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Celebrating the 13th Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia

Mardi Lumsden

The 13th Triennial Assembly meeting of the Uniting Church in Australia, held in Adelaide from 15 to 21 July, was another example of the power of people moving together towards a promised goal.

Almost 300 Uniting Church members gathered to celebrate *Life Overflowing* (the Assembly theme) and participate in decision-making and direction setting for the Uniting Church for the next three years.

The continued solidarity with our Indigenous brothers and sisters was strengthened when Assembly members stopped business to hold a moving prayer vigil of lament for the Stronger Futures legislation on the steps of South Australia's Parliament House.

Standing side by side, new Assembly President Rev Prof Andrew Dutney, and Rev Ronang Garrawurra, the new National Chair of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress, showed the nation it is possible to walk together as one people of God.

The vigil was a simple but powerful gesture that made a marked difference on the rest of the meeting.

During his daily Bible studies, visiting theologian Rev Luna Dingayan, a key leader of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, inspired members to continually seek renewal, the very essence of a Protestant church.

He warned that it is not an easy task to follow God's mission and it required a willingness to see, hear and act in accordance with God's will.

Prof Kirsteen Kim, 2012 Cato lecturer, compared changes in mission practice and theology between the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference in 1910 and the centenary celebration in Edinburgh in 2010.

The Professor of Theology and World Christianity at Leeds Trinity University College believes Christians need a global conversation about mission to learn from one another and to discern together the Holy Spirit among the many spirits in the world.

"We are blessed by a spirit that pushes boundaries, sends, interconnects and builds global fellowship," she said.

The participation of more than 50 guests from 34 overseas churches and partner

organisations reflected the Uniting Church's determination to cooperate with churches in Asia, the Pacific and Africa as they pursue fullness of life for all people. Assembly members also promised a renewed approach to multicultural and cross-cultural ministry.

The Assembly was presented with three proposals discussing marriage. A respectful and articulate discussion followed and after two days, members agreed to acknowledge the Uniting Church's current statement on marriage and ask the Doctrine Working Group, after appropriate consultation across the church and with ongoing liaison with the

Assembly Standing Committee (ASC), to prepare a discussion paper on the theology of marriage within the Uniting Church. This is to be circulated widely with responses and recommendations sent to ASC before the 14th Assembly.

Overall, the 13th Assembly was full of life in abundance. Those present were witness to the Uniting Church at its best, discussing with grace and respect difficult issues that affect humanity.

President Rev Prof Andrew Dutney and Rev Ronang Garrawurra lead the prayer vigil on the steps of South Australian Parliament, Wednesday 18 July 2012

MONTHLY PRAYER

Lord Jesus, life giver,
release us for reckless discipleship so that
love and laughter, grace and goodwill, hope
and helpfulness, faith and fruitfulness,
wisdom and wonder, will bubble up and
overflow changing us and transforming our
community.
Amen

JULY 2012

Stories overflowing

IT is my great honour to embark on my first issue of *Journey* – done by way of a joyful plunge into the deep end of the *Life Overflowing* at the 13th Assembly.

In these pages, we bring you many of the inspiring moments and impressive people from that week in Adelaide, and, I hope, a feeling for some of the love, vitality, and justice we found in abundance there.

All those qualities were present daily in the respectful and inclusive debate and consensus processes for proposals.

And they were abundantly manifest in the move from words to action in expressing solidarity with our Indigenous brothers and sisters over the injustices of Stronger Futures.

After a suggestion by Rev Niall Reid the prayer vigil at South Australian Parliament was organised overnight, predominantly by impressive young adult member Rads Sukumar, whose own appreciative take on Assembly is on page 9.

President-elect Stuart McMillan's long-standing engagement with Indigenous communities will further strengthen commitment to Indigenous Australians.

New President Rev Prof Andrew Dutney praised the church in his installation address (see page 7) for its diversity and the value members place on inclusiveness.

The 13th Assembly reaffirmed the commitment of the church to remote Australia, to Indigenous Australians, to multicultural and ecumenical ministry, and to multi-faith relations. It gave appreciation to the often unsung deacons, celebrated 120 years of Korean partnerships in mission, and welcomed a statement from young leaders.

As President Dutney said of the 13th Assembly at its conclusion: "I'd describe it as multilingual, intergenerational, cross-cultural, ecumenical, international, prayerful."

Many impressive Queenslanders were in attendance, with Rev Stu Cameron, South Moreton Presbytery, and Rev Michelle Cook, Calvary Presbytery, chosen to sit on the Assembly Standing Committee. Ms Cook will also serve as one of Prof Dutney's two chaplains.

Looking back over the week, I feel privileged to have been witness to such faith in action, and to the gifts of so many impressive and frankly wonderful people. And turning my gaze ahead, there is the privilege of sharing stories in abundance with *Journey* readers, my new companions, to look forward to.

Kate Indigo, Editor

Living abundant lives

Rev Kaye Ronalds

WHILE waiting by the carousel for luggage after our flight home from Adelaide, with memories of the 13th Assembly swirling in my head, I read a text message from my sister announcing that my aunt had died.

Aunt Beth, a maiden aunt, had lived with my parents for most of my life. Hers was a remarkable life. Born in 1920, she was raised by her grandmother because her mother died when she was a fortnight old. She told me she was fed on a rag dipped in cow's milk. A precarious start to life!

Her grandfather was building a weatherboard and corrugated iron house but it was never finished because he died when Beth was just 12 months old. Beth's father remarried three years later but Beth continued to live with her grandmother and uncle on the dairy farm in north-east Victoria.

In childhood her thyroid gland began to malfunction which meant that she stopped growing at 1.2 metres. Medication would have helped but they couldn't afford it.

At school she worked hard and became a good reader who helped the younger children. One day when the Cann River was in flood she slipped off the log used as a bridge. An older boy grabbed her just before she was washed away, saving her life.

For many years Beth worked for her board, cooking the meals on a wood stove for all of the men on the farm. She joined the CWA and won prizes for her needlework. In her early forties she finally got treatment for her thyroid condition and eventually went on the pension.

For the next 50 years she filled her days with knitting, crocheting, cooking and helping with the children in the extended family. While there were many hard times, Beth was loved by a network of family and friends, and was able to have an abundant life using busy and helpful hands to give care and comfort to the people.

During the 13th Assembly in Adelaide we heard about many people living a precarious existence in risky circumstances. For example, as a result of the fighting between Tamil and Sinhalese people there are

84 000 war widows in Sri Lanka with few options to feed their families. Many are forced to turn to prostitution, ironically with the soldiers who killed their husbands.

We listened to the Indigenous people of the Northern Territory who have experienced the impact of the Intervention strategies, and wondered whether the Stronger Futures legislation will actually address the disadvantage in their communities or just contribute to low morale, resentment and a sense of injustice.

There is a need to help close the gaps in education, health and life expectancy and to reduce the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Islander people in prison, but perhaps a more abundant life cannot be achieved by legislation.

We heard from Rev Christine Senini, former chaplain on Christmas Island, about naming and uncovering the sacred in the lives of those who have fled the terror of civil war to risk their lives in boats on treacherous seas. In a recent service on Christmas Island, Tamil and Sinhalese Christians worshipped together in the chapel.



The Bible study leader, Rev Luna Dingayan from the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, urged us to listen to the cries of God's people and let that expression of need direct our mission.

With timely help, many people would be able to lead safe, productive and abundant lives. My Aunt Beth was given a helping hand to make her life healthy, safe, productive and abundant.

Rev Dingayan commented, "For as long as people are denied the fullness of life there will never be true peace."

Being a follower of Christ means that we not only get to enjoy abundant life, we are enlisted to contribute to making choices that release life overflowing for all people.



13th Assembly Bible study leader Rev Luna Dingayan, Uniting Church President Rev Prof Andrew Dutney and Perla Dingayan. Photo by Mardi Lumsden

Where's the Moderator?

This month Rev Kaye Ronalds will be at many events, including:

4 August Multicultural Connections, Ipswich Trinity Uniting Church.

5 August Central Queensland Presbytery visit, South Rockhampton Uniting Church.

8 August Queensland Heads of Churches meeting, Wynberg, New Farm.

19 August Silver Anniversary of Oxley-Darra Uniting Church building.

Snap that!

SEND us a photo that captures the *Journey* theme.

Lyndelle Gunton sent this beautiful image in to capture the *Life Overflowing* theme. The Gunton family are currently on a caravanning trip around Australia, and this is Ellie embracing the setting sun at Gantheaume Point, Broome. In these moments life truly does overflow.

September theme: education.



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Christmas Island

CHAPLAINCY is never an easy gig. It is a unique and challenging frontline ministry that throws up constant surprises to those brave enough to listen to the call.

Nowhere is this more true than at the Christmas Island Detention Centre, where Rev Malcolm Bottrill, a retired minister from the Presbytery of North Queensland, is taking over from Rev Christine Senini for the next six months.

Malcolm's wife Judy hopes to use her skills as a qualified teacher to offer additional support to those in the detention centre.

Malcolm began his ministry just a few days before the first of the recent tragedies.

Ms Senini provided pastoral care and support for the detainees and staff for six months from December 2011. She was the first Uniting Church minister to serve on Christmas Island in the joint Anglican–Uniting chaplaincy, although the church has had a presence at immigration detention centres for over 20 years.

Ms Senini's arrival on Christmas Island coincided with the one year anniversary of the *SIEV 221* disaster.

As most Australians were busy organising Christmas celebrations, Ms Senini and the other chaplains on the small island were preparing to support a community still coming to terms with the horrific tragedy that took place on their pristine Rocky Point shoreline.

At least 50 lives were lost that day, including children. The recent tragedies reminded all on the island of the fragility of human life and the great risk that asylum seekers are prepared to undertake on their journey to Australia.

While the recent tragedies made headlines across Australia and sparked a fresh round of vitriolic and devastating political discourse, Ms Senini's focus was well and truly on the detainees and the island's staff and residents.

"My chaplaincy," she explained, "is based on a love for all people without judgment; I am here for those of all faiths or of no faith at all. I am here to walk alongside and share with those experiencing hardship, grief, anger, anxiety, frustration, and to celebrate joy and significant occasions that we all have in our lives."

National Director of UnitingJustice Australia Rev Elenie Poulos accompanied Uniting Church President Rev Alistair Macrae and Rev Lorna Green from the Anglican Diocese of Perth to Christmas Island just a few weeks before Christine concluded her ministry.

Her observations echoed the reflections of Ms Senini.

"Asylum seekers who are detained are at risk of losing hope and having the effects of their trauma exacerbated by the detention experience. The asylum seekers we spoke to told us of the importance of having someone to talk to who understands the significance of their faith, whatever it is, as well as someone who is independent from the Detention Centre system," said Ms Poulos.

"The compassion that chaplains bring to Christmas Island crosses faith boundaries and helps people through this part of their journey as they seek a life free from persecution and violence."

Both Ms Senini and Mr Bottrill are living witnesses to the example of Christ in Matthew 25:34–35, as he calls us to behave towards strangers as though



Rev Christine Senini and Rev Malcolm Bottrill at Phosphate Hill Camp on Christmas Island in June 2012. Photo by Luke Senini

each of them was Christ himself. This vital role, however, can only continue through the generosity of people who seek to support this important ministry.

This placement is funded through the President's 'Care for Christmas Island' Appeal. Donations may be made at <http://goo.gl/PbXXI>

Agencies drive energy efficiency

THE Queensland Synod is looking for better and smarter ways of reducing its carbon emissions.

With the recent introduction of the carbon tax and two pieces of federal legislation, the National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Act and the Energy Efficiency Opportunities Act, UnitingCare Queensland and Wesley Mission Brisbane have been obliged to seek ways to reduce energy consumption and increase energy efficiencies.

Yet, as Colleen Geyer, Director of Mission, UnitingCare Queensland and Chair of the UnitingCare Queensland Sustainability Coordination Team, makes clear, this is a welcome opportunity rather than a matter of compliance.

"We are committed to being environmentally sustainable not because we have to be but because it's who we are."

She notes that one of the five objectives of the joint UnitingCare Queensland strategic plan is "to be financially sustainable and environmentally responsible" with a long-term commitment "to developing, implementing and measuring the outcomes of our environmental practices."

"The Uniting Church has made a number of statements on the environment over the years, and these are important foundations for us in the work we do in this area."

Due to the energy-hungry services of hospitals and aged-care facilities, UnitingCare Queensland and Wesley Mission Brisbane account for over 90 per cent of the energy consumed by the Queensland Synod. It is here that the search for energy efficiencies will be concentrated.

Group Manager, Audit and Risk, UnitingCare Queensland, Garry Pridham, said, "Due to the large electricity consumption in these facilities, the Queensland Synod is technically required to be reported to the Clean Energy Regulator, but as it is not a large producer of emissions it will not be 'caught' by the carbon tax regime and will not have to pay carbon tax.

"However, as we are a large consumer of electricity we will face estimated price increases of around 10 per cent if, as predicted, energy producers pass on their carbon tax costs to consumers.

"This would have a large impact on our services if we take no action."

UnitingCare Queensland has established a Sustainability Coordination Team to develop a group-wide alignment of each of the service group's sustainability plans and to identify opportunities for group-wide initiatives.

"Our aim is to reduce our electricity usage without affecting our services – UnitingCare Queensland's priority is to be a leading organisation in person-centred care while being environmentally responsible," Mr Pridham said.

Work is underway to measure current energy consumption, with the aim of identifying opportunities for improving energy efficiency, reducing consumption, and measuring future reductions.

This major initiative is being coordinated by UnitingCare Queensland on behalf of the Synod, with a working party consisting of members from each UnitingCare service group and Synod agency.

Four eco-theologians give faith responses to the carbon price

REV Dr Clive W Ayre: The term "carbon tax" in popular debate is highly misleading, even mischievous, and suggests this is primarily about money.

It is about protecting the environment for the future.

Faith itself involves a cost; it has a cross at its heart, and we can't expect to avoid that in responding to the divine call to care for creation.

Rev Dr Jason John: The biggest disappointment is that the Australian Government has been forced to sell the new carbon price to us on the basis that it won't cost us anything.

We cannot continue under the illusion that we can renew God's creation without sacrifice. We must ensure that it is not the poor, future generations, and God's other creatures who pay, while a few of us reap the benefits.

Because we encounter in worship and prayer the one who reminds us that life does not consist in the abundance of possessions, Christians should be at the forefront of the call for repentance, and the sacrificial attitude required to serve and protect God's garden planet.

Rev Dr Noel Preston AM: Christian focus in the past has been on human welfare and not on the total natural environment.

The brunt of the dangerous consequences of failing to address

climate change adequately will be borne by the poorest and most vulnerable.

Christians cannot avoid this social justice challenge. It derives from the gospel mandate to love our neighbour.

It cannot be acceptable to argue that we should not lead the way globally in making changes because our actions will make little difference. That would not only abrogate our social responsibility (as a relatively rich nation) to do the right thing, but would be a self-interested proposition that demeans our nation.

Miriam Pepper, Uniting Earthweb:

The Australian Government argues that the carbon pricing mechanism is the most efficient way to reduce carbon pollution. However, experiences internationally with such mechanisms suggest that they do little to drive a significant shift away from fossil fuels.

Meanwhile, the mining of coal and gas in Australia is expanding at an alarming rate – with detrimental impacts on local communities and ecologies, farming land and the climate.

A halt to this expansion, concerted investment into energy efficiency and renewable energy, and ultimately an economic model that pursues sufficiency rather than endless growth are needed for the benefit of all.



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When neighbours become good friends

Dianne Jensen

THE ties that bind the Uniting Church in Australia to our Pacific neighbours run deep.

The Australian Methodist Church began missionary work in Papua New Guinea (PNG) in the nineteenth century and in the Solomon Islands in 1902. And through the decades which followed and the challenges posed by conflicts, political change and natural disasters, strong links have been forged between the three national churches.

The importance of the relationship was underscored during the July visit of Pacific Church leaders Bishop Bernard Siai (Moderator-Elect of the United Church in PNG) and Rev Wilfred Kurepitu (newly

appointed Moderator of the United Church in the Solomon Islands) and their wives as part of a leadership development program sponsored by UnitingWorld.

While in Brisbane, the group met with *Journey* staff and shared some of their hopes and concerns for the future.

Both new church leaders have personal experience of the devastating conflicts which almost tore apart their countries, and of endemic tribal strife. It is no surprise to find that one of the key roles for the church in both nations is in reconciliation and mediation.

"Ninety-five per cent of Solomon Islanders are Christian," said Mr Kurepitu, whose denomination counts 60 000 people in more than 200



Rev Wilfred Kurepitu, Bishop Bernard Siai, Maramas Wendy Siai and Roselyn Kurepitu, and General Secretary of the Queensland Synod Dr Shirley Coulson. Photo by Osker Lau

congregations. "The church is still a core part of society and has an important role in peace building," he said.

Mr Kurepitu was the superintendent minister of the Honiara circuit in Guadalcanal when ethnic tension first broke out in 2002, and took part in negotiations with rebel forces.

In neighbouring PNG, with around 600 000 members spread across 11 diverse regions, the church has been instrumental in bringing together warring factions, especially in Bougainville between secessionists and the government.

The Young Ambassadors for Peace (YAP) program has been conducting peace-building workshops in the Bougainville area for more than six years.

In 2008, 32 warring tribes came together in the Southern Highlands to sign permanent peace treaties, following lengthy

negotiations facilitated by YAP in Tari. In both the Solomon Islands and PNG, the importance of the church as the provider of basic services cannot be overestimated.

In communities where most people have limited access to health, education and transport, the church plays a pivotal role in delivering services and facilitating local training – much of it in partnership with agencies such as UnitingWorld.

Building capacity within communities and within the church is fundamental.

"Our biggest problem in PNG is the management of resources and finances," said Mr Siai.

"We have a vision now, to make sure the church becomes a good steward. Training is a key issue."

Both churches have achieved striking results under challenging circumstances, working quietly but effectively with local, national and international partners to

build capacity at every level.

The Solomon Islands, for example, is on track to meet two of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG4: reduce child mortality and MDG5: improve maternal health), thanks to mobile clinics, education and basics such as clean water.

In PNG, amid the political turmoil, the United Church's grassroots experience has given it access to key government initiatives, such as the newly formulated 40-year plan for development.

The cautious, consensual approach hasn't stopped these Christians from speaking out, but when they do speak, they do it with the power of combined churches such as the National Council of Churches.

"Together, we can speak prophetically to the government as a voice for the church," said Mr Kurepitu.

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Churches step up to challenges of HIV/AIDS

A new report has highlighted the vital role of churches worldwide in tackling stigmatising attitudes toward people living with HIV/AIDS, and praised prominent church leaders for shedding light on previously taboo areas of sexual health.

Faith organisations have sometimes struggled to communicate effectively with communities about the treatment of HIV/AIDS due to traditional teaching on sexual abstinence before marriage and contraception, especially in countries with high HIV rates.

A new report by development consultants Plurpol, based in Auckland, New Zealand highlights the significant influence of faith leaders and praises changing attitudes toward the way such influence is being exerted.

In Africa, where the Uniting Church works with Methodist partners, the influence of the church is profound.

Geoff Dornan, International Programs Coordinator for UnitingWorld's Relief and Development, said that mainstream protestant

churches within Africa are usually open about the need to use contraception as well as promoting fidelity.

"There are huge billboards promoting both these approaches everywhere within Zimbabwe and Zambia, where our church partners are supporting people with HIV/AIDS," he said.

"The philosophy of the Methodist Church is to raise awareness and to work pastorally to support people who have HIV/AIDS. The method is to do so within the community wherever possible.

"It's been very effective and transformative not just for families but for whole communities."

At Matthew Rusike House on the outskirts of Harare, Tasmanian Anthea Maynard is working alongside the community nurse to help educate local people about the importance of protecting themselves against HIV/AIDS.

Along with her family – husband Grant, and three children Abbey, Clare and Bride – Anthea will spend a year swapping skills and learning

from people who share their lives and homes with families at the forefront of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Zimbabwe.

Matthew Rusike House forms part of a caring community aiming to respond to the one in six children who have been orphaned as a result of HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe.

The children, many of them HIV/AIDS positive themselves, live with "mamas" who nurture them and provide them with a genuine sense of family. The children attend school within the village and help grow their own vegetables alongside others from the local community.

"Our first priority is to care for those who suffer," said UnitingWorld National Director Kerry Enright.

"But we are also committed to alleviating the distress of those who suffer because of the stigma associated with diseases like HIV/AIDS.

The approach of our church partners is to care for people within community settings as well as to educate people about the causes of the disease and the best way to avoid it."

Dayboro: alive and kicking

Dianne Jensen

"A constantly growing congregation with increasing influence in the community" sounds like the good old days when women wore hats to church and sermons were published in newspapers.

It is in fact the description of an ordinary Uniting Church community which refused to slide gracefully into history.

Dayboro is a rural, urban fringe community with a population of about 3000.

Eleven years ago the Uniting Church congregation was in decline, and sustained by just a core of residents.

Closure and reallocation of resources was advised.

Dr Paul Inglis, who recently retired as Dayboro community minister, said today the church is a "vibrant, engaged congregation that has risen to the top in community esteem, is known well beyond its boundaries for its work, runs programs for all ages, and supports its home and overseas missions physically and economically proportionally well above the average congregation."

Dr Inglis was the leader of a team that brought a new dynamic to the organisation, firmly rooted in the empowerment of the lay people, and a deep connection with the local community.

Determined to prove that their church could not only survive but thrive, Dayboro turned its back on perceived wisdom about how churches ought to operate.

"Much of what we did broke away from traditional decision-making models, and shortened the lines of governance and action," said Dr Inglis, a former academic who drew on his experience in education and process management.

In practice, it meant beginning with a survey to find out what people wanted, and then identifying what was most important.

This was backed up by research into the profile of the local community.

The congregation became the primary decision-making unit, ditching the Church Council and introducing a process of "whole of congregation" facilitation for critical conversations whenever a decision needed to be made.

Once projects had the go-ahead, they were swiftly implemented.

If this sounds like a recipe for chaos, Dr Inglis suggests that it is in fact the opposite. Encouraging diverse opinions and allowing conflict to rise not only validates the ideas, faith and intellect of the congregation, it provides the catalyst for critical thinking, he said.

Governance may seem to be unrelated to church growth, but Dr Inglis believes that open government and good communication foster both inclusiveness and tolerance, key elements in engendering a broad ownership of mission.

"Belonging and ownership belong together," he said.

Once it understood and agreed on its mission, the congregation began to engage with groups as diverse as Blue Care, the local school, local businesses and service organisations, other welfare groups, politicians and health care professionals.

They asked them how the church could help.

Working with these key players, Dayboro developed a family support and emergency relief ministry linked to the community network, and initiated its own programs that brought people and services into church facilities.

Alongside this, the congregation expanded their children's ministry and study groups, grew their leadership group and increased their preaching team.



Dr Paul Inglis, retired community minister at Dayboro Uniting Church. Photo by Dianne Jensen

In short, Dr Inglis said the congregation began "reinstating the centrality of the church in the life of the community, and its relevance."

"For most of the community, a church's integrity and credibility is established from its visible

actions ... those conducted outside its walls. Dayboro Uniting Church has tried to relate to the life of the local community to the fullest extent possible, and it has brought great results," he said.

Stepping outside the comfort zone

Dianne Jensen

PILGRIMAGE is a journey of discovery; of people, places and self.

In spite of their remote location on western Cape York, the residents of Mapoon, Napranum and Weipa (Calvary Presbytery) have become hosts

to those pilgrims who have made their way north since the Uniting Church launched AboutFACE (Faith and Cultural Exchange) in the 1980s.

The program is a national activity of the Uniting Church in Australia, and facilitates urban Christians spending time in Indigenous communities. It aims

to build understanding, trust and friendship between the different groups.

A group of eight people from Indooroopilly Uniting Church is currently reflecting on their pilgrimage in early July, organised through Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress deacon Rev Michelle Cook and youth worker James Hughes.

Assistant in Nursing Michael Henley was struck most by the sense of community that he witnessed, "a strong feeling of connectedness between everyone who lived there" both within the local area and the church.

The Indooroopilly visitors spent time with the local youth group as well as meeting some of the Elders of Mapoon and Napranum to hear their stories, "both the beautiful and painful ones alike," said Mr Henley.

The legacy of their forced dispossession during the early 1960s is part of the ongoing story of Mapoon.

"Healing has happened, and people have moved back, but the scar that it left is still there."

An afternoon with a young girl collecting shells, seaweed pods, and ripe Simothsi berries was a cherished experience for Christabel Carvolth from Indooroopilly.

"It was, and is, humbling to have been invited and shown around, not as tourists, but as individuals, part of the church, who are invited to develop a partnership," she said.

Ms Cook said, "While the congregations know they are part of the whole church, it is encouraging and strengthening to have a concrete example of people's interest and prayers."

"Elders in Mapoon were so excited to have people learn palm weaving, to show them bush foods and to have an eager audience for their stories."

Seven teenagers from Scotch Oakburn College (a Uniting Church school in Launceston) recently returned from the

school's third annual cultural pilgrimage to the area.

As well as fishing with traditional owners and learning about the cultural practices and the way of life in the local community, the students spent time with local teenagers, including camping and sharing communion at Eliot Falls in the Jardine River National Park, about 900km north of Cairns.

School chaplain Graham Bartley described "a real intensity of relationship" that occurs between the groups during the two weeks, with the visiting students emerging with a sense of hope and possibility for Indigenous people.

James Hughes sees benefits for his young participants as well.

"There is a very strong connection (between the two groups) that we are young people with a lot of the same issues and concerns and we can learn from each other," he said.

"It really enriches the lives on both sides."



Communion at Mapoon, using coconut and coconut juice. Photo by Michael Henley

A community rises from ashes

MAPOON'S story is a footnote in the history of church missions, government policies and Indigenous land rights.

Mapoon Presbyterian Mission was established on western Cape York in 1891, following decades of warfare between cattlemen and explorers and the traditional owners: Tjungundji, Yungundji and Tanikutti.

The community achieved national prominence when the mission was closed and the inhabitants removed to Bamaga in 1961-63, following the discovery of bauxite deposits on Cape York Peninsula and the granting of mining leases on land occupied by the Weipa and Mapoon Missions.

Most of the buildings, including the church and

individual homes, were torched or demolished.

Some residents vowed to return, and from the late 1970s, people began coming back.

In 2000, Mapoon was formally recognised as a Deed of Grant in Trust Community with status similar to a shire council. Under this system, a locally elected council governs the community.

Home is where the heart is

A sense of belonging is fundamental to our health and happiness, and this is as true for churches as it is for individuals.

National Church Life Survey indicators of healthy churches stress the importance of a warm and consistent welcome, nurturing worship, and an enriching sense of community.

Journey asked Uniting Church members, both long-timers and newcomers, why they belong to their church.

Maranoa Uniting Church cluster is comprised of six communities in an area approximately 200km square. Roma is the centre of the region, and hosts a Uniting/Lutheran congregation. Wallumbilla and Yuleba are to the east, Mitchell to the west and Injune and Arcadia Valley to the north. The region is experiencing a new understanding of community because of the impact of coal seam gas.

Gail Price, long-time member, Arcadia Valley: Seems to me that "community" and "belonging" are one and the same. The lovely part about

worshipping in the Valley is that it doesn't matter if you are Catholic or Calothumpian ... regardless of who leads worship, we all belong, and we treasure everyone's contribution. Anyone who saw the working bee in the middle of the flood this year, from this wonderful community that supported me and my family when my husband passed away, would understand how precious belonging is.

Jodie Beitz, new member, Roma: In addition to my faith, I am drawn to our church in Roma by the sheer pleasure of the beautiful and kind-hearted people who attend the church. They have all welcomed me as part of their community with open arms, and renew my faith in God each and every week, just by being the people they are and living by his word. The words of our Reverend Linda Hamill inspire and assist in motivating our parish, and provide us all with a sense of belonging.

Oakey Uniting Church cluster is comprised of the Oakey, Jondaryan and Goombungee congregations under the

leadership of one minister. The Community Church at MacLagan is also part of the cluster, and the ministry is shared by Anglican, Presbyterian and Uniting Church ministers and lay leaders.

Olive Frizzell, long-time member, Oakey: I was confirmed in the Presbyterian Church at Allora when I was 16 years old. I was a member of the Presbyterian Church in Oakey until it joined the Uniting Church 35 years ago. My faith in God and the love of the church has enriched my life, and helped me through serious health problems with my husband over many years. My life has been full, filled by the friendship made with other members and caring ministers.

Shannon Wessling, new member, Oakey: I will never forget the first time I went to the Oakey Uniting Church. I was greeted with smiling faces happy to see me. I'm in the place where God wants me to be at this time, and I'm glad I listened to God and made the change. Been here seven months and counting ...

Top left: Olive Frizzell, Oakey
Top right: Jodie Beitz, Roma
Below: Shannon Wessling and Mia, Oakey, at their confirmation and baptism. Photos courtesy of the congregations



Trinity welcomes Dr Aaron Ghiloni

DR Aaron Ghiloni has joined Trinity Theological College as Director of Studies – Mission, Ministry, and Leadership, and Director of Field Education.

Dr Ghiloni's work is in Christian theology in dialogue with the humanities and social sciences. His new book *John Dewey among the Theologians* is a conversation between educational theory and Christian doctrine.

He teaches the college's popular "Theology of Religious Pluralism" course.

From 2009 to 2011 he taught on the Abrahamic traditions at The University of Queensland and is currently

completing further postgraduate qualifications in Islamic Studies.

He said that as a theological scholar, he is impressed by the foundational role "scholarly interpreters" play in the Uniting Church.

"With the *Basis of Union*, I am heartily 'open to an informed faith' and I believe it is crucial to 'learn to sharpen [our] understanding ... by contact with contemporary thought.' I applaud the Queensland Synod's desire to 'confess the Lord in fresh words and deeds' through the *Together on the way, enriching community* process.

"I think this is what we are emphasising at Trinity

Theological College. The curriculum has a distinct focus responding to the 'challenges and possibilities for the proclamation of the gospel in secular and pluralist Australia'.

"Thus, my classes in areas such as leadership, mission studies, and pastoral theology will be in dialogue with these cultural currents. We will look at how Christian thought is challenged and enhanced through contact with other faiths and other disciplines."

Dr Ghiloni has extensive practical experience in teaching and educational leadership, and has been a high school teacher and administrator, youth and children's pastoral minister, and an adult education officer (including for the Presbytery of Moreton Rivers). He brings a broad ecumenical outlook to his teaching, having served within the United Methodist Church, the Anglican Church of Australia, and a Pentecostal congregation.

Trinity Principal Rev Dr Geoff Thompson said the college is delighted to have Dr Ghiloni join the faculty.

"Together with his brief to expand the college's engagement with issues of leadership, he is well suited to help foster the college's mission of producing visionary leaders who have a 'theologically-formed commitment to the Christian community and discipleship formation.'"



Dr Aaron Ghiloni outside Trinity Theological College in Auchenflower, Brisbane. Photo by Osker Lau

Dalveen closes its doors after 57 years

THE small rural church of Dalveen in the Downs Presbytery has closed its doors after 57 years of worship.

More than 50 people packed into the traditional weatherboard building on 23 June for the final service to remember and give thanks for fellowship and worship during countless Sunday services, weddings, baptisms, confirmations and funerals.

The establishment of the church in 1955 was a community affair, with land donated by P. Cameron, timber for the polished floors and walls supplied by local sawmill owners Cliff and Stan Pidgeon, and construction by nine local volunteers. The historic bell, also donated by the Pidgeons, and originally used

to toll the beginning and end of the shift at their brickworks, was presented back to the Dalveen community during the decommmissioning service.

In his address, Pastor Dudley Abraham gave thanks to the people who had started the church, and to those who had kept it going.

"We believe we are the church, a body of believers going out in the community and witnessing for Christ," he said. "Let this not be the end of the life of the church, but the beginning of a new life in the community."

Presbytery Minister, Rev Sharon Kirk, and Church Council members Judy Middleton and Susan Evans assisted in the decommmissioning service.



Members of Dalveen Uniting Church, Bev Butler, Pam Mitchell, Allyson Abraham, Cath Brown and Dulcie Welsh. Photo by Joyce Abraham



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President's installation address

In his installation address at the Adelaide Entertainment Centre, new Uniting Church President Rev Professor Andrew Dutney praised the church for its diversity and the great value church members place on its inclusiveness. The following is an excerpt of his installation address.

I'VE been introducing the Uniting Church to people for most of my adult life – its history, vision, values and structures. I even wrote a booklet called "Introducing the Uniting Church in Australia". I go to Uniting Church agencies to brief boards. I go to Uniting Church schools to do professional development with teachers. I go to Uniting Church councils and committees to induct new members into the nature of the church they've been elected to lead.

And I don't see this need for introductions slowing up any time soon. For one thing, the church's health, welfare and educational agencies are continuing to grow and employ many people who are committed to the agency's mission but have no affiliation with the Uniting Church. So the agencies are looking for opportunities to

introduce their workers and volunteers to the Uniting Church and its ministry in Australia. Or again, as migration patterns continue to develop and change we're delighted to welcome more and more people from Asia, the Pacific, Africa and elsewhere into the Uniting Church. The denominations that they knew and loved in their home countries generally don't have congregations here and so they look to the Uniting Church for ways to build Christian communities appropriate to their needs. And they look for opportunities to get to understand their new denomination – its vision, its ministry, and how they can share in it.

Religion in Australia is intensely voluntary. People choose a religion for themselves, what parts they'll adopt or

ignore, and what they think of any pronouncements that their religion's official leaders make. People don't take their religious affiliation as "given", but choose it.

This isn't the orderly transmission of a denominational tradition from one generation to the next. It's the wonderfully dis-orderly creation of tradition by a generation that has no clear memory of a shared origin but a strong sense of belonging together through a shared vision. This is post-denominationalism and it is part and parcel of the Uniting Church's life and ministry.

The Basis of Union had envisaged not a unit-ed church – complete, packaged, distinct – but a unit-ing church – provisional, a continual work in progress, "an interim way of being 'church' on the way to the end of denominationalism as a whole."

In 1977, the Uniting Church was formed by people from three strong denominational traditions agreeing to leave their denominations behind to be together.

And over the last 35 years the Uniting Church has continued to be formed and reformed by people from many nations, cultures and denominations learning "to forget who they are and remember whose they are."

Every five years, a National Church Life Survey is conducted throughout Australia.

This time, the Uniting Church took the opportunity to commission some survey questions of its own. While the results are still being processed, a preliminary report has been produced in time for this Assembly.

One of the questions included in the NCLS preliminary report was this:

Which of the following



Newly installed President, Rev Prof Andrew Dutney, shows his sense of humour and good nature as he chairs the 13th Assembly meeting

aspects do you most like about the Uniting Church as a denomination?

The list of options was fairly long. It mentioned just about everything you could think of that we're involved in through our agencies.

But it turned out that the list was pretty much superfluous. Of the 19 768 Uniting Church attenders who answered that question nearly 71 per cent indicated that the thing they liked most about the UCA as a denomination is its "inclusiveness of all types of people". Just to compare, the next most commonly chosen option was "provision of community services", at just under 25 per cent.

No, the votes are in. The message is clear. The thing we

like most about our church is its inclusiveness.

It turns out that our congregations know and like what lies deepest in their DNA as Christian communities and uppermost in the vision of the mission of God which the Uniting Church lives to participate in "that reconciliation and renewal which is the end in view for the whole creation".

It is the task of this 13th Assembly not to shore up a denominational identity, not to protect our brand, but to hear what the congregations we serve have said to us through the NCLS report and to lift our eyes to that horizon of "reconciliation and renewal ... for the whole creation" as we attend to our work.

Resurrection optimism

The following is an excerpt of the address Rev Alistair Macrae, Uniting Church President from 2009 to July 2012, delivered to the 13th Assembly on Monday 16 July 2012.

ALONG with the worldwide Christian Church we are in a time of fundamental transition, with all its challenges and opportunities.

We should continue to ask what Christians have asked in every crisis: What is possible, even in the valley of the shadow of death, in this liminal, uncertain space, for those who trust that the Shepherd God can provide water in the desert, bring hope out of fear, liberation out of paralysis, life out of death?

In the early church, and ever since, believers confronted by massive barriers have recalled the mystery of faith which we intone every time we gather at the table of the Lord: "Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again!" A crack in the wall appears and the light of hope shines through again. New worlds of possibility open up and fire the hearts, minds and imaginations of believers.

What distinguishes hopefulness from mere optimism is the central Christian claim of resurrection. We are "prisoners

of hope". Not hope for mere institutional survival but for the ultimate victory of love over hate, peace over violence, hope over despair.

Thank you, Uniting Church, for entrusting me with this role. Please forgive my mistakes and omissions and any words or actions that have been unworthy of the church or the gospel.

You gave me the privilege of seeing a broad cross-section of this church and I have been blessed with so many glimpses of God's Kingdom, God's new creation, in and through the worship, witness and service of this church. While we are a flawed church, nevertheless God's grace is so often manifest and I encourage us all to remain committed, faithful and imaginative as we participate with God until that blessed day when the walls of separation will be no more and God of our crucified and risen Lord will make all things new.

A full version of both of these speeches is available at <http://goo.gl/2yE0R>



Outgoing President Rev Alistair Macrae passes the stole to new President Rev Prof Andrew Dutney during the installation service at the Adelaide Entertainment Centre, Sunday 15 July 2012

Agreement on marriage

THE 13th Assembly was presented with three proposals discussing marriage on Thursday 19 July.

A respectful and articulate discussion followed as Assembly members engaged with the proposers: Rev Avril Hannah-Jones and Jenny Hayes, Port-Phillip West Presbytery (proposal 31/amended to 64); Rev Lu Senituli and Rev Gwen Fisher, South Moreton Presbytery (proposal 43); and Rev Carol Bennett and Rev Alison Whish (proposal 46).

The comments and concerns of the floor were noted by the Facilitation Group so that they could formulate an amended proposal to be presented the following day.

On the afternoon of Friday 20 July, the Facilitation Group presented proposal 71, a new proposal which was written to combine and amend the previously presented proposals on marriage and relationships (31, 43, 46, 64) according to the comments and concerns of the Thursday session.

Discussion followed the presentation, and though some amendments were made, the floor of the Assembly reached an agreement to acknowledge the current position on marriage of the Uniting Church in Australia, as per the minutes of the 8th Assembly in 1997, with further work to be done by the Doctrine Working Group between now and the next Assembly.

An Interim Record of the decision made by the Assembly was printed for members on Saturday 21 July.

This statement was as follows.

The Assembly resolved:

1. To acknowledge that the current position on marriage is set out in Assembly Minute 97.31.12

2. Noting the desire for respectful conversation within the diverse community of the church, and the current public debate about same-gender marriage, to ask the Doctrine Working Group, after appropriate consultation across the church and with ongoing liaison with the Standing Committee:

- to prepare a discussion paper on the theology of marriage within the Uniting Church, and explore its implications for public covenants

for same-gender relationships

- to circulate the paper widely, and specifically to UAICC National Committee, synods, chairpersons of national conferences, presbyteries, UAICC regions, Uniting Network, the Assembly of Confessing Congregations, congregations, agencies and institutions of the Uniting Church, requesting responses to the Working Group by a date to be determined by the Standing Committee; and

- to summarise responses and bring recommendations to the Standing Committee by November 2014, to enable the Standing Committee to bring a report to the 14th Assembly in 2015.

Continuing the covenant

A NUMBER of proposals to the 13th Assembly related to the Uniting Church's relationship with its Indigenous members.

One proposal called on church councils, boards and agencies to uphold the views of the Uniting Aboriginal Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) as they make decisions about proposed changes to the constitution by the Australian Government which will go to a referendum.

This was in the spirit of the covenant relationship the church established with its Indigenous people in 1985, said Rev Tim Matton-Johnson, Deputy Chair of the UAICC, and would progress the covenant in positive ways.

"When it comes to important decisions like this for First Peoples, we need to trust the people for whom this is a heart issue."

Holly Wright (Riverina Presbytery, NSW/ACT) said Rev Shayne Blackman, UAICC Administrator, had assured an earlier Assembly session that it did not see this as the church giving the UAICC a "blank cheque". Mr Blackman said that the UAICC was a council of the church and would make no decision regarding the referendum question wording without consulting the Assembly Standing Committee.

Elenie Poulos, UnitingJustice Australia National Director, had also previously told the meeting that there was a need to raise awareness of the referendum and work to ensure the final wording

was acceptable to Australia's First Peoples.

On the final day of business at the 13th Assembly, members expressed a clear intent to continue to grow the covenanting relationship with the UAICC.

The 12th Assembly approved the revised preamble to the Uniting Church in Australia's constitution to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Peoples.

Three years on, the 13th Assembly agreed to establish a working party to evaluate progress in the covenanting relationship.

In moving the proposal, Denise Chapman said it is important that the covenanting relationship is deeper than just words on paper.

"This agreement needs to have an impact on the actions of the councils of the church to implement the covenant and build partnering relationships with the UAICC in its ministry and mission among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are striving for equal outcomes with non-Aboriginal Australians," she said.

"There is a wealth of evidence that Aboriginal people in Australia are among the poorest and most marginalised people and governments have committed themselves to closing the poverty, health and education gaps," she said.

"The Uniting Church has also committed itself to closing these gaps."



UAICC Administrator Rev Shayne Blackman speaking at the 13th Assembly

Dean Whitaker, who seconded the proposal, said the way covenanting happened between the two bodies was not replicated by any other mainstream church in Australia, and of that he was particularly proud.

The Assembly also passed a resolution of support for Indigenous people (proposal 63).

Members resolved to work towards 16 actions, many to do with calling the Australian Government to action on

Stronger Futures legislative "regime" and ensuring that the Uniting Church will stand with the UAICC in the name of justice and to support Indigenous leaders.

Meet President-elect Stuart McMillan

ON Thursday 19 July members of the 13th Assembly meeting in Adelaide, endorsed Stuart McMillan, the Northern Synod Moderator, as President-elect of the Uniting Church in Australia.

Mr McMillan will be President-elect for the next three years before he takes up the presidency in 2015 at the 14th Assembly in Perth, succeeding current President, Rev Prof Andrew Dutney, who took up the role on Sunday 15 July.

Mr McMillan said he was deeply humbled at the great trust

the members of the Assembly had placed in him.

"Over the next three years, I will be doing a lot of listening, both to the spirit and to the church to prepare myself," he said.

He listed his passions as the covenant relationship, encouraging Indigenous leadership, the multicultural richness of the church being shared with congregations, and the advocacy work of the agencies UnitingWorld and UnitingJustice.

"My leadership style has been shaped by the Indigenous people I have spent the last 30 years with," he said.

"So I would want to involve those people in real ways, and also to seek a greater involvement from the multicultural folk in real ways – that is, to invite them to give leadership."

Members of the 13th Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia also reappointed Rev Terence Corkin as General Secretary of the Assembly until 31 December 2015.



President-elect Stuart McMillan is congratulated by President Rev Prof Andrew Dutney

Putting the Gen-Y into Assembly and the hip into fellowship

Rads Sukumar

CALL me a Church Nerd if you will, but the 13th Assembly, and my first, was really cool. Perhaps it was the ridiculous amount of food consumed. Perhaps it was the amazing co-Gen Ys I met and befriended. Perhaps it was our Stetson-wearing-President and cheesy-tie-wearing General Secretary chairing the meeting with such grace and humour. But after a week in a 13th Assembly-shaped bubble, I'm quite happily fried.

A few things really stood out for me. I really loved that we were able to discuss and deal with complex matters with

prayerful discernment and humility, despite our incredible diversity. The image of one flock following one shepherd echoed throughout the whole conference, as we dealt with issues that many of us differed on, and as we prayed and sang.

I loved that nobody's voice was dismissed as being too young, too inexperienced or too emotional. Indeed, my fear, before actually reaching the Assembly, was that the proposal I was to present with Rhane Lester (about the National Young Adults Leaders Conference 2012 "Reconciliation People" statement) would just be passed with a nice pat on the head for

the future leaders of the church. But people applauded. It was good to reassure them that the church isn't dying, that there are young leaders in the church, already loving and serving. There was a lot of love in that Plenary Hall.

And I loved the way we experienced true relationship with members of Congress, especially when we all stood in solidarity on the steps of Parliament House, and prayed and sung together (in tune too!) in response to the passing of the Stronger Futures legislation. The prayer vigil was not a planned part of the Assembly. It simply arose out of the energy and



Young leaders Rhane Lester and Rads Sukumar at the 13th Assembly

passion of the meeting. And it was a great honour to take part in organising that memorable event.

I am extraordinarily grateful for the opportunity to be a part of the Pilgrim People, for the friendships formed, for the songs sung, and for the path walked together.

Rads (Radhika) Sukumar is a 24-year-old Administrative Assistant at Uniting Mission and Education in the NSW/ACT Synod. She is seeking to be a candidate for Ministry of the Word. She attended the 13th Assembly as a youthful lay member

Assembly Standing Committee

ON Saturday 21 July, the results of the previous day's ballot were announced with 18 members chosen to sit on the Assembly Standing Committee (ASC) for the next three years.

Members were drawn from every Synod, representing both the lay and ordained communities and also the youth of the church, with three people

under the age of 25 chosen.

Ex-officio members of ASC are Rev Alistair Macrae (ex-President), Rev Prof Andrew Dutney (President), Mr Stuart McMillan (President-elect), Rev Terence Corkin (Assembly General Secretary), Rev Ronang Garrawurra (UAICC Chairperson), and Rev Shayne Blackman (UAICC

National Administrator). The other members chosen for the Standing Committee are:

- Alison Atkinson-Phillips (WA, lay)
- Bethany Broadstock (Vic/Tas, lay, under 25)
- Stu Cameron (Qld, ordained)
- Michelle Cook (Qld, ordained)
- Emma Davison (NSW/ACT, lay, under 25)
- Kate Fraser (Northern, ordained)
- Geoffrey Grinton (Vic/Tas, lay)
- Zac Hatfield Dodds (NSW/ACT, lay, under 25)
- Andrew Johnson (NSW/ACT, lay)
- Jason Kioa (Vic/Tas, ordained)
- Cheryl Lawson (WA, lay)
- Craig Mitchell (SA, lay)
- Deirdre Palmer (SA, lay)
- Ian Price (SA, ordained)
- Isabel Thomas Dobson (Vic/Tas, lay)
- Ian Tozer (WA, ordained)
- Jan Trengove (SA, lay)
- Jenny Tymms (Northern, ordained)

Rev Glenda Blakefield (Assembly Associate General Secretary), Rev Dr Chris Walker (Theology and Discipleship Consultant) and Synod General Secretaries all have observer status on the ASC. Please pray for the members of ASC as they take up this important role within the life of our church.

Faith in action over Stronger Futures legislation

ALMOST 400 people sang, prayed and observed a minute's silence on the steps of the South Australian Parliament to express concern at the federal Stronger Futures laws.

At lunchtime on day five of the 13th Assembly, members moved en masse from their meeting to the steps of Parliament.

Passers-by stopped and stared and cars beeped their horns at the silent procession of people holding Uniting Church banners

led by both the President and the Chairperson of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress Chair (UAICC).

After the whole crowd had joined in song, Uniting Church President Rev Prof Andrew Dutney opened the prayer vigil by declaring:

"We, the 13th Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia, have gathered here today in lament and prayer, in response to the Federal Parliament's Stronger

Futures legislation.

"Our political leaders must rise above the election cycle and commit funds and resources to practical programs that are evidence-based with accountable and transparent processes.

"The programs need to be developed and implemented in partnership with Indigenous communities rather than imposed upon them.

"We have worked in partnership with our Indigenous brothers and sisters and we have listened. We commit ourselves with the Uniting Church's Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress, to developing

more just, inclusive and equal relationships in the Church and Australian community."

UAICC Chair Rev Ronang Garrawurra said:

"The Australian Government has taken away our lands and now our humanity also is taken away by this new law."

The event made Channel Seven's Adelaide nightly bulletin.

The Stronger Futures laws passed at the end of June extend the policies of the Northern Territory Intervention such as income management by up to 10 more years. The Uniting Church has been a vocal opponent of the legislation.

Rev Prof Dutney said that the Uniting Church believes in a God who seeks the reconciliation of all people.

"We are also members of a church that is still 'Uniting'. We challenge our church, our government and our nation to listen deeply to the knowledge and culture of our First Peoples.

"If we are serious about pursuing genuine relationships with the First Peoples, we must commit to genuine continued consultation and dialogue.

"In Christ, we are sisters and brothers, and so we commit ourselves to stand alongside each other in love and friendship."



Members of the 13th Assembly gather on the steps of the South Australian Parliament to hold a prayer vigil of lament for the Stronger Futures legislation

Economist calls church to act on justice

ON the second last day of business at the 13th Assembly, members were treated to the eye-opening wit and humour of economist and Executive Director of The Australia Institute, Dr Richard Denniss.

Speaking at a preview of the new UnitingJustice Australia website, the co-author of *Affluenza* asked why, in a country as rich as Australia, we can afford to tackle so many problems – but not climate change.

He pondered why it was that Melbourne could subsidise a car race but could no longer afford to subsidise fresh fruit in public schools.

Why Sydney could afford to host the Olympics but not house the homeless?

“Why does our economy generate the outcomes that it does? Why is poverty with us in times of affluence? Why can we afford to tackle so many problems, yet we can’t afford to tackle climate change? These are questions that my profession and the political class love to keep to themselves.

“We can’t possibly imagine tackling something like climate change because we are busy actually causing that climate change with the world’s biggest mining boom,” he said.

He reminded those present that big global issues are solved every day but it was a matter of priorities.

“We have and we do identify new problems and we solve them with a particular enthusiasm.

“But let’s be clear: in the last 20 years we have not found the will to address Indigenous disadvantage, we have not found the money to improve our public education system, we will not invest the money we need to into our aged-care system to prepare for an inevitable demographic time bomb, and we are told repeatedly that we cannot afford to tackle climate change.

Dr Denniss urged Assembly members not to leave issues of justice up to the world’s economists.

“As high priests of finance we have nothing to contribute to questions of justice.”

“These are fundamental questions of justice and equity ... the last people in the country that you want thinking about these problems are me and my colleagues. These are not questions for economists, yet economics is used again and again to explain the inexplicable.”

He congratulated Assembly members for the small amount of media coverage of the Assembly

prayer vigil on the steps of South Australia’s Parliament. “It is very hard to get on mainstream TV talking about issues of Indigenous disadvantage,” he said, “but gee it is easy every night to get 30 seconds about the Hang Seng and the Nikkei-Dow.

“I don’t know anybody who doesn’t have an economics degree who even knows what the Hang Seng is!

“Do you really think that the people who need to know are tuning in to the Channel 10 News to find out? So what is it doing there on the news every night? It is telling you that big important things, that greater minds than yours have puzzled over, are happening in the world.

“You might think we can afford to spend more on health, you might think we can afford to spend more on education, and you might think we might do something sensible like tackle climate change, but you don’t even know what the Hang Seng is! So why should we listen to you?

“These are things for you to demand of your political leaders, but understand that my colleagues will be standing between you and them, running interference, talking about the Hang Seng, getting you to think



Executive Director of The Australia Institute, Dr Richard Denniss, calls 13th Assembly members to insist on economic justice

about anything other than here we are, living in one of the richest countries in the world, telling ourselves we can’t afford to tackle poverty.

“Congratulations for taking the time to stop and think about things that, frankly, people really don’t want you to think about.”



Uniting Church in Australia past Presidents Rev Gregor Henderson (left) and Dr Jill Tabart, ex-President Rev Alistair Macrae, current President Rev Prof Andrew Dutney, and past President Rev Prof James Haire at the 13th Assembly in Adelaide.



Calendar art competition

What does being a disciple of God in 2013 look like to you?

Young people aged five to 17 are invited to creatively express their ideas on the theme *Being a Disciple of God in 2013* for the 2013 Synod Calendar Art Competition.

Entries close 21 September 2012.

For more information and guidelines for entry, visit www.together.ucaqlid.com.au/artcompetition

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Sowing seeds of friendship ...

Tara Burton

HUNDREDS of school children united in day camps across the state to relish in activities and games during the winter school holidays.

Holly Jewell, one of the directors of the Oxley Darra Day Camp and Uniting Communications graphic designer, attended day camp as a child and wanted to continue the tradition for her own kids.

"When my son was almost old enough both my kids asked me why they should go.

"I knew that if I wanted my kids to enjoy day camp and more importantly have a relationship with God then I needed to show them that it is important to be involved."

Ms Jewell noted that due to the success of day camps many parents would love them to be held more often than once a year.

"Because it's held annually we can focus church members' attention to it.

"It's a big week and it takes a lot of resources and a lot of people's time.

"But that's something that we volunteers do happily," she said.

Moggill/Karana Downs Day Camp coordinator Catherine Solomon couldn't agree more.

"I am involved with camp as I see the seeds being planted.

"God is using us to plant these seeds in the campers and in the leadership team.

"This is an eternal investment and this is why I'm involved in this ministry," she said proudly.

The campers aren't the only ones who enjoy day camp – it is also a valuable outreach to teenagers in local communities.

"Not only are we giving these children an opportunity to hear and experience first hand the good news of Jesus Christ, but the leaders and helpers gain so much from the camp as well.

"Many of our leaders and helpers do not have a committed faith but are willing to abide by the Christian ethos of the camp."

Ms Solomon said that this year's was the wettest day camp she had been to.

"Usually the teams spend hours each day in their gunyahs (bush huts), but because of all the rain and mud, time was limited outdoors.

"There was a completely different feel to the camp this year with teams probably bonding in more significant ways.

"The children had an amazing time," she said.

Beth Nicholls also grew up attending day camp and now leads the Go West team at Redlands.

For the past 14 years, Go West has taken the gift of day camp to rural areas of Queensland to encourage them in children's ministry.

"It is a great way to connect with the community, and to give children and leaders an experience of the bush and camping that is quite unique.

"It takes children and leaders out of their regular environment and through adventure activities, craft, assembly times, worship and team devotions it develops their skills and faith," she said.

Ms Nicholls said that the memories of day camp last a lifetime.

"Recently we had someone come to church because after many years she recognised the need for God in her life.

"She had remembered day camp in the midst of her life struggle, when she found



Oxley Darra Day Campers Rory, Morgan, Riley and Sam toast marshmallows with one of the directors, Holly Jewell. Photo by Mardi Lumsden

a cross that her leader had given her many years ago."

From this year's camps, the children, team leaders and volunteers will fondly

remember the sea of mud, burnt marshmallows and sunlight glistening through stormy clouds.

... and reaping the rewards

Paul Clark

MY wife and I were leaders at the recent day camp on the

north side of Brisbane. Despite the weather, the kids had four fabulous fun-filled days of activities, singing, sports and

engagement with the theme "All you need is [God's] love".

The directors did an excellent job organising the event, and

reorganising it overnight due to bogged buses! But what really impressed me were the 60 or so teenagers and university students who were the engine room, the small group leaders, of the camp. Here were young people, usually known as the "i" generation, giving up their holidays to spend four intensive days with primary-school kids. It was worth the price of admission just to witness it.

The whole experience did make me consider how it is that we as a Uniting Church have often done youth ministry so well, only to have one of the oldest demographics of any denomination, and some of the worst retention rates of our young people. I can only explain it this way.

At youth and children's events I often see leaders who are very playful with their faith, who exemplify a joyful, excited and passionate relationship with God, who use the latest technology, language and creative arts in their presentations – and who aren't afraid to move their bodies to loud music, as worship.

But when these young people return to their home churches, too often they experience a faith community nothing like this. Playfulness and passion have given way to formality and respect. The music and methodology of the message have missed a decade or more, and often they are shunted to the margins in Sunday school, participation in the service or even morning tea selection. Is it any wonder they retreat to the new and Pentecostal churches, or fall out completely?

We can try and run day camp like the Service of the Lord's Day or, more appropriately, we can let the lessons learned by our youth ministers liberate our liturgies.

I ask you to consider your response with all seriousness. Fabulous children and youth ministry on the fringes of our church will only ever produce a church with fabulous youth and children on the fringes. We need them to be at the heart of what we do.

Paul Clark is the Chief of Sinners at Redcliffe Uniting Church. He stays young by dyeing his hair.

stuff kids ask

If we can't see God, how do we know God is there?

Answered by Rev Paul Clark, Redcliffe Uniting Church, and children's book author

WE had balloons in church recently. Most people love balloons (except for the bangs!). Balloons are fantastic. We pump air into them, and they grow! Air, which we can't see, somehow

pushes the balloon out. There are many things in life that we can't see, but we know they exist because we can see or feel what they do. God is like that. We can't see God, but we can feel God in our lives, and see what God does and has done. Scientists tell us that we can detect less than 20 per cent of the

universe! That leaves plenty of room for God. The most remarkable thing, for me, is that a man called Jesus walked the earth, saying and doing some amazing things. After his life one man wrote, "Jesus was the visible image of the invisible God." If you really want to see God, find out about Jesus.

This year *Journey* will feature this column of great questions from the mouths of babes. If you have heard a great question from a young person, please send it to journey@ucaqld.com.au



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5 AUGUST 2pm – 5pm

Omega Writer's Meeting. St Francis College, Milton. Christian authors share support, information, inspiration and prayer. Contact Ruth Bonetti on 3375 1775 or visit www.omegawriters.com/wp.

5 AUGUST 2pm – 4pm

"Be thou my vision" afternoon of favourite hymns at Kairos Uniting Church, St Luke's Hamilton. Bring gold coin donation and plate for afternoon tea to share. Contact Paul Bennett on 3262 1790 or pbbennett@internode.on.net.

5 AUGUST

Please pray for Oakey Uniting Church cluster, "Reaching Out: Making Friends Together with Christ". Please pray for:

- the cluster of MacLagan, Jondaryan, Goombungee and Oakey, as we seek God's direction
- the process of the sale of property as we seek to be faithful to God's call in this area
- Oakey's newly formed Kids' Club and the volunteers who share God's love with the children
- our seniors as they struggle with the limitations of ageing and failing health
- our younger members who have recently committed their lives to Christ
- give thanks for the parents who support their kids in their sports.

11 AUGUST 6.30pm – 9pm

A really cool Christmas dinner at Redcliffe Uniting Church. Great three-course Christmas dinner plus concert of Christmas music. Profits in aid of chaplaincy. Bookings essential. \$40 pp. Contact Lesley Brown on 3284 3688 or brownliw5@optusnet.com.au.

22 – 17 AUGUST

YASKI snow-skiing adventure, Perisher. A fun time of sharing with like-minded people, encouraging each other and enjoying being in the snow. \$1052 covers accomm, meals, ski and gear hire, national park entry, lift passes and ski lessons. Contact Graham Keech on gkeech.loganuc@tpg.com.au or Beth Nicholls on bethn@dovenetq.net.au. Register at www.cleveland.ucaweb.com.au.

12 – 26 AUGUST 11am – 2pm

Archival Collection at the Vera Wade Gallery, St Andrew's Uniting Church, Brisbane City. For those fascinated by early Christian witness and the contribution of past members to the history of Brisbane. Contact Jenny Ponting on 3221 2400 or saintandrews@saintandrews.org.au.

12 AUGUST

The Sherwood Uniting Church congregation is in a time of transition. Please pray for:

- God's guidance and discernment by the Joint Nominating Committee, Elders and Church Council
- a continuing Year 7 group
- the development of evening worship and fellowship with young families
- an ongoing support for former prisoners through Community Bridges.

17 – 18 AUGUST 8am – 1pm both days

Garage sale. Wheller Gardens, Uhl Hall, 930 Gympie Rd, Chermiside. Pick up great buys of preloved clothes, books, household appliances and homewares, crafts, knick-knacks, etc. Contact Barbara Wood on 3359 7010 or trevorjwood@bigpond.com.

18 AUGUST 8am – 12pm

Jumble sale. Beachmere Uniting Church, cnr Moreton Tce and Second Ave. Cakes, jams, plants, books, clothing, manchester, craftwork, CDs, DVDs, videos, records, bric-a-brac, etc. Morning teas. Contact John and Marjorie Horchner on 5496 8371 or marjanhorchner@bigpond.com.

19 AUGUST

Please pray for Iona West Uniting Church. Iona West is a church seeking to minister to various people in the community by providing a variety of ministries and services. Please pray for:

- a replacement minister as Rev Euan McDonald moves to Laidley/Hattonvale at the end of September. Please also pray for a new profile and assembly of the Joint Nominating Committee
- the various services, traditional Sunday mornings, contemporary Sunday evenings, and a fortnightly family/messy church mid-morning
- our various ministries: Men's Shed, Kid's@Play Group, men's breakfasts, Café Church, Iona West 4-Ways (formerly Crossroads), RE in the primary school, Camp Eagle, and more
- our various lay leaders and preachers, church councilors and our retired minister in the congregation, Rev Neale Hill, who together will be leading worship, doing pastoral care and coordinating activities for the next few months.

25 AUGUST 2pm – 4.30pm

Gilbert and Sullivan meet ABBA at Bracken Ridge UC. Tickets at the door. Adults \$10, Children free. Afternoon tea and stall. Contact Marilyn Linnett on 3269 3282 or mardoug3@bigpond.com.

25 AUGUST 9:30am – 4.30pm

Choral Workshop. Opera Old Studio, Conservatorium of Music, Southbank, Brisbane. The Queensland Choir's Annual workshop is open to singers with choral experience. Contact Ian Orchard on 3351 7662 or enquiries@qldchoir.com or visit www.qldchoir.com.

26 AUGUST

Please pray for Laidley Uniting Church:

- for the preparations for our new minister starting the beginning of October
- for our busy month of September with our Craft and Quilt Expo and Day Camp
- for our Mainly Music leadership team. We run two groups with one leadership team. We have an overall attendance of about 30 families, most of whom have no connection with the church
- for ways to share a placement with Gatton to grow Hatton Vale, which is growing fast with new houses built and more estates opening. We want to connect more with the local community
- for the community work done in Laidley through Crisis Care, our op shop, breakfast twice a week at the local school and the "Have a Chat" group that provides a sausage sizzle and a listening ear to people in the main street on Wednesday evenings.

31 AUGUST – 2 SEPTEMBER

Sea of Faith in Australia 2012 Conference. Twin Towns Resort, Coolangatta. Shared humanity and the place of religion, faith and meaning as expressions of the human spirit. Contact Peter Robinson on 5577 2142 or pdrob15@optusnet.com.au or visit www.sof-in-australia.org.

1 SEPTEMBER 1:30pm – 4pm

The heart of the father with florist Robert Manton. Redcliffe Uniting Church. An afternoon of music and floral arrangements. Small floral arrangements for sale. \$10 (school-age children free). Afternoon tea. Contact Elaine Hints on 3284 7935 or redcliffeuc@dovenetq.net.au.

Upload your What's On entries at www.journeyonline.com.au

Census 2011: Christians in the spotlight

Dianne Jensen

"THAT'S me in the corner, that's me in the spotlight, losing my religion."

More and more Australians seem to be nodding their heads in time to the lyrics from the 1991 hit song by American rock band REM, according to 2011 Census of Population and Housing data recently released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

The figures show that the number of people reporting "No religion" has increased significantly, from 18.7 per cent of the population in 2006 to 22.3 per cent in 2011.

Christianity remains the most commonly indicated religion, with 61.1 per cent of the population reporting affiliation with a Christian religion – a decline from 63.9 per cent in 2006.

The increase in the number of people identifying as having no religious affiliation follows on the heels of the vigorous "Mark No Religion" campaign run by The Atheist Foundation of Australia in the months leading up to the Australian Census in August 2011.

Ruth Powell, Director of the National Church Life Survey, says that the Census data reveals more about affiliation than faith.

"People don't affiliate with anything, so the Christian religion suffers along with everything else," said Dr Powell

during an interview with Leigh Hatcher on *The Open House* radio show.

"It's not just churches, it's volunteer organisations, community groups – there are deep trends going on about how people engage in community together, and express their belonging."

Rev Dr Geoff Thompson, Principal of Trinity Theological College, believes that the key issue for Christians is the fact that participation in the traditions and practices of the Christian faith is now a minor presence in our community.

"Any thinking about the future of the church must resist all nostalgia for what the church was," he said. "We must be brutally honest with ourselves about the cultural shifts that have occurred and seek to understand them deeply; we need to realise that our contemporaries by and large see no need for, and no interest in, the faith that we proclaim."

Dr Thompson suggests that our thinking about the future of the church needs to be "less about whether or not we succeed in turning the ship around; less about whether we can reverse these cultural trends; less about whether we are at a high point or a low point in the cycle of church attendance – and more about the kind of community we are called to be, the kind of people we are called to be."

Thinking out of the box for youth in Rosewood

Rev Peter Blauw

IN the past 12 months, the Rosewood community has experienced some problems with youth on the streets late at night causing mischief. Realising that the police and justice system were limited in how they could help, the pastors of some of the local churches got together. Individually we couldn't do much, but together we could help resource someone to work with the young people.

We invited Younglife Australia, who had a good record mentoring youth in Ipswich, to partner us in walking with these kids. We also approached the Ipswich City Council, police, local businesses, the Lions Club and sporting organisations that were keen to find a better solution to social problems in the community.

A Younglife youth worker is now working within the local high school and one night a

week on the streets building relationships with these kids and their families. To help us build momentum, the Ipswich City Council and Younglife organised the first Rosewood Youth Festival at the local skate park on 6 July.

There were local bands and dancers, free food and drinks, and a craft workshop. The kids also had displays of their own with skateboard and bike tricks. The dancers taught some of the "oldies" how to do the "shuffle". I found out that I was about 40 years and 40 kilos too late to do it but had fun trying!

Sometimes we have to think outside the box to reach out to the community. In this case, we have combined resources between churches and people in the community to work out solutions to social problems.

We have also set up a group that has representatives of all the stakeholders to formulate strategies for building a better community.



From left: Younglife youth worker James Beutell, Baptist Pastor Will Mogensen and Rev Peter Blauw. Photo courtesy of Peter Blauw

Good Game: Christianity and the Culture of Sports

By Shirl James Hoffman, Baylor University Press (Waco), 2010, RRP \$43.95

Reviewed by Rev Peter Harvey

SHIRL James Hoffman has grown up in and around sport and church, so is well-suited to bringing this academic-style critique to the marriage of the Christian faith and sport. In *Good Game: Christianity and the Culture of Sports*, he asks the reader to take a hard look at the current state of sport, even sport in a supposedly Christian context, and see how it might look within a "truly" Christian context.

The preface and introduction offer insight into the author and helpfully frame what follows. The first five chapters offer a historical context for the interaction between Christianity and sport. Beginning in ancient Greece and Rome, where the

Christians of the day denounced a culture of sport, Hoffman then journeys through the Middle Ages and the age of Puritanism to more modern times. The only problem for me with this was the more recent the historical period, the more the focus on what Hoffman seems to see as the only modern culture – America.

Hoffman analyses modern American evangelical thinking about sport. He asks questions about the connection between sport and behaviours seen as consistent with the Christian life; and the church's exploitation of players, owners and managers who have refrained from such behaviours. He also examines the physicality of the majority of sports, and the way the human body (which he calls the temple of God) is mistreated and abused. He critiques the idea that



sports are and can be used to build character and explores using sport as an evangelism tool. He concludes by offering his thoughts on a transformation of sport within a Christian context for Christian institutions.

The book is interesting and thought-provoking. There are many problems in sport, and *Good Game* forces the reader to examine them. I don't know if I agree with the conclusion Hoffman reaches, but it's been a good journey to observe.

Faith on Film

Screens every Sunday from 1.30pm at Hoyts Sunnybank Cinemas. www.hoyts.com.au

Reviewed by Tara Burton

IN July Hoyts Australia launched the new Faith on Film festival which has been screening in cinemas across Australia.

Hoyts Queensland Area Manager Roshon Georgas said that Faith on Film aims to bridge the gap in the market for the Christian film genre.

"Faith on Film brings powerful stories from around the world to the big screen, so that family and friends can enjoy them together.

"It inspires through the power of story.

"Faith on Film is about celebrating life".

Ms Georgas said that the challenge has been gaining exposure and recognition for this niche genre.

"We hope that many people come along to the festival and that through positive recommendation, many more do.

"We hope that the audience exits the cinema with a sense of hope for the future," she said.

The program for the Faith on Film festival is scheduled to run until the end of this year. Some of the many Christian films that will be featured are *Billy: The Early Years*, *The Holy Roller*, *Faith Like Potatoes* (Director's Cut), *Not a Fan* and *The Least Amongst Us*.

First winner of our Faith on Film double-pass giveaways, David Pohlmann, lecturer at Christian Heritage College, was impressed by Armie Hammer's portrayal of Billy Graham in *Billy: The Early Years*.

"There were brief moments



towards the end of the piece where you could quite imagine him as a young Billy. "Stephanie Butler also put in a good performance as Ruth Bell Graham."

Mr Pohlmann added that the narrative could have benefited from a tighter structure, and noted that the film straddled a number of genres including biographical drama, docudrama and even romantic comedy.

To win a double pass to the Faith on Film screenings keep an eye out on the Uniting Church in Queensland Facebook page.

Leaving Alexandria: A Memoir of Faith and Doubt

By Richard Holloway, Text Publishing, 2012, 32.95

Reviewed by Rodney Eivers

IN some respects this is a sad book, as typified by the author quoting a number of times, "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world" (2 Timothy 4:10).

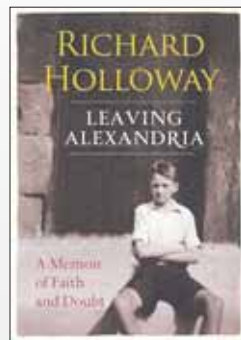
Yet the autobiography of Richard Holloway (formerly Bishop of Edinburgh and Primate of the Anglican Church in Scotland) is a penetrating and honest insight into one person's journey in the Christian faith. And it seeks to deal with how the institutional Christian faith has been challenged over the past century or so and is continuing to be challenged, as seen through the eyes of one man.

This honesty extends to another aspect of his personality with which I can identify. In acknowledging the strongly self-analytical basis to his relationships and his dealing with events, he speaks with admiration and some envy of those good people (whether caring for people suffering from terminal HIV/AIDS, or even his own children) who innately and spontaneously express care and goodwill to others.

Holloway claims that this honesty and perhaps a tendency to have publicly voiced his thinking as it developed have got him into trouble, and led eventually to his resigning from his posts in the Anglican Church.

Has Christianity a future? Has God a future? One can follow how Holloway developed doubt as to whether these two entities even belong together.

And in the end it got too much for him. The indications are, however, that despite (and perhaps because of) the loss of his ecclesiastical status



he will continue to have no less an impact on stimulating thought.

His writing, which he did not begin until nearing 40, has proved an inspiration to his readers for relating the worldview promulgated by Jesus the wandering Jewish sage of some 2000 years ago to the worldview of this very different era of our twenty-first century.

Its appeal would be particularly strong for those like he (and I) who seek to know what constitutes Christianity and what constitutes morality in this day and age – and to what extent there can be a link between them.

For Richard Holloway it is an ongoing journey.

I am sure he has a lot to say to those Uniting Church people interested in the challenges to the church of twenty-first century ideas and struggles.

I would recommend *Leaving Alexandria* as one man's thoughtful version of that journey.

Other books by Richard Holloway include *Godless Morality* (1999) and *Between The Monster and The Saint* (2008).

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

A Spacious Place: Contemplating the Second Half of Life

By Alie Stibbe, The Bible Reading Fellowship, Abingdon, UK, 2012, RRP \$15.95



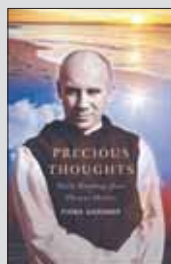
Contemplative Vision: A Guide to Christian Art and Prayer

By Juliet Benner, IVP Books, An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, RRP \$23.95



Precious Thoughts: Daily Readings from the Correspondence of Thomas Merton

Selected and edited by Fiona Gardner, Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 2011, RRP \$26.95



Carrie Underwood Concert

30 June 2012, Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre

Reviewed by Tara Burton

ON 30 June, Carrie Underwood graced the Brisbane Exhibition and Convention Centre with an amazing live performance.

Her first ever concert in Australia was worth the wait.

Winner of American Idol 2005 and several Grammy awards, Carrie Underwood has taken the country world by storm. Even those without a particular interest in country music are captivated by her vocals.

Carrie was supported in the show by Australian Idol winner Damien Leith, and the two meshed well together.

A highlight of the performance was when the lights dimmed for Temporary Home. Lyrics such as "This is my temporary home./it's not where I belong./Windows and rooms that I'm passin' through./This is just a stop, on the way to where I'm going./I'm not afraid because I know this is my Temporary Home" reveal her Christian



inspiration, as do song titles such as "Jesus Takes the Wheel".

Unfortunately Carrie was ill-served by a lack of audience enthusiasm and energy.

For those seated in middle and back the lights became blinding and distracting at times, giving the impression more of a light show than a live performance. But although the sound was also a bit poor in certain sections, Carrie's fantastic supporting band powered through.

Overall, Carrie shone and she has certainly gained at least one new fan!

Here's hoping she returns to Australia again soon.

Books available from ...

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

Still serving on the frontier

JOURNEY spoke with Rosemary Young, National Director of Frontier Services, at the 13th Assembly.

Journey: There were about 17 people in the discussion group, with representatives from every synod, and across Australia. What was the greatest value of the discussion for you?

Rosemary Young: The second session was really interesting because people had different experiences of fly-in-fly-out, which has been a big issue for us.

We're supporting communities where people flying in and flying out leave behind their own communities without resources, and of course then we are trying to also support the

communities into which they fly, places such as Karatha in Western Australia.

A number of the people involved in that conversation are either at the home end, supporting the families who are left without the partner, or they have an experience of mining communities in their own districts.

J: Are these fly-in-fly-out and mining communities gaining an emphasis in the work that Frontier Services does?

RY: In fact, mining communities and places where development has been happening have been part of our ministry for 60 or 70 years. But the agency was involved in places like Weipa

and Karatha and Roxby Downs and Tom Price as they were being developed, and they had churches at their heart.

Our real fear now is that this use of fly-in-fly-out camps, which have no heart – of any variety – is leaving people without a sense of community and connectedness, and also disconnecting people at the other end.

J: It seems that how successfully Frontier Services can support these communities depends on relationships with managers and HR managers, and if there's turnover a good relationship can be lost.

RY: That's absolutely true. We are really dependent on a person of faith being in a role where they can invite us in – or unfortunately, a catastrophe. And that is very often what opens the door. Very often and very unfortunately!

J: Matt Gees from St Marks – Mt Gravatt Uniting Church has people from his congregation who go out somewhere remote in a working group every year.



Frontier Services staff celebrate 100 years at the heart of the Outback during the 13th Assembly

RY: They do, yes, they go as part of our Outback Links program, which connects the voluntary effort that's available largely within but also without the church with the needs of families and also communities in remote Australia for all kinds of practical things. But quite apart from the practical things the volunteers do, they just offer friendship and that's a wonderful, wonderful gift.

J: You must have seen lots of friendships arise and flourish over the years.

RY: Absolutely. We have more than a thousand volunteers at any one time as part of the Outback Links program, but we guess now that number would be more than equalled by the number of people who go out just visiting friends they made as an Outback Links volunteer!

J: Do you have any particular goals in coming to Assembly

this year for furthering the mission of Frontier Services?

RY: Really, we see the Assembly as an accountability process. Frontier Services' work is the work of the whole church. As an Assembly agency, we can only work together with synods and presbyteries, and particularly with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress.

So being here we have the opportunity to have all of those people in one place, to ask them questions to help them understand how they're part of the life of the agencies and how we're part of the life of the church.

So essentially it's about reforming the relationships that come and go as you cross paths over the triennium, and really being accountable to Assembly on behalf of the whole church.

Assembly wrap

- The Uniting Church's current Ministerial Education Committee is to be replaced by an Education for Ministry Working Group, with the new body to provide advice on the standards of formation, education and training for the Ministry of the Word, Ministry of Deacon, Ministry of Pastor and Ministry of Lay Preacher.
- The statement presented to the 13th Assembly, *One Body, Many Members – Living Faith and Life Cross-culturally*, prepared by Multicultural and Cross-Cultural Ministry of the Uniting Church in Australia, promises a renewed approach to multicultural and cross-cultural ministry.
- Members of the 13th Assembly accepted a proposal

for the Uniting Church to "commit itself anew to the people of remote Australia" in this centenary year of the establishment of the Australian Inland Mission.

- Regulations relating to the conduct of appeals will be reviewed by a task group to be appointed by the Assembly Standing Committee.

- 13th Assembly members expressed appreciation for the contributions of Queenslanders Rev Dr Paul Walton and Rev Dr Elizabeth Nolan. Dr Walton served as Convener of the Assembly Working Group on Worship for 15 years. Dr Nolan served as Chairperson of the Assembly Christian Education Reference Committee from 2006 to 2012.

- The National Christian Youth Convention will be held in Sydney from 7–10 January 2014, with the theme *Yuróra*. The website will be live in mid-August.

- Two books were launched. A new "little green book" edition of *Holy Communion* revamps the "little blue book" that has been widely used by congregations, and includes worship services for communion. *Building on the Basis* is a collection of papers from the UCA Assembly Working Groups on Doctrine and Worship published between 2000 and 2011. Both are available from www.mediacom.org.au.

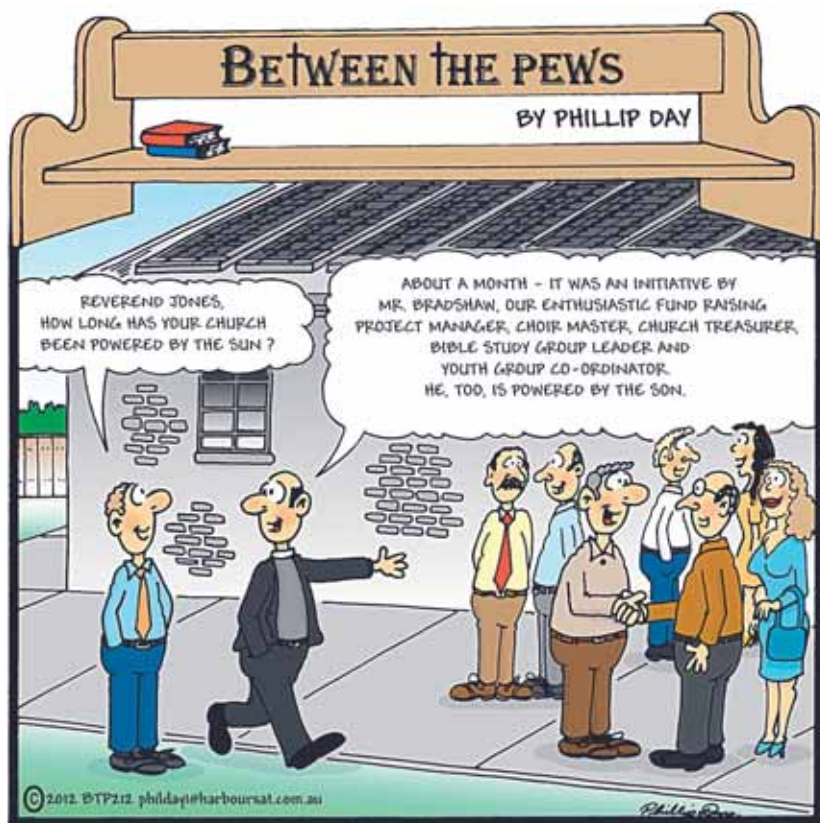
- Perth will host the next meeting of the triennial Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia in 2015.

For more Assembly news visit www.assembly2012.uca.org.au

Uniting Communications team



The Uniting Communications team. Left to right: designers Holly Jewell and Osker Lau, editor Kate Indigo, writer Dianne Jensen, director Mardi Lumsden and communications officer / advertising manager Tara Burton. Photo by Holly Jewell



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A two-way street

IT'S hard to realise that the Uniting Church has turned 35!

What a remarkable journey for a young Australian church which has been changing in many ways alongside a world that is equally changing.

Throughout those 35 years, the respective state journals have continuously brought news of the church and its people. *Journey* is a welcome item in my inbox each month, an opportunity to learn what is happening in another Synod. Its fresh, clean presentation with plenty of

colour makes for a very easy read.

It is important to remember that these Uniting Church journals enable two-way communication. Just as staff writers and contributors bring the stories to life, perhaps *Journey* could devote more space to letters. As you can see, I'd rather write a letter than be limited to 140 characters via a Twitter post!

Allan Gibson
Cherrybrook, NSW



Spiritual traps of sport

I really enjoyed your recent articles on sport in the last edition. I love sport. I love the competitiveness and engaging in the story of each game, particularly when I am left with that addictive "winning feeling".

However, I felt that you held back from presenting a critical perspective of the place of sport in our Aussie culture.

Two years ago, a family left Calvary Christian College for a school with a stronger sporting program. (How many people have left the church because of sport?) So the leadership of the College formed a working party to review sport at the college. The working party critically analysed sport for an understanding of a healthy sport/Christian life balance. Following are some of the statements the working party drafted in a position paper entitled *Sport at Calvary Christian College*.

"Sport has the potential to be a powerful value-laden activity which can be used for

good or for bad ... At its worst sport has the potential to develop into an ... experience of battle rather than play.

"In our culture, successful sport stars and sporting teams are at times idolised. A Christian worldview of sport in the Australian cultural context is ... somewhat 'counter-cultural'.

"We encourage parents to adopt a healthy balance in their family life. Unfortunately many parents have sacrificed youth group programs, Sunday church and a Christian education for the sake of seeing their child attempt to become a professional sports star."

In my view, there are many benefits and opportunities in sport for the church as outlined in your articles; however, let us not become naïve: sport has many spiritual traps.

Rev Jim Haak
Spiritual Director
Calvary Christian
College



A picture tells a thousand stories

IF a picture tells a thousand stories, the one on page 10 of June *Journey* in the "Coming of age" piece is no exception.

It beautifully demonstrates unity in action. Pastor Julia Lennon releases Sophie Monks' hand as she submerges into the spiritual journey of baptism. Rev Alistair Macrae firmly

and humbly supports the hand of the young woman, representing the church keeping us all together in the body of Christ, while a witness stands in the background worthy of praise.

Thank you, *Journey*.

Mercy Dunn
Emu Park



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35th anniversary messages

It's the 35th anniversary of the creation of the Uniting Church Queensland in Australia. I'm proud every day of this denomination and all it has achieved in such a short time.

Leanne Hutton

Happy Birthday, Uniting Church. I was there at your birth – in fact, I was there before you were born as I was friends with your parents at Arana Hills.

Billy Diehm

Happy birthday to the Uniting Church! May God continue to bless this wonderful organisation and all the work it does.

Brandon Strangman

Happy Birthday to the Uniting Church! Thank you for letting an old dog practise new tricks! God bless the next 35 years.

Richard Lance

2012 Calendar feedback

I've loved the different days listed on this year's calendar. Things like Pentecost, UCA anniversary, Lent, etc – that's great. Also the lectionary readings. Plus the calendars are a good size to sit on my desk and refer to often. However, they're not big enough to really notate on.

Matt Gees

Day Camp memories

The songs, and making your team area.

Rebecca Chan

Day Camp at Lathers Farm at Moggill. Flying fox, trailer rides, bonfire, billy tea, bus rides back and forth each day, half-cooked sausages on the campfire. So much fun.

Lyndelle Gunton

We've got Christopher Wayne as a special guest (right now) at the MR Day Camp at Samford. Kids are loving the treat after a wash out week!

Peter Armstrong

My fave memory of day camps was being a leader at St David's Coopers Plains. I think the leaders had more fun than the kids! And the bonfire on Sat nite for the leaders was pretty good.

Linda Hanson

What are your NAIDOC Week plans?

Tomorrow elders lunch in town, Magoon NAIDOC on Wednesday.

Michelle Cook

Log in and have your say now!

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.

Prison chaplains celebrated

ON 22 June, Uniting Church Prison Ministry celebrated 35 years of ministry by recognising the dedication of two long-serving prison chaplains. Mrs Pat Imhoff was honoured for her 25th anniversary of service and Rev George Tully for his 26th anniversary.

Speaking of the calling to prison chaplaincy, Prison Ministry Coordinator Beatriz Skippen said, "Whenever we serve the needs of prisoners, we minister to Christ Jesus. Together, empowered by the spirit, we can assist spiritual release and transformation for victims of crime, inmates, and families of prisoners. It's a privilege to be Jesus' hands and feet in the prison."

Mr Tully said that he has always been very proud of the ministry, which is well accepted by the system and prisoners alike. "The greatest reward," he said, "is knowing that I am where God has called me."

"I grew up among hard men and always felt at home among them. I believe very often these types of people have been misunderstood in middle-

class suburbia, which largely constitutes our church.

"My father said don't just think that some people keep the law and some break it. We all keep it and we all break it."

Taking the occasion to acknowledge the dedication of Mr Charlie Greer, his colleague in prison ministry, Mr Tully said that one of the greatest changes he has seen in his 26 years is many more professional people going to prison.

"It is far easier to find yourself in prison than it used to be. What once was business is now fraud."

Mrs Imhoff says a prisoner told her recently, "You don't realise how much the chaplains' visits mean to us. You are a window to the outside world and when you leave there is a changed atmosphere in here."

She was inspired to her work by 2 Cor 5:14 (Amp): "for the love of Christ controls and urges and impels us" to take the good news to the least, the last and the lost.

The greatest blessing, she said, was seeing God's love at work in people's lives: to see tears flow at

the good news that God can love and forgive them.

Mr Tully concurred. "We must hear the call to forgive. Too often we hear only the call to punish."

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For me, Assembly was a time of being proud to belong to the Uniting Church for:

- the respectful way hard and not so hard issues can be discussed and the way it is made possible for all voices to be heard
- the wisdom and articulation from various leaders
- the unsung work being done in politically sensitive contexts such as Christmas Island and West Papua
- the developing relationship between Congress and the UCA and the outworking of that at Assembly
- the commitment to remote Australia.

Highlights were being part of the community, the opportunity to learn through the Cato lecture, the Korean night, the reports of various groups, Australian songs new to me, listening to others, and especially, for me, hearing Aunty Denise share at breakfast the story of how "The Lord Be with You" was translated into Kurna language.

Elaine Rae
Executive Officer, Synod Schools Commission



WEB

Visit the 13th Assembly website www.assembly2012.uca.org.au for:
videos
photo galleries
speeches and sermons
proposals and reports



1. The Welcome to Country led by Stephen Goldsmith, also known as Gadla-Barti, an Indigenous Elder of the local Kurna people
2. Uniting Church members stand in solidarity with Australia's First Peoples at the prayer vigil at Adelaide's Parliament
3. Consensus in action: members enjoy meaningful discussion on proposals
4. President Rev Prof Andrew Dutney at the installation service on Sunday 15 July
5. Assembly members from all walks of life enjoy the unofficial Crazy Hat Day
6. UAICC Chairperson Rev Ronang Garrawurra addresses Assembly members



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