with Christ is thus a key Christological affirmation and its inclusion in our mission statement quite rightly grounds the life and directions of our Church in and under the lordship of Jesus Christ.

"Uniting in Christ is also a

strong missional statement," he said.

"The baptismal illusion takes us to the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20.

"Seen in this light Uniting in Christ also has an evangelical imperative.

"We affirm that it is the will of God that all people are united in Christ, and it is the Church's task to serve that end.

"In committing ourselves to be uniting in Christ we share in the unfinished work of God in uniting all people.

"Further, Uniting in Christ gives expression to the ecumenical commitment of the Church and our vocation of breaking down the barriers which divide humanity."

But for Burdekin minister Rev Paul Clark the statement does not go far enough.

"I love the intent – just not the delivery," he said.

"For those already in the Church it sounds like so much that we have already heard.

"It does not confront us and smack us between the eyes and make us go, 'That's new or different or radical.'"

"As Peter Hobson said, it's comfortable – and we can no longer afford to be comfortable."

Mr Clark said the call to true unity is very radical but there is a danger in that being the aim.

"If unity becomes our all encompassing purpose, the very things we do to achieve that – water down the boundaries, becomes all things to all people, accept anything – will ensure it never happens.

"When we fix our eyes on Jesus, unity will take care of itself.

Mr Clark defined "radical" as "going back to the core".

"Perhaps the first thing a Uniting Church has to do is dismantle its denomination and become a movement again?"

He also said the Church remains in denial about its place in society.

"The future of the Church lies in giving up its privileged position in society. We have to own our irrelevance in today's world.

"At its core Uniting in Christ is a clarion call to radical discipleship for the Church, but sadly it is a call that could easily be missed."



Walkers enjoy the Moggill Family Fun Run/Walk. Photo by Sally Gradidge

## Fitness first at Moggill

Moggill Uniting Church in Brisbane's west hosted its inaugural Family Fun Run/Walk on 14 August to raise funds to develop a Family Centre at the Church which will be open to the whole community.

Event organiser Joanne Thompson said the Fun Run/Walk was enjoyed, in perfect weather conditions, by 196 runners and walkers of all ages.

Sizzling sausages and

refreshing drinks were enjoyed as Councillor Margaret de Wit for Pullenvale Ward and Rev Costa Stathakis of the Moggill Uniting Church awarded prizes, sponsored by local businesses, to the participants.

Ms Thompson said, "The Moggill Uniting Church would like to thank the community for supporting this event and looks forward to hosting a Fun Run/Walk on an annual basis."

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September 4, 9.30am-10pm

## Journeys in Music and Grace

The Gap Uniting Church, Waterworks Rd.



Hear singer-songwriters Geoff Bullock, left, and Stu Larsen perform and talk about their journeys in music and grace.

A variety of tickets available including package deals for the day and group discounts.

Visit [www.thegapuca.org.au](http://www.thegapuca.org.au) or contact the Church office on 3300 2712 or email office@thegapuca.org.au.

**September 3-4, 10-2pm. Floral Kaleidoscope.** Two sections of floral displays. Boonah, Queensland. Contact Bruce Bartleet on 5463 1052 or [b.bartleet@bigpond.com](mailto:b.bartleet@bigpond.com).

**September 4-5. Biggenden Uniting Church Centenary celebrations.** Gospel concert, Church service and luncheon. Contact Bronwyn on 4127 1273 (between 1-6pm), Wynsome on 4127 1294 or Joanne on [iantrigger@activ8.net.au](mailto:iantrigger@activ8.net.au).

**September 4, 7-1pm. St Marks Uniting Church Garage Sale,** cnr Hicks and Springwood St Mt Gravatt. Contact 3849 8563 or [stmarksadmin@bigpond.com](mailto:stmarksadmin@bigpond.com).

**September 4. Earnshaw Road Uniting Church Garage Sale,** Banyo. Contact Marge McHugh on 07 3267 5042.

**September 9-10. Prepare/Enrich Training** at Chermide Kedron Uniting Church. A reputation for accuracy, reliability, sensitivity and relevance. Contact Bob Warrick on [nolabob@optusnet.com.au](mailto:nolabob@optusnet.com.au) or 0412 040 139.

**September 9-11. Laidley Uniting Church Quilt and Craft Expo,** 45 Patrick St, Laidley. Quilts, fine arts, needlework, and much more. Entry \$3/50c. Contact Graham Welden on 5465 3222 or [gmwelden@hotmail.com](mailto:gmwelden@hotmail.com).

**September 11, 8- 1pm. Brookfield Country Market.** Stalls available. Contact convenor Edith McPhee on 3374 1404 or [emcphee@westnet.com.au](mailto:emcphee@westnet.com.au).

**September 11, 7.30pm- 10pm. Brisbane Festival Male Voice Choir Sacred Concert** at Sandgate Uniting Church, 116 Board St, Deagon. Sponsored by Sandgate Men's Fellowship in aid of local School Chaplaincy. \$10 inc supper. Contact Jan Buchanan on [janiceb@pacific.net.au](mailto:janiceb@pacific.net.au) or 3269 3788.

**September 11, 7- 3pm. Elanora Uniting Church Spring Fair** and Flower Show with competitions in cut flowers, floral art, cakes and preserves. Contact Mary Flynn on [flynn19@bigpond.com](mailto:flynn19@bigpond.com) or 5598 8733.

**September 11, 9.30- 2.30pm. Australian Christian Meditation** community day, 139 Brookfield Rd, Kenmore Hills. A day of meditation, teaching, and more. Suggested donation \$10. Contact Gabby Nelson on [toga@bigpond.net.au](mailto:toga@bigpond.net.au) or 3711 4227.

**September 11, 9.30- 12pm. Storytelling workshop** at Graceville Uniting Church, 215 Oxley Rd. Join Andrew McDonough, creator of the *Lost Sheep* stories, for an interactive workshop. \$15 inc morning tea. Book to avoid disappointment. Contact Christopher Barr on [ucgrace@bigpond.net.au](mailto:ucgrace@bigpond.net.au) or 3379 6372.

**September 12, 2- 4pm. Music Lovers Charity Concert** at Graceville Uniting Church 215 Oxley Rd. An afternoon of fine classical music fundraising for the Casa Segura orphanage (Riberalta Bolivia). \$20/\$15/\$7. For bookings call 0424 780 389 or purchase tickets at the door. Contact Christopher Barr on 3379 6372 or [ucgrace@bigpond.net.au](mailto:ucgrace@bigpond.net.au).

**September 12, 2pm. Sinnamon Memorial Uniting Church 130th celebration,** Rocks Road Sinnamon Park. Preacher Rev Dr Bill Adams, followed by afternoon tea. Contact Jane Dale on [aajanedale@hotmail.com](mailto:aajanedale@hotmail.com).

**September 18, 1- 4pm. Lawn Bowls - Laugh with Blue Care,** Wynnum Manly Leagues Bowls Club. To book contact Blue Care 3308 5861, Sonia Kennett 0416 082 158 or email [skennett@bluecare.org.au](mailto:skennett@bluecare.org.au).

**September 18. Clayfield Uniting Church Garage Sale,** 170 Bonney Avenue Clayfield. Lots of bargains, stalls, sausage sizzle and morning tea. Contact Helen Wilson on 07 3266 5132.

**October 2, 11am-4pm. Trinity Ipswich Uniting Church Multicultural Festival,** 114 Jacaranda Rd, North Booval. Music, cultural dancing, great food and much more. \$7. Contact 3812 3110, 0419 714 903 or [viliami\\_anamila@bigpond.com](mailto:viliami_anamila@bigpond.com).

## Abergowrie Church decommissioned

THE ABERGOWRIE Uniting Church in Ingham was decommissioned on 6 June with a special service conducted by North Queensland Presbytery Chair Rev Bruce Cornish, right.

Its opening in March 1959 as the Abergowrie Methodist Church saw four baptisms that day.

Dwindling numbers and high building upkeep costs forced the congregation to reassess their use of the building.

Event Coordinator Liz Bosworth said the service was a celebration of the ministry of the Abergowrie Uniting Church.

"This brings to a close the end of an era for the Abergowrie Uniting Church, on a perfect



day, shared with a revered spirit by a blessed congregation, who celebrated the occasion with rejoicing and thanksgiving," she said.

A cake was cut by Tom Venables and the longest serving congregation member Ann Lyon.

Many members now worship at the Ingham Uniting Church.

## Congregationalist history

HISTORIAN DR Gwyneth Young has produced an historical record of memories from Congregational church members in Victoria.

This material is now available at [thelastcongregationalists.blogspot.com](http://thelastcongregationalists.blogspot.com).

## UnitingCare history project

WORK ON A documented history of UnitingCare and its services is about to commence.

If you have any information, photographs or stories to tell about the life of your service agency or hospital, please contact Dot King on 3025 2009 or [dot.king@ucareqld.com](mailto:dot.king@ucareqld.com).

## Mental Health Week raises awareness

By Irene Frances

THE YEAR'S Mental Health Week is 10-16 October and the theme is *Be active, Get connected, Stay involved*.

Mental Health Week begins with World Mental Health Day on 10 October and includes Stress Less Day on 13 October.

A Nouwen Network's Jane Frazer Cosgrove said Mental Health Week was an opportunity for churches to promote mental health awareness in their communities and help reduce the stigma of mental illness.

"Church people are not immune from mental illness such as depression, anxiety, eating disorders, schizophrenia," she said. "Many suffer alone with little



A Nouwen Network members prepare for Mental Health Week support from their church."

A Nouwen Network is a group of people with a community-based approach to support those whose lives are affected by mental health concerns and is supported by the Lifeline Community Care chaplains.

Visit [www.mentalhealth.org.au](http://www.mentalhealth.org.au) for resources or for information about A Nouwen Network contact Jane Frazer Cosgrove on 041 6649 474 or [nouwen-network@optusnet.com.au](mailto:nouwen-network@optusnet.com.au)





# Losing My Religion: Unbelief in Australia

By Tom Frame, UNSW Press (Sydney), 2009, RRP \$34.95

Winner 2010 Australian Christian Book of the Year

Reviewed by Peter Harvey, Flinders Patrol Minister for Frontier Services and former Anglican Defence Force Chaplain

TOM FRAME, former Australian Defence Force Anglican Bishop and current Director of St Mark's National Theological Centre, writes that this book (which he stresses is not autobiographical) comes out of his personal interest in our national cultural and spiritual mood, as well as a personal need to understand why so many of his fellow Australians find religious belief impossible.

After setting a clear platform for the language he uses, Mr Frame examines the context of the Australian spiritual mood.

He explores and evaluates the transition made within our society from Christendom to the present secularised civil

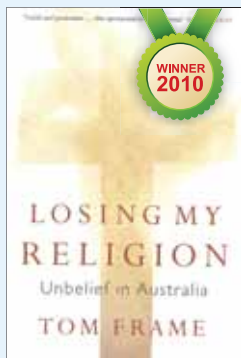
institutions, with broad brush strokes largely based on census data and personal observation, and assesses the extent of the loss of religious belief in Australia.

He then seeks to examine the causes of unbelief in general and applies them to the Australian context.

The issues raised by science and philosophy are examined, and Mr Frame writes that, alongside many of the internal conflict issues of religious bodies, they have been the major contributing factors in the growing disregard for religion in our society.

He also explores the rise of alternate spiritualities as substitutes for institutional traditional religion.

In the third and possibly the most contentious part of the book



Mr Frame seeks to understand the consequences of unbelief in a society which has its basis in a theistic world view.

The rise of secularism and the increasing marginalisation of religious communities are painted as the logical outcomes in a society which increasingly bases itself on an atheistic world view.

The text is unashamedly academic in nature, but Mr Frame displays an unwavering determination in his journey to understand the world we live in and the changing religious context we face in this nation.

# The Home We Build Together: Recreating Society

By Jonathan Sacks, Continuum, 2007, RRP \$29.95

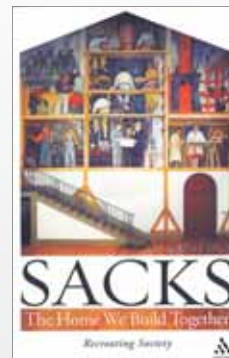
Reviewed by Kerry Pierce, a member of Believing Women for a Culture of Peace and minister at West End Uniting Church, Brisbane.

JONATHAN SACKS begins his political sociological thesis identifying that: "Multiculturalism has run its course, and it is time to move on".

He explores the shift in British society from a monoculture, where newcomers were welcomed as guests and expected to assimilate into the traditions of Britain, to the current multicultural liberal democracy, which inadvertently encourages group associations which can deny newcomers the opportunity to develop any form of British identity.

As a second generation migrant himself, Mr Sacks' concerns are for the sense of belonging that is lost to newcomers and the associated social disadvantage of missed opportunities.

Mr Sacks details the changes in the past 60 years and suggests that the political shift is detrimental to both the



nation and the individual.

I found Mr Sacks' detailed examination of social contracts and civil society, which he suggests is best grounded in covenantal commitments, most interesting.

Unfortunately it takes a long time for him to get to his basic thesis; that a new and inclusive British identity can be forged when people are prepared to accept their responsibility for working alongside each other to forge deep relationships.

This is where the sense of belonging that affords a healthy identity will be built and both unity and diversity will be given dignity.

I was encouraged by Mr Sacks' vision.

# See what I mean? and Hey Be and See

By Dave Andrews, Authentic, 2010, RRP \$15 each

Reviewed by Karyl Davison, Rural Ministry Coordinator and Christian Educator, PLC

THE CHRISTIAN church places a good deal of emphasis on the Ten Commandments, and the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, but as author Dave Andrews points out, much less emphasis is put on the words of the Sermon on the Mount (or plain) and the Beatitudes.

Mr Andrews reflects that the older he gets the less he

believes in, but that what he does believe in he believes more and more.

He believes in the necessity of the church, as people who hold to a Christian faith, to live out more fully the word of the Beatitudes.

These two little books are companion pieces to *Plan B* in which Mr Andrews takes Jesus' Sermon on the Mount



and reframes it "as a set of radical Be-Attitudes into a life changing framework" for

making a difference in the world.

*See what I mean?* outlines what the Beatitudes mean for Mr Andrews in stories as he seeks to embody the radical way of Jesus.

*Hey Be and See* sets out how the vision of the reign of God is possible, as Jesus intended it, here on earth, and how we can and should be a part of bringing it about.

He asks how much more

committed we might be to this vision if we recited the Beatitudes as frequently as we recite the creeds?

The message in these three books is clear: if we're serious about following Christ, we need to get serious about being in the risky places the Beatitudes would take us.

Do we have the courage?

More reviews online at [www.journeyonline.com.au](http://www.journeyonline.com.au) including:

## Say I am Strong

(CD)  
By Heidi Popp  
Independent, 2009  
RRP \$27.95



## Christ & Culture

Various Authors, Canterbury Press, Norwich, UK, 2010, RRP \$42.95



## Ladies and Gentlemen, The Church Has Left The Building: Pentecost

Rob and Andy Frost, (Ed) Mark Williamson, Authentic Media, 2008, RRP \$29.95



# In Your Shoes: Inter-Faith Education for Australian Religious Educators

By Kath Engebretson  
Connorcourt, 2009, RRP \$29.95

Reviewed by Aaron Ghiloni, Education Coordinator of the Moreton Rivers Presbytery.

IF ECUMENICITY was the major issue facing Australian Christians in the 1960s and 70s, inter-faith relationships is the big issue now. No longer can it be blithely assumed that "religion" is Christian religion or that "faith" means Christian faith.

*In Your Shoes* author Ms Engebretson makes a unique contribution to the growing inter-faith literature by placing her primary focus on interreligious education rather than on interreligious dialogue.

While reciprocal dialogue

is the "hoped for end" of inter-faith encounters, an inter-faith education is required before this can occur.

A pedagogical foundation makes true and transformative conversation possible.

Using a balanced range of theoretical models and practical examples, the book provides sound guidance for educators of sundry religions.

Theoretical models are dominated by phenomenology, which can be either a strength or a weakness depending on the learning aims.

Practical examples are intended for formal educational contexts, which will be useful to those teaching in schools but less relevant to those ministering in non-formal learning settings such as congregations.

## Books 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](http://www.mosaicresources.com.au)

# Celebrating a century of Ivy

MEMBERS OF the Esk Uniting Church celebrated the birthday of their oldest member, Ivy Fox (nee Feldhahn), at her 100th birthday lunch in Toowoomba in August.

Baptised at the Lowood Methodist Church in 1910, Mrs Fox has had a continuous association with her church, showing adoration for her Lord in the way she quietly shares her faith by love and example.

She married Thomas Fox in the Ellenborough Methodist Church, Ipswich, in 1935

and moved to his farm at Buaraba (between Esk and Gatton) which was only a few miles from the tiny Atkinson Lagoon Methodist Church where they worshipped and brought up their three sons, Tom (Jnr), Ross and Lance.

When this church closed in the 1960s they joined the Esk Methodist Church (now Uniting) where Mrs Fox became an enthusiastic member of the ladies fellowship.

She helped the ladies cater at cattle sales until she was over 90 years of age.

She also had her driver's licence until 95 years of age and was still able to drive 20km to church.

Mrs Fox moved into a low care hostel in Toowoomba in 2006, where she resided for four years, and has only recently moved into high care.

She was delighted to have several members from the Esk congregation, and some from Atkinson Lagoon days, join her and her family and other old neighbours and friends to celebrate 100 years.



Ivy Fox celebrates 100 years with family and friends. Photo courtesy of Debbie Bodley

## Grace College marks 40 years

IN EARLY July Grace College within the University of Queensland celebrated its 40th anniversary.

Grace College was officially opened in 1970 under the auspices of the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches, later the Uniting Church, with 120 young women coming from country Queensland and interstate.

The July weekend was chosen to coincide with the 100th anniversary celebrations of the

University of Queensland.

On 3 July almost 100 former residents of Grace College attended a dinner which was a great evening of reminiscing.

During the dinner the current Principal Dr Sue Fairley outlined some of the developments that have occurred at the College over 40 years.

The anniversary cake was cut by one of the original residents and now Fellow of the College, Rev Pam Russell.

At the Thanksgiving Service on 4 July a number of people were installed as Fellows of the College.

These new Fellows were: Professor Jenny Strong, Professor Helen Chenery and Tanya Ziebell (all current UQ staff) Adrian Webb, Jan White and Dr Russell Cowie (long serving Council members) and Althea Bailey, Ruth Rodgers and Kerry McPherson (all long serving College staff).

There was also a presentation to current Fellows including Betty Patterson, Jane Trewern, Rev Pam Russell and Berilyn Miller Morrison.

At these events a new 40th Anniversary Bursary was launched and everyone was



Grace College principals (from left) Berilyn Miller Morrison, current principal Dr Sue Fairley and the original principal Betty Patterson. Photo courtesy of Sue Fairley

### On Sunday 12 September please pray for Tully and District Uniting Church

THE THEME for Tully and District Uniting Church this year is "Build your Church".

Our vision is to build our Church in mind, body and spirit.

In many areas we are seeing growth, but prayer is still needed.

Please pray:

- for our ministries: Home groups, Sunday school and the youth service. These three areas have seen encouraging growth, however please pray that those participating in these groups continue to develop spiritually and gain a greater understanding of who they are in Christ
- for our financial situation. Being a small rural

congregation we are struggling financially and would really appreciate prayer.

- for our Church to be one in spirit and one in mind and that those in our communities see Jesus in us.

Tully is currently in the sugar season and we ask for prayer for a safe harvest.

There has been a lot of rain this season and this has caused delays and stoppages to crushing.

This will cause the season to run longer than normal.

As those involved in the season continue to harvest, we ask for a prayer of protection over them, for guidance and for endurance to see the season through safely.

### On Sunday 19 September please pray for St George Uniting Church

ST GEORGE is six hours west of Brisbane, in the Downs Presbytery.

The St George Uniting Church family is a congregation of mostly young families, with a smattering of young singles and seniors.

Worship services are held in St George, Dirranbandi and Wycombe, and the ministry area covers a radius of 120km to 150km.

Recently the Lord has shown us to employ Adrian Toft two days per week in the areas of youth and mentoring.

invited to contribute. This bursary will be awarded for excellence in the field of behavioural sciences.

Anyone wishing to contribute to this can contact the College on (07) 3842 4000.

Pray that the Lord would lead Adrian as this role unfolds.

Our congregation has also begun to pray, "Lord, what great thing will you do in our midst, that we will know that only you could do it, and that it would be a demonstration of the Spirit's power?"

Lord, increase our faith, and give us a God-sized work to do."

Please pray that when God answers that prayer we will instantly recognise it as the activity of God and respond in faith.

We currently run *stgeorgeyouth*

and have 30-40 high schoolers attending.

Pray that their faith would grow.

We also minister to up to 90 primary aged children through activities such as Jaffa, Day Camp and Sunday School.

Please pray that these children would begin a lifelong relationship with their heavenly father.

We thank the Lord because he is good.

Please praise him with us.

### On Sunday 26 September please pray for Coolum Beach Uniting Church

COOLUM BEACH is a growing coastal community between Maroochydore and Noosa. The Coolum Beach church has been active in the area since 1955.

Congregation members are mainly older and middle-aged people, with a handful of children and teenagers, who worship together on Sundays.

At the Friday night Fun Club there are between 25 and

50 people between the ages of five and 15 meeting together to enjoy games and worship.

They have been involved with the Lent Event program for children and have supported children in India.

Next year there is the potential to commence a small youth group.

Leadership is a concern for both Fun Club and a teenage group, as the majority of leaders

are aged between 60 and 90, with Ted, our 90-year-old, coming to set up, supervise games and talk with the young people.

The congregation's active Adult Fellowship and Community Life Group organise various activities throughout the year giving opportunities to involve the community. These include a fashion parade by local op shops, the Soup and Crusty luncheon, Christmas in June, a morning tea

and fashion parade that raised over \$800 for the Cancer Fund, Chew and Chat, car boot sales, the 2009 Spring Floral Festival, and the 2010 Art and Craft Show.

The congregation supports the SU high school chaplain and is involved in the ecumenical Stations of the Cross on Good Friday and ecumenical Christmas carols.

We would like to become involved in ministry in the new growth area of Peregian Springs but resources are limited.

Please pray:

- that members may grow and deepen in their relationship with God
- for leaders for both Fun Club and Youth Group
- that the young people involved in the Fun Club and Youth Group will experience the love of God and develop a personal relationship with God
- for guidance regarding ministry in the Peregian Springs area.



# Not the Greens at prayer

ARE WE really the Greens at prayer (August *Journey*)? Certainly not.

We are the church at prayer and we are the church at mission: committed to engaging in society so that we can contribute to building a just and peaceful nation where all people are valued and the earth is cared for.

If there are party policies that better reflect the Christian concerns for those who are poor, marginalised and oppressed then those policies are to be supported.

Christians are called to apply their faith and their prayers as they consider their vote. Some in good Christian conscience will choose to vote for one party, some in equally

good Christian conscience will choose another party.

Dr John Harrison and Steve Austin's comments in the August article suggest the church has lost traction in recent years in terms of our influence on politics.

I'm not sure they're correct.

A case can be made that our access to politicians is as good as ever, and our current practices of doing our research and analysis well mean we get a good hearing. Maybe we're not as strident in the public sphere as we once were.

But it's not always public loudness that counts - the regular conversations with politicians may be more effective.

Contrary to what Mr Austin said, I think we now do our theological underpinning of our

social and political stances much better than in the past.

That theological work is rarely reported, but it is in the documents.

The 2009 document *An economy of life* is a good example.

I trust our prayers, personal and congregational, are for all politicians.

Anyone who offers to be a political representative deserves the Church's prayerful support, as well as our proposals and criticism from time to time.

Gregor Henderson  
Ex-President of the  
Assembly



## Left not right

I READ with great interest the article by Phil Smith entitled "Are we the greens at prayer" (August *Journey*).

For many years I have seen or heard statements made in the name of the Uniting Church with which I totally disagree.

When statements are made by the hierarchy of the church they should state that such statements are personal and not necessarily the views of all of the members of the church.

I have often felt that many such statements will make many members of the public wonder if the Uniting Church is a member of a left wing political party.

I believe that the church should help the disadvantaged, but I feel that the left wing way

of doing things tends to make the disadvantaged dependant on others, rather than helping them believe that they do indeed have special gifts.

These gifts can be built to raise their belief in themselves.

The willingness to "have a go" is so important for anyone to reach their full potential.

We are responsible for our own welfare but sometimes we need help.

I ask the people making statements in the name of the Uniting Church to take into account that not all members of the Church think the same way as they do.

I realise that many people will disagree with what I have said, and there is my point.

Gordon Wright  
Glasshouse  
Country Uniting  
Church



## Favoured theology?

UNDERLYING PROF Peter Fensham's (April *Journey*) comments about updating the Basis of Union, it seems to me, is a recognition that many in the church want breathing space in their congregations to update their theological perspectives.

Rev Dr Geoff Thompson (May *Journey*), in his reply, mentioned the diversity of theological opinion that

informed the Basis of Union, and noted the continuing development of theological ideas in the wider church.

He made the point that it is inappropriate to "privilege" any particular theological position.

Yet this is exactly what happens every Sunday in many of our congregations.

It seems to me that contemporary theology routinely taught in the colleges is largely

ignored from many pulpits.

Is the role of church leadership to impose an exclusive theology on its members, or is it to guide and facilitate, to create the freedom and encouragement to empower the individual's faith journey, based on the best of recognised current scholarship?

Peter Robinson  
Paradise Point



## No myth to distil

I WOULD like to comment on the article "Distilling the conflict myth" by Peter Harrison (July *Journey*).

Conflict between Christianity and science should be minimal where science is simply revealing the incredible properties and potential that God has placed within his creation. However, when science tries to impose its own false beliefs upon Christianity then that is when conflict will always be present.

Evolution is just such a case.

Aside from science loving to perpetuate the erroneous belief that evolution has been proven beyond doubt, the very processes that form the basis for evolution actually conflict with what scripture says.

Scripture tells us that God is perfect.

How could a perfect God use evolution as a tool of creation when it is based on millions of years of pain, disease, mutation and death?

How could he regard this process as good?

This is not perfect creation, it is an abomination!

Secondly, Romans 5:12 states that sin and death came into the world through one man.

Through evolutionary eyes this has to be a lie, as death entered the world millions of years before Adam was even thought of.

Evolution can never be dovetailed into Christianity; on that there should be no conflict.

Allan Hawley  
Helidon



## Great big debt

NOT SO long ago I didn't know we had a debt.

I knew the Synod of the Uniting Church in Queensland had a nasty shortfall of around \$1 million in income arising from an undefined investment problem.

Since then in a series of rumours and revelations we learn of a Church debt which seems to expand in ever increasing enormity.

Is it now \$200 million? But hold on a moment, aren't we likely to have to pay back a lot more than that?

Say, for the interest on

\$200 million? It's time to ask for guidance isn't it?

Once upon a year I joined in the prayer taught by Jesus and came to the words "Forgive us our trespasses".

I personalised this to "Forgive me my trespasses" but this time it really is "us".

When the King James version of the Bible was more in vogue I wondered just what the word trespasses signified. I looked in the gospel of Matthew and found, surprisingly (and now portentously), it was debts.

It is helpful in prayer to know what we're seeking God's guidance or forgiveness for.

One of those things is surely this colossal debt.

We need to discover in detail the reason(s) for the debt, the amount of debt, to whom the debt is owed, and proposals to manage the debt.

If transparency is widely applied to private and public sector financial reporting, then our understanding of our debt will be greatly helped in our Uniting Church.

Of all the groups in our Uniting Church in this financial crisis surely the most significant group is going to be us, the ordinary members.

It would be a great help if our *Journey* editor would publish full and understandable information about our debt and continue to do so.

Jim Pearse  
Kenmore Uniting  
Church



For a summary of the FIP Board report to the 28th Synod go to [www.journeyonline.com.au](http://www.journeyonline.com.au) and search for the story "Finance still priority" - Ed.

## Remembering Israel

WE WERE disappointed to read the recent article in August *Journey* regarding the NCCA's advice to Israel, using all the right politically correct words.

Have we forgotten that Israel is the nation through which God first chose to reveal himself, who were scattered for nearly 1900 years yet

still retain a distinct identity, who suffered the horrors of the Holocaust.

Who miraculously survived four wars instigated by surrounding nations since 1948 and who now have to be constantly on alert.

We have much to thank them for.

It is extremely unfortunate that

Christians in adjacent areas are caught up in the turmoil but boycotting products will achieve nothing.

The problem is far bigger than that. Israel is not perfect. Neither are we. So let us not judge them.

God will deal with all of us in his own way.

Beth and Eric  
Ireland  
Atherton



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**Holiday unit**, modern, pool. 100m from Kings Beach Caloundra from \$360/wk. Ph Ray 0427990161.

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

**Cottage** 2 br, carport, clean, part furn, handy bus, quiet natural setting, suit single or couple. \$250 all incl. Box 498, The Gap PO, Brisbane 4061.

### General

**The Jesus Club** - for enquiring minds mid-teens to mid-twenties [freshsteps@bigpond.com](mailto:freshsteps@bigpond.com).

Email your classified advertisements to [journey@ucaqld.com.au](mailto:journey@ucaqld.com.au)

# What have you learned from asylum seekers?

By Brian Procopis

FIFTEEN YEARS ago the phone was ringing as I walked past a desk in the Lifeline Community Services Unit on my way to the lunch room for my cheese and vegemite sandwich. I could have left it but the ringing was persistent.

On the other end was a woman in her 30s, struggling to survive, accommodation unreliable, food intermittent.

Targeted by government authorities in her country as a result of speaking out against corruption, she had to escape.

There was no refugee camp, no queue to join. Her family and friends pooled their assets and bought her a ticket to safety. A tourist visa took less time to arrange than any other visa. She was an asylum seeker – the first I'd ever spoken to.

Naively I asked when her next special benefit from Social Security was due to arrive. She told me that she wasn't eligible for any assistance from the Australian Government. She told me that while she was waiting for her application for protection to be assessed (a process that can take years), she was not eligible for financial support, had no medicare access, no transport

assistance and did not have work permission. She was completely (and embarrassingly) reliant on charity. I didn't know any of this. I felt ashamed of my country's response. It was an important realisation. My distress took me onto the management committee of the Asylum Seeker Centre together with such agencies as Amnesty International, RAILS (Refugee and Immigration Legal Service), Red Cross, QPASTT (Queensland Program of Assistance for Survivors of Torture and Trauma) and others. Lifeline has subsequently adopted the Refugee Claimant Support Service as a program providing advocacy, food, fares, employment assistance, socialising networks and links to other supportive agencies. I'm still not sure what would have happened if I'd opted for that cheese and vegemite sandwich.

Brian Procopis is a community development officer for Lifeline Community Care Queensland and has done much work with refugees including a series of CDs with Sweet Freedom Inc featuring songs by refugees and asylum seekers helping them find their voice through creative expression.

By John Jegasothy

At the time of writing, boat people and border protection were major issues in the federal election. The world was watching. The international community, as well as the Australian community, know the atrocities and crimes against humanity committed in countries like Sri Lanka, Iraq, Afghanistan, Burma and other countries where the victims of war and persecution are fleeing.

Asylum seekers are victimised and are desperate people. The asylum seeker's path from warring countries itself is a dangerous exercise. Although there is a common understanding that big money is involved in paying the people smugglers, the poor victims sell or pawn their properties, jewels and borrow money from relatives, especially those who have already fled the country, to pay their "travel agents". They get into boats that are hardly seaworthy. Those who survive tell of the perilous journey where they almost lost their lives.

When they reach the shore, Immigration tries to do the right thing by doing medical checks, identity checks, then the application is written and processed with the help of legal aid. Their first statutory declaration is done when the asylum seeker is still in a daze, confused and fatigued. Subsequent interviews are done when still suffering from post-

traumatic stress. To prove their case where could people get evidence, especially people from countries like Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Iraq and Burma? These people have been traumatised over and over again and are incarcerated and isolated indefinitely from the Australian community and the rest of the world. Their fate remains in the hands of the Immigration case officer and members of the Review Tribunal if turned down. Asylum seekers are real people fleeing from real danger and that is proven because most of these asylum seekers are eventually given a Protection Visa.

Asylum seekers are prepared to take risks to find a safe place to live, and have the potential to make their contribution to the country that opens the door and treats them like human beings and real refugees. But how long to find the safe place and how long to be given asylum is an ongoing anxiety which has led some asylum seekers to attempt suicide to end their life in detention. Rev John Jegasothy is part-time minister at Rose Bay Vaucluse Uniting Church, Sydney, and minister of the Tamil congregation and Mission to Refugees. In 2009 he received a humanitarian award from the NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Victims for his work supporting refugees.



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