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Journey



The Uniting Church in Australia
QUEENSLAND SYNOD

**CALLED TO
FOLLOW THE
RISEN LORD**

**THE RAIN
CAME DOWN**
and the flood came up

**THE ART
OF EASTER**
transforming
the ordinary

Ben Huddreth

Wishing you a safe and happy Easter

GIVE THANKS TO THE

LORD

FOR HE IS GOOD

////////// HIS //////////

LOVE

ENDURES FOREVER

PSALM 118:1



The Uniting Church in Australia
QUEENSLAND SYNOD

30TH SYNOD

24 – 28 MAY 2013



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Journey

Cover art: *Christ's head*
by Cees Sliedrecht



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Closing date for editorial and advertising for April *Journey* is Monday 18 March. The next issue of *Journey* will be available on Sunday 7 April.



Embodying the power of Lent

One of the most powerful Easter experiences I have had was attending Albert Street Uniting Church in Brisbane City. Sure, the heritage-listed building surrounded by intricate stained-glass windows flooding warm colours down the walls is stunning, but it was a different kind of art that moved me.

Under the pulpit was the head of Christ, as seen on the cover of this edition, by artist Cees Sliedrecht. To the left and right of the congregation were equally large and powerful images of Christ's pierced wrists and at the back, above the door, hung Christ's twisted, bloody feet.

It was a stunning reminder that as the body of Christ, a congregation needs to experience the pain of the journey to the cross to be able to share the good news that comes after it.

Hearing the haunting strains of Antonio Lotti's *Crucifixus* in a sacred setting can have the same profound effect.

Art and music are powerful story-tellers. This is echoed in Marion McConaghy's article on religious art and in our stories on *songwrite* and the Blind Boys of Alabama.

It is easy to be too comfortable in our familiar expressions of church but Lent challenges us to move out of the comfort zone and to refocus our faith, as Moderator Rev Kaye Ronalds reminds us. Who are you in the Easter story?

We all have our place in the story and I pray that we never feel comfortable in our journey to the cross.

Mardi Lumsden
Editor-in-chief

For more information on artist Cees Sliedrecht visit ceesart.com or visionaries.org.au



Take the time to reflect during Lent

For me, the season of Lent is about making space and time to reflect on my life with God.

In some ways this runs counter to the pace of life around us. Most organisations have just resumed meeting after the long break over the summer holidays. They are building momentum, working on the goals for the year, reviewing strategic plans and organising fundraising events. Schools are in full swing, holding swimming carnivals and inducting school leaders. As moderator I am representing our church at events marking the beginning of the university year. The shops have shifted the merchandise for Australia Day and Valentine's Day and loaded the aisles with Easter eggs and hot cross buns.

Congregations have begun the regular program of activities. Friday-night youth groups are up and running. Sign-on day for Sunday School has been held and fellowship groups are planning for the World Day of Prayer (1 March). Volunteers have picked up their new rosters so that they can be involved in outreach or community service.

The commitments made at covenant services are fresh in our minds and many will be holding their annual general meetings this month. Some congregations will use the weeks leading up to Easter to prepare people who wish to be baptised or confirmed.

Sometimes we can think Lent is only about fasting and self-denial but that is not the purpose.

In some churches on Ash Wednesday when the ash is put on the forehead these words are said:

"Remember you are dust and to dust you will return". In our tradition we would expect to hear these words at a funeral and it is humbling to be reminded that one day our physical bodies will become compost.

Part of what it means to be human is to acknowledge our mortality. According to Christian teaching another aspect of the human condition is that humans are sinful. Most of us exist somewhere between the "made in the image of God" and what theologians refer to as the "total depravity of man".

Around the community you glimpse humans reflecting the creative, sustaining, empowering, compassionate qualities of God; but you can also see evidence of the cruel and calculating, manipulative, self-serving, rebellious, destructive tendencies and behaviours reflective of sinful humanity.

What is required is an honest assessment of ourselves.

So Lent need not be a time to beat ourselves up about our failures and falling into temptation, nor a time to congratulate ourselves for keeping a fast or following a particular spiritual discipline. That would be making the fast the goal rather than a means for developing true humility and genuine repentance.

The season of Lent provides space to explore our relationship with God and to remember that God's grace restores, redeems and renews.

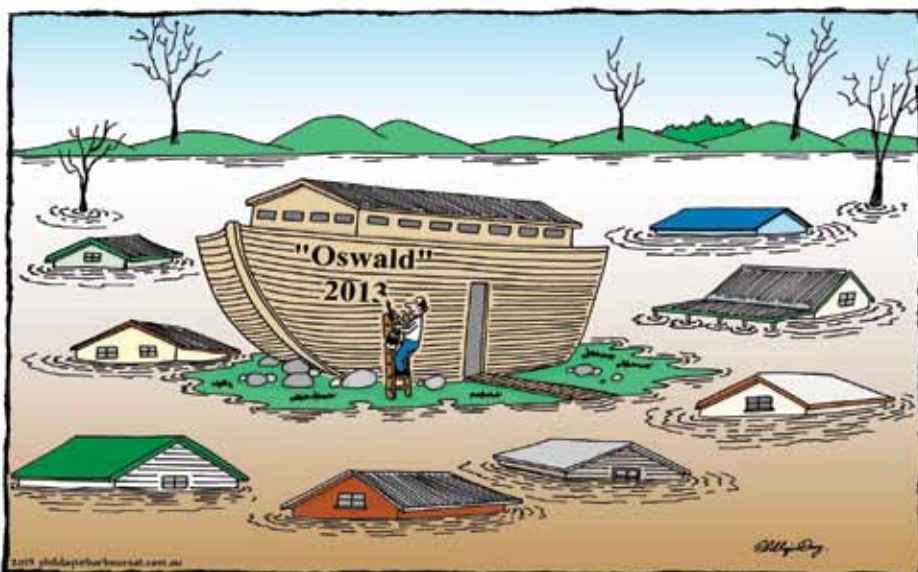
Rev Kaye Ronalds
Queensland Synod Moderator

Moderator's diary

- March 3**
Blessing and dedication of land at Forest Lake
- March 8**
Progressive Christianity dialogue
- International Women's Day
Government House reception
- March 9**
Mary Burnett Presbytery meeting
- March 15 – 17**
Assembly Standing Committee
- March 21**
Presbytery ministers meeting

Monday Middy Prayer

*Holy God,
in discipline and
humility enable us
to seek repentance and
to know the relief of
your saving grace for
troubled souls through
Christ our Lord.
Amen*





Visiting and local volunteers with the first load of flood debris from a lucerne hay paddock at Mundubbera. Photo: Andrew Hurst

Volunteers pitch in as rural clean-up begins

Men from the Shed Night movement and Christian men's fellowships headed out in February to help clean up in the North Burnett after the January floods. *Journey* reports on how willing hands can help a community begin the long road to recovery.

The little towns of the North Burnett didn't make the headlines when the Australia Day floods swept through a large chunk of central and southern Queensland. But in Eidsvold, Gayndah, Mundubbera, Mount Perry and many other places, the damage to farms and houses left locals stunned.

A phone call between Pastor Fay Barton in Mundubbera and Mary Burnett Presbytery Minister Rev Bob Harriman sowed the seeds of the project: to provide some hands-on help in the huge task of cleaning up.

The word spread through the Shed Night movement and other Christian men's fellowships.

Three weekends after the floods, a crew of almost 40 Lutherans, Baptists, Uniting Church and Churches of Christ volunteers headed for Mundubbera after work on Friday evening.

Fay Barton had connected the men with Blaze Aid, a volunteer-based organisation that works with farmers and families in rural Australia after natural disasters such as fires and floods. Blaze Aid established a basecamp in a large council shed, with showers, toilets and kitchen, and plenty of room to unroll a swag or park a caravan.

There was plenty of work ahead: repairing pumps, chipping asparagus, cleaning citrus and nut trees and gutting houses.

The men brought tools and labour, and the home-baked treats they left in each household were perhaps the icing on the cake for families who have lost everything.

"You have no idea how this has cheered the locals," said Blaze Aid coordinator Vicki Kelly. "Forty blokes for two days may be only a drop in the bucket, but it has encouraged people to make a start on tasks that seemed overwhelming."

Pastor Barton said that there is an enormous recovery effort ahead.

"You have given us a rest, a chance to catch our breath," she said. "You would be welcome any time during the next six months or more."

Blaze Aid has established basecamps at Monto, Mundubbera and Murgon.

For more information visit: blazeaid.com.au maryburnettpres.org.au, shednight.com



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The rain came down, and But the house on the rock stood firm

This month *Journey* brings together stories from some of the Uniting Church congregations impacted by the January wild weather and floods. To view the full reports and new stories, visit journeyonline.com.au.



Bundaberg and Coral Coast

Gradually, all of the church, halls and storerooms were inundated with flood water. In 80 years, this had never happened before.

With 1.5 m of water in the storage shed, fridges, freezers, tents, canoes and sundry items were all wet and muddy. Most had to be dumped. Sterling Centre was swamped: carpet, furniture, Sunday School resources and items from other organisations destroyed. McNaught Hall, with 60 cm of water, lost its kitchen and catering facilities. The grand church building had 60 cm of putrid flood water inside.

As the water rose, many people helped retrieve as much as could be carried to an upper level: chairs, crockery, pews, pianos, library books, electronics, files, musical instruments, pulpit and so on. The water did not stay long and the wonderful church family banded together to clean up the mess.

Residents of Bargara, Burnett Heads, Bundaberg North, Bundaberg East, Avoca and the wider community were flooded and lost power for many days. Many of our church family, even those who are in need themselves, have helped clean, house and counsel, especially with the elderly who have lost everything.

Rev Ray Nutley
Bundaberg Uniting Church

Central Burnett

The morning of Australia Day saw the people of North Burnett enjoying gentle soaking rain. By evening it was constant, heavy rain with the rivers and streams becoming a destructive force which was completely unexpected.

Sunday morning worship services in Mundubbera and Gayndah were cancelled and it was “all hands on deck” to evacuate over 100 homes and businesses in each town – not to mention people living all along the river who were watching the water rise. Helicopters flew back and forth rescuing people from flooded properties all Sunday and Monday.

Orchards were decimated, livestock washed downriver, buildings destroyed and lives shattered. Most were still recovering from the flood in 2010/11 and are now wondering if they will ever begin again.

Members of the congregations were immediately in action, assisting with evacuations, working in emergency services, taking frightened evacuees into their homes and just being there when needed.

Mundubbera congregation went on roster with three other churches in town to prepare evening meals for evacuees, emergency services and volunteers. There was no power or phone contact for several days and food that could not be used had to be dumped. The catering continued for two weeks until accommodation was brought into town for those who now had nowhere to go.

Pastor Fay Barton
Central Burnett Uniting Church

Biloela

Some members of the congregation are on farming land which was damaged by floodwaters. Fences have been damaged, cattle had to be located and topsoil was washed away. Parts of the Banana Shire were inundated with fast-flowing, rapidly rising water. The township of Jambin was evacuated to the school a few kilometres away on higher ground; parts of Goovigen, Dululu and Wowan as well as those on properties and people living on the outskirts of Biloela were also evacuated. Some properties and homes in the Thangool area were inundated.

The absence of a reliable communication network added to the stress and anxiety.

Members of the congregation have been helping out their friends and acquaintances as they are able, such as responding to the cry for assistance at 1.15 am to move furniture, then put it back after the clean-up, and the hard slog of pulling up fencing wire from silt and debris. Once the phone lines were restored, we were busy contacting people living on farms.

At this stage, the flood recovery clean-up and restoration process is in its infancy and will take many months and in some cases years. It is difficult to determine what help is required and careful planning is needed to ensure that services and assistance are directed where the need is greatest.

Pastor Donna Muston
Callide Valley Uniting Church

the flood came up



‘Gradually, all of the church, halls and storerooms were inundated with flood water. In 80 years, this had never happened before’

Ray Nutley

Opposite page:
Floodwaters inundate Bundaberg Uniting Church.
Photo: Ray Nutley

This page:
A rescue team leave the Bundaberg church.
Photo: Ray Nutley

Property at Gayndah after the damaging floods and storms.
Photo: Central Burnett Uniting Church

Dawson Valley

The lower Dawson River, which is fed by the Mimosa Creek south of Baralaba, and the Don River feeding flood waters from the Callide Valley, caused some severe inundation of properties.

Large stream flows and flooding wreaked havoc on irrigation infrastructure along with some machinery. Stock were swept downstream. There were crop losses of some 12 per cent between Theodore and Moura and further downstream.

This part of the Dawson Valley saw 300 to 450 mm of rain falling over the three days. The farmers in this area are now rebuilding fences, replanting crops, repairing machinery that was inundated and repairing roads and irrigation banks that were washed away.

Some farmers are dealing with the loss of crops and livestock along with repairing equipment after going through the 2010/11 disaster.

Prior to the rain event farmers were running out of water to irrigate their crops and some were even abandoning some fields.

David Hutchinson
Church Council Chair
Moura Uniting Church
dawsonvalleyunitingchurch.org.au

South Rockhampton

Our congregation consists of three worship centres; South Rockhampton Uniting Church, and Bushley Uniting Church and Mount Morgan Uniting Church (both out of town).

Bushley was completely cut off from Rockhampton due to the Neerkol Bridge receiving extensive damage in the flash flooding. The congregation will likely not gather for worship for several weeks until the bridge is repaired.

Mt Morgan is now accessible, but was cut off previously.

Several of our out-of-town members were isolated for up to a week due to flood water and loss of communications.

Only one congregation member has been displaced by the flood. She is a mum of a young child – her street flooded in both the initial flash flooding and the follow-on flooding.

Rev Jennifer Roberts
South Rockhampton Uniting Church

Stanwell

Dozens of homes were inundated in Stanwell, near Rockhampton, after flash floods ripped through the community on January 25.

The water roared past. Never had it risen to this height; at least 1.5 m higher than any previous flood. Vegetation, branches, logs, silt, fences and various household belongings were all swept along by a torrent hundreds of metres wide. Ever so quickly, one dwelling after another was inundated along with whatever material possessions each family had acquired.

This was Stanwell, a place that boasted a nearby power station, a shop, a school, twin tracks carrying the coal from further west and numbers of older homes protecting the lives of many country people. And now so many wander around dazed and wondering if a large part of their lives or their future will ever be normal again.

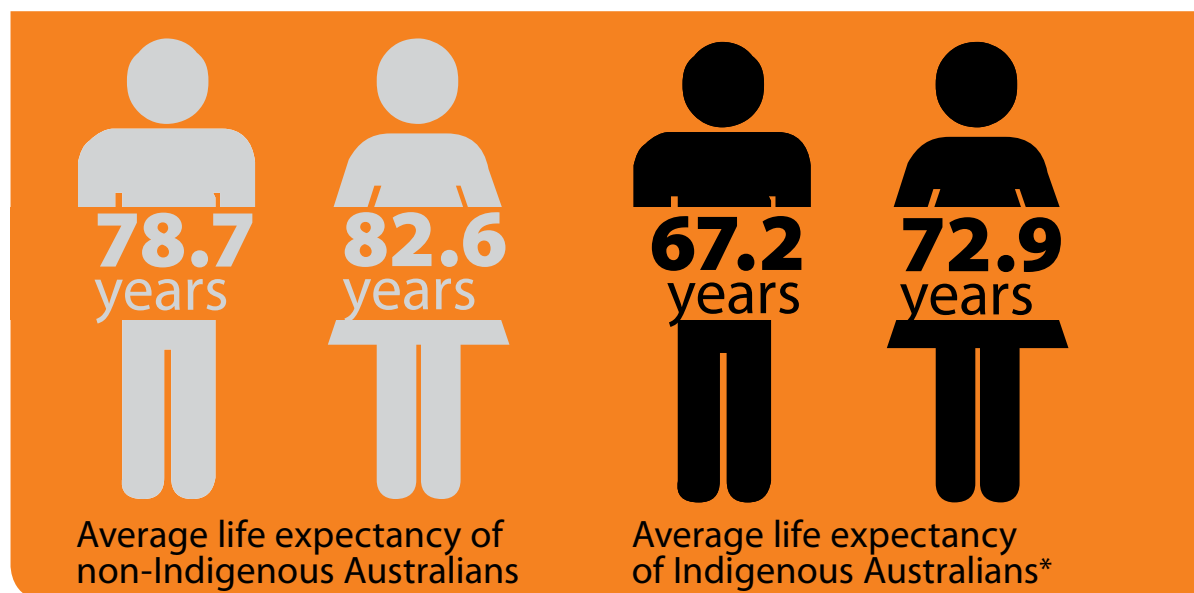
Rev Glenn Ingram
South Rockhampton Uniting Church

To share the experience of your church community, contact journey@ucaqld.com.au.

Tax deductible donations should be directed to the National Disaster Relief Fund at assembly.uca.org.au/donate or phone 1800 772 851.

Requests for funds within the Queensland Synod should be directed to the Disaster Relief Funds Distribution Committee on disaster.relief@ucaqld.com.au.

Closing the Gap report card: Room for improvement



Indigenous communities in remote and urban areas experience heightened levels of disadvantage in spite of government commitments, says **Sue Hutchinson**.

The Australian Government made a formal commitment in 2008 to close the gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in health, housing, early childhood, education, economic participation and remote service delivery. The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) set measurable targets in order to monitor progress.

In this year's *Closing the Gap* report, presented to Parliament in February, Prime Minister Julia Gillard revealed that, while good progress is being made in some areas, little has changed in others.

The current life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians is 11.5 years for males and 9.7 years for females. It is clear that sustained effort across many areas will be required to meet the 2031 target, especially strategies focusing on the chronic diseases that contribute to more than three quarters of the gap in mortality rates.

Currently, Indigenous children are twice as likely as non-Indigenous children to die before they turn five years old. This situation is slowly improving;

the aim to halve the gap in under-five mortality within a decade (2018) is on target, with child mortality rates falling.

Young Indigenous children living in remote areas now have much improved access to quality early childhood education, enhancing their learning and development and preparing them for school. The participation target will be met this year; with 95 per cent of Indigenous children in remote areas enrolled in preschool programs.

While the target to improve Year 12 attainment is ahead of schedule, the aim to halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy for students is making mixed progress.

In terms of housing, across Australia we are on track to rebuild or refurbish 4876 houses by 2014. This is fundamental to improving the health, education and employment of Indigenous people.

Close the Gap day will be held on 21 March.

Sue Hutchinson
Uniting Communications Research Officer.

Closing the Gap Prime Minister's Report 2013
tinyurl.com/bxlethv

Close the Gap Day information
at tinyurl.com/aqw9hgd



Call for nominations 2013 Moderator's Community Service Medal

Do you know a volunteer who has contributed in an outstanding way to the Church's mission in community service in Queensland? The Moderator's Medal is one way to honour them. This year we are looking for nominations that truly reflect the UnitingCare Queensland Mission statement:

'As part of The Uniting Church, the mission of UnitingCare Queensland is to improve the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities as we: Reach out to people in need; Speak out for fairness and justice; Care with compassion, innovation and wisdom.'

Nominees must:

- > be a volunteer, past or present
- > have exhibited outstanding service over a number of years
- > be involved in community service work other than congregational work (e.g. UnitingCare Community, Blue Care, UnitingCare Health hospitals, Wesley Mission Brisbane or community service agencies outside the Uniting Church)
- > not be or have been in paid employment connected to their volunteer work.



Nominations should be submitted electronically via the UnitingCare Queensland website ucareqld.com.au

NOMINATIONS CLOSE
Thursday 28 March 2013



Called to follow the risen Lord

The Year of Discipleship is part of the Uniting Church in Queensland's Vision 2020, focusing on the call to form active and accountable disciples of all ages. Easter has much to do with discipleship, says **Chris Walker**. Who will we decide to follow when it really counts?

The heart of Christianity is Easter. This is seen by the space each of the gospel writers gives to the last week of Jesus' earthly life.

It is not hard to see why. The climax of Jesus' ministry was from entering Jerusalem for the last time to his crucifixion and then resurrection.

It was a time of dramatic contrasts. The crowd went from hailing, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!" to "Crucify him!" in less than a week.

Jesus drove the profiteers out of the temple and also said it would be destroyed in the near future. He taught in forthright ways which inspired the people but led the chief priests and scribes to look for a way to kill him.

His own disciples were both stimulated and perplexed by Jesus. Was he about to set up the kingdom of God in Jerusalem? But what about his strange words concerning suffering and death and rising?

He shared a solemn meal with his disciples and changed the words of the Passover liturgy to speak of the bread and wine representing his body and blood. Jesus himself wrestled with his coming death in agonised prayer in the garden of Gethsemane. Even one of his own disciples betrayed him and the others deserted him.

He was flogged and crucified as though he were a criminal.

Then the impossible happened. He was raised from the dead, appearing first to women and then to men who were his followers.

The interpretation of these events quickly developed. He died not just as a martyr but "for us" for our sins, in accordance with the scriptures. He was raised not only to show that God is stronger than the forces of evil and death, and Jesus was indeed his beloved Son, but that we might know new life and have the confident promise of resurrection.

Easter has to do with discipleship. Are we prepared to follow Jesus even if it means taking up our cross? Are we willing to turn from seeking our own future to seeking the reign of God? Whose side are we on when it really counts?

The promise of Easter is that nothing can separate us from the love of God. God has identified with us fully in Jesus and faced the worst that humans have to deal with. God offers us forgiveness, love and the possibility of new life. God desires that we join in the continuing ministry and mission of Jesus, ushering in God's reign of love, justice and peace. We are to do so in the company of others who also identify with Jesus, and together follow his way.

Rev Dr Chris Walker
National Consultant for Theology and Discipleship

revdrchriswalker.wordpress.com

‘It was a time of dramatic contrasts. The crowd went from hailing, “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!” to “Crucify him!” in less than a week’



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Young adults on fire

Fuelling the desire for change

Tara Burton reports on how a new generation is taking up the challenge to shape the church of the future.



“Dynamic, faithful and influential” are the words that National Faith Development Consultant Tom Kerr uses to describe young adults in the Uniting Church in Australia. Our job, he says, is to supply fuel for their fire to live out their faith in a fast-changing world.

Mr Kerr was one of the organisers of the Uniting Church's National Young Adult Leadership Conference (NYALC) in Sydney in late January, which brought together 42 young adults from across Australia. Joining them were 15 facilitators and a total of 50 different contributors.

The conference was jointly hosted by Uniting Church President, Rev Professor Andrew Dutney, and key leaders of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC). The first NYALC was held in January 2012.

The national event aims to build leadership capacity in Uniting Church young people, and to form a national network to provide opportunities for inspiration and influence in the church and the community.

Learning to lead

Mele Lolo, who worships at the Logan Multicultural Uniting Church, says that she is thankful to God for the enriching experience at NYALC.

“I’ve been able to re-connect my faith with God and my relationship with God as a young leader.

“I’ve always thought that being a leader was just one leader leading. However, what I’ve found out is that it’s actually a team of people who are all leaders,” she says.

Candace Champion from the UAICC in South Australia says that the conference inspired young people to learn the true meaning of leadership.

“The National Young Adult Leadership Conference brings out the best in me. There’s so much that I have to learn and I feel like the conference enables this.

“I want to see the future of the Uniting Church to be united not only across Australia but the world.”

Richard La’Brooy, from Northside Community Church in Sydney believes that young people care deeply about the future of the Uniting Church.

“You always hear that it’s a dying church. I refuse to believe that. I’ve seen so many young people who are passionate about the Uniting Church ... We want to be a part of it and we want to shape it into the future,” he says.

Rev Peter Armstrong, conference facilitator and minister at Samford Valley Community Church in Queensland, was inspired to meet young adults who are bringing their gifts of leadership to their local community.

“The experience was one of incredible unity as followers of Jesus Christ – with an emphasis on the reconciliation and renewal of all creation through Jesus.

“You always hear that it’s a dying church. I refuse to believe that. I’ve seen so many young people who are passionate about the Uniting Church”

Richard La’Brooy



Uniting Church President Rev Professor Andrew Dutney (centre) joins young adults from across Australia at the National Young Adult Leadership Conference in Sydney.
Photo: Tom Kerr

“As a church we need to bless our young adults by listening to them, learning from them, and helping to shape the church to become the vehicle of God’s purposes for the next generations,” he says.

The attendees enjoyed a range of different activities including team building, Bible study groups and mentoring visits from key Uniting Church leaders.

Challenged to change

The conference concluded with the participants producing an action plan to create change in their local communities.

“The participants have been set a challenge to be the salt of the Earth; to go back to their churches, to live out their faith in their communities, and to influence the world,” says Tom Kerr.

“The shape of the actions they take will be as diverse as the participants themselves. Some will aim to be better neighbours, others might work towards harmony in their multicultural and multi-faith suburbs, some will start community projects and some will produce internet clips or images that we hope will end up going viral.

“They are making the world a better place for others, as faithful followers and disciples of Christ.”

Professor Dutney was both enlightened and inspired by the young adult leaders.

“The delegates were a really impressive group of people who are passionate about the church and mission, engaged in innovative forms of witness and service in their own communities and networks, and are inter-culturally confident,” says Professor Dutney.

View the NYALC video at tinyurl.com/byddpo4
Read the presidents blog at andrewfdutney.wordpress.com



I think the greatest thing with the Uniting Church is the fact that we actually stand up for things and we don't just talk about it, we actually do it. We are active across the country and across the world. I think that's the most fantastic thing about our church.

Richard La'Brooy
New South Wales



I have a pretty strong heart for Indigenous people and a pretty strong heart for social justice. That's why I'm a member of the Uniting Church. I know that the church is such a strong advocate for social justice issues. They're trying so hard and that's what keeps me.

Jemma Whittaker
Northern Territory



I would like to see good engagement with the different cultures represented in Australia, because it's a constantly changing society at the moment.

Josh Scherer
South Australia



Rev Russell Reynoldson (left) with Val Braithwaite, Luke Reynoldson and Frank Cochram on the block at Ellen Grove, Brisbane
Photo: Holly Jewell

Keep your eyes on Forest Lake

A minister stands at the front door of a house in a new development. “We knew you would come,” says the woman who answers his knock. “We’ve been waiting for you.” Dianne Jensen reports on the story behind the new Forest Lake development.

Twenty years ago Rev Ron Elvery (recently retired) was asked by the chairman of Presbytery to “keep an eye on Forest Lake”, a fledgling housing development on the outskirts of Brisbane’s western suburbs.

He began by knocking on doors, and gathering a small group which started meeting at nearby Richlands school in 1993. Some were church members from elsewhere, some were lapsed members, and some were unchurched.

This marked the beginning of the Forest Lake Uniting Church congregation, which this year will begin construction of a three-stage development on land at Ellen Grove purchased in 2012. The development will become a Synod-wide project.

Forest Lake was the first master-planned community in Brisbane, and destined to become the catchment area for a larger congregation.

The pioneer congregation had stabilised by the mid-1990s, and there were plans to be part of a shared ministry centre on a central site to be made available by the Forest Lake College (now St John’s Anglican College). The Uniting Church congregation was by this time worshipping at the college, formerly a joint initiative between the Uniting Church and the Anglican Church.

In 2003, under the leadership of Rev Dr Norma Spear, the congregation developed a lay ministry team which served for the next five years.

The vision for a joint ministry venture had dissipated by 2005, and later plans to purchase land did not eventuate.

In spite of the disappointments, the congregation continued to grow in numbers and in faith, says Rev Russell Reynoldson, who was inducted as minister in 2011.

“There was much soul searching in 2011 as we explored what our future mission and ministry objectives would be.”

The congregation spent time listening to community leaders, discerning the needs of the area, and establishing its mission goals. It began planning for a church community which would become a regional hub for the fast-expanding corridor from Logan through to Springfield.

“It became obvious that if the congregation was to continue to develop, particularly as it sought to engage the community, a base was required,” says Mr Reynoldson.

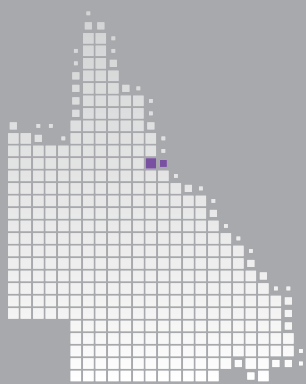
The development will start with the construction of a Community Life Centre, incorporating an op shop, ministry/counselling rooms, training room, playgroups and a men’s shed. The existing house will be used as a ministry centre.

Stage two is the development of a hall, kitchen and bathroom amenities. The final stage will be an extension of the hall, allowing the site to seat 500 people.

To read the full story, visit journeyonline.com.au

‘The congregation began planning for a church community which would become a regional hub for the fast expanding corridor from Logan through to Springfield’

Mt Louisa House of Praise Townsville



Fast Facts:

Community:

- > Townsville is the largest regional town in North Queensland, with a population of over 190 000
- > average age is 33 years, with 80 per cent born in Australia
- > major areas of employment are health, defence and education.

Mission focus:

- > families
- > the broken-hearted
- > looking beyond the church community
- > working with other churches.

What's new:

- > the installation of a commercial kitchen, which will be used to feed the community
- > the excitement for God and His church being generated as a group of men meet together on Saturday mornings.

Social media:

- > congregation and child care websites
- > congregation and youth Facebook pages.

Prayer and praise are central at Mt Louisa, Townsville

Mt Louisa House of Praise is located in Townsville, North Queensland. The congregation has strong links with local churches and engages with the community through a range of outreach ministries. **Tara Burton** spoke to minister **Anne Harley**.

How are you enriching your community?

We play a significant role in Stable on the Strand, a Christmas event put on by the churches of Townsville. Over 35 000 people attend and it continues to change the spiritual atmosphere across the city.

Neighbour to Neighbour is another combined churches initiative, where volunteers go into the homes of hundreds of elderly and disabled people to do small tasks.

Each year we give away the equivalent of 20 per cent of our income to causes beyond ourselves. Members of our congregation are involved in activities including the YWAM Medical Ship, Live FM radio station, religious education, and prison chaplaincy. We have a child care facility attached to the church, MOPS (Mothers Of Pre-Schoolers), playgroup, Kids' Club and seniors' ministry.

For the past three years at Easter the Uniting Church in Townsville has held The Call. The vision comes from Ezekiel, when the dead bones came to life and formed a mighty army. For some this weekend has been truly life changing. This year The Call will be held on 29 – 31 March, with the theme *Never be the same*.

What are the current trends?

The lead minister has been on sick leave for an extended period and this has had a huge impact. Many members have had to stand up and take on roles that they have not done before. The body of Christ has been a huge blessing. One non-Uniting Church group visited us for three Sundays, blessing us with love, bringing words of encouragement, morning tea, their offerings and preaching.

We continue the cross-church work with youth ministry this year, which has seen the coming together of the youth from three different churches and their leaders.

What does forming disciples mean for your church community?

There is a growing hunger for the things of God; deeper worship, prayer, healings and divine encounters. Presently we have congregation-driven prayer meetings every morning of the week.

It is not as much about learning the Bible as living the Bible. It is not only about conversion of the head but transformation of the heart. We emphasise the transformation of lives through the power of God's Holy Spirit

Being called a "House of Praise", worship is a critical part of our church life. Worship becomes a time when we can experience God and be changed.

Our motto is *Experience God, be changed, make a difference*. We continually ask the question: What does it mean for the church to be demonstrating the power of God and the life of the Spirit in a hurting and broken world?



Baptism at Mt Louisa House of Praise church camp;
(L to R) Ben Neideck, Brian Christie,
Rev Anne Harley, Joel Mackereth.
Photo: Steve Hawes



Participants at the *songwrite* workshop in Canberra. Photo: David MacGregor

Making music for the next generation

It's part of our church traditions, but will it be part of our future? *Journey* reports on *songwrite*, the first national gathering of worship songwriters in the life of the Uniting Church.

Thirty songwriters, musicians, mentors and coaches from across Australia came together for *songwrite* at Kippax Uniting Church, Canberra over the weekend of 15 – 17 February.

They gathered to talk about and compose new songs for both traditional and contemporary contexts, and to be inspired and challenged about the role of music in communities of faith.

Coordinators for the weekend were Sharon Kirk, The Downs Presbytery minister and Rev David MacGregor from Oxley-Darra Uniting Church in Brisbane. Both are members of the Queensland Synod-based Assembly Worship Working Group which hosted the weekend.

Songwriter and Uniting Church President Rev Professor Andrew Dutney and Lutheran songwriter Robin Mann were special guests.

David MacGregor believes that *songwrite* reflects the need to not only encourage Uniting Church songwriters, but to inspire a broader theological content and a wider range of musical styles.

"Uniting Churches are good at using songs of praise in their worship, but too easily forget the place of song in helping address the need for lament, confession and intercession," he says.

Many of those who attended the workshop had rarely written or shared a worship song before, he adds, "yet inspired by the Spirit, and through a supportive creative community, new worship songs were birthed" over the course of the weekend workshop. Music scores and recordings were created, many performed at the "open mic" evening.

The empowering and prophetic role of songs of worship, within and from communities of faith, was a strong emphasis over the weekend.

"There's a keenness to explore how *songwrite* participants and other songwriters across the land can be supported and encouraged," says Mr MacGregor, "how the new song of First Peoples and migrant-ethnic communities can be harnessed, and how ultimately the triune God can be worshipped and served in fresh ways."

For the participants, the opportunity to work collaboratively and to network with other musicians was encouraging and life-giving, he adds.

For Uniting Church musicians, *songwrite* is just the first note.

*David MacGregor is a well-known songwriter whose music is featured in publications including **Uniting in Worship 2, Together in Song** and **Seasons of the Spirit**. Visit togethertocreate.com.au for more information.*

*To read more about **songwrite** visit tinyurl.com/avgqeag.*

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Jimmy Carter (second from right) and fellow Gospel music legends the Blind Boys of Alabama will perform this Easter at the Byron Bay Blues and Roots Festival.
Photo: Blind Boys of Alabama

Born to sing the Lord's song

Faith, persistence and a true sense of call is what drives **Jimmy Carter**, the only active original member of gospel music legends the Blind Boys of Alabama. Mr Carter spoke with **Mardi Lumsden** on the eve of the group's next Australian tour.

If patience is a virtue, the Blind Boys of Alabama must be the most virtuous musicians around.

The group won their first Grammy Award, one of the highest accolades in music, 63 years after meeting at the Alabama Institute for the Negro Blind in 1939. The Blind Boys of Alabama have now won five Grammys and a lifetime achievement award plus numerous other honours. They have worked with artists from Willie Nelson and Eric Clapton to Ben Harper, k.d. lang, and Prince.

For 80-year-old tenor Jimmy Carter, his longevity in a fickle industry is more about a calling than a career choice.

"We love God ... God has been good to us. He took care of us so we just thought that we owe him and we will serve him until we cannot serve him anymore," he says in his husky Southern preacher drawl.

Over their 70-year career, the Blind Boys have lived through massive change both in music and US politics. Brought up in the deeply segregated South, in the 1960s they played their part in the civil rights movement, performing at events including benefits for Dr Martin Luther King Jr.

"The biggest change is that we finally have a black president," says a proud Carter. "I never thought that I would see that in my lifetime. Not only did I see it but he is going into his second term now!"

While there is a sense of sadness when Mr Carter reflects on being the last active original Blind Boy, he is grateful that the group could outlive the original members.

"I miss my friends, I miss my old colleagues, but it is good to know that the music is still going on and even when I am dead I bet you it will still go on!"

The Blind Boys perform all over the world at venues both secular and sacred. This Easter they will perform at the Byron Bay Blues and Roots Festival alongside long-term collaborators Paul Simon and Ben Harper.

"We have collaborated with many secular people but what folk don't understand is that a lot of these people, although they are secular, they came out of gospel. For example, Ben Harper came out of the church."

And seeing the Blind Boys perform is almost a spiritual experience in itself.

"When you see the Blind Boys live you are going to see emotion, you are going to see joy; you are going to see a whole lot of things. I tell all of them: 'When we leave this place, people will never be the same!'"

For more information visit blindboys.com.
To read the full story visit journeyonline.com.au.



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Marion McConaghy with her sculpture, *Three Crosses*, on display in the Lent to Easter exhibition at the Vera Wade Gallery in Brisbane.
Photo: Holly Jewell

The art of Easter: transforming the ordinary

Spiritually motivated art enriches us by its affirmation of our faith, laid bare through the artist's own struggle to search out meaning, says Queensland artist **Marion McConaghy**.

As an artist, I am often taken off-guard by the impulse to create.

When visiting my brother the other day, I discovered him dismantling his wooden sawhorse. Three splintered pieces lay discarded at the base of the frame, which was sitting ready for a replacement piece of timber.

However, when I looked down, I didn't see rubbish ready for the bin. I felt compelled to re-form these simple elements into something whole again.

Within the impulse to create lie the seeds of challenge and questioning. Once the artwork is complete, that same impulse may translate into the viewer being pushed out of their comfort zone. Is it art? What is the meaning of the work?

Recycling elements refreshes and re-forms their familiar meaning into another entity, giving them the potential for a new, valid reason for existing.

I often wonder at how the process of transforming ordinary, raw elements into art has the power to touch others.

Art represents much that we can't really put into words. The symbols of faith, hope and love cut across the human experience, tapping into our common belief systems, thus holding and focusing our attention.

We are presented with this in Michelangelo's *Pietà*. Carved out of marble, this life-size sculpture of Mary holding the crucified Christ in her arms speaks eloquently of Christ's vulnerability, and of the depth of his mother's love and grief. It is breathtaking and harrowing in its beauty. We, as viewers, are transformed ourselves by witnessing it.

The three pieces of discarded wood from the sawhorse found new life in a freestanding sculpture representing Calvary, named *Three Crosses*.

The sculpture will be part of the 2013 Lent to Easter exhibition by Visionaries, a group of 50 Christian artists from South East Queensland, in the Vera Wade Gallery in Brisbane.

Working within different genres and across denominations, these artists give expression to their faith through the visual, reminding us that we belong to one family in Christ.

This powerful and eclectic exhibition challenges us to reflect, to reach out to others in the spirit of forgiveness and redemption, and to rejoice in the ordinary made extraordinary.

Marion McConaghy
Convener of the Vera Wade Gallery
and a member of Visionaries

For more information visit visionaries.org.au.

VISIT:

Visionaries: Lent to Easter
Vera Wade Gallery
St Andrew's Uniting Church Brisbane
until 7 April, Monday to Friday 11 am – 2 pm
saintandrews.org.au

Genesis to Jesus Art Journey
Every Sunday during 2013
Redcliffe Uniting Church
redcliffe.unitingchurch.org.au

Easterfest: Music, worship and art
Toowoomba 29 – 31 March
easterfest.com

Easter in the Country
Easter art exhibition
Roma 6 – 8 April
easterinthecountry.com.au

Moogerah Passion Play
Lake Moogerah, Boonah
23 & 24 March, 29 & 30 March
moogerahpassionplay.org.au



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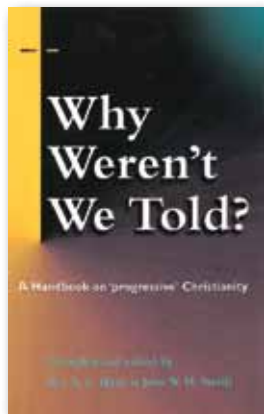
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Why Weren't We Told?
A Handbook on 'progressive' Christianity
 Authors: Rex Hunt and John Smith
 Polebridge Press 2013
 RRP \$25.00

Stepping outside the boundaries

As a conservative evangelical Christian of the latter decades of the twentieth century, I always felt ill at ease with the narrow confines of the dogmatic creeds and the "straightjacket" formulas of belief that Christians were expected to adhere to within the confines of regulated denominations.

There was no acceptable freedom to step outside those regulated boundaries for fear of expulsion or moving beyond the dogmatic confines of our denominational heritage.

Today, in a world of unlimited resources and enquiry, people are asking the pertinent question of their denominational leaders, "Why weren't we told?"

This book of selected writings is a powerful stimulus for Christians to explore the mysteries of their own faith walk. It will open new horizons that stimulate spiritual growth and enable a freedom for people in small groups to share together in these many critical areas of human spiritual discovery and fulfilment.

Rex Hunt and John Smith are opening the door for Christians and people of every religious persuasion or none, to explore a "new spiritual vitality and

expressiveness"; to ensure that Christianity has an "intellectual integrity", and breaks down the barriers of sexuality, culture and religion.

As we move on in our faith walk by questioning, discussion and debate, we are ever progressing beyond the dogmatic straightjacket forms of Christendom, to new horizons of interpreting our faith, focus and values for our spiritually liberated journey.

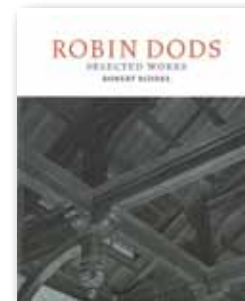
I recommend people of all ages, irrespective of their present theological beliefs or denominational allegiance, to explore and research their individual faith walk through the pages of this book.

The thinking and scholarship of the vast array of Christian contributors will liberate, invigorate and expand the understanding of your beliefs and faith practice. It will provide a vehicle for rethinking your faith and your understanding of humanity in this 21st century.

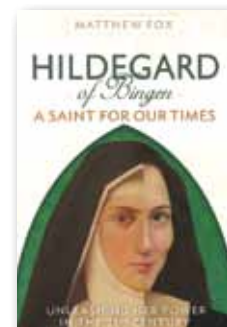
Rev Bryan Gilmour
 Past Moderator of the Uniting Church in Queensland

*Rex Hunt, John Smith and Val Webb will discuss their recently published books: **Why Weren't We Told**, **Against the Stream** and **In Defence of Doubt** at a seminar on 9 March at Merthyr Road Uniting Church, Brisbane. For more information contact 0409 498 402 or drgarn@bigpond.net.au.*

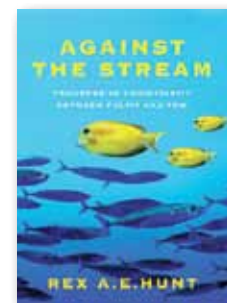
Reviews available at journeyonline.com.au



Robin Dods 1868-1920: Selected Works
 Robert Riddel
 URO Media 2012
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Hildegard of Bingen: A Saint for our Times
 Matthew Fox
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The Christian Business Directory used by Uniting Church folk since 1978.

All the Christian Business Community ask is that they be given the opportunity to serve. Remember "Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone - especially to those in the family of faith."

Galatians 6:10

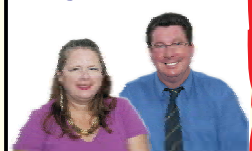
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Doug and Yvonne Matthews with their two daughters on Hooley Station in the Pilbara, where many communities have been impacted by the rise in FIFO work practices. Photo: Hazel Buckley

Cancer of the bush or salvation for our cities?

A new federal government report on fly-in fly-out and drive-in drive-out work practices says that the development of the resources industry should not come at the expense of regional Australia, a position shared by **Frontier Services**.

Uniting Church agency Frontier Services has welcomed a parliamentary report highlighting the negative impact of fly-in fly-out and drive-in drive-out (FIFO/DIDO) work practices on remote communities.

‘We have observed the disconnect of people who fly in and fly out, and do not belong in the community where they live or where they work’

Rosemary Young

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia, chaired by MP Tony Windsor, commenced an inquiry into the issues in 2011. The report, *Cancer of the bush or salvation for our cities? Fly-in, fly-out and drive-in, drive-out workforce practices in Regional Australia* was released on 13 February.

Frontier Services is the major provider of aged care, health, family and community services in remote Australia, including Aboriginal communities, isolated properties and mining sites.

National Director Rosemary Young welcomed the view that the development of the resources industry should not come at the expense of regional Australia.

“The Inquiry has found, as we have found, that FIFO and DIDO practices have made it harder for remote communities to thrive and has eroded the ‘liveability’ of some remote communities,” she said.

The House of Representatives Standing Committee identified the urgent need for a comprehensive federal government policy regarding FIFO/DIDO workforce practices and their impact on regional communities.

The report highlights the need for a strategy to address the supply of affordable housing in

resource communities, and recommends the removal of exempt status, in relation to the Fringe Benefits Tax Assessment Act, of FIFO/DIDO work camps that are co-located with regional towns.

“We agree that steps must be taken to ensure that FIFO/DIDO should be the exception rather than the rule and that measures can and should be in place to encourage workers to live in the communities where they work,” said Ms Young.

“As a nation we should make every effort to build strong and sustainable communities in remote Australia.”

In its submission to the inquiry, Frontier Services said that the enormous salaries offered to FIFO workers in the mining sector had made it harder to recruit people to work in essential services such as health, counselling and family support.

“We have seen the escalation of accommodation prices which is pushing out local people, we know community organisations are struggling to get numbers and we have observed the disconnect of people who fly in and fly out and do not belong in the community where they live or where they work,” Ms Young said.

The parliamentary report recommends that a Commonwealth study be undertaken on the impact of non-resident workers in regional resource towns on the provision of medical services, and the development of a health policy that supports the sustainability of regional medical services.

To read the report and view submissions visit tinyurl.com/ax7okvv



Kairos Uniting Church Earnshaw Road congregation celebrated the opening of their newly renovated hall, (L to R) with Pastor Terry Stanyer, Rev Andrew Gunton, Rev Keren Seto, Dr Shirley Coulson, Rev Kaye Ronalds, Rev Sandra Jebb and Pastor Gabriel Manuelli.
Photo: Nina Jory

Blue Care facilities escape major damage

Queensland's largest not-for-profit service provider, Blue Care, is in clean-up mode following the wild weather caused by ex-tropical cyclone Oswald.

Executive Director Robyn Batten said it was the third time in two years that Blue Care had launched its organisation-wide disaster management plan.

"For almost two weeks the wild weather presented challenges for our team of 10 000 staff and volunteers. Almost all of the 80 communities we operate in were affected and we were ready for worst-case scenarios.

"We were fortunate our 260 sites were not significantly inundated with water, though power and network outages, service isolation, fierce winds and rising waters were some of the challenges our staff faced. In some central Queensland communities there were crocodiles and snakes to watch out for too.

"We were also accommodating residents of other services whose aged-care facilities were flooded."

Blue Care residential facilities were isolated in Emerald, Lowood, Gympie, Toogoolawah, Rockhampton and Gladstone. Facilities in Logan and Bundaberg were prepared to evacuate.

Kairos opens new hall in traditional style

Moderator Rev Kaye Ronalds officially dedicated and opened the newly renovated hall at Kairos Uniting Church Earnshaw Road, Brisbane on 10 February.

The celebrations began with a service, with the worshippers overflowing on to the new undercover deck area, followed by a meal in Rotuman style and traditional dancing and singing. The congregation was joined by visitors from Fiji, New Zealand and Rotuma and the local Federal Member for Lilley, Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer Wayne Swan.

Lifeworks Toowoomba plans \$5m centre

Lifeworks Uniting Church, Toowoomba will soon begin the first stage of the construction of a new \$5 million worship and child care complex in Glenvale, with plans now awaiting approval by the Toowoomba Regional Council.

The \$1.7 million first stage, due for completion by July next year, includes a child care centre and a community hall.

The congregation was formed in 2001 by the amalgamation of Westbrook, Newtown and Scots Uniting Churches.

Campaign for Change winner announced

Two mothers with a dream of establishing a respite centre for families of children living with a disability have won the 2012 Wesley Mission Brisbane (WMB) Campaign for Change initiative, announced on 13 February.

Kath Coory and Tina Graham hope to give local families a break by setting up Project Sleepover, an out-of-home respite centre where children can enjoy a sleepover in a supported environment.

"This service will provide children with a normal Saturday, interacting with their peers just like any mainstream child would have, and give their families a chance to reconnect," said Ms Coory.

Campaign for Change was designed to enrich the South East Queensland community by providing five individuals or groups with the opportunity to share in \$50 000 plus expert mentoring to establish a community program.

The project will receive a \$30 000 cash injection from campaign partners PBS Building, as well as support and mentoring from WMB to establish Project Sleepover.

To follow Project Sleepover visit wmb.org.au/page/campaign_for_change.

Classifieds

Holy Land Tour: 16 day Jordan-Israel tour leaving April 15. Cost \$6200. 18 day Turkey Greece Tour leaving 29 April. Cost is \$6400 or \$4575 if you do both tours. All tours include 4* accom, breakfast and dinner and gratuities. Single supplement avail. Contact Rev John Lucas on 0448132262 or john@walkingfree.com.au. Places close 14 Feb.

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"The Forest Lake Uniting Church began with its first worship service on 7 February 1993.

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We are excited by the next phase of the Forest Lake Uniting Church – the building of a Community Life Centre – a place of belonging – a regional hub for Forest Lake and surrounds. We hope you capture our vision, share our excitement and become one of many people supporting this incredible opportunity to give back into our community".

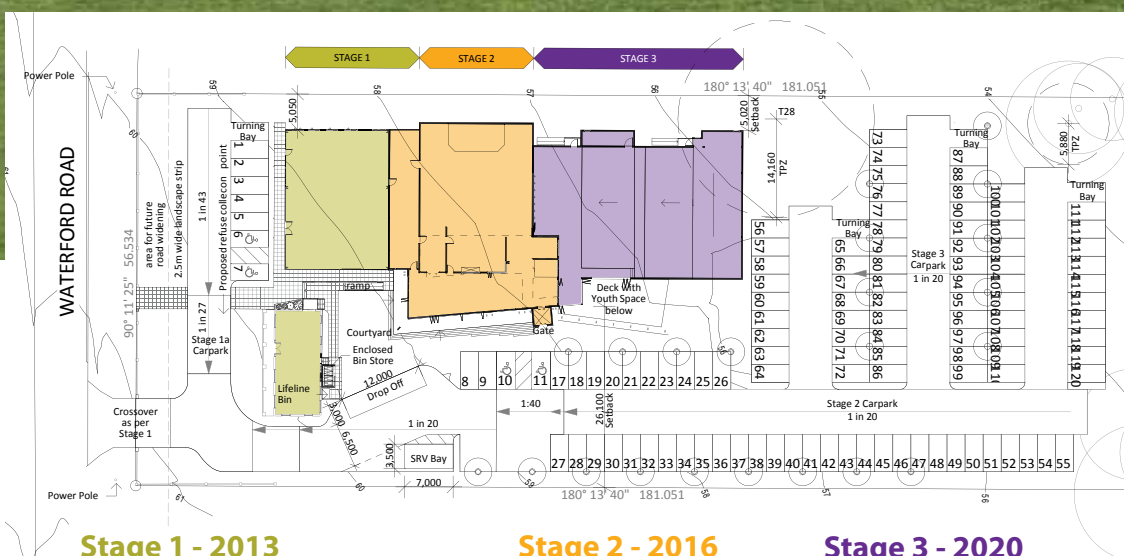
Rev Russell Reynoldson, Forest Lake Uniting Church

"I encourage you to support the members of Forest Lake Uniting Church as they seek to establish a place of belonging and a centre for ministry and community service in their community."

Rev Kaye Ronalds, Moderator, Queensland Synod



528 Waterford Road, Ellen Grove - A significant regional community hub



Stage 1 - 2013

This is the beginning of our Community Life Centre – the hub for a range of community focused services including an Op Shop, Reception & Counselling Rooms and Training Room. Coinciding with this, a refurbishment of the present house provides the Church's Ministry Centre, office space and a drop-in area.

Provision also for 15 car park spaces.

Stage 2 - 2016

The building of a hall, kitchen and toilet amenities.

The hall space will seat 250 and will play host to many community and church activities including youth groups, craft groups and community meeting facilities.

Stage 3 - 2020

An extension to the Stage 2 hall.

This provides extra seating for larger community & church meetings.

To support this project or to find out more information, please contact:

P: Rev Russell Reynoldson on 0429 472 567

E: rev.russell@bigpond.com

W: forestlakeuca.org.au



An activity of The Uniting Church in Australia **FOREST LAKE**