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Journey

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Take the lead

There are all kinds of leaders. Some have very high profiles, but others simply identify a need and take action, often without receiving much recognition at all. What all leaders have in common is the courage to speak out and get to work.

Peter Sewakiryanga, Director of Kyampisi Childcare Ministries, is one such person. He is not the only person working to halt the horrific, modern practise of child sacrifice in Uganda, but his courage in responding to the needs of his country is changing lives. Read about his work on page six.

In October young Indigenous leaders came together at the Grasstree Gathering in Brisbane. Some of these leaders are facing many challenges, but are also demonstrating the courage to speak out with their own voice (Page ten).

Speaking out is a challenge in itself sometimes. It takes courage to get up in front of a large group and deliver a message. On page 12 we examine the fine art of the Sunday sermon. What makes a good sermon, and how can our preachers be more effective in their communication?

Where does all this courage come from? What do we do when we are not feeling particularly courageous? At the Global Leadership Summit hosted by Newlife Uniting Church, Bill Hybels reminded those attending that our courage comes from God.

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9).

Rohan Salmond
Cross-platform editor



Lead vulnerably

When I was preparing to serve in the role of moderator a friend lent me a book on leadership. *Leadership on the Line* is by Ronald Heifetz, a physician who plays the cello, and Marty Linsky, who has a background in politics and the media. Neither of the authors is a theologian, but the last section of the book focuses on body and soul.

The book, published by Harvard Business School, has lots of good advice about how to lead organisations and some very practical strategies for responding to issues in corporate and government sectors. I was surprised that so much of the last section resonated with my ideas about Christian leadership. They write about the strength of personal life, relationships and practices for renewal and being motivated by love and a desire to make a contribution and to make connection.

Sometimes people think leadership is about throwing your weight around or behaving in an authoritarian way, yet Jesus was not like that. At times there were some strong words exclaimed and differences of opinions expressed. People commented on his way of exercising authority even over the wind and the waves. Sometimes he used humour to influence and challenge.

When Jesus turned over the tables in the temple he let his anger drive his action. It was an act of leadership that demonstrated it was time the money changers ceased taking advantage of the

poor pilgrims on their way to make a sacrifice at the temple. Sometimes leadership involves speaking up for justice.

The response that Jesus made to those who arrested, charged and tried him was one of steadfastness on the mission. His death on the cross is often described as sacrifice.

Apparently the word “lead” comes from an Indo-European word that means “to go forth, die.” So leading may mean recognising that one day I will die, and how might I give meaning and significance to my life in the meantime?

“Exercising leadership is an expression of your aliveness. But your life juice—your creativity and daring, your curiosity and eagerness to question, your compassion and love for people—can seep away daily as you get beat up, put down or silenced,” write the authors of *Leadership on the Line*.

One response is to pull on layers of protection, to allow yourself to become numb and unresponsive, or to grow cynical and callous. Other leaders tote up all their personal sacrifices and develop a sense of entitlement.

Instead, leaders should remain open, available and vulnerable while loving and serving God and God’s people. That is my challenge as a leader.

Rev Kaye Ronalds
Queensland Synod Moderator

Moderator’s diary

4 November

Brisbane Boys’ College awards and speech night

8–9 November

Calvary Presbytery meeting, Cairns

11 November

Calvary Christian College graduation celebrations

14 November

Synod moderators’ meeting, Sydney

15 November

Mapoon anniversary

27 November

Blue Care staff recognition night

Monday Midday Prayer

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Amen

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October's bushfires devastated the Blue Mountains region of New South Wales
Photo: Melinda Kingsland



President launches bushfire appeal

The worst bushfires in 45 years have devastated the Blue Mountains area. The Uniting Church Assembly is responding, but requires generous assistance, reports **Matt Pulford**.

President of the Uniting Church in Australia Rev Dr Andrew Dutney has launched a national appeal to support those facing loss and hardship from the recent bushfires in New South Wales.

"The fires have destroyed or damaged hundreds of homes in the Blue Mountains," said Dr Dutney. "We ask Uniting Church members across the country to pray together and to offer their support for all the people affected."

The October fires were the worst that the region had experienced for at least 45 years and a state of emergency was declared across New South Wales. There are ten Uniting Church congregations and faith communities in the Blue Mountains area, and several congregation members lost their homes.

National Disaster Recovery Officer Rev Dr Stephen Robinson has coordinated the New South Wales Disaster Recovery Chaplaincy Network (DRCN) since its formation in 2009. The network is trained, resourced and coordinated by the Uniting Church, and its chaplaincy teams were working in all major evacuation centres as soon as the emergency began.

Dr Robinson worked around the clock to ensure that chaplains from a variety of denominations and faiths were available at evacuation and recovery centres.

"Teams of chaplains from a wide range of denominations have been active in five communities, some on a 24-hour basis," he said.

He described the fires as "the most serious I've experienced in 17 years of involvement in bushfire response" and said that resources would be stretched to the limit to support local communities.

Dr Robinson and Dr Dutney are encouraging people who would like to assist to make a donation through the National Disaster Relief Fund.

"Donating money is much better rather than donating goods," said Dr Robinson. "It makes it easier for workers to meet needs on the ground quickly and efficiently."

Donations of \$2 or more to the National Disaster Relief Fund are tax deductible. A variety of donation options including a secure online donation facility are available via the Assembly website at assembly.uca.org.au/bushfires

“We ask Uniting Church members across the country to pray together and to offer their support for all the people affected”

Rev Dr Andrew Dutney

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Stolen blood

Worldwide reports confirm the reality of child sacrifice in northern Africa. Ashley Goetze speaks to Peter Sewakiryanga about Uganda's modern affliction.

In Uganda, children are routinely kidnapped and their body parts cut off for ritual sacrifice. In pursuit of wealth, clients visit witchdoctors on a weekly basis delivering hearts, livers and blood to be consumed by spirits.

Pastor Peter Sewakiryanga is the Director of Kyampisi Childcare Ministries (KCM), one Ugandan aid organisation aiming to provide physical, emotional and spiritual healing to young victims of such atrocities. According to Mr Sewakiryanga, witchdoctors target children because they are seen as pure and the spirits are said to want pure blood and organs.

"It's not normal," he says.

"In our culture's past there has been some sort of sacrifice of animals to appease demon spirits and the gods of the witchdoctors—that has been happening for years—but the sacrifice of children, that is new—and growing."

Bodies of dead children are widely believed to be buried at the foundations of Uganda's capital, Kampala's heightening skyline. Child sacrifice is a modern problem.

Deadly ritual

Mr Sewakiryanga has been a spokesperson on child sacrifice since the launch of KCM and Jubilee Campaign's international prayer campaign, *End Child Sacrifice* back in 2009, attracting mainstream media attention from news outlets all over the world including the BBC, NBC and ABC.

He says that if a child is taken to be sacrificed, there is little hope of survival.

"Most of the time the children die while they are attacked and there are very few that actually survive. Others just disappear and you never see them again. It's a strange phenomenon that has come to Uganda practised by witchdoctors and people who believe in witchcraft," he says.

In 2011, the US State Department reported some 9000 children had gone missing in Uganda over four years, many of whom are feared to have been abducted for sacrifice.

"It's hard to tell how many children have been killed—last year in 2012, we had 32 cases of children who were attacked and just one survived. The rest were killed. And we are a small charity so we really aren't able to follow up all the cases all around the country," says Mr Sewakiryanga.

Yet many find the reality of child sacrifice hard to believe.

Mr Sewakiryanga recalls the visit of a crew from the BBC back in 2010. The film-makers had originally set aside two months to see if anything would come of their visit, assuming the problem would not be so immediately visible.

"They were in Uganda for one week and they got what they wanted in that one week and they left," says Mr Sewakiryanga. "You cannot stop the hand of God and what he's doing to save his children."

The documentary they produced, *Uganda Child Sacrifice* would go on to be nominated for an Emmy award.

“Most of the time the children die while they are attacked and there are very few that actually survive”
Pastor Peter Sewakiryanga



Above: Allan, the child on our cover, is a survivor of child sacrifice
 Right: Allan, centre, with Pastor Peter Sewakiryanga and other children saved from child sacrifice by Kyampisi Childcare Ministries
Photos: Peter Sewakiryanga



A costly lie

Driven by superstition, exploitation, witchcraft and extreme poverty, child sacrifice has become big business in Uganda.

“There is a story in Uganda of a rich man, a very rich man, who claimed his riches and the whole community knew that he had killed his child to get wealthy,” says Mr Sewakiryanga.

“Witchdoctors use this story to tell people, ‘Look this person got rich and a lot of rich people sacrifice their children’, so the desperate poor will follow the witchdoctor’s advice and sacrifice their children—to make money—and it’s all a lie.”

As reported by the BBC, \$600 is the average price tag for the ritual murder of a child, although Mr Sewakiryanga says witchdoctors vary the cost depending on the wealth of the individual and their perceived desperation.

Uganda’s Directorate of Social Protection has revealed that 67 per cent of Ugandans live on less than \$2.40 a day. As a result, exploitation of the vulnerable is fierce, “but there is no evidence that child sacrifice brings wealth,” says Mr Sewakiryanga.

“It has also been used by witchdoctors to cover up what they have stolen from people. Once you get involved in the murder of a child, whether yours or somebody else’s, you are not going to follow up. You won’t go to police because it’s you who killed the child. So they will end the game like that.”

Australian connections

After a “divinely appointed” meeting with a Brisbane-based general practitioner on a flight between Uganda and Australia, Mr Sewakiryanga was connected with Australian surgeons who

offered to perform life-saving surgery on the mutilated genitals of six-year old child sacrifice victim, George Mukisa.

Later, following coverage by the *Sydney Morning Herald*, another top surgeon offered to do the same for George’s best friend, Allan Ssembatya. Allan’s operation featured on Channel 10’s *The Project* early this year. Both boys are alive and thriving in KCM’s care.

“I think it’s God crowning his work, because no one knows me and no one knows a little village in the community of Kyampisi, bonded in such poverty. But God called us to pray and it’s God who started this and God has his ways of connecting people,” says Mr Sewakiryanga.

He believes it is prayer that will heal his land as, “the only answer to spiritual issues is prayer”.

“When I came to Australia the response of people to pray for this was amazing. In fact that’s why I was able to see these miracles happen; children being saved and we as a team being safe from the hands of the witchdoctors and those that are seeking to retaliate for what we are doing,” he says.

The KCM team consists of 29 volunteers who care for 219 children, 80 of whom are directly affected by child sacrifice.

Where the Ugandan government has taken a “slow step in approaching this issue”, KCM is calling on the international community to stand with them and sign a petition to end child sacrifice which they hope to present to the Ugandan president by the end of next year.

So far 40 000 signatures have been collected out of a target of 100 000.

“What we’re calling on the government is to look at the child protection laws, revise the 1957 colonial witchcraft act, which is still being used in Uganda, and bring the perpetrators to book because a lot of people are getting away with it.

“I’m here to stand and call upon the church to support our petition and push for international awareness because if a child in Uganda is dying, the whole world is affected,” says Mr Sewakiryanga.

Weema Clinic

Meanwhile, KCM is attempting to address the lack of access to medical help, one of the root causes of child sacrifice. Weema Clinic, KCM’s current project, is to be a physical and spiritual place of healing as well as a place to share the gospel.

“One of the reasons people go to witchdoctors is because they have a physical illness but nowhere to go for physical healing. They are desperate for healing and they will go there because there is no alternative,” says Mr Sewakiryanga.

“As a pastor I will sit in my office and see a lot of people with medical need and I will pray for them, yes, but common sense also tells me they need to see a doctor. Where there is no doctor they are pushed to resort to the lies of the witchdoctor.”

Asked why he would engage with such a wholly gruesome and emotionally taxing issue, Mr Sewakiryanga replies, “It’s a call. I don’t know why God chose me to do this but even if it’s for one child for me it will be worth it—it’s already worth it.”

For more information about KCM’s projects or to sign the petition visit kyampisi.org



Bright green discipleship

Caring for the environment is one way we can actively demonstrate our love for God and each other, writes **David Weddell**.

At a recent dinner, I met someone really enthusiastic about church. They were one of those people who can, and will, slide the topic of church into almost any conversation—particularly if there are non-church people around. I've sometimes wondered if, as a Christian, that's the sort of thing I should do.

Over the course of the meal my new friend mentioned church about eight times before we started talking about climate change and what our response should be. Having raised church so much, the next few words from my friend would be perceived as being the Christian response.

Suddenly I can see purpose in being the enthusiastic church person. When topics like these come up, it gives an opportunity to explain how faith influences action. To show how faith inspires us to be better people. To demonstrate how faith makes a practical difference in everyday life. In Christian language: discipleship. So what would I have said?

Believing in God, and loving God, means having a responsibility to take care of the creation left in our hands. The creation we praise him for, we should also protect. For me this means less time

in arguments on how life began, and more time saving it from being destroyed.

Jesus said to love God and to love others—not just a little, but to love others as we love ourselves. I'd never want to experience the devastating impacts of climate change myself, so I can't say I love my neighbour and then live in ways that make people suffer—particularly the poor.

For geographic and economic reasons, climate change hits poor nations the hardest. The Christian faith is very strong about helping the poor and vulnerable. Society may talk about doing "our fair share", meaning no more than others, but Jesus talks about the Good Samaritan—a person who does all they can, even when others do nothing.

There's also great joy in this. Many of the things that help "save the planet" are also things that help me feel closer to God and to my fellow human beings.

I wish I was articulate enough to have said these things at dinner that night. If each of us took this message to heart, it would show we do not just attend church but that we also apply the gospel to our lives. I think that's who I want to be. I think that's discipleship.

David's blog can be found at convenientsolutions.blogspot.com

‘Believing in God, and loving God, means having a responsibility to take care of the creation left in our hands’



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God's Squad founder, John Smith (centre) prays with members in Ukraine
Photo: God's Squad



Biker culture under harsh scrutiny

Have new anti-bikie laws stigmatised an entire sub-culture? **Ashley Goetze** talks to **Rev Dr John Smith**, founder of international Christian motorcycle club, God's Squad.

Rev Dr John Smith is a biker, and he's proud of it. Known to many as "Smithy" or "the holy bullfrog", the legendary God's Squad figurehead may soon be mistaken for an outlaw under new Queensland legislation passed in a marathon early morning session in October.

The Queensland Government's anti-bikie laws are now some of the toughest in the world, with 15 years added to the normal penalty for serious gang-related crime and a special bikie-only prison.

Dr Smith is convinced that the new laws clearly violate the United Nations charter of human rights, and that there is little evidence that such laws are effective in dealing with organised crime.

"I believe these laws are absolutely draconian and totally unjust," he says. "The problem is that out of maybe 40 or 50 different clubs, what you're getting is the attention given to three or four clubs that make it look like everybody that's got a patch on his back is a criminal."

After 42 years of ministry, what Dr Smith finds most distressing is that even men with "God's Squad" on their back are being stopped and intimidated by Queensland police.

"The majority of guys in almost all outlaw clubs have no criminal records, they're not involved in criminal activity and yet now by association they are marked," says Dr Smith.

"One of the reasons Jesus was prosecuted and crucified was because of association—because he

was a friend of public sinners and outcasts," says Dr Smith. "Being a friend with someone doesn't mean that I support everything in their lifestyle."

According to Dr Smith there are few clubhouses in the world where God's Squad members are not welcome. Everybody in the bike scene knows who they are, what they stand for and that they can come to them for help.

"You can't judge a book by its cover ... I mean that's supposed to be a Christian value—God looks on the heart and man looks on the outward appearance," says Dr Smith.

With a doctoral dissertation in cultural anthropology behind him, Dr Smith says there are many reasons men choose to join bikie clubs.

"Some people are in bike clubs, because—shock horror!—would you believe it, they actually like riding motorcycles. And they like having a sense of corporate identity with others. One size does not fit all."

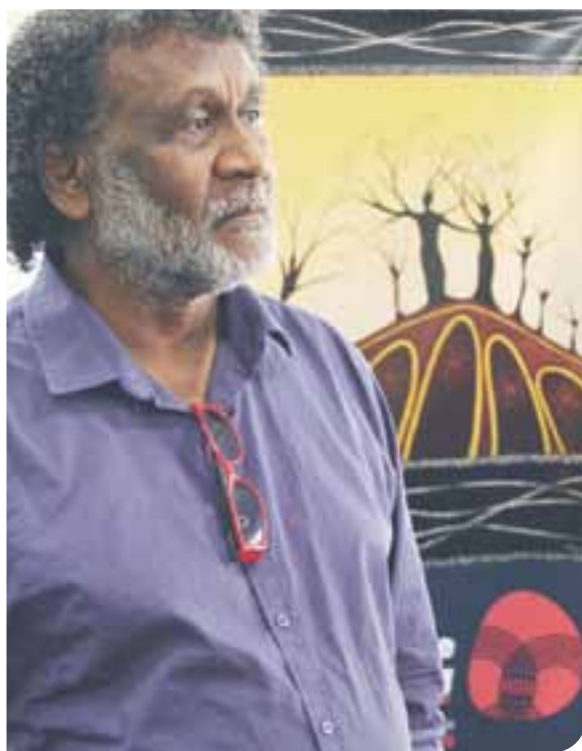
When asked how the new laws would affect God's Squad Dr Smith replies, "Our ministry will never change. We believe that Jesus was a friend of outcasts and we intend following Jesus, whatever Campbell Newman suggests we should do."

Look out for John Smith's feature length, biographical documentary Smithy: Something in every hue, currently in production.
gsmc.com

“The majority of guys in almost all outlaw clubs have no criminal records, they're not involved in criminal activity”

Rev Dr John Smith

Indigenous leaders mobilise for mission



Rev Ray Minniecon from Sydney at the 2013 Grasstree Gathering in Brisbane
Photo: Dianne Jensen

Emerging Indigenous leaders and elders from across Australia are forging new partnerships through the Grasstree Gathering. **Dianne Jensen** reports.

“Preaching in your own skin” is a catchphrase that sums up the cultural and spiritual empowerment of a people, and it resounded at the National Grasstree Gathering Emerging Indigenous Christian Leaders Conference in Brisbane.

The Grasstree event in early October followed the inaugural conference last year in Melbourne. It brought elders and educators together to mentor a new generation of nearly 40 emerging Indigenous leaders from across Australia.

There were six representatives from the Uniting Church and Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress: Joya Waia (Weipa), Ellen Hobson (Bamaga), Joylene Naylon (Logan Central Multicultural) and Sarah-Jane Hollingsworth, Otila Leone and Sono Weatherall from the Zillmere Uniting Church congregation.

Breaking down the isolation

The 2013 Grasstree Gathering Coordinator Brooke Prentis, chairperson of the Churches Together Indigenous People's Partnership (CTIPP), is passionate about equipping young people for ministry. She believes that the network being developed through Grasstree is pivotal to breaking down the isolation experienced by many Indigenous Christians.

“Each of us as individuals is called to a certain ministry, like those of us in the Salvos, the Uniting Church, the Pentecostal mob, and all the other church mobs, but we often feel very isolated. If you take my example, as a full church member of the Salvation Army, I'm the only Aboriginal church member in all of South Queensland.

“When we get together at Grasstree, you are with a group that understands the challenges and the heartbreak that you often encounter in your ministry,” she says.

Advocates for change

The four-day event included some of Australia's key Indigenous Christian leaders, such as Uncle Graham Paulson, Uncle Graeme Mundine, Rev Ray Minniecon, Aunty Nellie O'Chin, Uncle Rex Japanangka Granites and Aunty Jean Phillips, an Aboriginal Christian leader who is the Vision Leader of the Grasstree Gathering.

Through Bible studies, workshops and the sharing of testimonies and stories, the elders encouraged young leaders to be passionate change advocates.

Uncle Graeme Mundine, Executive Officer of the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry in the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney, told participants that one of the first steps was to agree on common goals and outcomes, “and on where we believe the Holy Spirit is leading us”.

He said that his generation had received a bad model of leadership from the missionaries.

“They were the pastors and they sent us out as evangelists. It's time for us to learn how to change the role. We've got the language of it; it's time to put it into action.

“I can't guarantee that it will be easy. But deep down inside you know that there are wrongs happening and we've got to do something about it ... always remember who you are, and where you come from.”

Aunty Jean Phillips encouraged the young leaders to challenge the churches about their models of Indigenous ministry, especially in resourcing.

“You need to be speaking up, educating the non-Aboriginal church people and our own folk,” she says. “People out there want to support you. We need you. Come in with your vision.”

“They were the pastors and they sent us out as evangelists. It's time for us to learn how to change the role”
Graeme Mundine



Joya Waia (Weipa) and Ellen Hobson (Bamaga) at the 2013 Grasstree Gathering in Brisbane
Photo: Dianne Jensen

Beyond denominational boundaries

The coming together of people across denominational and theological boundaries is a key development in the empowerment of Indigenous Christians, says Brooke Prentis.

“First of all we’re Christian, and second we can talk about our cultural identity as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We just don’t get those opportunities to get together and share our stories and our testimonies and what our dreams and our hopes are.

“The people we brought together are all doing work in their community, but don’t necessarily feel empowered to be leaders. I think that’s what Grasstree is trying to achieve, and once we empower our own leaders then we will start to see some real transformation in communities.”

The stories shared from urban, regional and remote communities underscored the reality that Indigenous ministry and the Aboriginal experience is different to that of mainstream Australians, she adds.

“As an Indigenous minister, in a week you could have two funerals, you have to provide five houses for people, you’re trying to get kids to school, you’re trying to feed families, you’re trying to do a sermon—all those things. If you’re a non-

Indigenous minister you might only have a funeral a couple of times a year. You might have a homeless person come in maybe once a week. You probably haven’t often dealt with child safety—many of us have taken in kids as foster or kinship carers.”

The experience of ministering in a specific cultural context is a familiar one for Sarah-Jane Hollingsworth from Zillmere Congress, whose church runs a number of outreach programs including supporting local families in crisis.

“Our leadership model is quite different. We very much walk beside people; our pastors will go and knock on that door, and visit people if they are in hospital or sick, and they will chase people up. Which means it’s a lot more work, a lot more hours.

“We are also dealing with people who have a lot of past hurts and that hurt, even though it might have been their grandparent, is passed down in a very real way, in every way imaginable.”

The Grasstree event was an important mentoring experience for Ms Hollingsworth.

“Part of being Aboriginal is that you are told not to question things. In my work at youth camps like Summer Madness, I have noticed that the non-Indigenous children, they question things, they say ‘no’. Murri kids are told not to do that, not from our own people, but out there in the world. Here

[Grasstree] you get some tools to go into a situation and deal with it, to advocate on your own behalf.”

Telling the story

Joylene Naylon from Logan Central Multicultural Uniting Church hopes to study youth ministry, after making the difficult decision to move from her home in Port Augusta.

“It’s been a tough time in the past,” she says. “I want to tell people about my story and how I have moved on in my life. It’s good, just looking to the future and seeing how my life can be.

“I have made different choices for myself, and I want the young ones to see what it is to be a Christian.”

A key issue for equipping Indigenous leaders is mentoring and training which embraces and reflects the Indigenous experience, says Ms Prentis, and the next Grasstree conference will encompass learning about the past, however painful.

“What we are looking for at the next Grasstree is to really understand Aboriginal people’s involvement with the church over history. This one, we started to understand where we as individuals have come from. The next Grasstree is about where we as Aboriginal Christians have come from, and how that happened. It’s building that foundation.”

Preach your heart out

Pull out the popcorn, it's time for the sermon. **Dianne Jensen** explores how preaching styles have changed, and why good preaching still matters.

When comedian George Burns suggested that the secret of a fine sermon is to have a good beginning and a good ending, with the two as close together as possible, he could not have imagined the entertainment provided by the modern preacher.

Puppets, drama, videos, storytelling, interactive dialogues and Lego people portraying biblical characters are just some of the creative tools used by the contemporary preacher.

For those with memories of what Victorian novelist Anthony Trollope described as “that anxious longing for escape” on Sunday mornings, the changes are like a fresh breeze.

Others, confronted by technological wizardry and expectations outside their comfort zone, may depart from a worship service feeling less than satisfied.

It's in our genes

Preaching—both ordained and lay—is in our nonconformist DNA. The Congregationalist, Methodist and Presbyterian traditions, which came together to form the new pilgrim community of the Uniting Church in Australia, were firmly rooted in the importance of preaching the word.

The *Basis of Union*, the Uniting Church's foundational document, sets out the conviction that through the power of the Holy Spirit, through human witness in word and action, God's message of salvation and redemption is made known to the world.

And in spite of changing times and different expectations, preaching still matters to Uniting Church congregations.

The National Church Life Survey (NCLS) 2011 Uniting Church profile showed that 52 per cent of respondents agreed that the preaching at their church was usually very helpful, with only two per cent saying that it was rarely or never helpful.

Rev Dr Malcolm Coombes, principal of Trinity Theological College, believes that while we shouldn't limit our witness to what happens in a sermon, good preaching continues to have an important role.

“It is partly through preaching that we can command people's attention and awaken faith when it is in the power of the Holy Spirit,” he says. “It is through preaching that people can be called to be disciples. It is through preaching that people can be encouraged in their living in faith.”

Pushing the boundaries

There is nothing wrong with doing things differently, believes Dr Coombes; in fact, it is essential.

“The shape, form, style, and content of preaching need to be constantly questioned in the light of changing society. It always has needed to be questioned,” he says. “Our society is so different to that in which Jesus, Paul, or Wesley spoke. We cannot simply transplant New Testament sermons into our world today without thinking about what we are doing, or without considering how people listen differently today.”

Rev Mel Perkins, Christian educator and Pilgrim Learning Community (PLC) lecturer is one of the team behind the “Foundations of Preaching” course offered by Trinity Theological College and PLC. The unit provides theological perspectives as well as practical instruction on sermon development and delivery.

“I enjoy presenting sermons in a variety of formats,” says Ms Perkins. “It connects into my training as a secondary teacher, knowing that people learn and take in information in different ways—so, for example, not all of us are auditory learners, and yet most of our sermons are presented in aural form only. Offering people the opportunity to engage with and hopefully hear the word through different ways of interacting with the Biblical text may allow some to ‘hear’ something

“The shape, form, style, and content of preaching need to be constantly questioned in the light of changing society”
Rev Dr Malcolm Coombes

".....AMEN. AND NOW, A LITTLE SURPRISE FOR EVERYONE - A POP QUIZ TO SEE WHO WAS LISTENING TO THE SERMON...."



Artwork: Phil Day
facebook.com/
PhilDayCartoons

they haven't 'heard' before. I like to engage people with visual and kinaesthetic activities, and multi-sensory and multi-intelligence experiences."

It's an approach echoed by lay preacher Tanya Errey from Chinchilla, who is in the final stages of completing her certification through Pilgrim Learning Community.

The flexible PLC course has provided an academic framework and plenty of encouragement.

"Seeing how you could bring your own individual style into preparing a message and delivering a sermon was encouraging," says Ms Errey. "You weren't constrained by rigid rules. Of course we have a set formula for service preparation and things like that, but the Uniting Church really embraces a lot of creativity within individual expression and that appealed to me.

"I do a lot of congregational participation and response work. I try and have something different every week, but it's always participatory so the congregation has ownership of the service as well."

Back to basics

While cross-platform communication technologies have radically altered our preferred ways of "listening", what hasn't changed is the role of preaching, and the elements which make it effective. Just as a sermon is not simply a matter of providing facts laced with logical argument, the use of technology, creative arts and interactive formats are not substitutes for good preaching.

Dr Aaron Ghiloni, Director of Studies—Ministry, Mission, and Leadership at Trinity Theological College, collaborated with Mel Perkins on the preaching unit offered by PLC and the college. On

the subject of excellence in preaching, he quotes St Augustine, who suggested that preaching has three core functions: to inform, to delight, and to move.

"It's important for preachers to have a mix of these styles," says Dr Ghiloni. "Communicating knowledge must be coupled with calls to action; excellence in aesthetical form must be coupled with passion and commitment."

Lectures on Preaching (1881) by Rev Phillips Brooks, delivered before the Divinity School of Yale College, contains some surprisingly relevant advice.

Preaching is the "communication of truth by man to men" writes Dr Brooks, in which "message" and "witness" are essential elements.

"It is to be a message given to us for transmission, but yet a message which we cannot transmit until it has entered into our own experience, and we can give our own testimony of its spiritual power."

Preaching is not about meeting the needs and wants of the congregation, he says, but "to apprehend in all their intensity the wants and dangers of this life, then to know all through us that nothing but Christ and His Redemption can thoroughly satisfy these wants."

Christ at the centre

Dr Brooks' unflinching view of the centrality of preaching nothing less than salvation for all is confronting in an age where Christianity is simply one religion among many.

Ms Perkins agrees that preaching for conversion is a challenging business.

"It means that the preacher expects the Spirit to be active (the Word to be alive) as they prepare, write

and speak—both for themselves and for those to whom they are speaking. But to preach any other way—is that really preaching the gospel?"

Rev Ray Hunt, a retired minister who was Superintendent Minister of Wesley Mission Brisbane for 18 years, is a powerful exponent of traditional preaching. He believes that the power of the spoken word is undiminished, and that the pulpit is an important symbol of preaching the word.

"Good preaching always has two aspects; Christ is at its centre, his coming and dying and resurrection, and the other is the pastoral care of the people, that what you are preaching about indicates that you understand where people are.

"The key is always the interpretation of the scriptures, and what it means for people today that they might be free and be refreshed to live as Christians in the world," he says.

Trinity Theological College is providing renewed attention to training both lay and ordained in the art of preaching.

"Over the last few years we have introduced a preaching unit which candidates must complete, and we are introducing a new system of field education experiences (including preaching) over the whole time that candidates are at college," says Dr Coombes.

"Learning about preaching doesn't stop when candidates exit college."

For more information about preaching courses visit pilgrim.ucaqld.com.au or trinity.qld.edu.au



Emmanuel rejoices

Cairns Emmanuel Uniting Church is one of the most culturally diverse in Queensland. Rohan Salmond spoke to interim minister Rev Peter Woodward.

What's happening in your congregation?

The Emmanuel Congregation is in a period of transition. I'm the intentional interim minister for 2013, but the processes of calling a minister to commence in early 2014 is well in hand. The congregation is looking forward to a new phase in their multi-cultural journey as they share faith with each other and the community around them.

What does being a multicultural church mean to you.

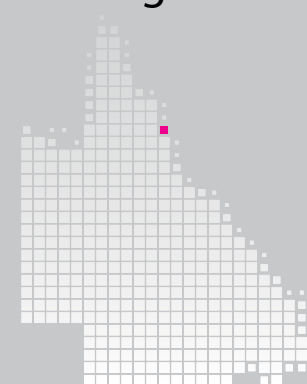
Over the last seven or eight years Cairns Emmanuel has become an increasingly multi-cultural congregation with a rich diversity of peoples joining the congregation, mostly from the Pacific and Asia. That does not include the Korean congregation which has been active in the church complex for more than 15 years. The result is that people of non-European background now outnumber the white-skinned people, and no single group is a majority. This adds to the richness of the mixture as the different cultures and faith experiences inform each other, cause moments of tension and give opportunity for growing together.

This means that many who attend worship celebrate their faith in a language other than their "heart" language, so we recently conducted a multicultural service on 29 September. This brought together all the groups who use the church complex. The service was in 11 different languages in a celebration which flowed from language to language, such as singing "This is the Day" in English, Korean, Tok Pisin, Aroma (from near Milne Bay), Bahasa, Bhutanese (Nepali), Tuvaluan, Samoan and Fijian.

What does creating disciples mean for your church community?

Besides the attendance at worship, Bible studies and an Alpha Course, one of the key aspects of discipleship is our life together. With the diversity of cultures and expectations, the command to "love one another" sometimes has interesting implications; and it is a journey that we are continually living and growing in.

Cairns Emmanuel Uniting Church



Fast facts:

Community:

- > 1700 km north of Brisbane
- > Gateway to the Great Barrier Reef
- > Population of approximately 153 075

Mission focus:

- > To worship God, grow in faith and reach out with his love to others

What's on:

- > Women's evening fellowship
- > Regular Sunday evening prayer night
- > Emmanuel Youth Group

Online:

- > emmanuelcairns.com



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Christian meditation
at Taizé
Photo: Damir Jelic



Remembering silence

Rev Adrienne Dempster, facilitator of the Maleny Uniting Church Christian meditation group, reminds us to make space to hear the still small voice of God.

On 11 November 1918, there was silence.

The guns fell silent on that day in November, and on the same day in 2013, our nation will again observe one minute's silence at the eleventh hour. Silence and remembering, one giving space and meaning to the other.

In 2011 my husband and I visited the Menin Gate in the Belgian town of Ypres. On that gate is the following inscription:

HERE ARE RECORDED NAMES OF OFFICERS AND MEN WHO FELL IN YPRES SALIENT BUT TO WHOM THE FORTUNE OF WAR DENIED THE KNOWN AND HONOURED BURIAL GIVEN TO THEIR COMRADES IN DEATH.

Today the people of Ypres still remember at 8.00 pm each day. The street running through the gate is closed off, buglers play the Last Post, there is a short service and there is silence. They honour and remember the 54 000 men of the former British Empire whose remains were never recovered from the battlefields that surround their town—the most comprehensively razed town in Europe. My grandfather and great uncle were two of these.

In the stillness of our November silence, for one moment, we turn our thoughts away from our own present distractions and give focus to memory. The remembering is deeply personal for many and yet, profoundly communal. That which is God-like within us surfaces, and we find within ourselves a likeness to the God of the long-term memory, “Though a woman forgets the child she bore, I will not forget you”. God does not forget them, and nor do we.

I find gentle parallels to what, as a nation, we experience on Remembrance Day, and what happens in Christian meditation. There, it is the space—the silence—we give to God for God's self-revelation, which gives our lives meaning. An aged rabbi once told his students, “It is the white spaces, the silences, between the words that give the words their meaning.”

The discipline of silence is one of the three foundational concepts of Christian meditation: stillness, silence and simplicity. In 20 minutes of silence, that which is God-like within us is enabled to flourish and grow. No words are spoken. The distractions of our current lives are set aside. We remember our Lord as we inwardly pray our mantra, “Maranatha, maranatha. Come Lord Jesus”. We remember him.

‘The remembering is deeply personal for many and yet, profoundly communal’

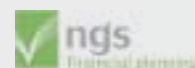


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The Hunger Games: Catching Fire is due for release on 22 November
Photo: Lionsgate

Aflame with uncomfortable truths

With the upcoming release of *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire* at the end of November, buzz is once again gathering around the franchise, originally a trilogy of books written by Suzanne Collins. In September, the first book of the *The Hunger Games* series was discussed on Jennifer Byrne's ABC show, *Books that Changed the World*—alongside titles including Darwin's *The Origin of Species* and Homer's *The Iliad*.

Why are these novels, and their cinematic adaptations, so powerful? The parallels between *The Hunger Games*' setting of Panem and that of our own world are easy to draw; the exploitative relationship between the wealthy Capitol and its impoverished districts hits uncomfortably close to home. The media saturation the citizens of Panem experience feels familiar too, as does the way that media is used to reinforce, rather than challenge, the unjust social order.

The Hunger Games trilogy revolves around the Hunger Games themselves, an annual "celebration" during which the Capitol takes a male and a female

teenager from each of the 12 districts as tribute. These teens are then placed in an arena to fight to the death in a glitzy, nationally televised event. Unlike our Olympic Games, which celebrate the ideal of friendly competition, the Hunger Games are designed to remind the districts of their total subjugation to the Capitol.

It is a concept that initially horrifies us, but the viewer of the new *Hunger Games* film is doing what the characters in the movie are doing: watching the Hunger Games. It is an act that feels innocent enough, but which makes the viewer a participant in the corrupt system of oppression depicted in the story. *The Hunger Games* series is powerful because it reminds us that we are no different to an ordinary citizen of the Capitol; they still think of themselves as essentially good people, but they are implicated in the injustice that makes the Games a reality.

What are our real-world parallels? It's a question to which real-world audiences should give attention.

Rohan Salmond
Cross-platform editor

“The exploitative relationship between the wealthy Capitol and its impoverished districts hits uncomfortably close to home”

Wonderful Memories



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Holy Fool
Michael Leunig
Allen & Unwin, 2013
RRP \$49.99

Exalting the holy fool

Michael Leunig has made teapots, ducks, crescent moons, fish and flowers an enduring fixture in the Australian cultural landscape. Perhaps best known for his cartoons, which feature regularly in *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age*, Leunig's latest collection of artwork, *Holy Fool*, instead draws heavily from his other works: paintings, etchings, mixed-media collages and sculptures.

Leunig's work is always whimsical and introspective and *Holy Fool* is no different. The collection examines an idea contained in most of Leunig's work—that of the holy fool itself, which he describes as “a character who does not conform to social norms of behaviour ... but is regarded as having a compensating divine blessing or inspiration”. This fool, genderless, with a bulbous nose, lidless eyes and expressive mouth has become iconic of Leunig's work, making his style one of the most recognisable in the country.

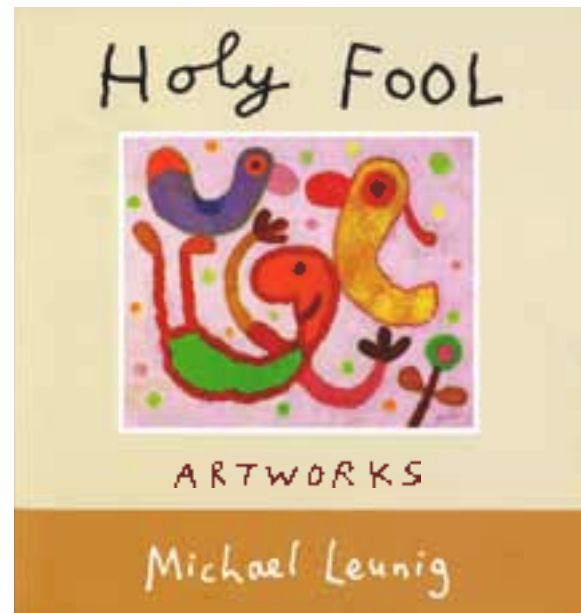
Holy Fool is profoundly spiritual, and there are many points when Leunig's Anglican upbringing can be seen in his art. A Christian religious influence is explicit in a number of works contained

here, but especially in *Do this in remembrance of me*, an acrylic painting of one fool, sitting, drinking from a bowl offered by another fool, kneeling. In true Leunig style, a duck balances delicately on top of the kneeling fool's head.

Of course, Leunig's primary audience isn't Christians in particular, but there are themes contained in *Holy Fool* which are especially interesting to people of Christian faith. In its examination of the character of the holy fool, Leunig's book echoes Jesus' reminder that “unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3).

The wide-eyed fool is sometimes joyous, sometimes melancholic, but always bears a life-filled spirit that shines through every page. The fool is inseparable from the form of Leunig's art itself; both are at once simple and profound, innocent and wise. As a result, *Holy Fool* is not just beautiful, but also challenging. Herein lies the example for Christians and the institutional church—to be holy fools, all of us.

Rohan Salmond
Cross-platform editor



“Leunig's book echoes Jesus' reminder that “unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven”

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Lifeline Darling
Downs rural
mobile counsellor
Brian Steele on
the road
Photo: Supplied

Rural tragedy: why mental health matters

Dianne Jensen talks to Lifeline Darling Downs rural mobile counsellor **Brian Steele**, the only men's counsellor in the Western Downs region.

The telephone call came on the weekend. A young man who had only just made an appointment to see the sole men's counsellor in the Western Downs region had committed suicide.

Lifeline Darling Downs rural mobile counsellor Brian Steele takes calls from health professionals, community workers, worried family members and ordinary people seeking help. Based in Dalby as part of the Western Downs Counselling Project, he clocks up hundreds of kilometres on dusty roads in a region which extends from Wandoan to Tara and west to Dulacca.

After 25 years in the area, he knows that the odds are stacked against people living with mental health issues in remote and regional areas—especially men.

A 2012 Griffith University report for the Australian Suicide Prevention Advisory Council indicated that male suicide rates in remote areas (36.32 per 100 000) between 2005 and 2007 were significantly higher than in non-remote areas (18.25 per 100 000). It also revealed that the prevalence of mental health disorders in rural suicide was 84 per cent, compared to 70 per cent in the urban group.

Mr Steele supports men and boys struggling with issues such as depression, anger and aggression, in a culture where males are expected to tough it out rather than talk.

"There has always been a bit of a stigma about mental health," says Mr Steele, "and that's

why farmers and people who have always been staunchly independent don't like to think that there is a mental health issue because they don't want that label."

Programs raising awareness about mental health and the availability of services such as the Lifeline rural counselling project are gradually whittling away at these attitudes, he adds, and some men are beginning to seek help, especially when they can talk to another man.

His diverse case load reflects the too-familiar cost of human relationships under stress: divided families, changing roles, social isolation, and fractured partnerships. The rapid social and economic change and recurring natural disasters experienced by Western Downs communities have added to the impact.

"I know we talk about the effects of drought and flood and mining—all of those are very important—but there is a wide range of general relationship issues which often these other things impact.

"Most men with mental health problems are referred to me for anger issues, and aggression is a big thing with men. The sources of anger can be many and varied. Uncertainty about their future and the future of their property can trigger anger issues in people," says Mr Steele.

"There's a lot of pain and a lot of hurt inside, and sometimes it's not until they just 'crack' that people are aware."

For 24/7 crisis support, call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or visit lifeline.org.au

“Uncertainty about their future and the future of their property can trigger anger issues in people”
Brian Steele



Brisbane church leaders shine light on corruption

Uniting Church Queensland Synod Moderator Rev Kaye Ronalds joined Brisbane church leaders at a prayer vigil on 17 October against the endemic corruption which keeps people in poverty across the world.

The ecumenical vigil at Wilson Outlook Reserve in Brisbane was one of an estimated 2000 prayer vigils held worldwide during Anti-poverty Week from 13–19 October. The initiative is part of a campaign by Exposed, a global coalition of churches and organisations including Micah Challenge and the World Council of Churches.

Micah Challenge Australia's *Shine the Light* campaign is calling on the Federal Government to implement measures to improve transparency and to enable the governments of developing countries to better hold multinational companies to account for the taxes they pay in the countries in which they operate.

For more about Micah Challenge Australia's *Shine the Light* campaign visit micahchallenge.org.au/shine-the-light

For more about the global Exposed campaign visit exposed2013.com

Queensland Synod Moderator Rev Kaye Ronalds with other church and community leaders at the *Shine the Light* prayer vigil
Photo: Micah Challenge

Summer Madness—2013 registrations open!

Summer Madness is the Queensland Synod's youth camp for teenagers in grades seven to 12. It runs from 13–16 December at Alexandra Park Conference Centre on the Sunshine Coast.

Activities include worship, Bible studies, electives and crazy games. Summer Madness is a great time for young people to get together, worship God, have fun and learn about being a game-changer for God.

Register before 29 November at summermadness.com.au and join in the fun.

National Lay Preachers Conference 2014

The Synod of Western Australia will soon host Mandjar, next year's National Lay Preachers Conference from 5–7 April 2014. Mandjar is for worship leaders, Sunday school leaders, lay preachers and lay leaders in every ministry of the Uniting Church.

The Western Australia Lay Preachers Association has prepared a program focusing on the theme, *One Calling, Many Responses* on behalf of all the associations in other synods and presbyteries. Discussion leaders include Nancy Ault, Bill Loader, Geof Lilburne and Ian Tozer.

Register by 28 February 2014 by contacting Doug Burtenshaw, conference organiser at s.d.burtenshaw@wn.com.au or call 08 9525 1917.

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2014 Synod calendar winners



How could you grow faith in 2014?

Benjamin Powell, 5: Listening to my Sunday School teacher, reading my Bible and praying.

Brielle Powell, 8: Doing family devotions, listening to Sunday School lessons and praying.

Charlize Leonard, 7: Prayer, sharing our faith with others, trusting God.

Charlotte Watson, 12: Like a mustard seed, faith is grown through the nurturance of patience and love.

Cloe Yu, 12: To spread the word of the Lord through the Bible.

Ella Currie, 10: By reading Jesus' messages.

Ella John, 9: Pray, read devotions, Sunday School.

Emma Hill, 10: The love of God grows with the people through the Bible and with our family and friends at church.

Eva Bojorge, 5: Be more kind and considerate to others.

Hamish Gomersall, 14: Involve myself in both the church and wider community.

Rhianna Rankin, 16: Faith grows as you walk with God through the seasons of life.

Riley van Niekerk, 12: Learn his teachings and pass them on to others.

Sarah Channer, 17: By fulfilling the purpose that the Lord has for me by using the gifts God has given me.



2014 synod calendar

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