March 2011



MORE DEPTH, MORE STORIES AT journeyonline.com.au

NEW GEN SEC STARTS PAGE 4 "Empowered by the Holy Spirit, I am confident that we will rise to the challenge of our times." Dr Shirley Coulson

ACTS OF GOD?

"Of course 'acts of God' are not defined in insurance policies." **Rev Dr Rob Bos**

UNITINGCARE RECONCILIATION COMMITMENT - P6

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WHAT IS CHURCH?

By Mardi Lumsden

BIG QUESTIONS - P4

THE UNITING Church's foundational document, the *Basis of Union*, states many different purposes of the church.

Some of these include: "preaching Christ the risen crucified One" (para 3); "to be a fellowship of reconciliation" (para 3); "be led to deeper commitment to the faith and service" (para 12); "order its life in response to God's call to enter more fully into mission" (para 13); and "to serve those in need in the world" (para 14).

"The church's call is to serve that end: to be a fellowship of reconciliation, a body within which the diverse gifts of its members are used for the building up of the whole, an instrument through which Christ may work and bear witness to himself" (para 3).

What a task!

In recent years many different expressions of church and worship have appeared.

For some people, being Christ in the community (providing a meal for a family in need for example) is an act of worship.

Michael Hewson said worship is celebrating God. "And church is the essential socialisation of that spiritual offering."

Rev Heather Griffin said that church is the community of people who "love God a little and would like to love God more".

"We are a community called to reflect the light of Christ wherever and in whatever circumstances we find ourselves," she said. "Worship is the natural expression of our relationship with the One who is far beyond our capacity to comprehend."

South Moreton Presbytery Children's, Youth and Families Ministry Coordinator, Rev Wendi Sargeant, has written a thesis on this topic.

In it she suggested the changing view of church is a reflection of changes in Australian society.

"Even a cursory glance at family life, media, education systems and information dissemination gives huge scope for discussion and the raising of issues for the institution that is the Church," she said.

"The Church is not merely a group of people who follow the teachings of an ancient religious leader," she said. "The emerging Church has a great opportunity to be the 'new' old way of being Church.

"This will take transformed action in our own context.

"Transformed action requires

the kind of reflection, learning and consequent choices that Practical Theology offers.

"Now, more than ever, we need to educate people to reflect theologically about the Christian story."

Christ in action

IN THE PAST few weeks I have visited some of our congregations and communities that have been directly affected by flooding in the south-east corner of Oueensland.

I also hope to visit Central Queensland and North Queensland over the next few months

These visits have taught me a lot about what it means for us to be the Church, the body of Christ amongst broken and damaged communities.

As I saw thousands of people go out into their communities to help clean up the mess and feed and clothe family, friends and strangers, I caught a glimpse of what God's reign on earth might look like.

Help was offered freely and unconditionally.

People helped others, never asking about what they believed, how they lived or what their personal relationships looked like.

the crisis has passed. Those who needed help received the offers of care and support without question and those who were in a position to help did so without prejudice.

I wonder what the church would look like if we could be as generous and unconditional in our welcome and care when the crisis has passed.

I pray that all who served others during this trying time will know the gracious love and blessing of God as they move into the long recovery phase.

We know that amidst all

this generosity and compassion there were reminders of human sinfulness as looters and frauds took advantage of the vulnerable; such behaviour but was overwhelmed by love.

I would love to see us live that approach to community engagement all the time.

Therefore I urge our congregation members not to forget those they helped.

Why not make contact with people you helped in a couple of months' time to see how they are going.

Why not arrange a recovery BBQ around Easter as a way of saying thank you to all who helped and assuring those who

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church would look like if

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have been devastated that they

are not forgotten and that we

realise their recovery will take

the most meaningful celebrations

through to the Last Supper, the

Garden of Gethsemane, the

trial and crucifixion, the silence

of the tomb of death and the

triumphant resurrection, offers

a powerful motif that can help

This Easter should be one of

Easter, from Palm Sunday

many months.

we have experienced.

people see their own flood, cyclone or earthquake experience taken up into the experience of the incarnate Son of God.

I encourage all within the Uniting Church to be open to sitting with those who have lost loved ones, homes and businesses; those who cannot see a bright future.

Their days in the tomb may be much longer than the three days of Jesus, so I ask you to be patient and present with them until, by God's grace, they experience the resurrection light of Christ in their personal situation.

This year the Easter postcard says: "Hungry? Satisfy your sweet tooth and your soul this Easter".

> Let's help people explore the Easter story and relate it to their own experiences.

We know that soon the public message will give the impression that people should have moved on from the events of January and February this year.

However, our experience as a community

of compassion tells us that such shocking experiences create deep wounds and leave painful scars for a long time.

Our knowledge and understanding of God's gracious presence should give us the confidence to take time to journey through the healing that will be so necessary for many in our communities.

I sat with a farmer in the Lockyer and asked him how we in the church can help him through

A different way to worship

I REMEMBER sitting in a music class at university having a vibrant discussion about what the definition of music was.

Everyone agreed that playing, singing or improvising constituted music.

But what about a bird singing? Was that music? Of course!

So our thinking expanded.

Could street sounds, noises that were unintentionally created, also be called music?

At this point we decided that it was the intention behind the sounds that mattered and what made it music (although the discussion continued and got very heated).

Intention turned noise into music. I often wonder the same thing about church. Could sitting with someone on a train talking about faith be worship?

Could helping move mud, trees or rubble after a natural disaster be worship?

Could running a community meal for homeless people be

worship? Like music it comes back to the intention behind that activity.

In this edition we speak to many different people about how they see church and worship.

The concept that kept coming back was community and intention.

We invite you to explore what church and worship mean to you.

Post your thoughts on our Facebook page. After all, that could be a form of church for some!

> Mardi Lumsden Editor

P.S. On behalf of the Journey team we congratulate our designer Osker and his wife Naoko who, the day before this edition was printed, had a little girl!

To our youngest reader, welcome to the world!

this. He said there are two things: encourage people to "eat more fruit and vegetables" and "don't

Message from the

Moderator

forget us". I urge you to think about how these principles might apply in your situation.

Rev Bruce Johnson

Support the small businesses

in your area and don't forget those whose situation may not be very visible.

Let's not leave our sisters and brothers languishing in fear and death, but stay with them until the new life dawns.

Sign of the times



IN SIGN of the times this month we break with tradition to show you this powerful photo from Rev Dr Rob Bos.

Dr Bos took this photo in Munda, Solomon Islands, in the days after south-east Queensland flooded in January. Walking down the street Dr Bos found a local pastor raising money for the people of Queensland.

"I was flabbergasted," said Dr Bos. "Here were people whose per capita income was probably around \$1000 being generous with what they had to help us out!

"One of his congregation members carried a placard asking people to help. Another pushed a rusty wheelbarrow into which people dropped their money.

"The pastor told me he saw the devastation on television and was moved to do something, so he resolved to spend a week raising as much as he could.

"I told him I was from Queensland and thanked him very sincerely.



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.



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Church responds to **bushfires**

By Alison Atkinson-Phillips

AT 12.15 on Sunday afternoon, Liz Lamb and her husband Bill noticed smoke near their home on the edge of the Darling Range Regional Park.

Ms Lamb realised the fire was down in the valley, and arranged for her daughter, who also lives in the area, to evacuate to their house

However, not long after, she was preparing for her own evacuation.

We saw a glow coming over the hill, and a roar," she recalled. It was at that point that her daughter loaded the five grandchildren into the car again, this time to Ms Lamb's other daughter's house in another suburb.

"The men were hosing down trees and I grabbed a few things that I keep in case of an emergency," said Ms Lamb. "I rang my son, all teary and said, 'If I take the hard drive, will I keep all my photos?'

"So I just sort of had time to see what I could grab, then the police knocked on the door and said to get out."

Stories like Ms Lamb's are told by Uniting Church congregation members around the eastern suburbs of Perth. Almost everyone knows someone who was affected.

A few suburbs away, Margaret Johnston and her daughter Anna were watching events unfolding on TV.

Anna was worried about

friends and checking in with them on Facebook. She wanted to do something to help, so when she heard the evacuation centre needed

bedding and food for pets, they packed some old sleeping bags in the car and drove to the local latenight supermarket to pick up pet food and toiletries for evacuees.

On Monday, one of the ministers working in the evacuation centre realised clean underwear was in short supply for those who, unlike Liz, hadn't had time to grab a bag of essentials.

She called her sister, who

works for a UnitingCare agency, who were more than happy to help. As well as providing new underwear and socks from their Armadale store, they arranged for 200 pamper packs to be delivered.

Despite the drama, and a few sleepless nights, Ms Lamb's story has a happy ending.

By Thursday morning, Ms Lamb was taking care of her youngest granddaughter, Emily, while her daughter returned home for the first time.

The smoke was still in the air, and there will be lots of washing to be done to get the smell out of bedding and furniture, but their homes are intact, and they are now thinking about how they can give back.

Ms Lamb was encouraged to know UnitingCare agencies have been able to offer some support to those affected more than she was.

"When you see it on TV, so many times, fires, the floods, cyclone, it just goes on and on but there's always the facility; still more people can do," she said.

Alison Atkinson-Phillips is the editor of Revive, the newspaper of the WA Synod

Mighty winds fuel spirit

By Mardi Lumsden

CYCLONE YASI tore its way through North Queensland in February but with it came a tide of community spirit and strength.

North Queensland Presbytery Minister, Rev Bruce Cornish, has been travelling throughout North Queensland to examine the damage from floods and cyclone Yasi to Uniting Church properties and uphold Uniting Church people as well as the community.

Mr Cornish said the communities of Cardwell and Tully, which bore the brunt of the Category 5 cyclone's fury, may be without power for four to six weeks.

"These areas are very much a disaster zone," he said.

"There is a great deal of work still to be done there and with the army now having withdrawn there are fewer people to do the work."

On Sunday 13 February the

Tully congregation shared a service of reflection and sharing before joining many others in the Tully community for a combined service of thanksgiving at the Catholic Church followed by a community BBQ provided by the army.

"It was an important time but there is still a great deal to do," said Mr Cornish.

"In fact much of the clean up has halted until asbestos experts come in to give guidance on clean up safety."

Meetings of ministry agents have been held in various parts of North Queensland and Mr Cornish said they have been a time of reflection and sharing.

"We also held the Northern Zone meeting at Malanda on Saturday where all present had an opportunity to share their experiences of the cyclone," he said.

All towns in Yasi's path have

extensive tree damage and many houses have leaking roofs or broken windows from flying debris.

Mr Cornish was aware of damage to Uniting Churches in Aitkenvale, Mission Beach, Tully, Ingham, Townsville, Cairns and Wulguru, mostly roof damage.

The John Flynn residential

college at James Cook University, Townsville, was used as a last minute evacuation centre.

Mr Cornish also commended Blue Care staff who evacuated 100-plus residents of Townsville's Garden Settlement Aged Care Facility and continued to care for them for three days at a nearby school.

Blue Care Residential Services Director Richard Olley also praised staff.

"This would have to be one

of the biggest evacuations Blue Care has seen in recent times and the brilliant team work, headed by Blue Care North Queensland Residential Care Manager Sandra Glaister, has been outstanding," he said. "Our hats go off to staff and residents who handled this disaster so admirably."

The clean up of the year's events will take time and local churches will continue to need support and prayer in the coming year.



house opposite Tully Uniting Church



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Meet the new General Secretary

DR SHIRLEY Coulson, the new Synod General Secretary, began at the end of January. Journey asked Dr Coulson how she hopes to assist the Church.

Journey: How are you settling in?

Dr Shirley Coulson: I have had many expressions of welcome and feel blessed by the prayers and support of so many people across our Church in Queensland and even interstate.

The role of General Secretary is certainly a complex one and coming in to this role at this time in our history is challenging; however, it is also an exciting time as we engage in the Together on the way, enriching community process of discerning our shared direction and revitalising the church in the context of our time and place.

I have tried to make this first month a listening time.

J: What particular skills do you feel you bring to the role?

SC: The skill set and life

experiences I bring are somewhat different compared to those who have fulfilled this role in the past.

My background is in education and for the last 27 years this has been in Catholic education where I have held a range of leadership positions.

A significant part of my role in these positions has been in strategic planning and facilitating organisational change in ways which preserve the integrity of the mission direction and reflect core Christian values.

This means that I bring enthusiasm for, and experience in, the type of intentional journey being undertaken in the Together on the way, enriching community process.

Having been a part of congregations in a range of contexts I believe I may also bring new eyes to this journey.

At the same time I know I have much to learn from those with understandings, insights and wisdom greater than my own.

J: Do you think it is an

important step for the Uniting Church for a lay person to hold this role?

SC: When this position was first drawn to my attention I rejected it - ministers have always been appointed to this role!

I was encouraged to reflect that, in the Uniting Church, we have always recognised the importance of sharing the gifts and graces bestowed by God in service and building up the Church.

We have structures which promote lay participation and a strong record of lay leadership in church governance, but in many

of our church contexts we have also tended to "leave it to the minister to do" forgetting that we are all called to participate in Christ's mission in the world.

I feel privileged to be a part of this ministry with so many people committed to sharing their gifts and graces in the service of Christ.

J: What are some of your hopes for the Church in Queensland?

SC: In the Uniting Church we acknowledge that it is Christ who rules and renews the Church and that because of this we are able to "live and endure through the changes of history" (Basis of Union para 4).

Empowered by the Holy Spirit,

the Holy Spirit"

The church had special services to publicly "make firm" or "establish" someone's faith from around the 5th century

Still, I felt let down about my baptism.

If it's a sacrament – a promise – somebody didn't keep it: my parents, my god-parents, that congregation.

They didn't bring me up to know about Jesus and I've spent a lot of years wandering, ignoring God and ignorant of faith. I guess I let myself down there too

Time for another cuppa

Rev Lipton showed me some of the Uniting Church orders of service and asked me to promises that day, and kept

I am confident that we will rise to the challenge of our times. There is no doubt that some

difficult decisions lie ahead and we will need to change some of our past practices as we commit to "a fuller participation in Christ's mission in the world" (para 15b).

We have wonderful а opportunity in the witness of word and action that has already occurred in the discernment of our call and vision for 2020.

My hope is that all members and councils will embrace this opportunity and commit to making this vision a reality for the Church in Queensland.

The big questions

This year Journey explores questions from the pews, namely from a (fictitious) person exploring faith and the Uniting Church. This month our (fictitious) church goer, Nova B. Lever, asks:

Can I get baptised again?



MY 12-YEAR-OLD and I feel we've connected with God and his people since we've been coming to church and we do like those shiny Uniting Church name tags

ask her about baptism.

another denomination and it didn't mean much to anyone

My son has never been baptised. I really didn't want to 'get him done' just for the sake of ceremony. of tea. This wasn't going to take five minutes.

Although I know parishes and other churches where it's been done, she ruled out an adult baptism for me

In my situation the appropriate response is a time of learning and the

I had done some reading and I couldn't find the word

The minister said I'd missed the point. There are plenty of things we do in church today that the first Christians would never have imagined.

chapter eight, when Peter and John laid hands on the Samaritan believers and prayed for them, because "they had only been baptised in the name of the Lord

"In the Uniting Church people

saying God loves them, and that they are part of the family of God."

I began to wonder about God's promise made and kept, "once for all", in Jesus' death and resurrection

Was it luck that brought me to this congregation one Sunday morning a few months back?

The Uniting Church believes baptism is something very special that only needs to

The tea was cold by the time to stop looking back and start looking forward.

beginning, not an end.

It's time to make some commitments of my own to Jesus and his people.



Broadwater Road supports parents

By Tara Burton

IN LATE February Broadwater Road Uniting Church, in Mansfield, Brisbane, anniversary of their Parent Support Group.

The anniversary celebration on 27 February also honoured founder, Amy Wruck, who retired from the playgroup at the age of 80 after 15 years.

"I started the group because I felt that we were an inward-looking church and we needed to do something that's where I believed God

rate that it [the playgroup] grew and it's still growing. I'm absolutely delighted."

The Parent Support Group runs from Tuesdays through to Fridays, with mums, dads and grandparents bringing children

Friday coordinator Noela Weyer said 120 families both the community and the congregation attended the playgroup in 2010

the playgroup is very popular within the local community.

"Parenting can be very lonely Our passion is just to support young parents in their parenting role," she said.

group is the social aspect

the caring the people in the group show has also gone through to the mums and they now care for one another as well.

"We see the playgroup as a very valuable outreach within

The group provides morning

tea for parents, as well as indoor and outdoor activities

for children, parenting parents in crisis situations

help with the playgroup are congregation.

Gatherings show living Jesus

By Mardi Lumsden

MODERATOR BRUCE Johnson, along with four other heads of churches, is taking part in a series of six ecumenical gatherings that aim to provide an evangelising moment.

Each Living Jesus gathering includes presentations by three church leaders on their personal faith journey.

The first gathering was held on 15 February at St Catherine of Siena Catholic Church in Sippy Downs on the Sunshine Coast.

Archbishop John Bathersby (Catholic), Archbishop Phillip Aspinall (Anglican) joined Mr Johnson in sharing their personal faith stories to more than 500 people who attended.

"Each of us shared something of our own faith experiences and of what Jesus meant for us.

"Then there were a couple of local people who shared part of

their faith story. Both of them were quite different in their perspectives."

Mr Johnson said those present enjoyed the evening and were keen to know what happened next.

"I was going to ask them that," he said. "We had shown people how to talk about their faith and modelled the simplicity of doing that.

"So we said 'it's up to you whether you continue to talk about your faith with your friends and strangers and each other'."

Archbishop Aspinall spoke about the need for the church to communicate its theology in a language that makes sense to young adults rather than just sounding like "religious noise".

Mr Johnson spoke of his experience of young adults wanting to live out their faith and make a difference in the world around them.



Moderator Rev Bruce Johnson speaks at the Sippy Downs Living Jesus gathering. Photo by Conan Whitehouse and courtesy of the Catholic Leader

"The challenge for the church is to help them and support them in that and help the young people understand the importance of prayer and being engaged in a Christian community for sustaining them." Mr Johnson said the event was

made successful by the support of the local churches and he hoped for similar support for upcoming events.

> For more information visit www.livingjesus.org.au

Trinity welcomes new staff member

By Mardi Lumsden

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TRINITY THEOLOGICAL College welcomed the new Director of Old Testament Studies in February, Dr Jason LeCureux.

Dr LeCureux studied at Lincoln Christian University in Illinois, earning an MA in Old Testament and an MDiv in Historical Theology.

Masters degree in Christian counselling. They come to Trinity after four

years in Cheltenham, UK, where Dr LeCureux studied under Gordon McConville and Pekka Pitkanen, while working on his PhD in Old Testament Studies

Dr LeCureux said his fascination with the Old Testament probably started when his mother gave him a picture His wife, Cara, also did a Bible as a young child.

GHT UP

He said he was looking forward to the year ahead.

"I hope to be a good lecturer and to instil in the students a passion for and understanding of the Old Testament, how it still speaks to us today and how it is a critical tool for understanding who God is and how he functions."

His passion lies, not surprisingly, in the topic of his PhD thesis which was called The Thematic Unity of the Book of Twelve: The Call to Return and the Nature of the Minor Prophets, traces the theme of repentance through the last twelve books of the Old Testament.

"What does it mean to return to God and what does it mean to have God return to you?" he said.

"We are always in a relationship with him and there is always turning."

Dr LeCureux said he was looking forward to getting to know Uniting Church people all over the state and encouraged them to take one of his classes.



Dr Jason LeCureux. Photo by Osker Lau



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SYNOD NEWS

5



Children enjoy the Parent Support Group. Photo by Osker Lau

UnitingCare formalises reconciliation commitment

By Tilly Jarvis

UNITINGCARE OUEENS-LAND formalised its commitment to reconciliation with the launch of a Statement of Commitment to develop a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) on 1 February.

The RAP will build on the work that the organisation has already undertaken across its agencies and services in working towards closing the 17-year life expectancy gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians.

The commitment ceremony was officiated by UnitingCare Queensland CEO, Anne Cross, and Rev Shavne Blackman, National Administrator of the

Uniting Aboriginal and Islander have been doing through our Christian Congress, and was attended by executives and staff from UnitingCare and its agencies and services, as well as invited guests.

Turrbal Songwoman, Maroochy Barambah, performed the traditional Welcome to Country and a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives from across UnitingCare Queensland shared their experiences and insights in relation to reconciliation.

Ms Cross said UnitingCare Queensland has had a commitment to reconciliation and "Closing the Gap" for many years.

"Our RAP will formalise and build on the work that we

employment programs, the establishment of NAIDOC groups and by ensuring that we have appropriate cultural protocols in the development of best practice policies for the care of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples," she said.

"The RAP will give UnitingCare Queensland a framework for the future and will help us to deepen our relationships and to make our services more culturally relevant."

Ms Cross said the RAP will form a key part of their strategic planning and reflected UnitingCare Queensland's values of Compassion, Respect, Justice, Working together and Leading through learning.

"There is still a long way to

go but, as with every journey, there is a sense of anticipation and pleasure at taking these next steps

In his address, Mr Blackman welcomed UnitingCare's commitment to develop a RAP and issued a caution and a challenge to all who were present at the launch to make sure that what is included in the RAP is translated into action.

The first RAP program was developed in 2006 with the support of Reconciliation Australia.

Since then more than 200 RAPs have been launched with another 260 in development at the present.

Organisations involved to date include 11 of Australia's largest corporations including all major



Maroochy Barambah performing the Welcome to Country. Photo by Sue Hutchinson

banks, Wesfarmers, Telstra, News Limited, Woolworths and BHP Billiton.

Parents dream of healthy community

By Ben Pennings

"I DON'T know how many times he has jumped off the bridge. The voices insist that he does, to prove he is not afraid."

Rosemary (not her real name), a 67-year-old Uniting Church member, is a mother of five.

One has schizophrenia.

"Putting your child in a psychiatric hospital is a terrible thing for a parent to have to do," she said. "He was only 15 the first time. He felt all his nightmares had all come true."

Schizophrenia is an episodic illness requiring high flexibility in provision of support.

Countless families have sought to get this flexibility of support tailored to their needs. Due to a variety of systemic reasons, including stigma and funding shortfalls, they have failed. Secure housing is the key.

Wesley Mission Brisbane is working with a group of 40 families who want safe, supported and permanent accommodation for their adult children. For many of these families the strain of caring for their adult

children is compounded by their own advancing age and health conditions. The group of families is known

as Mantle Housing Ltd.

Mantle consumer consultant Helen (not her real name) is one of the few people living with schizophrenia who have their own home.

"It is my sanctuary - where I feel safe," she said. "It has given me a therapeutic environment in which to recover.

"I have a friend across the road who has battled the same illness and it gives me added security knowing she is there to share problems.

"It gives me a sense of inclusion and belonging, feeling part of a little community."

The Mantle members' goal is to create a community for their children, one that gives them the security to engage with the world on their terms.

Wesley Mission Brisbane has committed \$1million in land and development assistance to Mantle Housing, which is now working with governments to raise the rest of the funds needed.

Early this year the Haven Foundation in Melbourne launched their first purpose-built community.

This has been achieved through the persistence of a determined and professional board, led by Professor Alan Fels.

Mantle is currently searching for professionals to join their board or offer specialist assistance.

Helen worries about other people living with schizophrenia who are not as fortunate as she is.

"Many still live with ageing parents or in squalid hostels with insecure tenure or, even worse, in prison or on the streets," she said.

"They do not live in therapeutic environments in which they get an opportunity to achieve some recovery and a decent life.

uncertain with little hope of recovery and fulfilling their potential.

"This is why I have decided to join Mantle Housing, to try in a small way to speak up for fellow mental illness sufferers who cannot do so for themselves

Michelle Hildebrand on 3621 4676 or

Ben Pennings is



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"The prospect of Mantle providing pleasant, safe, secure housing for these people in the "Their futures are very future is one of the things that gives me hope for them." For more information contact

> m.hildebrand@wmb.org.au a freelance writer

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Members of the Charters Towers Uniting Church community. Photo courtesy of Phil Smith

Living as the beating heart

By Rev Peter Lockhart

THE GATHERING of God's people in worship is at the heart of the church's life.

Week by week we are drawn together to be fed by word and sacrament and sent out into the body of the world to share the hope and love of God with others.

This is how the *Basis of Union* describes it: "The Congregation is the embodiment in one place of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, worshipping, witnessing and serving as a fellowship of the Spirit in Christ. Its members meet regularly to hear God's Word, to celebrate the sacraments, to build one another up in love, to share in the wider responsibilities of the Church, and to serve the world."

Despite this understanding of the church the term "church" is understood in many ways, and unfortunately, often this is not in a positive light. The word "church" can be used to describe a building, an institution, the worship service, or even a group of people and it carries with it all sorts of baggage.

As one of my neighbours pointed out to me recently the "church" has a massive PR problem!

Unfortunately, we cannot simply get rid of the term or dismiss it as easily as some seem to want to, as if that will make a relationship with Jesus somehow more attractive.

True empowerment comes not from discarding words but from teaching new meaning and helping people to look from another perspective.

One perspective which can be helpful is to consider that the original meaning of the word which came from the Greek. The word *ecclesia* denoted a gathering of people. So in a Christian sense the *ecclesia* is God's people gathered together.

This might be understood as occurring at a spiritual level when we are drawn into God's life through Christ and in the Spirit.

Paul continually makes references to our lives in God, the spirit making us one and so on.

This understanding emphasises that the journey of Jesus' followers is not a solitary one but one which occurs in and with others.

This is one reason why coming together in worship is so important in our world which is so highly individualistic.

It also raises questions about how idiosyncratic worship services should be.

If we are drawn into God's life together, structuring worship to specifically meet the desires of a particular interest group can rub against the grain of God's inclusive love. On the other hand the gathering of God's people should not denude the fact that each of us has a personal relationship with God.

God creates us and calls us in our uniqueness and particularity.

What was so amazing on the day of Pentecost was that people spoke their *own* language and others understood.

The uniqueness of individuals was held in tension with the bond of understanding in the power of the Spirit.

It was this inspired setting which has traditionally been seen as the birthplace for the church. And it was from this setting that those earliest of Christians were sent into the world to share the message of Jesus.

Whilst the word "church" has all sorts of baggage, I think it is important not to lose sight of the definition of the people of God gathered together. It is in our constant gathering that we are reminded that we are baptised not only into Christ but into the body of Christ, the church, and it is in this setting that we are formed for our life in the world.

The gathering on Sunday, the worship or liturgical life of the church, should orient us towards God as well as God's promises for the whole creation. This means that *going* to church should lead us to *being* the church in our everyday existence: the heartbeat.

Trivia

1: Which council of the Uniting Church meets most regularly?

2: What is the purpose of the gathering?

Answers on page 12

Caring for others

By Phil Smith

WHO CARES for those who care for others?

This is a question answered, at least in part, by the chaplains who express the idea of church to those who work in circumstances that would test anyone's faith.

Police, hospital staff and paramedics find themselves caring for people in ways that stretch and stress them beyond what most professionals will ever experience.

Barry Cox is a Uniting Church chaplain working with those emergency workers in and around Townsville.

He marvelled at their commitment during and after cyclone Yasi.

"These people often leave their own loved ones and families at home to go out and care for others in the midst of cyclonic wind and rain, with things passing by at 200 kilometres per hour," he said.

Mr Cox works with those who are well paid to fulfil their calling. He also stands beside those

who volunteer their time, energy and skills to help others. "It's more than just a job for

them," he said. "They see it as being part of

a community and to love that community is to work in that community, heart and soul, giving everything to it.

"They want to give back to the community something of what they have received."

He might well have been echoing Paul's "living sacrifice" that is the best expression of belonging together. For Chaplain Cox the best of community is a fair reflection of what church is called to be.

"During the cyclone there were staff members in the Townsville General Hospital doing 24-hour shifts, with others camping on mattresses to get through it, and I can tell you there were a lot of tired, very dedicated staff."

But who cares for the chaplains?

"We have our own back-up," Mr Cox insisted.

"Our own church leaders look after us.

"Bruce Cornish, our presbytery chair, would be one. He keeps an eye on us and we have a number of other people we can talk to, to relieve our stresses and strains and get things off our chests.

"Speaking as a police chaplain, people imagine they have to be rock solid in the midst of



Chaplain Barry Cox. Photo courtesy of John Cox

everything that's going on.

"A chaplain's job comes after the crisis, to walk around and touch base with people and I find they'll share things they normally wouldn't." Mr Cox said it is in sharing that strain and stress are released.

It may take a week, a month or a year, but at some stage people need someone to whom they can unburden.



Peter Hicks, Josie Nottle, Michael Henley and Cath Hiley doing 'church' at their local pub in Indooroopilly. Photo by Kim Henley

Taking church to the people

By Mardi Lumsden

FOR SOME Uniting Church people church is not a building with the cross out the front, but rather somewhere in the community where people gather to relax, have fun and meet friends.

At Indooroopilly Uniting Church, across the road from one of Brisbane's largest shopping centres, that space has become the local pub.

Rev Josie Nottle said their Pub Church is a place where people can have spiritual discussions in a space where they are comfortable.

"The idea came from a recognition that many young people are wanting to engage in spiritual conversations and want to belong to a community, but that the church is foreign to them or hurt them in the past," she said.

"I was inspired by some of the fresh expression conversation to re-imagine what church could look like for these young people. "I was reading a book by Dave Mail called *Church Unplugged* and he spoke of this idea that fresh expression church is not a stepping stone to the real church that happens at Sunday morning, but is church in its own right.

"I spoke to a few young people at Indooroopilly who I thought might be passionate about this and we established a small team of highly committed Christians who have formed the core leadership of this community."

The group personally invited people they knew and now average around eight people per evening.

"At first we just started to meet in a pub setting to get to know each other and build relationships, but also to hold the God/spiritual conversations and hold God at the centre of this community.

"For many people (but not all) a pub makes more sense culturally than an 8am worship service at a church." The group has only been meeting for around five months so it is still early days but Ms Nottle aims to continue to develop a strong emphasis on God and how to live a life of faith.

She said the three guiding principles are: engaging ("points to God as he is, it's about real life, relevant"), enriching ("real community, growth focused, makes you think, love and God as a part"), and emerging

We hope it is a stepping stone or a vessel to a greater, deeper more committed faith.

("new, goes from here, practical expression, service, mission focus, an expression of love, we as a community point to God").

The people this ministry is aimed at are not necessarily the people who fill the pews on the weekend. "Our main target audience is the de-churched people; those who grew up in the church and have left," said Ms Nottle.

"A part of what we are doing is re-building the notion that it is safe and OK to talk about your faith with others.

"Many of the people we are connecting with have scars from their time as members of the institutional church and for them this is a fresh, safe and relevant way to share their faith

> once again in community." Ms Nottle said for her church is a community of faith.

> "The community exists to firstly bring honour and

glory to God, and secondly to encourage, inspire, resource and empower its members to grow and develop in Christlike character."

Ms Nottle is open about her personal dislike of singing in church. She recently spoke with someone who was "utterly shocked" that she would prefer not to sing as part of worship.

"She could not understand how this remained church. I asked if she was part of any other communities besides church and she said she was in a netball team. I asked her if she sang with them.

"For me church is not defined by the elements of a worship service.

"Although the proclamation of the word and spoken prayers are important and powerful, I do not define church by these."

While parts of Ms Nottle's church community support and encourage the Pub Church, not everyone shares her ideas.

"On the whole there is support," she said. "I think many members of the congregation are still unaware it happens.

"We hope it is a stepping stone or a vessel to a greater, deeper more committed faith."

But that does not necessarily mean a stepping stone to the Sunday service.



A small group during the week is "all important" to Mavis Spann of Hailfax Uniting Church in North Queensland. Photo by Phil Smith

Knowing your space

By Phil Smith

WEEKLY BIBLE study is perhaps second only to the Sunday gathering as the common expression of church.

For eight women in the tiny coastal communities of Taylor's Beach and Halifax, the weekly Know Your Bible (K.Y.B.) class has forged a fellowship that even cyclone Yasi couldn't interrupt.

Mavis Spann has been opening the side room at Halifax Uniting Church for her K.Y.B. friends every week for more than 11 years. Joining with Anglican women, they focus on the scripture.

"For me, the Bible has been the solid foundation of faith since Sunday School, Comrades, all through my life," said Ms Spann.

"My earliest recollection of church was a service beside the Salvation Army truck parked on the hill near the dairy farm where I grew up."

From the weekly Bible study around the vestry table, a

powerful fellowship has grown. She describes it as togetherness.

"We cry together. If one hurts,

we all hurt and we know that togetherness in happy times."

Ms Spann understands church to be much wider than the local congregation where she feels so at home.

During the winter, when tourists come north, the Halifax congregation numbers around 20.

While preparing for her tenth significant surgery in recent years, she was aware of people asking church members as far away as Townsville to pray for her.

"I was perfectly at peace," she recalled.

Curating worship

By Mardi Lumsden

FOR MANY years emotional experiences evoked by sense and touch and have been used to create a different style of worship.

Known as alternative worship, it is used by Christian churches all over the world including, possibly its best known proponents, the Taizé Community.

Cheryl Lawrie is the codirector of the Culture and Context Unit of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania.

She has explored alternative worship techniques for many years.

Through alternative worship she aims to facilitate spaces for people to discover a moment of transformation and grace.

"The primary theology around alternative worship is that God speaks into and from within all cultures - so alternative worship uses the things of the community's everyday lives (images, music, language) to hear and respond to the story of God," she said.

"The Modern period was so rational and very word-based and our worship reflected that, so worship was based around the spoken word.

"We would often give people a meaning that they needed to hear from worship.

"Alternative worship tries to offer people an experience which, hopefully, will not discount the rational but recognises that rarely are people changed by words.

"Transformation doesn't you are happen because convinced about something or you are talked into it.

"It is an encounter where you experience a story that resonates with your own.

"In some ways we're rediscovering ancient practices and patterns of liturgy and ritual that invite people into faith and go beyond reason and understanding.

"We're trying to work with those people for whom words aren't their primary means of understanding the world or themselves.

"Art and music and tactile things often reach a different part of people's minds and souls that words won't."

A sense of community remains at the core of alternative worship.

"It holds fast to the belief that liturgy is not the work of the minister, but the work of the people," she said.

"It's scary because it means we give up any illusion of control in terms of what message people hear

"Because we're looking first to tell a story (not its meaning) it means that more people have the capacity to be involved.

"And it doesn't mean they have to be Christian to do it.

"Within my primary community many of the people who put together spaces wouldn't identify themselves as Christian, but in curating worship together there's space for everyone to bring their story and put it against a story of Christian faith, to find where it rubs against us and where it resonates."

Ms Lawrie stressed that alternative worship is not for everyone; it is an alternative to evoke a transformation, and she admits there is no way of knowing what will work.

"I don't have the right to know what someone else needs to get from worship, that is

between them and God, all I can do is curate a space where people might be able to have a transforming moment."

And she said it was extraordinary to see someone changed in that way.

"It is incredibly humbling," she said. "You see people come into a space and go away changed and you think, 'what right did I ever have to think that I might mediate that?'

"I see people encounter something that is so transforming and beyond human making.

"Something amazing happens when people get to put their story against the bigger story of life and I've never been let down when we have done that."

One of Ms Lawrie's great joys is the worship she facilitates in

prisons over Easter each year. "On Easter Saturday we have an afternoon vigil.

"The premise is that if this is the day Christians believe God has gone to hell, which is in our creeds ... then maybe there is a chance that Jesus will be in this hell.

"None of it is hopeful or offers the promise of resolution, it purely offers the chance of people telling their story of being in hell, and everybody has that moment of absolute abandonment, fear and horror.

"Something extraordinary happens when you let people have that story and when you say this is God's story too.

"It is the easiest thing to do.

"You buy pieces of black card and put A3 colour images on them and invite people to write their reflections on them in black pen, or white pen if you are courageous."



Alternative worship in action at ncyc11. Photo by Jane Moad

It is these simple ideas that Ms Lawrie said people could try in their own communities.

"Alternative worship can look so intimidating to anybody who wants to try it.

"They think 'I can't do multiscreen projections and make my own movies or music'.

"Neither can I. You start with what you can do and you tweak things from other places and work out of the creative base of people in your community.

"It is a group of people who aren't saying 'this is what somebody else needs to hear', but 'this is how I need to encounter this story?

Alternative worship resources

Curating Worship by Johnny Baker - http:// jonnybaker.blogs.com

The Art of Curating Worship by Mark Pearson - www. clayfirecurator.org

http:// alternativeworship.org



David Rowe hosts the men of Ingham Uniting Church on Tuesday nights in his art gallery and framing shop. Photo by Phil Smith

Men meet needs By Phil Smith

TUESDAY NIGHTS in the back of an art gallery and framing shop, a few good men from the Ingham Uniting Church, North Queensland, prove that blokes can multitask

"We can talk, eat Tim Tams and drink tea or coffee! claimed David Rowe

This is church where two or three (or at most eight or nine) gather to support each other and grow together in faith for daily living

Mr Rowe, the art shop owner, admitted they always start a Bible study, but rarely finish

"Our elder, Graham Morris,

"We always start on the study, but end up looking after each other

"We always run late talking about the stuff of life, the cane season, someone's business or the young bloke's uni studies – and we pray for each other."

He says Sunday with the family in church is great worship, but years of building each other up means each one of them knows they have a brother they can call any

Last year a drunk passer-by wandered through the front door and stayed for a yarn.

"Jesus used to talk to me, but not anymore," he said.

He allowed the group to pray for him and left saying, "You're good men."

Disaster builds community

By Phil Smith

CHURCH IS like a chainsaw being wielded in an old lady's backvard.

Church is like new friends sleeping in the spare rooms of your house.

Church is when you don't speak English very well and you realise bad things are about to happen.

These were only some of the recollections of the ministers in Townsville as they met four days after cyclone Yasi brought down trees, power lines and quite a few buildings.

It also brought down barriers according to Aitkenvale's Mark Dewar. "We didn't know the neighbours on the other side of

our place," he said. "Their house fronts the next street, but the big tree between us flattened that six foot fence."

There were nods and grins all round at Mount Louisa House of Praise as the team acknowledged the hand of God in a hard circumstance.

Hospital Chaplain Barry Cox spoke of a family who came home to find the huge pile of branches and litter had been cleaned from their pool, and never knowing who had done that.

Craig Mischewski looked less then liturgical in filthy boots and a sweaty t-shirt as he spoke about "the psalm 91 thing".

Mischewski guickly Mr established what he called the ministry of the chainsaw, taking

Witnessing in faith

a group of young people with him to do what blokes like best: chopping and sawing.

The theology isn't quite so simple.

"I've had people saying, 'God is punishing us, others saying they were grateful God protected them," he said.

"Everyone's got their own take on it but the glue that sticks us together is the faith that no matter what happens, somehow God assures us it's OK?

At Mount Louisa on the Sunday after the storm Rev Anne Harley noticed visitors from the worst hit townships of El Arish and Mission Beach. As members shared their stories, one guest reminded them that the Bible says "do not be anxious".

> The 28th Synod affirmed a five line Call for the Uniting Church in Queensland in discerning the future of the Church. This edition we look at the fourth phrase: Witnessing in faith.

Mark Dewar cleaning up after cyclone Yasi. Photo by Phil Smith

trust."

By Tim Robinson

IN MY CURRENT ministry role I am working to make connections between our church and a growing suburb on the south side of Brisbane.

The first day I visited the area I drove to a small block of shops to see if there was a place I could grab a coffee and do my daily

journal and wait upon God.

There was no cafe, but there was a food store where I could buy a drink so I sat at a table out the front sipping an iced coffee and took in the surroundings as I read scripture.

As I sat there I sensed the prompting of the Spirit to go down into the park adjacent to the shops.

I got up and wandered down to see what was there and who might be around.

I noticed there were seven or eight teenage boys riding their bikes and scooters around the skate bowl. I wandered over to watch.

After a few minutes the oldest of the group rode up to me. "How's it going?" he asked.

"Yeah, I'm pretty good thanks. How about you?" I replied. "Good."

"She had a peaceful look on

her face that spoke volumes to

those of us who have allowed fear

to rule our lives," said Ms Harley.

"Do you come here much?" I asked.

"All the time. We love this place," he said with a smile.

"Yeah? You guys are pretty good. How long have you been coming?"

And so began a great conversation with an 18-year-old who I would soon learn loved riding, looked after his younger mates, had experienced real struggles and pain in his life and was passionate about helping other youth in the community.

We discussed everything from BMX to martial arts; great holidays to current work; attitudes towards alcohol to philosophies of life; and from religion to Jesus and he did most of the talking!

I could see that my new friend was a real seeker and was really sincere in growing as a person.

After an hour or so I realised I had to go.

"Mate," I said. "I'm really sorry but I have a meeting I have to go to. But I've really enjoyed our conversation and would love to hear more of your story. Will you be here same time next week?"

"Maybe, but it depends upon my work shifts."

"OK. Hopefully I'll see you again."

I shook his hand and began to walk away.

"Tim ..

I turned around. "Yeah?" really enjoyed "I our conversation, too. Can I have your number? I'd really like to have lunch with you sometime." "Absolutely!"

Psalm 91:2. "I will say of the

Lord, he is my fortress and my

refuge; My God, in him will I

Since that day I've caught up with my BMX buddy several times.

had some great We've conversations and I'm really enjoying getting to know him.

I am able to share my faith freely and believe that God has significant stuff in store for our friendship.

I can't help but think that this is what witnessing in faith is about - real relationships in real places where real people gather in our communities.

The last thing Jesus said to his disciples before he ascended to heaven was to go and be his witnesses in the world (Acts 1:8).

When he trained his disciples in mission he taught them to go to households, build genuine relationships with the people there and share the good news of the Kingdom of God through word and deed (c.f. Matthew 10, Luke 9 and 10).

God is already at work in the lives of people in our communities.

Where are the households and places that people now gather in our local community?

How might we prayerfully go and join them and develop genuine relationships?

What might be the good news for them?

How could they come to discover something of the love and grace of Jesus Christ through you?

Journey - March 2011





By Rev Dr Rob Bos

YOU MAY remember the movie The Man Who Sued God. It tells the story of Steve Myers (Billy Connolly), whose fishing boat was struck by lightning and destroyed.

The insurance company refuses to pay, citing a clause in the small print excluding "acts of God".

Of course "acts of God" are not defined in insurance policies, and Mr Myers argues that it is in fact a legal fiction conveniently used by insurers.

Soon, others who feel they have been deprived of legitimate insurance payouts join him in a class action.

To point out the injustice, Mr Myers sues God. How does one sue God?

In the same way that one

legitimate representatives - in this case a Jewish Rabbi, two Archbishops and a Moderator.

This leaves the religious leaders with a sizeable dilemma.

If they lose the case, they would be held liable for all the socalled "acts of God", and have to pay out millions of dollars.

On the other hand, they could win the case by denying the existence of God.

Either way they lose all credibility.

Whatever our view of the movie, it does raise important issues, including theological ones.

Are natural events, including floods, cyclones, earthquakes, tsunamis and bush fires, in some sense caused or permitted by God?

Many of us have pondered

might sue a corporation; through this age-old conundrum (at least as old as the book of Job in the Bible).

> To put it simply, and perhaps simplistically, if God is allpowerful, God can, in some sense, control nature.

> On the other hand, if God is all-loving, God would want to prevent bad stuff happening to people.

> Therefore a loving, allpowerful God would prevent calamities.

God did not prevent the calamity, so where was God?

We have perhaps been faced with that issue ourselves during the recent disasters.

Some people tragically lost loved ones.

Many lost possessions and livelihoods.

I empathised and inwardly

wept with those who had lost so much.

The question, "Where was God?" must have crossed the minds of many in a deeply personal way.

In 1974 I was appointed to a position in Darwin.

Cyclone Tracy destroyed the city just before I moved.

The suburb where I lived was an eerie ghost town of concrete stumps, all leaning in the same direction.

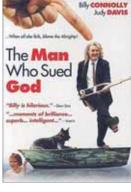
I heard people's stories.

They spoke of history being divided into BC (Before the Cyclone) and AD (After the Devastation) by that apocalyptic event.

A man who became a colleague and friend had sheltered under his house with his wife and young daughter when a block-work wall



West End, Brisbane, in flood in January. Photo by Lewis Yu www.gospelstudio.com.au



collapsed and both his wife and daughter were crushed to death.

I don't believe I have some divine immunity or special protection.

I simply do not know why I was not in Darwin and others were.

On the other hand, I have also had my share of personal sadness, disappointments and agonising dilemmas.

These are part of life.

They could have wrecked my physical or mental health or stripped me of faith - but they did not.

Somehow in the midst of that, I was grasped by a deep, unshakeable conviction that the God and father of Jesus held me and walked with me.

Life seemed like a dark tunnel, with many other confusing dark tunnels branching off in all directions

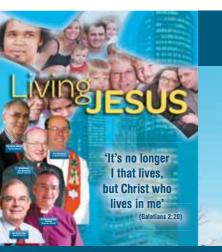
In there, the presence of God whom I see in the risen Christ, guided me step by step. Finally I was free to step out into the daylight again and discover a world more wonderful than I had ever previously experienced it.

In the movie The Man Who Sued God, Mr Myers eventually withdraws from the legal proceedings.

He argues that "the God of 'the act of God' does not exist ... If God exists. I don't think he sits around sinking people's little boats. I don't think he causes landslides, or earthquakes, or dreams up ways to make people's brakes fail."

He then quotes a line from John Donne: "All things to their destruction draw; only love has no decav".

Robert Bos is director of Pilgrim Learning Community



2011 CHRISTIAN GATHERINGS

A series of Christian gatherings exploring the relevance of Jesus in our lives, hosted by the heads of five Queensland churches

This is a unique opportunity to be inspired by the faith of church leaders sharing the impact Jesus has had in their lives.

7.30pm-9.30pm, with tea and coffee from 7pm

Wednesday 2 March: Sacred Heart Catholic Church, 358 Given Tce. Paddington. Presenters: Archbishop John Bathersby (Catholic), Rev Noel Noack (Lutheran), Rev

Bruce Johnson (Uniting).

Tuesday 15 March: St Paul's Anglican Church, Brisbane St Ipswich. Presenters: Archbishop Phillip Aspinall (Anglican), Rev Bruce Johnson (Uniting), Archbishop John Bathersby (Catholic).

Wednesday 30 March: Grace Lutheran College, Anzac Ave. Rothwell. Presenters: Rev Noel Noack (Lutheran), Rev David Loder (Baptist), Archbishop John Bathersby (Catholic).

Tuesday 12 April: Newlife Uniting Church,

4 Greenwich Crt. Robina. Presenters: Rev Bruce Johnson (Uniting), Archbishop Phillip Aspinall (Anglican), Archbishop John Bathersby (Catholic).

For more information visit www.livingjesus.org.au



friend or work colleague to come with you. This is a unique opportunity to be inspired by the faith of Church leaders sharing the impact Jesus has had in their lives.

EVERYONE WELCOME The Leaders of these five Christian Churches in Brisbane warmly invite you to attend one of these free gatherings.

April 30-May 1 Lifeworks Uniting Church 100th anniversary.

Lifeworks Uniting Church, Toowoomba, will celebrate 100 years of worship on the weekend after Easter.

The church has been known as Newtown Methodist, Newtown Uniting, Russell St Uniting, West Toowoomba Uniting and now Lifeworks.

Coincidentally it is also the 75th anniversary of worship at Scot's Uniting Church, previously Scot's Presbyterian Church. Scot's was amalgamated with Russell St to form Lifeworks.

The Centenary Committee are looking for past ministers and congregation members of any congregation that was part of the parish over that period. To be part of this event contact Annette King at the church office between 9.30am and 12.30pm Tuesday to Thursday on 4634 9128 or email lifeworks202@bigpond.com.

March 6, 10-11.30am. Chermside Kedron Community Church Friendly Hour. On the first Wednesday of each month Friendly Hour meets for morning tea followed by a guest speaker. March guest speaker is Katy Edwards. Contact Kaylene Domanski on 3630 4278 or kaylene.domanski@bigpond.com.

March 8, 3pm. Pancake sale for the McIntyre Riding for the Disabled Centre. Freshly baked pancakes available for \$2 to help Moggill's flood-damaged McIntyre Centre. Pot luck dinner from 6.30pm. Brookfield Uniting Church, 2 Upper Brookfield Rd. Contact George Barnes on geobarnes39@hotmail.com.

March 15, 7pm-9.30pm. Living Jesus Seminar at St Paul's Anglican Church, Brisbane St, Ipswich. Series of ecumenical gatherings exploring the relevance of Jesus in our lives. Speakers: Archbishop John Bathersby (Anglican), Moderator Rev Bruce Johnson (Uniting), and Archbishop Phillip Aspinall (Catholic). For more information visit www.livingjesus.org.au.

March 19, 8am-12pm. Beachmere Uniting Church Jumble Sale. Cakes, jams, plants, books, clothing, manchester, craftwork, DVDs and bric-a-brac. Beachmere Uniting Church, Cnr Moreton Tce and Second Ave. Contact John and Marjorie Horchner on 5496 8371 or marjanhorchner@bigpond.com.

March 19, 2-5pm. An afternoon of pleasure and inspiration through floral arrangements and song with Robert Manton (professional florist) and the Bracken Ridge Choir. \$10. Bracken Ridge Uniting Church, 9 Pellinore Rd. Contact Marilyn Linnett on 3269 3282 or mardoug3@bigpond.com.

March 28, 9.30am-12.30pm. Moreton Rivers Adult Fellowship Communion Service. Meet Rev Alistair Christie, National Chair of UCAF. Morning tea provided. Redcliffe Uniting Church, 1 Richens St. Contact Margaret George on 3885 8062 or macgeorge@optusnet.com.au.

March 29, 10am-1pm. Retired Ministers and Spouses Luncheon Brisbane Presbyteries and beyond. Guest speakers Rev Dr Lew Born AM and Mrs Betty Born OAM. RSVP necessary. \$15. Emmanuel Uniting Church, Enoggera. Contact Clive George on 38858062 or macgeorge@optusnet.com.au.

30 March, 7pm-9.30pm. Living Jesus Seminar at Grace Lutheran College, Anzac Ave, Rothwell. Speakers: Archbishop John Bathersby (Anglican), Rev David Loder (Baptist), and Rev Noel Noack (Lutheran). Visit www.livingjesus.org.au.

30 March, 6-8pm. Foster carer information sessions. Level 1, 766 Gympie Road, Chermside. Contact Families Plus (Lifeline) Chermside on 3624 2460.

April 1-4. Cycle of Life: Earth Gift art exhibition at the Francis Rush Centre, Elizabeth St, Brisbane city. 60 artists will exhibit and sell their work on an environmental theme. Free entry. Contact Margaret Moore on 3870 9427 or mollyjon@tpg.com.au.

April 2, 7-10.30pm. Remember Seven CD Launch. More than half the proceeds from sales of their music goes to mission projects abroad. \$20. Purchased at www.rememberseven.com. au. Schonell Theatre, Union Road, UQ, St Lucia. Contact Katie Wallis on 0408 768 909 or rockstarkato@hotmail.com.

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



Montville Uniting Church Act for Peace committee members. Photo courtesy of Act for Peace

Churches support Christmas Bowl

GENEROUS GIVING by churches around Australia to the Christmas Bowl, the annual program of Act for Peace, will help people in war-torn communities worldwide to rebuild their lives.

Churches in Queensland responded to the Christmas Bowl in creative ways.

At Montville Uniting Church on the Sunshine Coast, the church's annual Christmas display focussed on the work of Act for Peace.

The exhibition featured a handmade refugee tent inside the church hall and posters, banners and DVDs which highlighted

Easterfest 2011

TICKETS ARE selling fast for this years Easterfest in Toowoomba from 22-24 April.

With musicians and speakers coming from all over the globe to perform at the festival, *Journey's* issues like shelter, security, clean water, food shortages, healthcare, education, skills training, peace and justice.

Montville Act for Peace representative, Craig Hosmer, said, "It was a challenging display to put together, but we learned so much about the work of Act for Peace in the process and received some wonderful comments from visitors to the church's exhibit."

Funds raised through the Christmas Bowl will support Act for Peace partners who are helping over one million people displaced by conflict worldwide, including in the fledgling nation

picks are locals Tim Nelson &

the Cub Scouts, Francesca de

For all the Easterfest informa-

tion visit www.easterfest.com

Velance, and Jess & TED.

of South Sudan. Act for Peace Executive Director, Alistair Gee, said international support is needed to ensure long-term peace and stability in South Sudan.

"Hopes are high for this new nation, but chronic poverty, poor infrastructure and sanitation, and conflict over territory and resources are just some of the problems that we are trying to tackle with partners."

Act for Peace is the international aid agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia.

For more information visit www.actforpeace.org.au

Trivia answers

- (from page 7)
- 1: The congregation.
- 2: To worship God.



Reaching Out in a Networked World: Expressing Your Congregation's Heart and Soul

By Lynne M. Baab, The Alban Institute, 200, RRP \$33.95

Reviewed by Karyl Davison.

EVERYTHING ABOUT a congregation speaks of its values. Imagine walking into a church you know nothing about.

If you see children's artwork posted on the noticeboard, hear children singing and playing, and see posters for youth camps or outings you will know that this church caters well for families, without hearing a word spoken.

Alternately, imagine walking into a church where the noticeboard displays faded decorations, out-ofdate catalogues for the local Christian bookshop and oldfashioned silk flowers.

Without being spoken to, you may assume that this congregation is old and tired. The central point of

longer a central part of communal life - people no longer feel loyal to the religious institutions of their childhood, if they ever were. Almost every congregation

our time.

values and identity is critical.

This is partly because of the

explosion of communication

technology and partly because of

the enormous societal shifts in

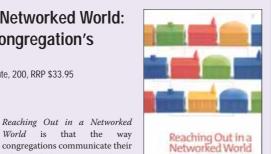
Communities of faith are no

uses some sort of communication technology. For some it is simply a

newsletter handed to those who attend worship.

However, many congregations communicate through websites,

email, blogs and brochures. The question posed bv



this book is: "Do they all communicate the same message, the same values and identity?"

Reaching Out in a Networked World not only explores the ways identity and values are expressed in communication, but gives practical and helpful advice about how to communicate more effectively as a community of faith.

I highly recommend this book for ministry agents, church leaders and anyone who is involved in communication in the life of the church.

Finding Your Hidden Treasure By Benignus O'Rourke, Darton Longman & Todd 2010, RRP \$27.95

Reviewed by Sandra Jebb, a minister with Kairos Uniting Church

AUTHOR BENIGNUS O'Rourke shares with us a way of connecting with God through silent prayer that has been lost down the centuries or at best well hidden.

who is drawn to the practice of silent prayer.

Finding Your Hidden Treasure is for anyone who wants to improve his or her prayer life and get a fresh understanding of prayer.

It is also a refreshing book for all of us who have struggled with prayer.

Mr O'Rourke suggests that if we have become tired of asking God in words that have no life in them and tired of saying prayers that are not bringing us closer to God, then this path of silent prayer may offer us a way to develop a deeper communion with God.

He draws on the writings of Saint Augustine, Thomas Merton and Henry Nouwen as well as stories from everyday life experiences.

Each chapter is short, but packed with insight. It would be ideal as a devotional.

Mr O'Rourke is clear that



our search for inner harmony, for closer connection to God, is not something we seek selfishly but is a gift we share with others.

Our goal is to take God's love to others in our everyday life

As Martin Laird says in the foreward, if you are looking for a book on silent prayer that is eloquent in its simplicity, perceptive in the issues addressed, and offering comfort in the presence of a God closer to us than we are to ourselves, then this book is for you.

Wisdom Chaser: Finding My Father at 14,000 Feet By Nathan Foster, IVP Books 2010, RRP \$21.95

Reviewed by John Ruhle.

WISDOM CHASER is a candid look at what life was like growing up with a famous father.

The book follows the true journey of father and son as they set out on an ambitious plan to climb many mountain peaks and ranges within their home state of Colorado.

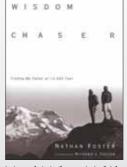
These expeditions provide a backdrop for the rediscovery of a lost relationship between father and son and also the rediscovery of a relationship between God and the author.

Mr Foster shares about his struggles with alcohol and the impact this has on his life, relationships and faith.

"I have become convinced that I am a few bad choices away from becoming just about any kind of person. My propensity for destruction remains my greatest fear," said Mr Foster.

While recognising this, the book then also offers hope for all people who struggle with doubts, addictions and questions of faith. Wisdom Chaser is one of the

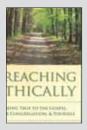
best books I have read in ages -



filled and it is full of challenges. It is a book that I will go out of my way to recommend for my mates to read.

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

Preaching Ethically: Being True To The Gospel, Your **Congregation**, & Yourself By Ronald D. Sisk, The Alban Institute, Virginia, 2008, RRP \$24.95



Bible Bites: 365 Devotions for Aussie Families

By Ladeane Lindsay, Anglican Youthworks, July 2010, RRP \$16 95



My First Holy Communion: Prayers for a Lifetime

Written by Sophie Piper and Illustrated by Angelo Ruta Lion Hudson, 2010, RRP \$17.99



Dance: the sacred art By Cynthia Winton-Henry, Skylight Paths Publishing, 2009, RRP \$26.95

Reviewed by Julie Barns who has a passion for dance and education

DANCE - THE sacred art is an artfully and thoughtfully written manual that guides us to make contact with our emotions and put meaning and structure to them through dance.

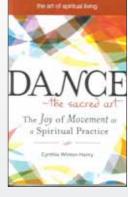
Dance is an art form that can be deeply personal and exploratory, and then grow into something to share publicly with others.

This book takes the reader through the many stages and purposes of dance - all the time making links back to our spirituality and physicality in positive and nurturing ways.

It describes with clarity several dance/movement exercises that guide a person to make connections with God, their fellow humankind, and between mind and body.

Clearly numbered stepand by-step processes interesting anecdotes shape our perceptions of how dance can be healing for us.

Basic ideas such as describing spaces for movement sessions and what to wear for dancing are covered clearly and prepare the reader for more complex ideas and



dance strategies.

Ms Winton-Henry delves into the healing power of dance on a personal level - using dance to cope with stress and trauma: on a local level - making connections with community and forging healthy relationships; and through to a global focus creating and spreading peace.

Dance as prayer is both implicitly and explicitly professed as a powerful, healing, empowering, moving, binding, freeing, loving experience.

An inspiring read for those already dance literate and accessible and motivating for those wanting to share in the joy of dance as a spiritual practice.

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

it is real, it is funny, it is faith-



The winning Boys' Brigade team of Josh Hodkinson, Owen Winkley, Matt Wyllie, Nathan Newton, Callum Lauder, Blake Taylor and Ian Ruddiman. Photo by Carlisle Wyllie

Caboolture boys spike win

THE MORAYFIELD Community Uniting Congregation can now claim a national title-winning volleyball team.

destination of nearly 400 boys and leaders of The Australian Camp in January

Campers from around the country boarded the Spirit

camp there were many including climbing Cradle Mountain, fishing, mountain biking down Mt Wellington, ice skating, Hollybank Treetop Adventure, visiting Port Arthur, Cataract Gorge Beaconsfield, and much

After a week it was time for volleyball competition.

The boys from 3rd Caboolture Company finished second at the last camp in 2008. The rain that flooded Queensland had made its way to Tasmania.

the competition with 3rd Caboolture losing to the favourites from Victoria.

needed as they fired up and beat that same team in the final

In taking out the title, 3rd Caboolture beat three teams that have won the competition in the past.

http://boys.brigadeaustralia

Celebrating Camp Constable By John Ruhle

> AFTER FORTY-TWO years of helping to create an environment of fun, friends and fellowship, the

Camp Constable campsite at Mt

in churches up and down the

In 1953 she married Ted

Skinner. In 1977 she played at

Esk's first Uniting Church service.

wedding in the town's Anglican

Church, the bridal party was an

hour late but Mrs Skinner kept

playing until the organ strap

The only way she could keep

the music coming was to play fast

and furious, her feet and fingers

zipping up and down the pedals

beyond the church organ. She

sang for many years with the Esk

The congregation says you

can't beat a traditional church

organ when Mrs Skinner

launches into much-loved hymns

Her love of music extends

When she played for a friend's

Brisbane Valley.

broke.

and keys.

Community Choir.

A service of recognition for the outgoing Camp Constable



Esk organist proves age no barrier

By Rosemary Wycherley

WHEN MARJ Skinner first played

the organ for Esk Methodist

Church the congregation was

swelled by soldiers based in the

local showgrounds and saleyards.

they were shipped out to defend

New Guinea against the Japanese.

the same after that," she said.

celebrates her 88th birthday.

It was a sad day for Esk when

"The Sunday services were not

On 16 March Mrs Skinner

Mrs Skinner remembered

Some evenings they gathered

Since 1943 Mrs Skinner has

fondly how the soldiers would sing heartily in church.

round her mother's piano for a

sing song and supper afterwards.

accompanied many different

ministers and was one of five

organists who regularly played

Retiring Camp Constable Committee members (from left) Terry Edwin-Smith, Bev Adams, Roger Barringham, Cameron Struble and Tony Butler. Absent - Robert Adams. Photo by John Ruhle

Uniting Church on 13 February to celebrate the many good times and achievements over the years.

In the 1960s the three congregations of Ashgrove Ave, Ashgrove West and The Gap had the vision to create a place where people could gather together to learn, share and grow.

This vision came to fruition in 1968 with Camp Constable officially being opened. Based on the efforts of many volunteers and a committed committee the camp site grew and hosted many people.

Rev Graham Johnson was a young Methodist minister in the Ashgrove Circuit when the camp site began.

He said people should be proud of what the camp has accomplished.

"Feel good about what you have achieved and about the great numbers of people who have been part of Camp Constable."

On Sunday 6 March please pray for Centenary Uniting Church

CENTENARY UNITING Church serves the Centenary suburbs south-west in Brisbane, including Jindalee, Mt Ommaney, Westlake, Middle Park and Sinnamon Park.

The area was affected by the recent floods and over 900 houses were inundated.

The congregation has collected goods such as nonperishable food, toiletries, laundry items and school supplies for distribution.

Our area is well served by a number of churches, so we are also partnering with Goodna Uniting Church and the Goodna Neighbourhood Centre to reach out to people in that community.

Many people have not yet been able to return home so we aim to be available for some time to come.

We have a container in the car park to store these items.

We aim to set up a thrift shop in 2011 so we can reach

out to people in our area and surrounding areas who need (or prefer) to shop for secondhand goods.

Through this we also aim to be a place in which members of the congregation and others can share their time and talents as volunteers; for people to drop in for tea or coffee and conversation; to be a means of allowing people to donate goods for sale that are no longer needed, or may be given sacrificially; and to generate funds to support community initiatives in surrounding areas.

In 2010 we began the Kids Hope program through World Vision in the Middle Park State School. We have 13 to 14 mentors, but the school could use a lot more.

Please pray for these missional efforts and for the life of our congregation as we gather together and are nourished week by week through word and sacrament.

On Sunday 20 March please pray for Mudgeeraba Uniting Church

MUDGEERABA UNITING Church (MUC) is on the Gold Coast and at the edge of the hinterland. In the last census 11,500 people call the once named "village" home.

It is a blend of the modern Gold Coast city and the historic town that formed the coast and farming communities.

Worship still occurs every first and third Sundays of the month in the refurbished but original 1892 Presbyterian Church located on the property prior to another worship service in the main auditorium.

Russell Knight. Rev Newlife, previously from

Robina, and more recently the Associate General Secretary of South Australia, has taken up a placement at Mudgeeraba this year and moved into a refurbished bank building (built in 1917) which was relocated to the property 10 years ago. Please pray for his ministry with and to the members of MUC.

With a very successful opportunity shop and care centre, operating from a building designed and built on the lines of the old church and bank, MUC is a real blend of the old and new.

Please pray that we might continue to honour those who forged a Christian heritage and witness in this area in the years past.

Pray also that we might be a new beacon of light into an ever-changing world, allowing our worship and care to shine God's love.

Pray that our Op shop and those who volunteer their services in it will continue to be an outreach to the community and allow for opportunities of mission in a state, national and international context.

Pray for the spiritual growth and depth of each member of MUC and for those who are seeking a place to worship.

Marj Skinner

Glorious has closed. committee was held at The Gap

Already over Nova B. Lever

WHAT EXACTLY was the purpose of the article on clerical attire by your fictitious Nova B. Lever in the February *Journey*?

To provoke discussion again on a hoary chestnut?

For me it only provoked irritation, because the whole article came across as shallow, ill-informed and flippant – a gratuitous put-down of clerical dress in general; not really appropriate, whatever one's personal views, in an official media organ of a Church which adopted traditional clerical wear for use on all significant worship occasions, although it is not, and never should be, made obligatory.

If you were trying to speak for those who are coming to the Church from outside in a search for faith, you weren't really very complimentary about their level of understanding.

For one purportedly with tertiary education, Nova B. Lever sounds almost naïve in her inability to grasp comparatively simple concepts of symbolism, and unwilling to accept that just because a tradition is old doesn't necessarily mean that it is no longer relevant to the present.

In any case, people in general are far more concerned with the character and actions of the minister than with what he is wearing.

You would have done better if this article had been published in tandem with a simple, straightforward explanation of the meaning behind alb, stole, scarf and cincture by someone well versed in liturgy and liturgical symbols.

There are plenty of such persons in our Synod.

I hope the treatment of future "big" questions will be more satisfactory than this.

> Arthur R. Lane Indooroopilly

Agents of hope

CONGRATULATIONS TO you and all your team. This February 2011 edition

is a real blessing. It captures many elements:

clear acknowledgement of raw painful truths; repeated reminders of recent and ongoing community supports (both local and abroad); sound advice and encouragement; and examples of a variety of new beginnings. hope within the community" (p7), and in urging your readers to do likewise. Every blessing on your team and its ministry.

Jane Frazer

Broadwater Road

Uniting Church

Cosgrove

lourney has done a fine job

in being that great gift Rev Dr

Robinson names: "an agent of



Send your letters to journey@ucaqld.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*.

CLASSIFIEDS

Accommodation

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

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

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

mmanue

God with us

I READ Rev Dr Bos' article ("God and nature" February *Journey*) with anticipation of discovering something insightful into God's relationship with his creation.

I was left a little disappointed as I felt he missed a fantastic opportunity to remind us all of God's ultimate hope.

Yes, creation was good when he made it, but then we chose to reject it of our own free will and we've been suffering ever since.

From the very beginning God had a plan in place to redeem it

all – us and creation – which was set in motion through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We may suffer at the hands of nature now, but it won't be that way forever.

God will return to make all things new, including creation, and I'm sure it will be better than "good".

Each time I try to come to grips with the darkness of this world I am reminded of the verses in Revelation 21:1-4 (not a popular book of the Bible for many Uniting Church ministers). "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

I thank Dr Bos, though, for highlighting God's love and compassion in the face of this earthly event – God is definitely with us!

Joanna Wiseman Murrumba Downs



JO AND Matt Patrick serve the BBQ at the Wellers Hill Tarragindi and Yeronga Uniting Church's Australia Day games day and BBQ.

The event became the perfect opportunity to assist some of Brisbane's flood victims and connect the church to the local community. The BBQ in Yeronga Park attracted 80 people.

"Over the last few weeks we've all worked together and got muddy. This was a chance to relax and see each other again," said Mr Patrick.

The afternoon involved a game of cricket, some old-fashioned games including sack races and thong throwing and finished off with a free BBQ. Photo by Matt Gees

3

Journey - March 2011



This full-time position is a Senior Executive position, replacing the current role of Chaplain. It is designed to be filled by a person who may or may not be ordained, but who sees their vocation as being to lead the spiritual life of a multidenominational Christian school which is a leading school in the independent sector.

Emmanuel College is committed to excellence in every field, and seeks to employ a person who will inspire with dynamic passion and intelligent faith, a large community of around 1,500 students, their parents and the staff. The successful applicant must be (or be willing to undertake a course of study to become) a registered teacher in Queensland, with a breadth of experience in schools.

A commencement date between 15 August 2011 and 1 January 2012 can be negotiated.

For further information about the position and the application process, please download the Application Pack from our website or contact Human Resources on (07) 5561 4046.

Applications close 31st March 2011.

What is church and what is worship?

Rev David Gill, 1985 Assembly General Secretary, statement to the 4th Assembly (1985)

A COMMUNITY defined by the miracle of grace.

Lose sight of that miracle ... and you are left with boredom in worship, triviality in doctrine, self-righteous wowserism in morality, self-justifying ideology in social ethics, piety that has no place for humour and churchmanship that is devoid of challenge.

What matters more than our grip on the miracle is that miracle's much surer grip on us.

That is the church's one foundation, and that is why we dare to look with confidence to the church's renewal.

Chris Mundy, Albany Creek

CHURCH IS an "internet" of people who send to and receive each other and ultimately God. It also reaches out to make new connections with others who are not linked in!

Amy Myers, Kallangur

WORSHIP TO me is more than Sunday

Services. It is a lifestyle. It is a choice

we make to live every day in service to

Christ. Church family are the fellow

Christians we meet with to build

relationships, care for each other, support

one another, grow in faith together, learn

together and most importantly praise

God together for the good, the bad and

the ugly. Both I consider vital to life.

Fiona Garrett-Benson, Brisbane

FOR ME when church is working well it's a community bound together by a belief and worship of Jesus Christ and following in his teachings. Worship equals adoration, respect, praise and thankfulness for who Jesus Christ is and what he has done for us.

Rowan Longhurst, Petrie

WORSHIP IS a real want, a need to go somewhere (doesn't even have to be a building) and praise the Lord. Not every service has to be all singing and preaching. Have a big meal together and share faith stories with one another. Learn from other Christians. See where they failed in their life but also where they got back up with Jesus.

Joanna Wiseman,

Murrumba Downs

GOD'S FAMILY.

Tim Bennett, Brisbane

CHURCH IS a bunch of sinners who meet regularly. There is another sinner called the pastor who helps the other sinners continually turn to God.

Bill Fowles, Narangba

CHURCH IS the place where faith and fear meet. It is in me and in all our situations and relationships.

Feeling that "I am/we are the church" is a better aiming point than going to or belonging to the church.

Worship is being the right person in the right place doing the right things in the right spirit at the right time in right relationships.

Wendy Fender, Enoggera

CHURCH IS family – with all the diversity of personalities and view points that a family has. Being church family brings commonality of belief in Jesus Christ, and purpose – serving him which should overarch or even overcome all our innate differences.

With this comes an underlying loyalty which means we care deeply and sacrificially for each other.

Mick Fanning, Sherwood IT'S A COMMUNITY.



Hi my name is Alex Gow!

5th Gow Family Generati

You may have heard me talking on the radio about funeral pre planning. My dad says planning ahead for a funeral service is one of the best things you can do for your family. The Alex Gow 'Guide to Thoughtful Funeral Pre-Planning' will really help. If you would like a FREE copy of the guide please fill out this coupon or call my Dad on 3852 1501 and please mention my name Alex Gow!



Journey - March 2011