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Journey

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Cross-platform editor: Rohan Salmond
Editor-in-chief: Mardi Lumsden
Writer: Dianne Jensen
Design: Holly Jewell
Advertising: Ashley Goetze
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Contact: Uniting Communications,
The Uniting Church in Australia Queensland Synod
60 Bayliss Street, Auchenflower QLD
GPO Box 674, Brisbane QLD 4001
Ph: (07) 3377 9910 | **E:** journey@ucaql.com.au
F: (07) 3377 9717 | journeyonline.com.au

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Closing date for editorial and advertising for November *Journey* is Monday 14 October. The next issue of *Journey* will be available on Sunday 3 November.



Loving actively

When I moved to Brisbane earlier this year, I set out to find a new church. After trying a number of churches, I wound up at West End Uniting.

What I found there were people living with mental illness and intellectual disability as an integral part of that community. They were not just tolerated or paternalistically cared for—they were part of the very life of the church. It was that active love and inclusiveness that caught my eye, and I now call West End my home. Other churches do this too, of course, and a big part of this edition of *Journey* is devoted to exploring the ways that happens.

This month we observe Mental Health Week (6–12 October) and World Mental Health Day (10 October). The Uniting Church has long provided support and care for those living with mental illness through services provided by Lifeline and UnitingCare, but individuals and congregations are involved as well. We explore some of the ways Uniting Church people are engaged in this area on page 6, and Joan Beavis reflects on serving the people of West End on page 10.

Mental health isn't the only area we can actively show love for others, but it is an issue that affects us all. Whether it is personally or through someone we know, issues of mental health will touch all our lives, so it is something we should all be engaged with. This can be a challenge because accepting people as they are is often difficult, but it's a challenge we can undertake together.

Rohan Salmond
Cross-platform editor



I needed help and I knew it

I knew I was in trouble when I was sleeping poorly and my usually sunny nature gave way to a cloudy, stormy self.

In 2009 a series of things converged in my life and I was diagnosed with depression.

The triggers included being very tired because we lived next to a major road, I was away more than 100 nights per year, I was nudging 50 so my body was preparing for menopause and I was experiencing some frustrations fulfilling the functions of presbytery minister. Sometimes people in churches don't behave very well and there can be a lot of mopping up to do.

My husband encouraged me to talk to the doctor about how I was feeling. A twelve-month course of anti-depressants, chatting with my professional supervisor and adjusting my routines to make sure I had plenty of exercise and proper time off meant that I was eventually back in good shape.

It was difficult for me to admit that I needed help. I am usually the helper.

Ministers who suffer illness, burnout or depression can feel ashamed, inadequate or feel like we are "letting God down", but Christians, even ministers, can find themselves battling depression or in a family where there are mental health issues.

For people affected by severe mental illness, life can be confusing and distressing. Sometimes it is nearly impossible for family members to offer support, and relationships can be fractured and broken. Yet for others the condition is able to be managed and medication and other support enables a normal life.

Congregations can be places where families receive support in their caring roles and those affected by mental illness can gain acceptance and belonging. A Nouwen Network is an excellent resource for congregations.

That can be one way that Christians put the theory of loving generously into practice. It is 50 years since our Church began providing anonymous telephone counselling through Lifeline. That has provided one line of support for those affected by mental illness and their relatives.

As a young minister I benefitted from training which helped me understand mental illness and gave me insight when I was depressed.

My own experience gave me a tiny insight into what some people live with every day. In worship on Sunday 13 October I invite you to pray for those affected by mental illness, carers and their families.

Rev Kaye Ronalds
Queensland Synod Moderator

If you need crisis support call Lifeline on 13 11 14

Moderator's diary

13 October

Guest preacher at St Stephen's Uniting Church 150th anniversary service, Toowoomba

18 October

Global Leadership Summit, Newlife Uniting Church, Robina

26 October

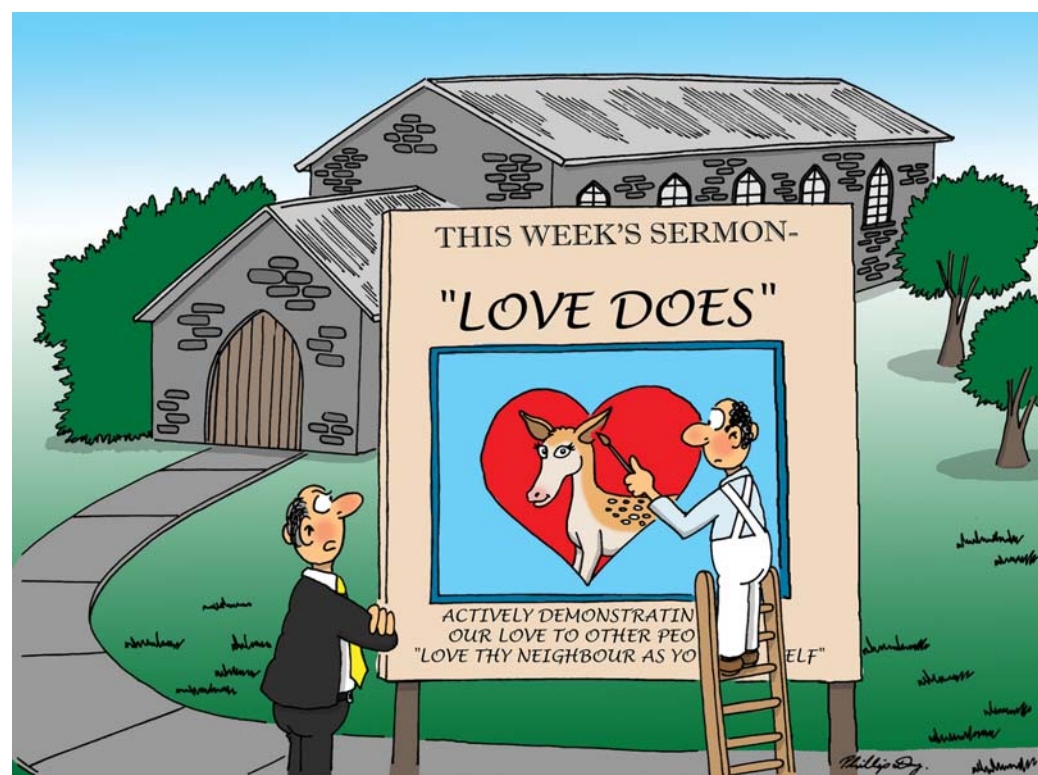
Opening service of the new Fernvale Uniting Church

30 October

Clayfield College annual speech night

Monday Midday Prayer

*God of life,
help us to show your love and
grace to people who need special
care, and may our churches be
places of welcome for all.
Amen*



"I THINK YOU MISUNDERSTOOD THE SERMON TOPIC, MR. JENKINS."



Hana, 16, fled Syria after her house was bombed and some of her relatives tortured. Here she is in the Za'atari refugee camp, wearing the uniform supplied to her by Act for Peace's partner in Jordan, International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC)
Photo: Act for Peace

Churches called to act for peace in Syria

Act for Peace, the international aid agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia, visited the Za'atari refugee camp in northern Jordan, supporting Syrian refugees fleeing the crisis. As the conflict worsens, Act for Peace asks for continued support from the Christian community, writes **Karen McGrath**.

Just over a year ago there was only sand, dotted villages and a school where the Za'atari refugee camp in northern Jordan stands today. The Syrian uprising which began just 40 km away in the town of Dara'a rapidly changed this as thousands of Syrians began to cross the border on foot each night to flee the worsening conflict.

In August 2012 the population of the camp was 15 000. Just over one year later, Act for Peace visited the Za'atari refugee camp and saw the astounding impact of the Syrian crisis. In the wake of chemical weapons attacks, the United Nations refugee agency UNHCR now estimates camp numbers to be over 140 000—close to the population of Cairns—despite being packed into a space measuring just 3.5 square kilometres.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres says, "Syria has become the great tragedy of this century—a disgraceful humanitarian calamity with suffering and displacement unparalleled in recent history."

News of chemical attacks in Damascus and the threat of international intervention have caused Syrians to continue to flee their homes. UNHCR has estimated there are 6.25 million Syrian refugees—the largest displaced national group in the world forming the "biggest displacement of all time".

Over the past two years many international agencies have reported evidence of war crimes on both sides of the conflict, but Act for Peace maintains the priority needs to be civilian protection and a political solution to the crisis, not military intervention.

Act for Peace condemns the use of chemical weapons but also condemns the justification of violence in the name of peace. Rev Tara Curlewis, Secretary of the National Council of Churches Australia, is seeking a peaceful solution.

"External military intervention will only increase the suffering of the people and increase the risk of escalating sectarian violence," she says.

Without further action by the international community to increase humanitarian access and protection through safe areas, far too many people remain at high risk of more atrocities.

Act for Peace brings together 19 member churches in Australia and unifies Christians to raise vital funds to protect Syrian refugees in the midst of conflict. The combined efforts of churches, including financial support, prayer and peace advocacy, make a tangible difference for those in need. It is the responsibility of Christians in both Australia and around the world to stay committed to a peaceful and diplomatic solution, for the sake of the men, women and children behind the politics of the Syrian crisis.

Visit actforpeace.org.au/cmsyria to support Syrian families and refugees.

Discussion points:

- > How can we work together in our faith communities to help alleviate the suffering in Syria and neighbouring countries?
- > Are peace talks in Syria the only way forward?

Prayer points:

- > For those in conflict with one another to come to a peaceful solution, so that civilians may resume their daily lives.
- > For the protection of families fleeing from danger.
- > For humanitarian staff assisting children and families in need, that they will have the financial resources and physical supplies necessary to help families and restore hope for a brighter future.

Breaking the silence about mental health

Mental health is not the absence of illness, but a way of living. **Dianne Jensen** reports.

“One of the big things I’ve learnt from my son’s illness is not to be judgemental. You never know what people are going through.”—Lyndal Hutton.

According to mental health charity SANE Australia, nearly half the Australian population will experience mental illness at some stage of their lives and about one in five people will experience a mental health problem each year.

Anxiety disorders affect around 14 per cent of the adult population, and depression affects a further six per cent. Others experience substance abuse disorders, psychotic illnesses such as schizophrenia, personality disorders and other mental health conditions.

Mental illness is an endemic issue which is no respecter of age or station, and the associated stigma and discrimination can prevent many from sharing their pain and from getting help. Even when treatment is forthcoming and effective, which is the case for the majority of disorders, isolation and discrimination are tangible barriers to picking up the threads of broken lives.

We seem to know a lot about treating illness, but less about creating inclusive communities which foster wellbeing. But there are signs that a slow revolution is taking place in grassroots groups across Queensland, moving beyond clinical perspectives to an understanding that recovery is not about “getting rid” of problems. It is about seeing people beyond their struggles: their abilities, possibilities, interests and dreams.

A Nouwen Network is a non-denominational group established four years ago. Coffee shop gatherings are held regularly within the Brisbane region and the website provides resources and monthly updates for individuals and churches.

Facilitator Jane Frazer Cosgrove says that the meetings provide a place where Christians can

breach the silence around mental health that exists in many church communities.

“At these gatherings our faith is an important gift that is shared. There is a community of listeners who are ready to respectfully receive the gift of a person sharing their sacred stories; the stories of their faith journey before mental illness, the stories of their sense of God being present and God being absent within the times of illness, the stories of their losses and the stories of their resilience.”

Mental illness strips so much away, she adds, and those who are seriously or repeatedly ill incur many losses which frequently include their sense of self-worth and hope.

“Like other illnesses and traumas, it interrupts the story that a person thinks they are living. They find themselves within the chaos of a new, frightening, and disorientating story. They, and those around them, can then focus so much on the story of the illness that it takes real effort to reclaim a story that feels inclusive of the whole person,” says Ms Frazer Cosgrove

Moggill Uniting Church members Lyndal Hutton and her son Robert, who lives with a mental illness, are part of A Nouwen Network.

Ms Hutton says that educating people about the issues is key to combatting judgemental attitudes.

“I think people are afraid of mental illness because they don’t know how to approach it and they don’t know what to say ... Be willing to listen to people and to try to understand, and realise that while you can’t solve their problems you can be a friend.”

Group 61, a Christian-based support group operating from the Sunshine Coast to the Gold Coast and as far west as Ipswich, has a simple but powerful purpose: to encourage friendship. Volunteer support people are matched with individuals with mental health issues, and

‘A slow revolution is taking place in grassroots groups across Queensland, moving beyond clinical perspectives to an understanding that recovery is not about “getting rid” of problems’



A Nouwen Network gathering
in Fairfield, Brisbane
Photo: Holly Jewell

the two commit to a morning or afternoon outing every week, and to monthly group barbecues.

Co-founder Jan Hunter from Chermside Kedron Community Church became involved when John Fox, currently the Group 61 coordinator, put an item in local church bulletins about visiting people experiencing mental illness. A family diagnosis of Generalised Anxiety Disorder made her aware of the isolation felt by many people.

“I often wonder if there may be an exaggerated expectation among the general public about the role of medication which, though sometimes necessary, does nothing by itself for personal growth and coping skills—or building community—or improving ambient circumstances,” says Ms Hunter. “Friendship and caring, sometimes overlooked, can provide a powerful tool to aid recovery.”

Ms Frazer Cosgrove is passionate about the need for congregations to work intentionally to overcome the barriers to acceptance and participation which exist with their own communities.

“By raising awareness of mental illness, and offering friendship, encouragement, acceptance and understanding, churches can become caring communities for people affected by mental illness.”

She adds that people suffer injustice and exclusion often and on many levels.

“What pulls most at my heart is the fact that on top of all this they are either excluded from, or ‘fall through the cracks’ of ministry provision. People need to know that they are not alone.”

*Mental Health Week will run from 7 – 13 October with the theme: **Working toward wellbeing.***

Resources for World Mental Health Day on 10 October are available at nouwennetwork1234.wordpress.com

Lifeline: 13 11 14

Beyondblue: 1300 22 4636

This is our beloved son

Our story started a few years ago when our son became schizophrenic.

Although the family could see what was going on as his behaviour became more erratic, because he was over 18 years old and could not see that he had problems we were not able to get any intervention to help him. This was a very difficult time as we felt powerless. To receive medical treatment he had to seek help or come to the attention of the police.

And that’s what happened. It ended up with our son being taken into custody and going before a magistrate’s court, where he became an involuntary patient in the mental health system. He was taken to the Royal Brisbane Hospital which led to him being diagnosed as suffering from schizophrenia.

We have had good care from the public hospital and the case workers, although suffering from a lack of continuity of staff supporting him. Our son has had no further major psychotic episodes, but he continues to have psychological issues. One of the consequences is that people can develop addictions, and one of his is gambling.

Now it’s a more positive picture, because our son has actually taken control of the situation and is trying to do as much rehabilitation as he can.

He has a support base, which is important, because a lot of people don’t have family that

can help, or their family simply can’t cope because the situation has become so dire.

We discovered that when you talk in your local congregation about somebody in your family with mental illness, it is staggering just how many other families have encountered similar experiences.

Mental illness still has a stigma. If you compare it to somebody who has broken a leg, they go to a doctor, they have a plaster applied, it’s taken off and everything is better. Mental illness is not like that as it is ongoing, and the treatment is one of managing the condition rather than being cured. People will talk about cancer, and other illnesses, but rarely mental health.

We have some close friends that we can be reasonably honest with about how we feel. People don’t need to have gone through the same experience in order to help, they just need to be prepared to listen.

Name withheld



Young people from Uniting Churches across southeast Queensland gathered with Uniting Church President Rev Dr Andrew Dutney to discuss holistic sexuality
Photos: Holly Jewell

Sexuality: What's the big deal?

Last month, young adults across Queensland gathered to talk about holistic sexuality with Uniting Church President, Rev Dr Andrew Dutney. **Ashley Goetze** reports.

Suggestively titled *Theology between the sheets*, bashfulness soon subsided in exchange for sincere questions surrounding the nation's fixation on Biblical interpretations regarding same-sex marriage.

As one young person asked, "What's the big deal?"

Uniting Church President Rev Dr Andrew Dutney answered, "What was very much underground and even criminalised in some states has moved to the surface and been decriminalised as an ordinary part of life."

"It's been an incredible change in our lifetimes, so we're just trying to get our heads around it."

Dr Dutney went on to explain how from the introduction of the contraceptive pill in 1961 to the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1997, issues that would appear to the younger generation as frustratingly easy to address make plain the generational gap between those who have lived through major political changes concerning sexuality, and those who have not.

Twenty-one-year-old Chanise Pojar from the Gold Coast was one young adult surprised to realise the contemporary nature of some of the issues.

"It was really interesting to learn about the history of sexuality and the western culture and how much it has changed in not just 50 years, but 30 years," said Ms Pojar.

"I was definitely challenged in the way that popular culture affects me and attempting to step out of that and view sexuality the way that God designed it to be, as a gift and a beautiful thing and avoid being part of any kind of culture or media that abuses that."

Having these conversations while remaining both cross-generational and cross-culturally unified is the harder task the Uniting Church has set itself, said Dr Dutney.

It is a task pursued in spite of the intensely divisive nature of such issues and has been proven achievable. Dr Dutney referred to the 13th National Assembly, saying that Uniting Church members unanimously placed community above theological disparity; observing Romans 14.

"We recognise that people have different understandings of how the scriptures are inspired and what their authority is," said Dr Dutney.

"What I hope for the Church is that the result of this conversation will be a deeper level of understanding and appreciation and love for each other, in our difference."

“What I hope for the Church is that the result of this conversation will be a deeper level of understanding and appreciation and love for each other, in our difference”

Rev Dr Andrew Dutney



More than meets the Y

Kerry Marnane examines what discipleship means for an emerging generation in the church.

As a member of Generation Y, I have heard the labels so often attributed to us. True, we are as a whole reluctant to commit—be it to events, careers or relationships; and we so often display a sense of entitlement—to a better future, better opportunities and higher standard of living. In general we are tech-savvy, well-travelled, have higher incomes, more education and lower tolerance for inconsistency than any previous generation.

In this sort of environment it is hardly surprising that the biggest challenge faced by Australian evangelists is apathy. Young would-be Christians are wondering how faith could possibly improve their lives. Some would see this as a cause for concern for the future of the Church. As a young Christian, I too am concerned, but I do not believe it is a case of Christianity being irrelevant. It is a case of demonstrating its relevance in a society that offers so many competing and contrary views and temptations.

We need to explore what it truly means to be a disciple of Jesus. For example, through answering the challenging questions of my peers, I find myself delving deeper into my Bible, or seeking answers from the community of faith of which I am a member. As a young Christian, I often examine

some of the traditional operations, views, and practices of the Church: Are they directly related to Jesus' message, and our commissioning? By upholding these, am I demonstrating my lived experience of relationship with God? Often the answer is yes, but in true Gen Y form, if I cannot see the point or connection, or I sense insincerity, I want to distance myself from that practice or view. However, when on board, we Gen Ys are passionate members of the faith community, with the added bonus of being information-hungry, innovative—and handy with a computer.

As a disciple, I want to share God's message of love and redemption with others, particularly with those my age. I know many in my circle of Christian friends, family, and my local congregation are also passionate about discipleship with young people, and are frustrated by the dwindling numbers of young people in our faith community.

But the one thing that really, truly, encourages me as a disciple is walking alongside those through whom I can clearly see God's transforming love and grace flowing. You can't buy that online!

Kerry Marnane
The Gap Uniting Church

thegapuca.org.au

‘When on board, we Gen Ys are passionate members of the faith community, with the added bonus of being information-hungry, innovative—and handy with a computer’

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KM13006_Ladies

Faith without boundaries

Joan Beavis lives in West End, Brisbane where she ministers to the lost and vulnerable people of her community.

My mother Nellie would hold the hands of the lepers in the hospital on the tiny island of Ubuiua in the Milne Bay district of Papua New Guinea. My father, Bert Cuff, had built the hospital, commissioned by the Methodist Overseas Mission.

In the 1950s it was believed that you could catch leprosy, so these people were the outcast and the isolated. Yet their relatives carried their crippled family members over mountainous terrain to get treatment, and we cared for and gave dignity to these vulnerable people.

My faith story begins in this remote place and intersects with the story of the community of West End, the inner city suburb of Brisbane where I have lived for more than 35 years.

I came here to train as a young nurse in the 1970s, a time of political, social and spiritual upheaval. I worked with Vietnam vets, who were often isolated and outcast, and discovered Christians who were involved in the protest movement. I joined the House of Freedom ecumenical community, where we lived together in share houses. We had a vision of a caring Christian community on the side of the powerless and oppressed, and tried with all our energy to put that into practice.

Later, with four young children, my husband and I joined the West End Uniting Church, which has a rich history of community outreach and advocacy. The church has just celebrated the 60th anniversary of what began as the Blue Nursing Service, now known as Blue Care, an outreach of the Methodist Mission at West End in 1953.

West End has always been a community under pressure, located just across the river from Brisbane's Central Business District. It is the

place of the water rat (*Kurilpa*), of Indigenous, Chinese and post-war migration stories, of lace ironwork cottages, community housing and new apartment blocks, and of factories, offices and cafés. With its mix of cultures and occupations, former premiers and struggling artists rub shoulders in the streets with new migrants, refugees, young professionals and social housing residents.

It is here, standing with the outcast and the vulnerable as they share their story in the street, in the shops, in the library, outside my door, that I continue to meet Christ. They live across the road and down the road; they sit on the benches and camp out at the busy intersection which marks West End.

Mental illness, like any other illness, doesn't know about days off or about night and day. And just as there is no edge to living with illness, so there is no edge to a faith that is lived as an integral part within the community.

Whether it's engaging with those people who come on Sundays and sit in a church where they feel safe and included—comfortable enough to ask for prayers for the Broncos, or to stand beside the minister during the sermon, or to sing heartily with earphones on—or engaging with those same people as they drop in to pick up a free coffee from the café owner who knows them by name, there is no edge.

There is mutuality here. The same person who asks for prayers for her entire family on Sunday will notice the splint on my arm and ask for prayers for me next Sunday. We grieve together when a young woman dies alone, worry about the barefoot girl, and celebrate when the silent man begins to speak a few halting words.

This is a place where the shopkeepers and

‘Living alongside people who struggle with mental illness means allowing a person to see the world through a different lens’



Joan Beavis, and some images from the busy intersection at West End, Brisbane
Photos: Holly Jewell

other locals will look out for people with health challenges, so there is a natural network of care and information.

The churches in West End have always worked together with a natural ecumenism to look after those who need support. Whether it is sharing resources, facilities, information, networks or events, West End Uniting Church has a strong connection with St Andrew's (Anglican), St Francis (Catholic), St Mary's and the Greek Evangelical church. Our Easter Stations of the Cross, when a bare wooden cross is carried up and down Boundary Street on Good Friday, is supported by these churches and by shopkeepers, locals, and artisans. It attracts about 100 people as we move from station to station to pray.

Living alongside people who struggle with mental illness means allowing a person to see the world through a different lens, whether it be standing under a street light at 2 am as the patterns cast through the branches of the tree speak to him of God, or reading the Bible in the street window of the Greek Evangelical church.

Each one of these "outcasts" has the right to feel at home here, and the right to be just as visible as the diners who come to West End to sample the eclectic food and culture.

We need to learn how to listen to people, and to understand how they interpret the world. When a person is listened to, they are engaged at that point of their journey. It is about walking with them as they nurse their bruised hearts.

That is the intersection of the Cross, that their burdens might be lifted.

westendunitingchurch.org.au





Decoding the Word

Rohan Salmond explores different interpretations of the Bible and how they enhance both personal and communal faith.

The Bible is a book with a unique place in human history. It consistently tops “greatest” and “most influential” book lists, and across all its versions and translations it would easily rank among the world’s best-selling titles. It is also, anecdotally, the world’s most frequently stolen book as well.

Recently there has been renewed interest in the Bible in public discourse, partially due to comments made by the now former prime minister Kevin Rudd on ABC’s *Q&A* prior to the 2013 federal election. The resulting discussion has highlighted the different ways the Bible is understood and applied, not only outside the Church, but also within.

Strong foundation

One thing that is not in dispute is the foundational role the Bible plays in Christian theology. “The Bible’s important because it’s how we know about God,” says Dr Jason LeCureux, Director of Studies of the Old Testament at Trinity Theological College, Brisbane. “It helps us to understand who God is and what he’s done, where we’ve been and where we are going.”

Rev Michelle Cook, a deacon at Mapoon Uniting Church, Cape York, says the Uniting Church’s foundational document, the *Basis of Union*, is very clear about the place of the Bible. “I’m a good Uniting Church girl, so I’ve read the *Basis of Union* 20 000 times,” she laughs, “so for me the Bible is a unique and apostolic testimony through which we

hear the word of God. It’s one of a kind; there are no other books like that.”

Part of the Bible’s importance is that it links contemporary Christians of all kinds back to the early church. Rev Lu Senituli, Bayside Uniting Church minister, finds this aspect of the biblical witness is extremely important.

“First I think we need to establish that in the Christian faith, the apostolic witness of the Bible is one of the fundamental moorings that articulate the absolute truth claims of the faith,” he says.

“It’s the ‘handing on’ of the apostles’ teachings. It’s the ‘traditioning’—the handing on of the apostolic witness. So as contemporary Christians, we read the Bible stories and the witness of the apostles and hand on those sacred stories which in their own ways point to its fulfilment in Jesus of Nazareth.

“These sacred stories are about divine revelation and it interprets itself from within and not according to some external authority or human experience. Jesus bears witness to himself,” he says.

A matter of interpretation

The language used by Christians of all kinds to describe the Bible is strikingly similar. The phrases “apostolic witness”, “God’s word” and the idea that it is a common reference point come up again and again, but differences in approach quickly emerge when relating highly-charged contemporary issues to the biblical text.

“By itself it’s a book, but with the work of the Spirit it’s this living thing. That’s important”

Rev Michelle Cook

These differences were thrown into stark contrast when former prime minister Kevin Rudd addressed the issue of same-sex marriage on ABC's Q&A. Although a practising Christian, Mr Rudd's biblical analysis caused an outcry among some church groups the next day.

Dr Edgar Conrad, associate professor in the School of History, Philosophy, Religion and Classics at the University of Queensland, is writing a book about the Bible in the news.

"I think Rudd mentioned that the Bible supports slavery," he chuckles. "If one looks at the biblical text it's interesting that clearly slavery was practised in ancient Israel and that even the Ten Commandments refer to slaves as property owned by the Israelites.

"But there are other parts of the biblical text that suggest that to take a position on slavery is problematic. You get texts in the creation story that talk about how God created all men and women in a kind of an equal status. This debate came up in the United States during the Civil War, when both abolitionists and slave-owners in the south quoted the biblical text to support their point of view.

"Some people have basically looked at the Bible to give them information about what is proper—what are proper decisions?—and they look to the Bible to support their own position, to give their own position authority. Often I think they do this by cherry-picking the text. They will choose passages that suit their agenda and ignore others so that all sorts of positions are taken on all sorts of contemporary issues."

Cornerstone of community

Although the sometimes-differing interpretations of the biblical text can be a source of conflict, Mr Senituli says they are also a chance to offer each other an alternative vantage point in the biblical narrative, ultimately strengthening community—particularly across cultural lines.

"Each culture brings its own particular interpretive framework. When that happens, [the text] means different things to different people ... Now, that's not a threat. That's not a negative. If we allow the difference of the cultures and the biblical and theological understanding to actually engage, what we'll find is that we offer each other a biblical critique of how we are living out the gospel truth," he says.

"For example, the Koreans hold up a mirror to the Anglo community, 'This is how we live the Christian faith' and the western society holds up a mirror, 'This is how we live the Christian faith' and we critique each other to see whether we are continuing together in this historical faith."

Ms Cook says that while the Bible is often read in private, it should never be read alone.

"I think the biggest danger that we have is that we read the Bible and we go, 'Well I think it means this', and we don't talk to anyone else about it," she says.

"I don't know if we'll ever reconcile the different interpretations, but I miss out on so much if I just read it by myself and don't talk to other people ... I'll only get a very small sliver of what the Bible means if I'm not listening to how the Holy Spirit has worked in other people's lives through it.

"By itself it's a book, but with the work of the Spirit it's this living thing. That's important."

Open to everyone

The complexities of interpretation across cultures and ideologies can make the Bible seem inaccessible to ordinary people, but Dr LeCureux says you don't have to have "Rev" or "Dr" in front of your name to bring the Bible to life and put it into action.

"It doesn't take a specially-trained person to read and to notice and read slowly, to listen and think about what you've read and to mull things over and over in your mind," he says. "Training can help you pay attention and understand some things that are said of course, but anyone can read. Anyone can read and think and meditate and read again.

"The power that's in that message has to go forth, it has to do something. It can't just lie there. It's not just intellectual assent. It's not just intellectual understanding, it's something that mandates action on our part.

"It's a simple thing—my first question would always be, 'Do you read it?'"

Basis of Union
Paragraph 5, 1992 edition: THE BIBLICAL WITNESSES

The Uniting Church acknowledges that the Church has received the books of the Old and New Testaments as unique prophetic and apostolic testimony, in which it hears the Word of God and by which its faith and obedience are nourished and regulated. When the Church preaches Jesus Christ, its message is controlled by the Biblical witnesses. The Word of God on whom salvation depends is to be heard and known from Scripture appropriated in the worshipping and witnessing life of the Church. The Uniting Church lays upon its members the serious duty of reading the Scriptures, commits its ministers to preach from these and to administer the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper as effective signs of the Gospel set forth in the Scriptures.



UnitingWorld workshop participants, Solomon Islands
Photo: Bronwyn Fraser

Empowering Pacific women

This year, UnitingWorld turns its focus towards gender equality and addressing violence against women in the Pacific Island region. **Ashley Goetze** spoke with **Bronwyn Fraser** from UnitingWorld.

A self-described “link and chain” between the Uniting Church in Australia and Pacific Island church partners, last June UnitingWorld facilitated a workshop in Fiji that involved women representatives from the four Pacific nations of Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Tuvalu.

‘It’s as though if you can’t tweet it, it didn’t happen’

During this workshop, gender-based violence was identified by women as a dire concern in their communities, backed by an extensive United Nations survey of men in the Asia Pacific region that revealed 45.6 per cent of men admit to engaging in physical or sexual violence against women and 24.3 per cent to rape.

UnitingWorld has partnered with women’s church organisations in the Pacific to tackle the issue head on.

As a result, training courses, such as the Livelihood and Basic Business Skills workshop run in Kiribati earlier this year, have marked the beginning of a long road to change.

“If women are more independent in terms of income and they don’t have to rely on their husbands’ income there’s more likelihood they’ll report violence when it happens,” explains Bronwyn Fraser, Manager, Livelihoods

and Peacebuilding Program (Pacific) in the Relief and Development department, UnitingWorld.

These behavioural changes are long-term and therefore in opposition to the First World expectation of immediacy, where tangible quick-fix solutions are often found easier to get behind.

“People want to hear the individual story of change and change takes longer. It’s as though if you can’t tweet it, it didn’t happen,” says Ms Fraser.

Perhaps more indicative of the type of change UnitingWorld works towards is the story of Veera, the elderly lady from Kiribati whose story Ms Fraser recounted as one who left a lasting impression.

“She really spoke to my heart. She talked about the way things had always been, when women couldn’t access knowledge, couldn’t access information, education or training,” says Ms Fraser.

“She knew that the training they had done would kick-start action, she knew that it would make a difference, but what was more important to her in that moment was the dignity and value she felt at her age, to be finally invited to learn.”

Look out for a short DVD from UnitingWorld on gender equality and what that means in the Pacific, coming soon.

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Judith Baskerville, Jeff Taylor
and Rev Jenny Sims
Photo: Jandowae Uniting Church

Committing to community in Jandowae

Actively expressing love for others by being a positive presence in the community has become a priority for Jandowae Uniting Church. **Rohan Salmond** spoke with congregation minister **Rev Jenny Sims**.

What's happening in your congregation?

There is new enthusiasm within the congregation to connect with the community. Three members of the congregation are involved in religious instruction in the school. Members are involved in various clubs and activities in the town. The Craft Club meets in the church hall.

There is an active Ladies Fellowship group which raises funds through catering and provides oversight for the property. The women regularly visit Uniting Church residents at Taralga Retirement Village, taking them cappuccinos from the local coffee lounge. On occasions they take them to the coffee lounge for an outing.

I arrived in September last year, providing ministry to Dalby and Jandowae, where I lead worship on two or three Sundays each month. Right now I'm focussing on equipping the congregation to lead worship and to grow in their confidence to use their gifts in ministry so there is less dependence on others when there is no minister. A course for lay presidency of the sacraments is planned for later in the year.

What does creating disciples mean for your church community?

Creating disciples for us is about growing our faith through regular worship attendance and the recently established Bible study group. There's an emphasis on living our faith actively in our community and the ways we share our faith, supporting and caring for others.

The congregation is working on developing a vision statement with the help of Rev Marius Kruger, Downs Presbytery resource minister. The congregation is committed to connecting with people in the community and making the church an influential presence.

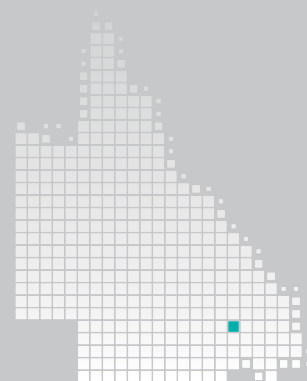
How does your church community show love in active ways?

Jandowae Uniting Church is a loving and caring community committed to one another and to showing compassion in the community. Prayer support has been significant for one another especially when specific health concerns and other struggles emerge. We have two people undergoing cancer treatment at the moment in a small congregation of about 25 people.

What is your church community passionate about?

Our church is passionate about connecting to the broader community and sharing the good news with others through genuine love and compassion. We are passionate about growing our church at every level. We want to grow our church, encouraging personal growth in faith, caring through pastoral circles and growth through engagement and connections with the community.

Jandowae Uniting Church



Fast facts:

Community:

- > 50 km north of Dalby
- > Mixed farming region as well as cattle grazing
- > Population approximately 1200

Mission focus:

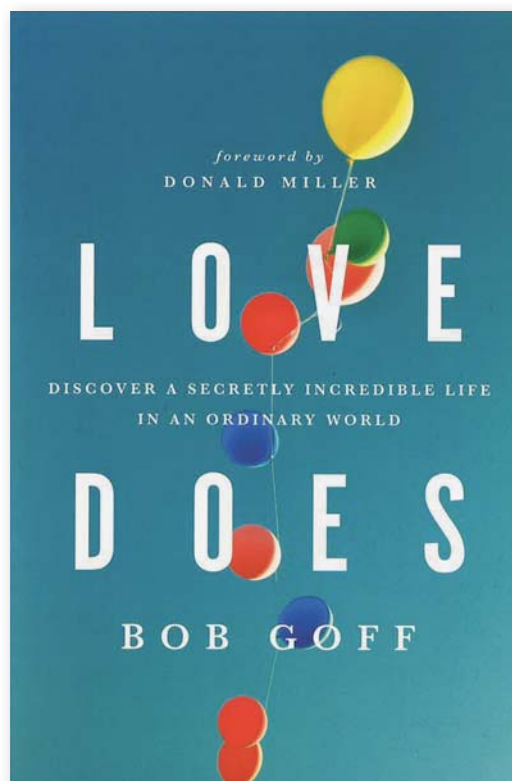
- > Connecting with people in the community
- > Making the church an influential presence

What's new:

- > Women's Bible study
- > Ladies' Fellowship—a friendship club
- > A music ministry called *Mainly Music*

Online:

- > A new website is coming soon



Love Does: Discover a secretly incredible life in an ordinary world
Bob Goff
Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2012
RRP \$15.99

Love is a verb

‘*Love Does* teaches us that love doesn’t just “do” once, it causes a chain reaction’

“I used to think Jesus motivated us with ultimatums, but now I know he pursues us in love.”—Bob Goff

Love is something that is often talked about, but it seems to be rarely understood. Bob Goff’s book, *Love Does* is a rarity. Although it is a memoir, it is not just an appreciation of Goff’s achievements and commitments—many and varied as they are—it is also a personal call for a rejuvenated understanding of what it means to love. By telling his own stories, Goff inspires a new appreciation of what it means to live a life fuelled by love. *Love Does* is an anecdotal guide on how best to love your life and those it encompasses.

“I used to think that being a believer was enough, but now I know Jesus wants us to participate, no matter what condition we are in,” he says.

Goff’s spirit and love for God permeates this book from the very first page and is evident in the stories he shares from his life. Chapter by chapter Goff

reveals proof that God calls us to action our faith in a “love does” manner just as Jesus’ disciples once did; to throw caution to the wind and say to God “I am with you”.

There are chapters in this book for everyone and for every lesson. Some are laugh-out-loud funny and others are full of joy, but what is most powerful is the reminder that love isn’t just a noun; love is also a verb, an action.

There is a challenge here: Will you choose to live your life as if love is a noun or a verb? Will you choose to act in life or merely be a bystander? Will you choose to have bold faith, or will you turn a blind eye to that which you are called? *Love Does* teaches us that love doesn’t just “do” once, it causes a chain reaction. That is exactly the effect of this book: giving others a hope that they too can affect change in their own lives and in those around them.

Hannah MacCallum
Founder, Cambodia child sponsorship program
Newlife Uniting Church, Robina



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Shalom Christian College students and staff with leaders from the North Queensland and Calvary presbyteries, the Queensland Synod and the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress.
Photo: Shalom Christian College

Shalom celebrates

Shalom Christian College's motto, "Many cultures: One faith", has never been more true. Annette Dale explores the many things worth celebrating at the college last month.

The Shalom Christian College community began three days of celebration on 10 September when Deloitte transferred responsibility of the college to the Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod, officially making it a Uniting Church school.

This marked the end of more than a year's joint effort by teams from Deloitte, Board Matters and the Queensland Synod to honour the vision of Shalom Christian College as a provider of quality education for more than 300 Indigenous students after the school went into voluntary administration in 2012.

"First and foremost has been our desire to honour the work that has been done in the past by ensuring sustainability into the future. It has been a real privilege to work alongside Rev Dennis Corowa as Chair of Calvary Presbytery and the staff at Shalom during this time," said Synod Schools Commission Executive Officer, Elaine Rae.

Celebrations continued on 11 September with a commissioning service for new Shalom principal, Chris England.

"I feel humbled and honoured to be able to lead the school in continuing the original vision of providing real pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students," said Mr England.

Mr England accepted the commission of serving God in the community of Shalom Christian College which was offered by the President of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress, Rev Rronang Garrawurra, and Queensland Synod Moderator, Rev Kaye Ronalds. In return, staff, students and community members welcomed Mr England and promised to support him in his role.

Mr Garrawurra challenged the congregation using the Great Commission of Jesus from the gospel of Matthew. Listeners were reminded that it is essential to have their hearts and minds open to what God wants them to do in their current situation and to move forward with God as the focus in their lives.

The following day the whole school community participated in NAIDOC celebrations—singing, dancing, sharing stories, eating together and being further encouraged in their Christian walk by Mr Garrawurra. Displays of students' artwork showcased the talent, creativity and culture nurtured in the college and gave life to the Shalom motto, "Many cultures: One faith".

The Uniting Church, through the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Congress and the Queensland Synod, has made a commitment to the ongoing work of Shalom Christian College. Ms Ronalds encouraged Uniting Church members to join the college community in continuing to pray that God's Spirit will be seen and heard in this place.

shalomcollege.qld.edu.au

‘First and foremost has been our desire to honour the work that has been done in the past by ensuring sustainability into the future’

Elaine Rae



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Southport Uniting Church community minister Rev Dona Spencer with art from Flourish Arts Festival
Photo: Southport congregation

Permission to speak, please

Southport Uniting Church has opened its doors and its heart to the busy world outside. Dianne Jensen reports.

The young woman was a regular attender at the night services at Southport Uniting Church on the Gold Coast. An artist who lived alone, Anne suffered from depression and schizophrenia following childhood trauma. One night she self-harmed, and accidentally killed herself.

Artist and Southport community minister Rev Dona Spencer remembers Anne well, because she had visited the church on the day she died. The minister and others in their turn sat with Anne as long as they could.

“What Anne did through her death was give the congregation permission to spend time with every single person who comes into that church and who asks for help,” she says.

Southport Uniting Church lies in the heart of the community at the northern end of the Gold Coast. The area is an eclectic mix of students, retirees, holiday-makers, businesses and residents, with a significant fringe population of people suffering from mental health disorders and one of the busiest court houses and parole offices in Queensland.

Anne was one of the many people who flow through the doors of the church every weekday morning. The open church, with free coffee and biscuits served by volunteers, is part of the intentional ministry of the congregation to be a place of sanctuary for people experiencing mental illness.

“Members of the congregation are rostered to meet, greet, and pray with any who enter,” says Ms Spencer. “Anyone who comes and wants to have extra time with the minister can do so.

“We have lots of regulars. The mental health issues present themselves in a multifaceted manner—from serious cases of schizophrenia to the repercussions of drug and alcohol use. Our members, through experience, develop supportive pastoral relationships with them.”

Southport was the first church in Queensland to host the CBM (formerly known as Christian Blind Mission) Luke14, workshop, *Mental Health Unwrapped*.

“Luke14 challenged the church community to consider ways of being more inclusive. It also encouraged us to appreciate and foster the gifts, abilities, and dreams of each person,” says Ms Spencer.


The congregation developed a range of intentional activities to link with the community, including a Never Alone Friendship Group (based on the Burleigh Heads model). It also welcomes other groups to use their facilities, including the Men Out There (MOT) drama group for homeless men.

Flourish Arts Festival, a congregational initiative now in its second year, is developing as a major community event every September. The festival celebrates the arts as a platform for healing and growth through a range of displays, performances, and workshops.

“Many of the people involved in the festival have suffered mental health issues,” says Ms Spencer. “They have found that through the creative processes of art, in a group, as well as on their own, they’ve experienced healing.”

southportunitingchurch.org.au

“What Anne did through her death was give the congregation permission to spend time with every single person who comes into that church and who asks for help”





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Journey's Cross-platform editor Rohan Salmond and Editor-in-chief Mardi Lumsden
Photo: Holly Jewell

Journey wins international awards

Journey magazine claimed two prizes at the Australasian Religious Press Association (ARPA) awards in Melbourne in September.

Scott Stephens' article, *Embracing uncertainty: The church in a secular age*, was named best opinion piece in 2012.

Former advertising manager, Tara Burton, was awarded bronze in the best new writer category for her article, *Love and loss*, about the passing of a close friend.

"My article was about a very personal and heart wrenching time in my life," said Ms Burton. "It's kind of ironic because the night of the awards was Zoe's birthday. It was a pretty glum day and hearing the news was almost like a message from her."

Uniting Church publications won numerous awards at the hotly contested event which judges Christian publications throughout Australia and New Zealand. Former *Insights* editors, Marjorie Lewis-Jones and Stephen Webb, were awarded the organisation's highest honour, the Gutenberg Award, for their outstanding 20-year contribution to Christian journalism.

ACCatalyst Managing Editor Peter Bentley was announced as the new ARPA President.

For more information visit arpanews.org

Gap years giving back

Mission Travel Group's Giving Back campaign has an exciting new category for young people with a missional dream—the Gap Year Grant. Applicants are invited to film a 60-second video explaining how they would spend \$5000 (after completing high school) to further God's Kingdom.

The Giving Back campaign runs between 1 October and 25 October.

For more information contact Dean Troth on dean.troth@gmail.com or visit missiontravel.com.au.

World Council of Churches assembles

The 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches will take place in South Korea from 30 October to 8 November.

The assembly has the mandate to set the future agenda of the council, elect governance officials and speak with a public voice on behalf of the churches. It is also an opportunity for the whole fellowship of member churches, including the Uniting Church in Australia, to join in prayer and celebration.

The assembly theme, *God of life, lead us to justice and peace*, is particularly timely given current global unrest. Please pray for this meeting.

For more information and worship resources visit wcc2013.info

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