

MORE DEPTH, MORE STORIES AT journeyonline.com.au

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"I am looking forward to young people really encountering a living faith through the witness of others." **Rev Dr Elizabeth Nolan**

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"A more hard-nosed approach is needed if there is to be the kind of honest engagement which is precisely what these questions demand." **Rev Dr Geoff Thompson**

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GIFTS THAT GIVE

By Mardi Lumsden

AUSTRALIANS ARE great gift givers.

Australian Bureau of Statistics research (*Festive Facts and Figures 2008*) showed Australians spending \$18.12 billion at retailers during December 2007.

Despite the global financial crisis and interest rate rises last year, *The Australian* said we spent over \$20 billion on credit cards alone over the festive season.

We are generous too.

According to the Australian National Retailers Association

(ANRA) in 2008 two in three Australians intended to make a donation to charity at Christmas.

Their research showed that 68.02 per cent of Queenslanders intended giving to charity and 20.81 per cent intended making Christmas gifts for family and friends.

Social Researcher Mark McCrindle said Australians spent \$50 million last year on "useless Christmas gifts".

"Seventy-eight point five per cent of Australians have received a present that they consider to be a total waste of money," he said.

While it is a wonderful thing to give and receive a gift, not all gifts are things you can hold.

Songwriter and composer Geoff Bullock said God-given gifts, such as musical talent, are inexplicable.

"When we are talking about a gifting we are talking about something that is extraordinary, a little other-worldliness," he said.

"I remember the night I wrote 'The Power of Your Love'.

"It was bizarre, especially the second verse. It just arrived in four lines standing at the kitchen bench."

He said it was important to use God-given gifts wisely and to work on refining your gift.

"And with the gifting may not come the opportunity," he said. "It is more likely that there will come the responsibility of 'what are you going to say? Does it need to be said? Are you prepared to polish this gift and take it further?'"

"If I wasn't so lazy when I was a teenager and really learnt to play then I would be writing better songs."

Gifts such as preaching, teaching, prophecy, openness, and honesty are not celebrated much in our culture but churches are full of these gifts.

"Can you imagine what it would be like if the church didn't write letters of protest, morality or do-goodism, but simply continually made a plea to politicians and the legal system to have mercy, to be gracious and to express love.

"The expression of the Cross compels us to speak not against, but for, love and grace," said Mr Bullock.

"If there is a giftedness within you and you have a soul message, you are walking through life with open eyes and an open heart.

"Jesus' journey with us comes down to a single person making a singular difference.

"I suppose it's about how I respond in little ways and maybe I'll be heard in big ways."

There are free resources at Mr Bullock's website <http://public.me.com/geoffreybullock>. Mr Bullock is also available in 2011 to be part of your church journey for a weekend

Sharing God's gift in Christ

WHAT TO buy for Christmas?

The way people choose Christmas gifts for their family and friends is rather fascinating.

Some seem to have no trouble at all. These are the ones who rush out to the Boxing Day sales and buy what they want for the next Christmas.

Others simply settle on one idea and buy a dozen, one for each member of the family.

Some agonise over each gift, hoping that the recipient will appreciate what they receive.

Then, of course, there are the people like me who rush out a day or two before Christmas and buy the first thing that seems appropriate, telling ourselves that it is the thought that counts.

It is wonderful that all of our gift-giving is but a pale reflection of God's gift of himself in Jesus Christ.

It's wonderful that God didn't just say, "It's the thought that counts".

Some readings from the Old Testament seem to indicate that God had given this a lot of thought for hundreds of years, if not from the beginning of time.

Each year we read Isaiah 9:2-7 and it sounds as though Isaiah knew all about God's intention to send Jesus into the world.

Of course, there are those who would see far deeper intentions of God in this passage than a simple prediction about Jesus' birth.

Maybe God has been trying to draw our attention to God's divine presence in our midst ever since the world began.

In the person of Jesus that divine presence has been made fully known.

In that gift we see all the love that God has for the whole of the created universe.

The gift of Jesus may seem like

This gift of Jesus has brought hope, healing, forgiveness and new life to millions of people.

some vague religious notion to many who are busily shopping at this time of year, however as Dr Hugh Begbie wrote in the Cromwell College magazine *Coca* in December 2009:

"But for those who see through the hype to the bed of straw in a small town 7km from Jerusalem, what they discover is the extraordinary and life-giving truth that, in Christ, the sovereign God of the universe knows our pain; in Christ, God confronts our pain; in Christ, God prepares the way to heal our pain.

"More importantly, God knows that our pain is bound to our moral brokenness, to that line of good and evil that runs like a ragged fissure through our hearts."

I barely remember the gifts I received last year, yet the world has remembered that divine gift for over 2000 years.

This gift of Jesus has brought hope, healing, forgiveness and new life to millions of people down through the centuries and throughout the world.

I wonder how the gift of Jesus Christ will bring transformation to many this year.

Those who have unwrapped this wonderful gift of God are engaged to help those around them also recognise and unwrap this gift.

Message from the Moderator

Rev Bruce Johnson



We must not clutch Christ to ourselves rejoicing that we have found salvation without asking ourselves how the sharing of Christ might draw others into a healing, renewing, life-giving relationship with God.

Can I urge all those who participate in the life of our church to think about the way they share God's gift.

Can you invite someone to a Christmas event with you?

Can you invite someone to share Christmas lunch with you?

Can you give a lonely person a gift that expresses Jesus' love for them?

Rather than bemoaning the commercialisation of Christmas, why not take hold of the cultural practice of giving Christmas gifts and infuse it with the life of Jesus

Christ, God's incarnate gift to us.

I hope that you have been encouraged and enriched as you have read the material offered to you in *Journey* this year.

Thank you for your prayers and messages of care for me and my family as I underwent heart surgery. We have really appreciated the sense of care and love that we have experienced within the community of Christ.

I wish you all a happy and blessed Christmas as you enjoy discovering more of the wonders of God's gift to us in Jesus Christ.

Share his love and grace with all your loved ones and neighbours and celebrate with those all across the world who are united in Christ.

I pray that the New Year will be filled with God's richest blessing.

Valuing the gifts of people

I KNOW I have said it before but I am not much of a gift-giver.

Don't get me wrong, I love thinking about and finding a really special gift for someone – one I know they will love.

But I usually fall down when it comes to getting them the gift in time for Christmas or their birthday.

So in this Christmas edition I wanted to explore the idea of gifts in another way.

I see my family, friends and colleagues as gifts.

They share their wisdom, friendship and love with me, challenge my perceptions and open my eyes to things I would not otherwise see.

I see the fact that we manage to get this paper out each month amongst all the other things we do in the Communication Services Unit as a miracle!

The whole *Journey* team is a gift to me.

I am very blessed to work with each one of them.

In this edition we focus on God-given gifts.

These are not just gifts that are given to us. They require us to

make a decision to accept them and work to refine them.

These are the gifts that are often overlooked in our society.

So often we celebrate the gifts of the highly intelligent, wealthy, powerful or famous.

How often do we celebrate the gifts that people with disabilities bring us?

How often do we celebrate the gifts of the Spirit?

In May, the Queensland Synod endorsed five Gospel Values: faithfulness, compassion, humility, truthfulness, and justice.

Imagine what a gift to our communities we would be if each church-goer, employee, and volunteer lived up to all five of those values?

That would be a truly great gift.

Mardi Lumsden
Editor



THIS SIGN was snapped while driving by Albany Creek Uniting Church, Brisbane, in November.

With a great message to take stock of each moment and not get too caught up by the end-of-year business, this will be sure to make the local community think.

Photo by Phil Smith.



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

Kids launch Christmas appeal

By Dot King

AN ARMY of children from schools, kindergartens, day care centres and churches throughout Queensland joined forces to help launch UnitingCare's annual Christmas appeal *Operation Santa* on 15 November.

Children visited Target stores in 57 communities across the state to spread some love, joy and hope with their Christmas gifts for people in their community who would otherwise not receive any gifts this year.

An estimated two million Australians, including more than one in 10 children, live in poverty.

Anne Cross, UnitingCare Queensland CEO, said thousands of people need support services

from UnitingCare agencies each day and that demand always increased around Christmas.

"There are many people in our community who struggle through the festive season and not only for financial reasons," said Ms Cross.

"We're asking the public to give an extra present and use their Christmas spirit to bring love, joy and hope to those in our community who are doing it tough this year," she said.

UnitingCare and Target are asking the community to become part of *Operation Santa* by donating gifts at Target and Target Country stores across Australia.

Simply take a gift tag off the red *Operation Santa* tree at any Target or Target Country store



UnitingCare Target gift appeal launch at North Lakes on 15 November. From left: Dr Narelle Dawson-Wells, The Hon Dean Wells, State Member, Councillor Julie Greer, Moreton Bay Regional Council, and local appeal coordinator Mr George Hammond with helpers. Photo by Dot King

and buy a gift (or a gift card) for someone doing it tough.

All gifts go to people in the local community where they are purchased.

Thanks to the generosity of people throughout the nation, UnitingCare and Target have collected and distributed more than 1.7 million gifts in the past 18 years, with over 65,000

donated last year.

UnitingCare Queensland Communication and Marketing Manager Lea Kingdon said the decision to use the name *Operation Santa* to promote the appeal this year was a decision made by the national Target marketing department in order to refresh the campaign and to distinguish the appeal from

the many other Christmas tree appeals.

"UnitingCare Queensland provided feedback to the UnitingCare national appeal office about the name change but given the long standing relationship UnitingCare has with Target, the decision was made at a national level to accept Target's proposal," she said.

Blue Care celebrates loyal staff

By Haylee Campbell

BLUE CARE acknowledged long-serving staff who have reached a career milestone of 20 years or more continuous service at the Blue Care Staff Recognition Night in Brisbane on 4 November.

Sixty Blue Care staff from across Queensland and northern New South Wales received special awards for their commitment and loyalty to the organisation at the event which was held at Rydges, South Bank.

Blue Care Acting Executive Director Robyn Batten said each individual had made an outstanding contribution to the organisation.

"Staff Recognition Night is about recognising, not only the work they do, but the spirit and manner in which they contribute to the health and wellbeing of frail, aged, and vulnerable Australians every day."

Since the annual award ceremony began in 2008, 331 Blue Care employees have received the

Staff Recognition Award for 20 years or more service.

Among the recipients was registered nurse Joan Donald, 78, who retired from Blue Care Nowlanvil Aged Care Facility at Ipswich in June, after 32 years of service.

"What I enjoyed the most was making every resident feel at home in a place filled with kind and compassionate people who ensure they are happy, comfortable and loved," she said.

"I did what I did at Blue Care because of the example set by other dedicated people who went before me."



UnitingCare Queensland CEO Anne Cross, Joan Donald and Moderator Rev Bruce Johnson. Photo by Shaun Murray

Artists find hope in margins

By Aileen Wallace

THE THIRD annual Art from the Margins (AFTM) exhibition, a creative initiative of Wesley Mission Brisbane (WMB), continues to be popular with 380 entries from more than 160 talented artists this year.

Part of the Brisbane Festival,

AFTM assists artists whose artistic development is limited by homelessness, disability, disadvantage or isolation.

The exhibition was spread across three different venues; Wesley House, Brisbane Institute of Art and the Inala Community Art Gallery and Cultural Centre.

AFTM convenor Ian Airey

said participation has more than tripled in the last three years and the outcomes have been exciting for all involved.

"Every artist gets a lift of their self-esteem," he said. "For some artists there have also been spin-off workshops and mentoring programs and some have also gone on to do more study."

"It is an exciting and rewarding program for everyone involved."

The idea for AFTM was born beside a coffee van for the homeless when a member of the Albert Street Uniting Church's Servant Network chatted with an artist who was living in isolation.

AFTM also aims to provide mentoring programs and links into the professional art world.

WMB has established an AFTM Collection which, when large enough, will tour regional

galleries throughout the country to help raise artists' profiles.

In 2010 the Bruce Heiser Gallery awarded its inaugural Professional Development Awards for three AFTM artists, Htoo Htoo Han, Billy Thompson and Francis Hefferan.

Visit www.journeyonline.com.au to see a photo gallery on the launch of AFTM



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Counting down to ncyc11



Young People in worship at NCYC 2009. Photo by Pammy Pryor

By Jane Moad

ALL OVER the country people are packing their bags and preparing to encounter God on the Gold Coast as they welcome 2011 at the National Christian Youth Convention (NCYC), a biennial Uniting Church event.

More than 1000 young people aged 16-25, church leaders and adult volunteers will gather on 29 December for the start of ncyc11.

Attendees will be from Australia, New Zealand, PNG, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, and India.

Brian Collins, 17, will be attending ncyc11 and travelling from the northside of Brisbane.

"I'm looking forward to

meeting up with all the people from last time, singing at the top of my lungs and partying with God for a week," said Mr Collins.

His first NCYC was in Melbourne 2009.

"It was all pretty amazing but my favourite moment I'd have to say was Fa's speech and the atmosphere there was pretty amazing."

Fa Ngaluaf spoke passionately on the last day of convention in 2009 and is on the Management Team for ncyc11 as the Cross Cultural Linking Coordinator and one of the driving forces behind New Year's Eve Celebrations.

Rev Dr Elizabeth Nolan is a Minister of the Word at Warrnambool Uniting Church in

Victoria. This will be Dr Nolan's seventh NCYC having attended three as a participant in the 1970s and three as a chaplain or adult volunteer since 1997.

Dr Nolan finds it hard to choose a favourite NCYC moment, but highlights 1975 with Dr Norman Habel and Dr Kosuke Koyama's preaching.

Although the speakers, music, Bible studies and program will be different in 2011 from many years past, Dr Nolan's prayer is that NCYC is the same.

"I am looking forward to young people really encountering a living faith through the witness of others and I pray they will respond and give their lives over to following Jesus as Lord and Saviour for the good of our community in Australia and the world," she said.

For more information visit www.ncyc11.com.au

Youth pour out in faith

SOUTH MORETON'S northern cluster of churches held their presbytery young adults service on 31 October at Broadwater Rd Uniting Church in Mansfield, Brisbane.

Service co-organiser Matt Gees said, "The night was about encouraging young adults to discover within themselves ways to express and pour out their faith."

Your time is now was the underlying theme of the service which was well attended.

Wellers Hill - Tarragindi Unit-

ing Church invited some special guests from Scripture Union, UnitingWorld, The Red Frogs crew, ncyc11 and UCB Australia (United Christian Broadcasters Australia) to show the congregation ways that they could pour out their faith.

Mr Gees said the team hoped to provide avenues for young people to connect with organisations outside their own church.

"We didn't want the young people to once again be asked to just volunteer for the church," he said.

"If that's what they felt God calling them to do ... then great!"

"But we wanted to show that there was more opportunity both within the Uniting Church and within other ministries to do that.

"Every attendee on the night was given a word4u2day youth devotional thanks to UCB Australia and encouraged that if they already had one to pass it on to a mate.

"We also encouraged them to talk to their ministers and elders about how they could do more with their faith."

Organisers hoped people would be inspired by the event.



The Red Frogs display at the South Moreton Presbytery young adult evening. Photo by Cameron Todd

Colleges renamed

THE ANGLICAN Diocese of Brisbane has announced that two leading co-educational schools in Brisbane's south-west corridor, currently administered by the Diocese but previously joint Anglican and Uniting Church schools, are to be renamed to reinforce their Anglican heritage.

Archbishop Phillip Aspinall said Forest Lake College and The Springfield College would be renamed as St John's Anglican College and The Springfield Anglican College, respectively.

While both schools were jointly administered, from November 2009 they have been

the sole responsibility of the Anglican Diocese of Brisbane.

Archbishop Aspinall said the Uniting Church had been consulted and had given their blessing to the name changes.

The Uniting Church's role in the history of both colleges will be formally acknowledged with plaques at both colleges as well as an ongoing ministry presence.

Under the arrangement the Uniting Church congregation

based at the Forest Lake College Primary Campus will continue to use the Alpine Place Chapel for worship activities for as long as it is required.

The congregation will also have access to these facilities outside school hours through prior arrangement with the head of Forest Lake College.

Right: Archbishop Phillip Aspinall. Photo courtesy of Focus



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Course trains youth workers

By Mardi Lumsden

THERE MAY be few people with the title Youth Worker in the Queensland Synod these days but National Faith Development Consultant for Youth and Young Adults, Tom Kerr, said that that doesn't mean there are fewer people doing the job.

Many youth workers have transitioned to being ministers, deacons, or pastors and Mr Kerr suggested it was time for people with a passion for youth ministry to think outside the box.

"Uniting Church Youth Workers are serving as chaplains in state and church schools, as youth workers in the community through local Church ministry, in welfare organisations and so on.

"More than ever before our Uniting Church youth workers are reaching out to non-churched young people."

Mr Kerr suggested equipping

youth workers through the Youth Ministry Internship Scheme (YMIS).

"The YMIS course provides contextualised Christian Youth Work training and is run by Scripture Union," said Mr Kerr, who is also a YMIS course trainer.

"It gives students a Certificate IV in Youth Work or a Diploma in Youth Work that are nationally recognised.

"The YMIS course has Government funding possibilities built in too which is very helpful for financially struggling students."

Sarah Rothery is one of four school chaplains from Glebe Road Uniting Church in Ipswich.

She said the YMIS course gave her a practical base for her work with high school students.

"Learning about self-harm, community work and group work has practical and direct applications to my work with

young people," she said.

"Because you can do it online, in your own time, and have your own trainer available to you, it is a very flexible way to study which can fit in with your full-time work."

Thomas Grealy and Nathan Golding from Emmanuel Uniting Church in Enoggera, Brisbane, are also doing the YMIS course.

Mr Grealy's placement is with his home church while Mr Golding wanted to explore school chaplaincy.

Mr Grealy appreciated the different areas covered by the course.

"It really does equip you for youth ministry in such a way that helps you connect the church with the community.

"It covers areas of pastoral care, dealing with at-risk young people, helping refugees integrate into a community, recognising and supporting young people



Rev Harlee Cooper and YMIS student Thomas Grealy from Emmanuel Uniting Church. Photo by Tom Kerr

with mental health issues, dealing sensitively with people of other faiths and so on."

Mr Kerr said YMIS is a pathway for training Uniting Church youth pastors or workers.

"Rev Harlee Cooper, Mr Grealy's supervisor at Emmanuel Uniting Church, sees great value

in the course too," said Mr Kerr.

"Both Tom and Harlee agree that the course is set up to train youth workers for the real world and that theological training would be an important supplement to add to the development of YMIS graduates who serve in the church context."

Magnetic Island powers up the grid

By Denise Secomb

MAGNETIC ISLAND Uniting Church is now supplying sufficient electricity to the grid from its newly installed solar panels to power nearly two houses, making it a net contributor of energy, rather than a net user.

The solar power was made possible by the Townsville Solar City project.

The church paid nothing for the installation and gains nothing by it, but the congregation's Building and Grounds Convenor Dr Rick Braley said members have the thrill of producing electricity for others to use.

Community engagement manager for Queensland's only Solar City project, Julie Heath, said the church had graciously agreed to host more than 60 panels on the roof, generating an

average 37.5kW hours per day of electricity.

She said the Townsville Solar City project, funded by the Government's Solar Cities project, had assessed more than 75 per cent of businesses and residents on Magnetic Island for solar panel suitability.

Trialling is taking place on the island with the help of a supportive community keen to be as sustainable as possible.

Residents and businesses have had free compact fluorescent light globes installed and been offered 16 different vouchers, such as a \$100 voucher when a new, energy efficient refrigerator is purchased.

Ms Heath said the Solar City team will even take the old fridge away to be recycled.

"A fridge more than nine years old costs more to run than it's worth," she said.

The project picked up a green marketing award at the Australian Institute of Marketing and was highly commended in the Public Relations Institute of Australia environment category.



Gracelyn Baird, Shirley and Alan Renton in front of Magnetic Island Uniting Church's solar panels. Photo by Denise Seacomb

Green Church web of life

THE QUEENSLAND Synod Green Church office would like to hear stories of congregations and agencies working to help the environment.

Green Church volunteer Judith Dalton said sharing stories, information and resources can encourage and empower others.

She said a recent Western Australian Synod Green Church survey found 200 different activities happening to do with environmentalism and conservation.

"One church even collects ring pulls off soft drink/food cans to be recycled into artificial legs.

"It would be lovely to build up a picture of all the green happenings here," she said.

For more information visit the new Green Church website www.greenchurch.ucaqld.com.au



Lily Ayre. Photo by Ian Ayre

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The College is seeking to appoint a Chaplain from the beginning of 2011 following the retirement of the incumbent after 18 years of dedicated service.

The role of this position is to assist students and staff in their personal faith development, to develop and lead the implementation of a regular Chapel Program, supplemented by a Christian Living teaching program, and to ensure the ecumenical foundations of the College are enhanced and promoted at all levels.

Applications containing the names of three confidential referees should be sent via email to: Warren Peat, Headmaster, John Paul College at mmadge@jpc.qld.edu.au

Applications close **Monday 13 December, 2010.**

For a full position description please visit our website: www.jpc.qld.edu.au

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Walkers make tracks for Bible translation

By Karyn Markwell

DAVID CARNELL, Andrew Carnell, and Andrew Sav arrived home in Stanthorpe on 11 November after walking 2000 kilometres to raise awareness that there are still 2000 languages into which the Bible has not been translated.

The trio left Cairns on 24 August and arrived in Stanthorpe on Remembrance Day.

Mr Sav said he was not sure if he would make it.

"When we reached the 1500km mark, it suddenly struck me that I could do it," he said. "That was an awesome moment."

Each kilometre represented a unique language that doesn't yet have a translated Bible – not even a single verse.

In addition to walking, the three men held evening meetings at local churches and town halls en route to share information about the 350 million people who don't yet have access to the Bible in their own language.

Mr Sav said their message was going global with more than 10,000 people from 124 different countries visiting their website (www.the2000walk.com).

The team experienced plenty of challenges during The 2000 Walk, including cooling their feet in a

creek they were later informed is inhabited by crocodiles, walking eight kilometres in the wrong direction before realising and retracing their steps, and suffering from severe blisters and painful feet.

Over the final kilometre the team was joined by 100 supporters.

They were met at the finish line by a bagpiper and 350 cheering people who released balloons.

"The group finish was symbolic of the fact that translating the Bible for the remaining 2000 Bible-less languages is not a job for a few individuals, but is a team effort where many people are



David Carnell, Andrew Carnell, Andrew Sav and supporters finish The 2000 Walk. Photo courtesy of Karyn Markwell

needed," said Mr Sav.

People interested in getting involved in Bible translation can

contact Operation Mobilisation and Wycliffe Bible Translators.

Charting New Territory in Charleville

By Mardi Lumsden

SIXTEEN BOYS from Green Point Christian College on the Central Coast of New South Wales travelled to Charleville in remote south-west Queensland in September to lend a helping hand to property owners in the area.

The trip, currently in its seventh year, aims to help property owners who have been doing it tough, in previous years during the drought.

The group of specially selected Year 9 and 10 students was led by school Agriculture teacher Richard McKay and supervised

by three other male leaders.

The team spent ten days on a number of large properties in the Charleville area from 16-26 September.

"We organise the trip to give the group what we hope will be the experience of a lifetime," said Mr McKay.

"Our aim is to provide the boys with strong male role models and take them into environments which are unfamiliar."

The team linked up with Frontier Services Patrol Minister Rev John Case.

"We drive to and from Charleville, camping on the way in stock reserves or camping

grounds, and use this as a time for the boys to bond and enjoy their outback experience," said Mr McKay.

"When we arrive, we link up with our host, Rev John Case, who is a local covering rural and remote parts of south-west Queensland."

Mr Case said the locals were thrilled to welcome the boys.

"The trip offers opportunities for the boys to develop leadership skills and bridge the gap in their knowledge about people living in rural and remote Australia," he said.

"This is a win-win situation because the boys get to see some



Harry Stowe, Brad Everingham, William Weekes and Malcolm Hensley learn new skills. Photo courtesy of Jason Smith

amazing country, learn new skills, and develop a sense of what it is like to help others, with the support of some pretty special role models."

Frontier Services is a major provider of aged care, health and community services, and pastoral support to people in remote and outback Australia.

Gallery opens in CBD church

ST ANDREW'S Uniting Church in Brisbane's CBD dedicated their new art gallery, the Vera Wade Gallery, on 17 October.

Ms Wade was an active and long-time member of the congregation and had been a violinist in the Queensland Symphony Orchestra.

For many years St Andrew's

has fostered the arts in the city through concerts, choirs and organ recitals.

Earlier this year an Art Gallery was added to broaden their outreach.

The Church Council decided to use a small part of the bequest Ms Wade left to the congregation for a fit-out of the gallery.

Minister Rev Ray Herrmann said the Church Council and congregation had become aware that there was little reasonably priced gallery space available in the inner city.

"This meant that emerging or little known artists had no opportunities to exhibit their work," he said. "The church was also aware of the fact that this section of the arts was missing in the congregational life."

With the establishment of the gallery the bond between the congregation and Visionaries (a group interested in religious art) also has been strengthened.

"The gallery at the corner of Creek and Ann Streets Brisbane, is open each weekday from 11am until 2pm," said Mr Herrmann.

For enquiries about the use of the gallery contact the St Andrew's Uniting Church office on 3221 2400



Noel Adsett at the opening of the Vera Wade Gallery. Photo by Richard Kitchen

Lecturer in New Testament Studies

United Theological College Sydney is seeking to appoint a lecturer responsible for the teaching and oversight of New Testament Studies.

The appointee would also be responsible for supervision of post graduate students in the field and be expected to engage actively in research.

The appointee would be involved in the formation of candidates for specified ministries and would be nominated as an academic associate of the School of Theology, Charles Sturt University.

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

The position is available from July 1, 2011. Full details of the position may be obtained from The Principal, the Rev. Dr Clive Pearson, United Theological College, 16 Masons Dr, North Parramatta NSW 2151 Australia. Phone +61 2 8838 9296 or email utc@nsw.uca.org.au.

Applications for this position close on February 21, 2011.

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The gifts of the wise

By Malcolm Coombes

THE BIBLE tells us that wise men (perhaps astrologers) came from the East looking for the child born King of the Jews (Matt 2:1,2).

Finally when they found the child Jesus they knelt down and paid him homage.

They then opened their treasure chests and offered gifts of gold, frankincense (an expensive perfume), and myrrh (cosmetic fragrance) (Matt 2:11).

That such an act is portrayed variously on every second Christmas card today is quite amazing.

Herod, the official king of Israel, representing the Roman Emperor, would pay no such homage, but instead felt threatened.

Some have suggested that the gold symbolised monarchy, the frankincense divinity and the myrrh

represented death.

While certainly representing different aspects of the nature of Jesus, this is probably drawing too much out of the story and is unlikely in terms of Matthew's way of telling the good news of Jesus.

Nevertheless, this act of generous giving and homage is still important in the world of the Gospel.

They certainly are gifts fit for a king.

The odd thing is that such affluent people could come so far to honour an unknown child in an everyday house in Bethlehem.

God's ways are upside down to the norm.

Interestingly the ancient prophet in Isaiah 60 speaks of a time to come when people from the nations will come from far away bringing the wealth of the nations.

"They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord." (Isa 60:6b – NRSV).

Is Matthew saying the time is now starting to happen, spoken of old, when the Gentiles come to hear the word of the Lord and all peoples from all walks of life can now pay homage to the Chosen One of God?

Matthew's gospel begins this way and finishes with the command for the gospel message to go out to the Gentiles (28:19).

The good news is for all, near and far.

Therefore what is worth sitting up and taking notice of is the fact that we have such unlikely people (note the Bible doesn't ever say there were three of them) from outside Israel (geographically and religiously - i.e. they were Gentiles) bringing gifts to the King of the Jews and they



Andrea Mantegna's *Adoration of the Magi* (1495-1505). Image courtesy of Wiki Commons

pay him homage.

This taps into what had been said in ancient times of Israel.

Now exciting things are beginning to happen!

Are there parts in us like Herod, unwilling to allow the reign of Christ to be fully appreciated?

Are there areas of our life which don't pay homage to

the ruler of the world?

The story invites the whole of us, whoever we are, like the wise men, to pay homage to Jesus and to offer our own precious giftedness to the service of Christ.

Malcolm Coombes is Director of Studies - New Testament at Trinity Theological College

Love knows no bounds

By Mardi Lumsden

JASMIN COX is a bright 11-year-old girl with a mop of ginger hair, a big smile and a hug for anyone who needs it, whether they know it or not.

She also has an intellectual impairment and multiple symptoms of syndromes that mean her diagnosis doesn't fit

neatly into any box.

But I get the feeling Jasmin (Jas) wouldn't want to be labelled or boxed anyway.

Jas' dad, Synod Chaplaincy coordinator Rev John Cox, said ever since she was very young she has known no limits when it came to people.

"It doesn't matter what shape or size they come in, it doesn't

matter if they are grumpy or happy ... she loves them all equally and is happy to talk to them," he said.

"Out of that, sometimes people who are not in a good space have their demeanour changed by her approach and her love.

"I was doing a baptism at Emmanuel Enoggera one day and Jas decided she was going to hug everyone in the congregation."

So she went person to person, including the baptism family who were not regular attendees.

"There were people in the baptism family in tears because they had been hugged."

Jas is also a great helper and likes being a friend to anyone who needs it.

"I care for babies too," she added.

And at school she shows friendship by "helping people to do their work".

Mum, Alison Cox, ncy11 coordinator, said Jas introduces the family to many people.

"Our world is so much bigger because of Jas," she said.

"This morning at the Ophthalmologist she knew everyone's name, introduced herself to them all, introduced me, and she got all these strangers talking who would have otherwise just been sitting there waiting for their appointment.

"She has taught me that your world doesn't have to be small and that it is OK to trust people and to

at least give them a chance."

Younger brother Isaak said it is nice to have a sister who is friendly to everyone, "Because she is very helpful".

Although it can't always be roses, he said he has learnt some important things from Jas.

"That I can be kind, friendly and stuff like that," he said.

Ms Cox said Jasmin's openness to people was certainly a gift from God.

"The connection Jasmin has with God is something I yearn for," she said.

"For a child who struggles to speak and communicate with adults she has a connection with God that is beyond description and beyond my understanding.

"But it is tangible, real and profound. Even people at church who watch her worship often end up in tears because they see that love and connection."

There are frequent stories about how Jasmin's reaction to someone has changed them or the people around them in a positive way.

On a trip to the neurologist Jas met a profoundly disabled middle-aged woman and her mother.

"I could just sense for the mother how exhausting that would be and how ostracised she might have felt for the last 40 years.

"Jassie just went up and gave her a hug and the smile on this

lady's face was phenomenal.

"The mum and I were both in tears. It was a gorgeous moment of love."

But with some gifts come a burden and for the Cox family that is the fear that someone could take advantage of their child.

"There is a tension in me all the time," said Ms Cox. "We know it is not appropriate for her to hug and kiss strangers and it is not a safe world. As a mother I am fiercely protective of her.

"Some people get quite annoyed that this child is invading their space. I often say to her that not everyone likes to be cuddled or needs a hug today.

"That is not really true. I think everyone does need a hug but they don't necessarily need it from Jas."

Life with a child with intellectual impairments is sometimes very difficult, but the Coxes see the good times as a gift.

"Probably five to 10 per cent of the time is gut-wrenchingly painful and really hard work.

"The beautiful side is a gift to us to help us keep on going and to realise that it is going to be OK.

"I keep handing Jassie over to God because I can't do anything else."

For Jas her future lies with God.

"I speak with God about it and I speak to Jesus about it.

"The future holds me helping mum do some cooking," Jas said.



Isaak, Jasmin and Alison Cox. Photo by Mardi Lumsden

The perfect gift

By Tara Burton

CHRISTMAS IS a time of giving. But what plagues my mind every December is what do you give the person who has everything?

When I look at my Dad I see a man who has it all.

He is financially stable so if he wants something he'll just go out and buy it himself.

This makes finding a Christmas

gift for Dad incredibly stressful and time consuming.

I always love gifts from my Dad because I know that whatever it is it's going to be great!

As silly as it sounds, the more thought he puts into my gift, the more pressure I have to make his gift even more special.

I have two options. I can either go shopping the traditional way and head to my local shopping

centre, only to be grabbed and prodded at by pushy 'sale strangers', all competing for me to spend big bucks in their store. Or I can buy all of my Christmas gifts online.

Just type in my credit card details and away I go, only to discover that before I know it I've racked up a hefty Christmas debt.

However appealing these options may be they are both a maze to navigate through.

For a hopeless gift buyer such as I am the more options available, the more daunting the task seems.

So I do what a uni student does best – I procrastinate.

Until before I know it I'm running around like a headless chook on Christmas Eve at 11pm looking for the perfect gift for my perfect gift-giving Dad (who has everything).

What I've needed to realise all along is that the perfect gift simply does not exist.

Maybe everyone gets caught up in finding the unattainable perfect



Tara Burton sifts through the many gift ideas for her dad.

Photo by Osker Lau

Here are some of our Christmas gift ideas

Make something – a toy, a scrapbook, some edible treats, beautiful Christmas decorations, etc.

For a unique gift that will also help those less fortunate try one of the many alternative gift catalogues:

Christmas Bowl:
www.actforpeace.org.au

UnitingWorld:
www.everythingincommon.com.au

Tear Australia:
www.usefulgifts.org

World Vision:
www.worldvision.com.au

gift and we forget the true meaning of Christmas giving.

This year I will stop searching for the perfect gift and I will not let the vast array of choices overwhelm me.

Instead I will find something nice for my Dad to tear open on Christmas day.

If it's exactly what he's always wanted than that's great!

But if it's not, that's ok too.

I know at the end of the day that I am his daughter and I could give him a hessian sack and he would appreciate the gesture.

I guess it really is the thought that counts.

Hearing the voice of God

By Phil Smith

JOURNEY READERS are probably familiar with the stories from the Acts of the Apostles in which God speaks to those who will listen, telling Philip to go along the Gaza road, Ananias to go to Saul, Cornelius to fetch Simon Peter and Peter not to hesitate but to go to the Centurion's house.

If there is a prophetic gift in

hearing God's spirit what follows is a story about the corresponding service; the responsibility to obey.

Peter Dyba lives in Aspley and has spent some of his faith journey in the company of the Geebung Uniting Church's men's group.

His seventy years have included early married life in Mount Isa and raising his family in Brisbane.

He has travelled back and forth to Kenya working with orphanages and Christian education projects.

Some time ago an Anglican minister called to suggest Mr Dyba accompany a mission team to Kenya.

He sensed God saying, "Yes, but go via India, arriving on 20 June and stay five days. I will show you where to stay and who you are to meet."

Amazingly Mr Dyba did as he was told.

On his third day in India he did not want to go back to sitting in the same café, but he went anyway, as told, only to find a man sitting in 'his' seat.

The man was Jonathon Kerrigan, a missionary volunteer from Dublin. He was in the same city as Peter for one day only, on his way home.

Upon introducing himself the visitor asked why Mr Dyba was there.

"I've come to see you," he said and asked what was troubling the young Irishman.

Mr Kerrigan poured out his heart, telling of the struggles to establish an orphanage with the Hearts in Motion organisation in Chennai (Madras).

Land purchased in 2007 had been landlocked as

local opponents purchased surrounding land to halt the project.

Waiting in Ireland was his pregnant wife, a home in need of repair and unemployment.

Mr Dyba prayed with Mr Kerrigan and offered advice from his own experiences. Today Hearts in Motion provides a safe and loving environment for many children from the streets and slums of Chennai as they grow and reintegrate in the community and Mr Kerrigan is running a youth ministry in Dublin.

Mr Dyba flew on to Kenya to link up with his own mission team working with orphans in the western provincial town of Bungoma.

One weekend, when the rest of the team were headed for Nairobi and the enthronement of the new Archbishop, Mr Dyba sensed God telling him to take a walk toward the airport: "I will send someone to meet you".

He encountered a young man who had just been robbed of everything except his Bible and a couple of scripture leaflets.

He was a preacher headed back to nearby Uganda.

Mr Dyba helped him financially but, more importantly, they discussed the life of faith.

The young man thought faith was "doing things for God".

Mr Dyba explained that as 'work', but said faithful living came from grace; hearing God and responding obediently in love.

Perhaps like Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch, Mr Dyba has no firm knowledge of what became of the African man after he went home.

Further down that same road a man approached Mr Dyba saying, "You are a man of God, please come and pray for my household, my church, school and orphanage."

He wanted no money.

His niece had just died, his six children were hungry and his ministry seemed barren.

Mr Dyba obeyed God and went to pray with this stranger.

Months later, in February this year, Mr Dyba was praying when he was instructed to try to find out what had happened.

Through the local pastor in Bungoma he learned that the once ragged man received a vision of a business and now has a milk run that provides for his family.

He is an effective minister in that local church.

Mr Dyba continues to listen for God's voice.



Lil and Peter Dyba with church members in Kenya. Photo courtesy of Peter Dyba

Equipping God's people

By Phil Smith

THE APOSTLE Paul promised the churches in need of good leadership in his day that "Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." (Ephesians 4: 11-13 NIV)

Christ promised to build his church, but how does the Uniting Church identify the gifts of the Holy Spirit and see them expressed in congregations throughout Queensland?

This is a serious question for a church that recognises the ministry of all believers, specifies ministries across its membership, and has limited ordained and other paid staff.

Pilgrim Learning Community (PLC) provides training and teaching across the state, looking

confidently for people's gifts and exploring how they are manifested in congregations today.

"God will raise up the right people with the right gifts in each place," said PLC Director Rev Dr Robert Bos.

Paul always spoke of developing spiritual gifts to increase connectivity in the church.

The Uniting Church expresses that as discipleship formation: equipping followers to serve in their workplaces, families and surrounding communities.

At a time when many congregations cannot afford a full-time minister, developing lay ministries means much more than keeping buildings open, according to Dr Bos.

"We must equip people for discipleship instead of only maintaining church structures," he said.

And the structures are changing quickly. Director of Continuing Education in the Synod of NSW/ACT Rev Dr Robert McFarlane identified four common congregational shapes or

expressions of church.

Large regional churches with more than 200 members can sustain at least one minister.

However, in a faith community of that size, an ordained minister cannot carry out the ministry alone.

In a "resource ministry cluster" a number of small congregations share the energies of one paid minister and that minister's primary role is supporting, training and equipping lay people.

In the growing field of chaplaincy, the local church goes out to other communities such as schools, hospitals and aged care homes.

New faith communities are forming to worship away from the pews and procedures of Sunday morning gathering.

Dr Bos said that means that the most common form of church in the past, the congregation of 30-70 members, will disappear.

Large or small, every congregation is dependant on the church's commitment in the *Basis of Union*:

"The Uniting Church affirms that every member of the Church is engaged to confess the faith of Christ crucified and to be his faithful servant. It acknowledges with thanksgiving that the one Spirit has endowed the members of Christ's Church with a diversity of gifts, and that there is no gift without its corresponding service: all ministries have a part in the ministry of Christ."

Lay ministries are much wider than lay preaching.

Presbyteries are working closely with PLC to develop the skills of volunteers called to serve as elders, pastoral carers, visiting chaplains.

While Presbyteries carry the responsibility of accrediting qualified lay preachers, the

decision of who can preach to a congregation rests with the parish minister.

Best estimates indicate around 200 lay preachers, accredited or otherwise, are speaking from Uniting Church pulpits in Queensland.

At a national level, the Assembly's Ministerial Education Commission is conducting a review of the ministry of Lay Preacher.

A report is expected in the middle of next year.

Around 40 people are currently employed as a pastor within the Queensland Synod.

Their roles range from full-time congregational pastors to school chaplains and lay ministry workers in community.



Gail Ayre is commissioned as a Lay Pastor. From left: Clive Ayre, Gail Ayre, Colleen Geyer and John Cox. Photo courtesy of Phil Smith

Breaking the communal fast

By Mardi Lumsden

WHEN MARYBOROUGH Uniting Church member Marion

Tappenden felt a calling to help homeless people she wasn't sure what to do next.

"I had a vision four or five years

ago of working with the homeless and it wasn't until earlier this year that I finally found somewhere to take it," she said.

Hearing that her congregation was looking for new mission projects she suggested, after much thought and prayer, a breakfast for homeless people.

"As there was already a ministry happening through the Anglican church which involved Anglican, Catholic and Baptist people, I decided that was probably a good place to start."

She gathered a couple of other interested people and went along

to see how it was done and to discuss what they felt was needed in the local community.

"I felt that God was telling me it was breakfast we were to provide."

Everyone agreed and on 5 October this year the weekly breakfast for the homeless began.

It currently has 25 volunteers and feeds between 15 and 28 people each week.

"There are men, women and children; we had four children this morning," she said.

"I see it as being Christ's hands in the community and meeting a need and serving God in that way.

"For me it is fulfilling what God has called us to do."

Ms Tappenden said congregation members have really

supported the initiative.

"Even people who can't get up early come.

"We have a couple of people who come in later to do the washing up."

Ms Tappenden said that there is a need for more services such as the breakfast and the soup kitchen run by the town's churches.

"We have started off with one breakfast [per week], but who knows, depending on how people feel we may look at another one down the track.

"If God leads us in another direction we will certainly be moving that way."

The Maryborough youth group will also be involved this month by preparing Christmas hampers.



Some of the breakfast volunteers at Maryborough Uniting Church. Photo by Diane Beasant

Montville brings gifts

By Craig Hosmer

MONTVILLE UNITING Church's annual Christmas display will this year focus on the work of Act for Peace and the Christmas Bowl with a thought-provoking exhibition.

Through posters, banners, DVDs and stories about real people facing real challenges, *The Gifts of Life* exhibit will

emphasise those gifts that make a difference in their lives: shelter, security, clean water, food, seeds, health, education, skills training, peace and justice.

The church will have a hand-made refugee tent inside the church hall and on the front lawn.

In addition there will be three decorated trees – a tree of peace, a tree of the gifts of life and a tree decorated by Montville school

children on a theme of hope.

Montville's small congregation receives wonderful support from members of the Maleny and Nambour Uniting Churches in mounting this display.

Last year, over 1000 visitors visited the church's display.

The exhibit will be open to the public from 11–23 December, from 10am until 3.30 pm.

Craig Hosmer is a member of Montville Uniting Church



The Montville Uniting Church working group. Photo by Paul Smith

Heart and soul lead the way

By Mardi Lumsden

ZILLMERE UNITING Church member Georgia Corowa is certainly good at juggling many roles.

The Churches Together Indigenous People's Partnership (CTIPP) officer has just returned from a tour to Vanuatu performing with Singaot Sista, a group of acclaimed female Indigenous singers-songwriters from Australia, New Zealand, the Pacific and Sudan.

The Queensland Churches Together (QTC) Indigenous advisory role is something of a passion for Ms Corowa.

"It all started from a consultation that happened last year that involved a lot of Indigenous church leaders," she said.

"They had some ideas of what they wanted CTIPP to do but making that happen is a journey.

"This year we had a reconciliation service at St John's Cathedral for all the churches to

come together for reconciliation week."

Ms Corowa's role is to create a network of church congregations who either have Indigenous leadership or who are interested in learning more about Indigenous issues relating to faith and the church.

"One of the focuses was to make the church aware of how the church missions affected Indigenous people and the perceptions from that.

"The main thing was to get the story out and for it to be told by an Indigenous person.

"You have non-Indigenous churches who sometimes don't know about what's going on or what has gone on in the past so I hope for an openness to those issues ... and for Indigenous church leaders to be empowered as well.

"I know that God has placed me there for a reason and it is in my heart.

But she also has a passion for the performing arts.



Georgia Corowa and Rev Bruce Boase at the reconciliation service at St John's Cathedral in June.
Photo by Michael Stephenson and courtesy of Focus

The graduate of the Aboriginal Centre for the Performing Arts (ACPA) not only performs in her church band, the Zillmere Warriors, but also in an eight voice choir and performs her own music.

"I made a decision last year to take one day at a time because for me it has to be where God leads me," she said.

"Especially in performing arts you can get on your own track and have a goal where you want to be and it might not be where God wants you to be.

"It's very unstable but for me

I wouldn't have it any other way."

Ms Corowa yearns for a deep connection with her cultural heritage, something the trip to Vanuatu made her appreciate.

"It was such an amazing experience.

"It came out of a festival they have in Vanuatu every year and they wanted to focus on women this year.

"The next day we had little girls coming up to us in the street in awe of us.

"You could see the women being empowered."

For this former Bowen resident

the world is opening up.

Next year Ms Corowa has another creative pursuit in the wings.

"There is a musical called *Dancing the Line* that has been in the woodwork for a couple of years and we are developing the final script to it.

"It is about the Torres Strait Islanders when they had to move to Australia and they made a world record with laying down the railway lines.

"I would like to move into telling the story of my south sea island heritage," she said.

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Journey - December 2010

Finding answers to old questions

Journey finishes its exploration of Brian McLaren's 10 questions which he says are transforming the church. This final question looks at the future. How do we explore the previous nine questions without creating division?

By Geoff Thompson

IN HIS BOOK *A New Kind of Christianity* Brian McLaren posed 10 questions to help people join the quest for a new and better kind of Christianity for tomorrow's world.

This quest, he tells us, is "springing up all around the world".

The project is laudable, yet I admit that I struggle to get past some of the rhetoric.

The struggle comes partly from never having been gripped by the 'emerging church' which

Mr McLaren represents.

I'm just not part of the 'we' of his ten questions.

In fact, there is something disconcerting about this tenth and final question.

Mr McLaren's 'we' are committed to avoiding division and generating creative and loving attitudes.

But they are warned to anticipate and prepare for resistance – presumably from those not on the quest.

Why not invite scrutiny rather than pre-empt it as resistance?

The dialogue Mr McLaren

commendably seeks requires a different posture.

Maybe the best way of opening up these questions without creating division would be to drop the high-sounding rhetoric of "a new kind of Christianity".

Just put the questions on the table, argue their merits, and discuss them using the resources of the whole Christian tradition.

There is also a certain romanticism about how this tenth question is posed.

Who could possibly argue with the need to generate creative and loving attitudes?

Who would not want to avoid division?

Yet, any discussion of the gospel's truth is potent.

A more hard-nosed approach is needed if there is to be the kind of honest engagement which is precisely what these questions demand.

The Cambridge theologian Nicholas Lash, writes of the need for Christians to engage the gospel's truth through nothing less than "thought and pain and argument ... prayer and study and an unflinching quest for understanding".

With critiques of Christianity pervading our culture, this is no time for sentiment.

Having said that, the questions are well worth asking.

Indeed, with the exception of homosexuality, Mr McLaren's questions focus on issues which have been the basic preoccupations of Christian theology for most of the church's life: biblical narrative, authority, God, Jesus, Gospel, Church.

Therefore, a quite different question arises for me.

Why are these questions being linked to a new kind of Christianity?



Author Brian McLaren

The questions are hardly new.

The history of Christian thought has already thrown up many well-developed answers to them and some of them have been creatively re-worked during the last two centuries.

Linking these questions to a new kind of Christianity partly reflects the emerging church context.

The emerging church – especially in its North American manifestations – is often an ex- or post-evangelical phenomenon.

It is now appropriating the richness of the theologies, liturgies, histories and questions of the wider church which have often been resisted by the evangelical constituency.

So they are new to those asking them in that context.

However, I suggest that if they seem new even outside that context it is because the mainstream protestant churches slipped into a theological slumber for most of the second half of the twentieth century.

For a whole complex set of reasons theological formation was put on the backburner – despite the twentieth century being a period of immense theological ferment.

Again to quote Nicholas Lash: there has been a "systemic failure of the Christian churches to understand themselves as *schools* of Christian wisdom: as richly endowed projects of lifelong education".

Closer to home, almost a decade ago, the *Report of the Three Presidents* identified one of the Uniting Church's weaknesses as "the decline in systematic teaching about our life in Christ as a central ministry in each congregation's life".

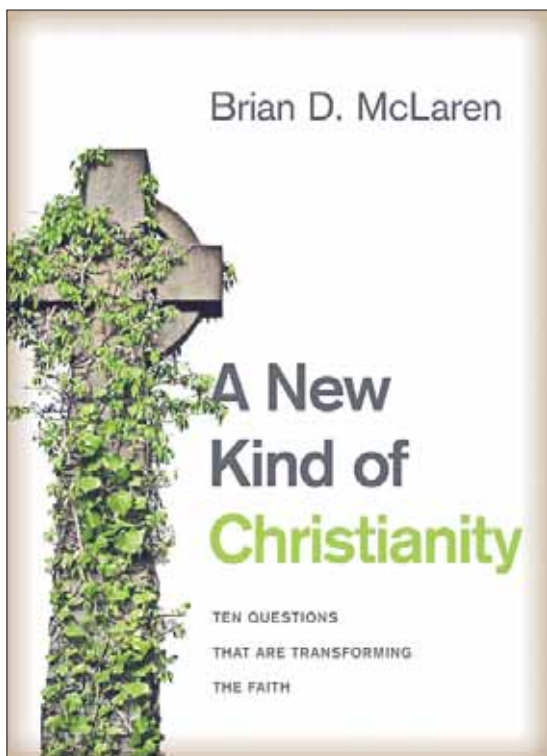
Whether or not that decline has been reversed remains to be seen.

But if such a ministry is to become central, we will need as individuals and congregations to commit to the thought, pain, argument, prayer, study and the unflinching quest for understanding that is required of a church called to mission in one of the most secular nations on earth.

And let's jettison the romance and the sentiment about a new kind of Christianity.

Being disciples of a crucified Lord is demanding enough.

Geoff Thompson is principal of Trinity Theological College



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More information and apply online at:
apply.su-chaplain.com

December 18, 6-8pm

Kenmore Community Christmas Carols



Sausage sizzle, entertainers, children's games, face painting, free glow sticks and more. Carol service with Josh McIntosh Band, Phil Smith MC. Kenmore State Primary School Oval. Contact Julia King on 3378 3595 or julia.king@kbc.org.au.

December 5, 8am-12pm. Mount Crosby Country Market. Children's activities, craft, fashion, baked goods, entertainment and much more. Lower playing field, off College Rd, the back of Mount Crosby State School. Contact Ruth O'Dowd on 0437110789 or ruth@mtcrosbycountrymarket.com.au.

December 5, 7pm. Tarragindi Community Carols and An Angel's Tale. Free family-friendly entertainment. The Hall, Wellers Hill State School. Contact Tiffany Archibald on 0402 328 633 or tiffarchibald@optusnet.com.au.

December 7-9, 3-7.30pm. Brookfield Christmas Tree Festival. Moggill Singers, Brookfield Community Choir, Brookfield UC Choir, a manger scene, Free entry. Brookfield UC. Contact Kay Barnes on 33005397 or geobarn39@hotmail.com.

December 9, 6.30-9.30pm. Logan Central Multicultural UC Outreach Program. 119 Bardon Rd, Logan Central. Contact Gewa Au on 0411 472 762 or gewa@centralopenlearning.com.

December 9-23, 7-10pm. Sandgate Christmas Lights Display. Free entertainment. Books, cards, craft, and more. 116 Board St, Deagon. Contact Eunice on 3261 3222 or sandgateuc@pfcs.com.au.

December 11-12. Glasshouse Country 10th Anniversary Celebrations. Saturday night casual meal with speaker Phil Smith and the GHCUC Ensemble. Sunday morning guest speaker Rev Bruce Johnson. Beerwah UC. Contact Chris Bell on 5492 5883 or chrisbell@tadaust.org.au.

December 12, 7pm. Sing-it-Yourself Messiah. Admission \$7.50. Albert St UC, cnr Albert & Ann Sts, Brisbane city. Contact Rosemary Hiley on 3031 3030 or R.Hiley@wmb.org.au.

December 15-23, 7-9.30pm. Kawana Waters Uniting Christmas Festival. Free admission, slice of cake and tea/coffee. Christmas gifts stalls. Thunderbird Dr, Bokarina. Contact Trevor Huth on 5491 6632 or t.huth38@optusnet.net.au.

December 17, 7-15pm. Christmas Carol Extravaganza. Join the Thomas Cantley Singers, Cantata Deo and other guest choirs. Entry by donation to WMB Emergency Relief. Albert Street UC, Brisbane city. Contact Rosemary Hiley on 3031 3030.

December 17, 5-8.30pm. Christmas on the Green. Twilight markets, jumping castle, entertainment, carol singing. WMB, Parkview Green, 930 Gympie Rd, Chermide. Contact Kerrie McVeigh on 3621 4693 or k.mcveigh@wmb.org.au.

December 18, 7-9.30pm. Trinity Ipswich Multicultural Christmas Carols. 114 Jacaranda Rd, North Booval. Contact Rev Viliami Mila on 0406 560 497 or viliami_anamila@bigpond.com.

December 19, 7-9pm. Oxley-Darra UC Carols in the Park. Cawonga Park, Oxley Station Rd, Oxley. Contact Rev David MacGregor on 0414 392 802 or dmacgreg1@optusnet.com.au.

December 19-23, 5-9pm. Stable on the Strand. A free event telling the story of Jesus. Strand Park, Townsville. Contact Anne Harley on 4774 6089 or anniehaha@dovenetq.net.au.

December 19, 5.30-8.30pm. Beachmere Uniting Church Christmas Carols sing-a-long. Cnr Moreton Tce and Second Ave. Contact Peggy Armitage on 5496 8128 or armitage1@australis.net.

December 21-23, 6.30-8.30pm. Stroll Through Bethlehem at Indooroopilly UC. Real sheep, carpenters, potters, weavers, soldiers and a live baby as Jesus. Supper included. Contact Adele Dingle on 0437 792 625 or dingle1@bigpond.com.

December 25, 12.30-2pm. Wesley Mission Brisbane's Christmas Day lunch for homeless and disadvantaged. King George Square Brisbane. Contact Tanya Richards on 0430 403 783 or trichards@wmb.org.au.

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

Revamped Indooroopilly church opens doors

SATURDAY 4 December was the opening of the redevelopment of the Indooroopilly Uniting Church.

The conclusion of the redevelopment brings to fruition ten years of planning and twelve months of construction.

Opened by the Moderator Rev Bruce Johnson the contemporary glass-fronted structure makes a dramatic connection between the earlier Methodist Church of 1917 and the church built in 1976 for the combined Presbyterian-Methodist congregation just prior to Union.

This history is captured in a new publication *Dreams and Visions*.

Opposite Indooroopilly Shopping Centre, one of Queensland's largest shopping centres, the redevelopment was finished just in time for the busy Christmas season and the Church's annual "Walk through Bethlehem" display running from 21 to 23 December.



Rev Josie Nottle and Rev Henry Swinden ready to welcome people to the redeveloped church. Photo by Jim Gibson

The display gives a space of rest for hectic Christmas shoppers to walk through a tableau of live actors displaying the first Christmas scene.

Live animals, a real baby, a cranky innkeeper, haughty soldiers and happy peasants and

a variety of shopkeepers will be there alongside Mary, Joseph, the shepherds and wise men.

For more information visit www.indooroopilly.ucaweb.com.au

Geebung celebrates 50 years

GEEBUNG UNITING Church will celebrate 50 years on 20 February with a service and lunch.

Now part of the Kairos Uniting Church cluster in northern Brisbane, an old farm house was the setting for the first worship service in February 1961.

Established as a Presbyterian Church, the farm house was the worship centre until May 1963, when the first permanent hall was opened.

In 1976 the congregation entered into cooperation with the Geebung Methodist congregation and became one congregation after Union.

The current church was opened in 1983.

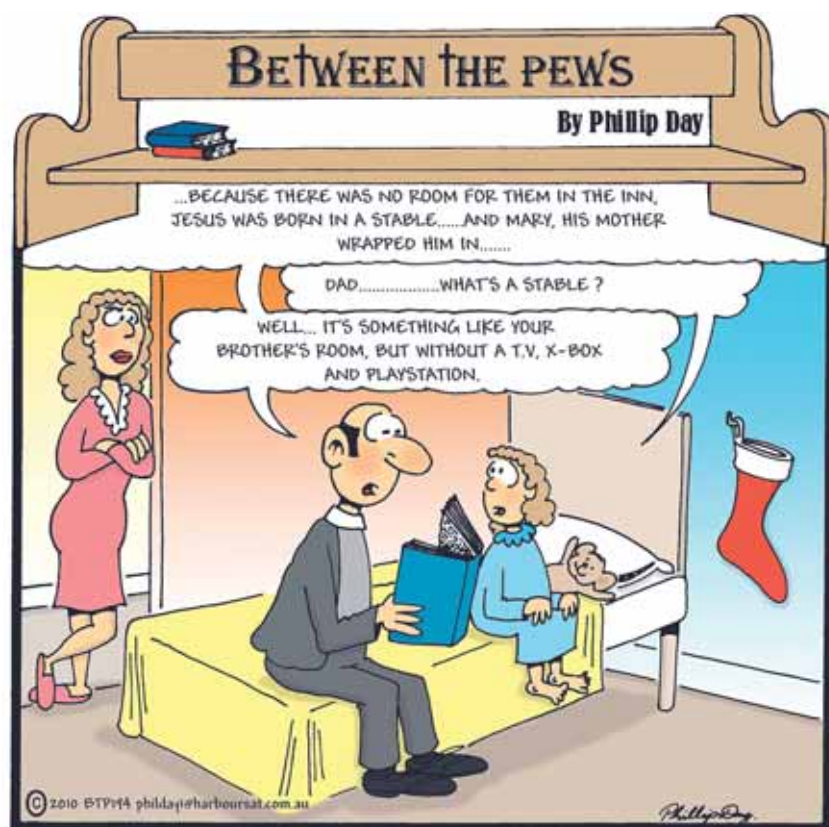
Everyone who has been part of this journey is invited to join the congregation for the occasion.

Enquiries to Ian Caitens on 3265 4396 or ian.caitens@bigpond.com

Looking for nurse windows

UNIVERSITY OF Queensland doctoral student Susan Kellett is in search of stained glass windows depicting nurses for her study into the commemoration and memorialisation of nurses in stained glass windows of public buildings.

Send information to Susan Kellett, University of Queensland, School of Nursing and Midwifery, Edith Cavell Building, Herston Campus, Herston, Queensland, 4029, 3346 5269 or susan.kellett@uqconnect.edu.au.



Stepping out with the Sacred:

Human Attempts to Engage the Divine

By Val Webb, Continuum, 2010, RRP \$35.95

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

THIS IS a true post-modern book in that it examines the search for the divine/sacred throughout the religious expressions of the cultures of the world without exercising judgement on these expressions.

Ms Webb explores the images and metaphors used to describe the divine, and what different human cultures understand to be the abode of the divine.

Using observations from her own experience and that of others, the author describes how different faith expressions explain the realm of the Sacred, various founders' visions and experience of the divine as well as the sacred rites, liturgies, sites, places, symbols and roles

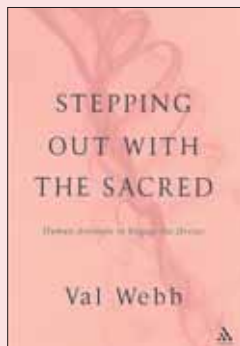
of the community and clergy in these faiths.

It is Ms Webb's thesis that all authoritarian statements in religion must be open to challenge and question as with authoritative statements from any discipline.

Any authority that goes against our own experience must be tested.

She comes to the conclusion that our experience and search for the sacred is fashioned by our own culture and life.

The book challenged me in that I thought I was a tolerant person and receptive to the beliefs and practices of other faiths (after all I did have the Rev Dr Robert Fulcher as one of my formative teachers), but through reading her book I found myself again examining my own



prejudices and preconceptions and becoming more aware that true dialogue means unconditional acceptance of the other.

Ms Webb's philosophies will not satisfy everyone – which is why I think it would make an excellent book for a book club or study group.

In the end though I had to agree with her when she says, "We cannot say God is ours only and that other experiences of the Sacred describe a different or false God".

From Saint Hildegard's Kitchen

By Jany Fournier-Rosset, Liguori, Missouri, 2010, RRP \$24.95

Reviewed by Rev Barbara Bailey.

THIS ENCHANTING publication links the medieval world with the twenty-first century.

Jany Fournier-Rosset, a mother and chef who is also a lay oblate with the order of St. Benedict, has brought the wisdom of the twelfth century St. Hildegard to us as a recipe book infused with the Saint's spirituality.

In the real sense, it is a simple cook book in which Ms Fournier-Rosset has listed 93 recipes for today based on the earlier writings and discoveries of this visionary Saint.

St. Hildegard saw God as first in everything, the source of all life, and her writings became an essential link between God and good health.

She was a mystic, a composer, an apothecary and a naturalist who received visions from heaven about human nutrition.

She believed in "foods of joy" which revitalise the physical, spiritual and psychological aspects of humans, as well as "foods of sadness" which sap health and vitality.

She was a proponent of moderation and discretion who said, "Everywhere in creation, trees, plants, animals and gems, there are mysterious



healing forces, which no person can know unless they are revealed to him by God."

This 223 page publication is set out as a recipe book with an impressive index of ingredients, glossary of cooking terms, and conversion charts, alongside quotes from the Saint herself.

Many of St. Benedict's table graces are also included.

If you want to know the secret of spelt flour, why lettuce should have a dressing, what time you should eat your first meal of the day, or what the difference is between an infusion and a decoction, then this book is for you.

It is a delightfully different and insightful publication.

Highly recommended for those who love to cook healthy food, and those who wish to reflect on this medieval wisdom.

A Celtic Christmas (CD)

By Tom Kendzia, 2009, RRP \$29.95

Reviewed by Sandra Jebb, minister at Kairos Uniting Church, an Australian who was born in Ireland.

IF YOU would like to add a Celtic flavour to brighten up your Christmas festivities this year then *A Celtic Christmas* by Tom Kendzia is a must!

This instrumental collection features some of Ireland's best traditional musicians with lively new arrangements of some well known hymns and carols.

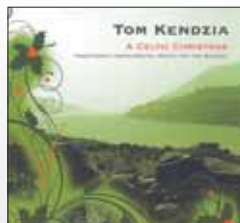
'The Merrily on High-Dance Melody' interprets the well known carols 'Ding Dong Merrily on High', 'God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen' and 'Good

King Wenceslas' in a unique style with the traditional Celtic sounds of pipes, fiddles and flutes.

Listen to an Irish foot tapping version of 'Hark the Herald Angels Sing'.

Put 'Christmas Eve' on in the background as you make your preparations for Christmas Day and you'll be dancing round the kitchen.

By contrast, if you prefer the more emotionally meditative ballads with the hauntingly beautiful sounds of harp and cello, then close your eyes as you



listen to 'Sliabh Gallen' and 'An Chiuilfhionn'.

'What Child is This' is a spiritually moving instrumental meditation to help us ponder just who is this Christ child Jesus that we welcome and worship at this time of year.

This CD captures the energy and enthusiasm of Irish traditional music at its best.

Listening to Country:

A journey to the heart of what it means to belong

By Ros Moriarty, Allen & Unwin, 2010, RRP \$32.99

Reviewed by Rev Dr Marian Zaunbrecher.

THIS IS a must read book for every Australian.

Author, Ros Moriarty, married an Aboriginal man of the lost generation who was taken from his mother when he was four.

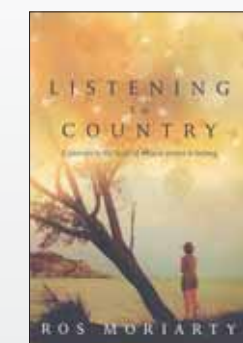
After first visiting his country in the Gulf of Carpentaria, where his people now live, at Borroloola, they returned frequently to remind themselves of who they were.

In 2006 she again returned determined to write the stories of the Aboriginal women; keepers of the traditional Law inherited from the Dreamtime.

Instead she found herself travelling with the women to the Tanami desert to perform a ceremony with over five hundred women from the surrounding areas.

As she describes the journey and daily occurrences – she cannot reveal the women's sacred stories and traditions – she intertwines this with her own story, her husband John's and that of the Yanyuwa people.

The story of a rich marriage emerges, as well as the history of the interactions between European and Indigenous



people and the struggle of setting up their Indigenous design studio Balarinji, whose designs cover the Qantas planes and now uniforms.

In the current depressed state of the Yanyuwa community one could end up feeling defeated, but instead her story is of strong, beautiful older Aboriginal women caught in systemic poverty, who protect the sacred ways, mourn the loss of their traditions and yet embrace life with resilience, warmth, happiness and inclusiveness.

Ms Moriarty's evocative descriptions mean you can almost taste the dust in your mouth as you read while you weep for the loss of a rich, vibrant and age-old culture.

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

My very first Christmas Story (Sticker Book)

By Lois Rock, Illustrations by Alex Ayliffe, Lion Children's, 2010, RRP \$7.99



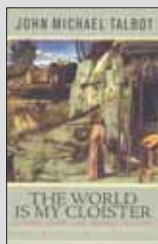
Seasoned (CD)

By Compliments of Gus, Humber Records, 2009, RRP \$24.95



The World is my Cloister: Living from the Hermit Within

By John Michael Talbot, Orbis Books, NY, 2010, RRP \$24.95



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

Maryborough celebrates 130 years

By Diane Beasant

ON FRIDAY 8 October the congregation of St. Stephen's Uniting Church in Maryborough re-enacted the laying of the foundation stone of the church.

130 years ago on that date the stone for the new Presbyterian Church was laid. The church was officially

opened on 20 November 1881 and cost around £4400.

It remains a conspicuous landmark in Maryborough with its striking belfry and tall spire.

April 2011 will mark the 120th anniversary of the Melville Pipe Organ and special activities are being planned throughout the year

culminating in an Anniversary Service for 20 November 2011 to mark the opening of the church.

Right: Megan Beasant, Joyce Bott, Jayne Cronau, Nalda Brett, Rev Graham Slaughter, Adam Niesler, Dale Beasant and Bevan Brett dressed in the fashions of the day to kick off a year of celebrations. Photo by Diane Beasant



On Sunday 12 December please pray for Buderim Uniting Church

BUDERIM IS a picturesque township steeped in history atop Buderim Mountain overlooking Queensland's spectacular Sunshine Coast.

Buderim Uniting Church celebrated its Centenary in 2007 and the changes over those 100 years have been enormous. Farms have disappeared and the population has grown to over 30,000.

Frank Fielding, a founding member, said at the time of the centenary celebrations, "Our church is a good strong church, a wonderful group of workers! The people now have the same spirit as they join in the work and we've bounded ahead."

"We're of the same mind, the same driving force."

If Mr Fielding were here today he would still say, "We are a strong church", with the same driving force, the love of our Lord Jesus.

Now we are a progressive church with a number of developing concepts.

Early in the year Vision 2010 was launched with a view to the formation of teams (i.e. worship, pastoral care, outreach, communication, and

administration) to support and assist the Church Council in its ongoing mission.

Please pray for:

- Café church. In addition to family and traditional services, café church commenced in February with 6-7 families meeting in a home fortnightly to do spiritual development studies. They now meet in the church with an attendance of 35 including children.

- Our young people. Having been largely a senior congregation we are much encouraged to have a Cradle Roll of 24 and the weekly activity of Mainly Music, an interactive and educational music program for children.

- Lunch with Friends. A fellowship where friends from outside and within the church share lunch monthly.

- Adult Fellowship and Men's Breakfast

- The fruitfulness of the newly formed teams.

The next time you find yourself on the Sunshine Coast, come and join us at Buderim Uniting Church for a wonderful time of praise and worship.

Aitkenvale celebrates 125 years

By Kevin and Robin Warren

AITKENVALE UNITING Church celebrated 125 years of church community in Aitkenvale, Townsville, on 23 and 24 October.

There was much remembering about good times with memories sparked by photos and memorabilia.

On Sunday over 170 worshippers attended a service in the morning, which was followed by a family picnic.

Minister Rev Mark Dewar led

the congregation in giving thanks for the faithfulness of previous generations, recognising that we stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before.

The Aitkenvale church has a strong background in providing community services.

The congregation played a key role in the establishment of the first Lifeline centre in Townsville in 1975 and has provided refugee housing and a home for young women.

With God's help and guidance,

the Uniting Church at Aitkenvale is looking forward to many more years of worship, witness and service.



Marie Dewar, Jennifer Burnett (Family, Youth and Children's Pastor) and Rev Mark Dewar (Minister)

On Sunday 19 December please pray for Townsville Central City Mission

TOWNSVILLE CENTRAL City Mission is a ministry of the Uniting Church which has emerged out of Townsville Central Uniting Church as a response to identified needs in the Townsville community.

After a period of soul searching, reviews and consultations, Central Uniting decided it needed to change its name to help focus its mission direction.

Our Vision is to work with Jesus Christ to build the Kingdom of God in Townsville.

Our Mission is that Townsville Central City Mission is a strategic city

church committed to proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ, ministering to human need, providing personal and family care through the ministry of word and deed.

Out of a deep commitment to Jesus Christ we value: faith in the living God, openness to all people, justice for the poor and marginalised, strong families building strong communities and the power of God to heal.

For Central City Mission please pray for:

- Stable on the Strand 19-23 December
- Seeds program for PNG
- YWAM Mercy Ship

- Prison Ministry For Townsville Living Waters Centre for Healing and Restoration please pray for:

- Healing Rooms
- Elijah House Ministries
- Ancient Paths courses
- Kiss the Girls course

For the future direction for Townsville Uniting Churches please pray for:

- Worship gathering
- Townsville Uniting Church Korean Congregation
- Combined evening Service and Christian Character Training.

St. Stephen's Uniting Church Macquarie Street Sydney

MINISTER OF THE WORD



St. Stephen's Congregation is seeking a Minister of the Word to lead us in developing our mission to the City of Sydney.

Our worship and proclamation is in the mainstream of the Uniting Church of Australia. Our vision is to be "An oasis of Christian worship, thought and action".

St. Stephen's Uniting Church is part of a significant historic precinct of the City of Sydney and is situated directly opposite the NSW Parliament, Sydney Hospital and is adjacent to the Supreme Court. The offices of many legal and medical practitioners are nearby.

The Minister who leads our Congregation

- Will be a gifted leader of worship with an appreciation of the Uniting Church's liturgical heritage.

- Will have strong preaching and leadership abilities and pastoral skills.
- Will work with our Director of Music to extend our musical excellence in worship and recitals.
- Will guide and encourage this Congregation to focus on new ideas and possibilities
- Will work with the Church Council and its Committees in the governance of the Church.

Please visit our website www.ssms.org.au to find out more about St Stephen's and the Congregation.

Inquiries to the Rev Neil Erickson chairperson@sydneypresbytery.org.au or phone (02) 9569 4410.

Written applications to be sent to Meg Herbert, Associate Secretary (Ministry), NSW/ACT Synod, PO Box A2178, Sydney South NSW 1235.

Wishing you a blessed Christmas, a rejuvenating holiday and a New Year full of opportunities.

From the Journey team Mardi, Osker, Tara, Phil and our many volunteers



When one journey ends, another begins

WE WERE saddened to read in the last edition of *Journey* that Uniting Church Safaris was to conclude.

We were one of many organisations fortunate enough to benefit from the generosity of UC Safaris who not only took people on journeys to remote Queensland but provided them with valuable insights into the

people of the outback, their joys, challenges and contributions to the economic prosperity and health of our nation.

Although UC Safaris' journey is now over, under the energetic leadership of Aubrey Baker, and more recently Doug Fergusson, the organisation has left behind a generous legacy of support for rural and remote ministry through Frontier Services in

Western Queensland.

We offer our sincere thanks to UC Safaris for its unwavering support of Frontier Services over the years and for helping us on our journey.

Rosemary Young
AM
National Director
Frontier Services



Challenge for the Church

AS A Uniting Church we are a congregational/council based church where the congregations/councils have much power.

We are trying to solve the current financial (and perhaps our mission problems) at a Synod level, but the Synod doesn't have the power to solve these problems (and it is not appropriate for the Synod to be the focus of mission).

We either need to give the Synod these powers (which is against our polity) or as congregations take the responsibility to solve these problems, which it seems we are reluctant to do.

Part of the problem is that the majority of our congregations think they are OK.

They are surviving; paying

their minister and basic costs.

They can't contribute any more, indeed they resent being asked to contribute as this will make them unviable, lead to the loss of their minister, and therefore the 'end' of their church.

We agents are culpable in this as we don't want to lose our jobs.

What needs to be made perfectly clear to all congregations is that most of us are already unviable! We are already living beyond our means, living on the inheritance of the past – and the inheritance has run out.

It needs to be made clear that even the current situation cannot, indeed will not, continue.

Until we admit our problems we won't be ready to live.

Only when we realise how corrupt our situation is personally, at a congregational level, will we be willing to do

radical things to change it (like giving up our idolatry to buildings, traditions/comforts, even our idolatry to ministers).

Finally we may be forced to think beyond the box, to things like joining with other Uniting Churches down the road or denominations across the street, selling our buildings and moving into the local school, going beyond Sunday morning as all there is to church, telling and inviting others.

Being church is hard in modern Australia.

Congregations, you must be the answer to the Church's current financial and spiritual malaise.

It's uncomfortable, but not as uncomfortable as other people forcing an answer upon you.

Rev Paul Clark
Burdekin



Mind, body and spirit

I WISH to commend you and your staff on producing such a progressive edition of *Journey* magazine for November, with its focus on men's health.

More specifically, you have provided men with a log maintenance book for their health, with inclusions for all their health needs: physical, emotional and spiritual.

You have successfully managed to destigmatise mental illnesses by placing

mental health in the context of general health.

Well done!

As a mental health nurse for 20 years, I would like to congratulate you on a feature issue that will contribute positively to all aspects of men's health, including mental health awareness.

Rose Dunmill
Indooroopilly
Uniting Church



Men's health hints

MANY THANKS for the focus on men's health (and wellbeing) in your last edition.

Given that men will seldom initiate an open and honest conversation about their health (unless like Frank Dingle and Steve Bagi they have found themselves at or near death's door) I am writing to share with you some initiatives being taken within the Presbytery of Bremer Brisbane.

It has been my delight to have spoken at some men's breakfast gatherings on matters raised in November's *Journey* and also to have briefly spoken at the Presbytery ministers lunch.

The response to sessions on "Men - The endangered Species" and "Being a father - the MOST important job you will ever have!" were nothing short of fascinating.

They prove the hunger in men for stimulating/accurate information, helpful handouts and the opportunity to share their experiences and opinions.

As a therapist who has specialised with men and their issues/relationships/concerns for some 25 years, and who has conducted workshops at a local, state, and national level, I was not surprised at the extent of the "father-son wound" present in the hearts and lives of men they have known and worshipped with for years.

Contrary to popular opinion, when a 'safe and sacred space' is created by/ for men, they will and do find

whatever it takes to explore their pain, issues and desire for health and wholeness.

I am passionately committed to the conviction that men have vast knowledge and wisdom to share with each other and that they can be the means of healing each other's wounds.

Conversations on how we might (as a church) more effectively minister to a whole range of men's needs are being planned by Rev David Baker, Bremer Brisbane Presbytery Minister.

It is our intention to involve some clergy/laymen with a view of planning some more opportunities next year (day workshops, a Men's Camp/Retreat etc).

I have created a variety of resources, programs and processes in this field and would welcome the chance to share with any congregations interested.

As a member of the State Committee of the Men's Wellbeing Association I can provide materials on a range of their programs (Common Ground and Men's Gatherings).

Visit their website at www.menswellbeing.org.

Please feel free to contact me on 3812 7585 or deanolafsen@bigpond.com or David Baker on dbaker@gil.com.au.

Dean Olafsen
Ipswich



CLASSIFIEDS

Accommodation

Wanted. Female housemate to share fully furnished 3 bedroom house in trendy and convenient New Farm. Rent subsidised in return for some support for 35 yr old learning to live independently. Quiet area, close to transport. Email drgram@bigpond.net.au or phone 0409 498 403 for information sheet.

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. Ph/Fax: 001144.2086946538.

General

www.DynamicChurchWebsites.com Incl. Video and SEO for \$495. Terry, (07) 5533 4737 or 0459 224 739.

Give away. 35-year-old piano to donate to a needy church/church hall. Sounds beautiful, excellent condition. Contact Jeni Parker on 0420 224933 for information.

Position Vacant

Youth and Family Worker. Exciting Opportunity Available. Part time position to start February 2011. Nambour Uniting Church, Sunshine Coast. Full job description at www.nambour.ucaweb.com.au. Closing date for applications 3 December, 2010.

Community Development Officer - initially half day per week at \$30 per hour. Acacia Ridge. freshsteps@bigpond.com

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

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

Please keep letters to a maximum of 250 words. Letters may be edited due to space limitations.

Preference will be given to letters responding to articles or letters in the most recent edition of *Journey*.



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What is the best gift you ever received?

Karen Krause

AT THIS time of year thoughts move to the list of gifts to purchase for family and friends for Christmas.

Reflecting on what is the best gift that I have received, I would have to say it would be the birth of our son sixteen years ago.

On the day he was born, the Sister of Mercy commented to my doctor that every child is a special gift.

How true that statement is.

Every day I say thank you for the joy, laughter, challenges and special memories that Daniel has brought to our lives.

Watching a child grow from someone completely dependent upon you for everything to someone who can walk and work alongside you is very special.

It is the little things like when he says "Have a good day, Mum" as he hops out of the car at school or the hug when you have done something for him that makes his day a little easier that make you realise this child is a 'gift'.

I challenge all of you who are parents to take a little time out of your busy schedule to reflect on your 'special gifts' particularly at this time of year when we focus on the miracle of Christ's birth.

I'm sure you will get that special feeling too.



Karen Krause is a secondary school Head of Department (Business) and mother



Dave Martin

IN OCTOBER this year I had the pleasure of visiting a World Vision Aid and Development Project at Lam Thap in Southern Thailand.

There I got to see just what our donor dollars achieve in developing nation situations.

Out of the four projects I visited, one was particularly impacting; a home goat farm that now has around 40 goats.

The goats are housed in stalls raised about a metre off the ground, which protects them from the damp ground and makes it easier to clean out the fertiliser.

The farmer, a Muslim, was particularly delightful and welcoming.

He has six children, who are all attending school now that he has the supplementary income from the goats, which provide milk, meat, fertiliser and skins.

What is the best gift I ever received?

For the above group photo this Muslim man warmly put his arm around me.

I was particularly touched by this gesture.

A number of the communities World Vision works with in Lam Thap are Muslim.

Here we are, a self-confessed Christian organisation, working without prejudice among many Muslims.

World Vision is doing this without making any attempt to change their faith through means of negotiation (if you ... then we ...), or coercion (us having a crusade mentality), or temptation (through gifts given when a faith response is asked for thus creating 'rice' Christians).

The reward was a hug for a Christian from a Muslim.

That said it all. Love given and love reflected back.

The best gift I ever received was the love from someone of a different faith who was acknowledging the work of Christians to make this world a better place.

"Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." (Matt 6:10)

Dave Martin is a Church Partnerships Manager for World Vision Australia



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