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QUEENSLAND SYNOD

August 2014

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Presbytery Minister vacancy

The Pilgrim Presbytery of Northern Australia (PPNA) is inviting applications from those who may have heard God's call to serve in this position.

With the return to Queensland of the previous Presbytery Minister Rev Jenny Tymms, the Presbytery is seeking to fill the Presbytery Minister position, which is now vacant.

This full-time position is based in the Synod office in Darwin and a manse and vehicle are provided.

The focus of the position is to provide pastoral care for the Presbytery's fifteen ministers and congregations and, through working with the Presbytery Executive and Pastoral Relations and Placements Committee, provide leadership and support across the Presbytery.

A key feature of this position is to work with and further develop the partnership with the Northern Regional Council of Congress (NRCC), the Northern Synod and UCA agencies.

Applications for this position are sought by **30 September 2014**.

For further information about this position please contact Mr Peter Jones, Synod General Secretary, peter.jones@ns.uca.org.au or 08 8982 3400.



The United Church in Australia
NORTHERN SYNOD



Expressions of Interest

Milpara Project Coordinator - Brisbane

We are looking for a person with appropriate skills and enthusiasm for church and community to coordinate the development of an emerging project that aims to integrate Church and Community in a way that puts vitality into local churches.

Information about this project can be found at:
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Journey

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



Invest for others

When I lived on Iona in Scotland, I heard a very interesting interpretation of the Parable of the Talents, the story Jesus tells about a master entrusting three of his servants with different amounts of money (Matthew 25:14–30).

I had always been told that the servant who buried his money, rather than trading it to make more like the other two, was lazy and unrighteous. The interpretation I heard on Iona was originally from a slum in Brazil. When the residents of the slum heard this parable, they said it was obvious that the man who buried his money actually did the right thing. Why?

The servants who traded their money both doubled their investment—very impressive! But how could they have done that without taking advantage other people? To those people who lived in the slum, the man who refused to participate in exploitative trading was righteous, even though it brought about the wrath of his cruel master.

What we do with the money we have is important. Saving for the future is prudent, but storing up wealth at the expense of other people is something we should avoid. Making ethical investments is one way to ensure our savings aren't harming other people (page six), and the Queensland Synod is doing a lot of work to establish a formal policy on the matter.

But it's not just our financial investments we need to manage with integrity. Our time is also important. Betty Willis, who we profile on page ten, is well-known in the Uniting Church for being an advocate for Pacific women. She is a great example of someone using their time to invest in others; even at 92 she is actively involved in her church mission committee. It's never too late to give your time!

I hope you enjoy this edition of *Journey*.

Rohan Salmond
Cross-platform editor



Mixing money and morals

The first cash I remember earning was the money we earned as children by picking ginger on the neighbour's farm. It involved sitting all day in the sun snapping off the green stalks and the ropey roots from the tuber. By the end of the week we had some money that we could use any way we chose.

It seemed curious to me to discover that you could also earn money by leaving it in the bank doing nothing. I had no idea what the bank did with the money that I left in my account.

Medieval theologians were critical about the practice of usury that charged outrageous amounts of interest on the money lent. In the ancient world there are records that indicate that the lender sometimes charged as much as one third of the amount loaned. At times the lender demanded that a pledge be given to demonstrate that the money would be repaid. Some even required that a slave or a child be left to work for the lender until the loan was repaid.

Loan sharks are not a modern invention and humans still battle greed and envy.

Paul advises Timothy to, "Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment."

1 Timothy 6:17-18

Being a steward of wealth involves weighing a complex array of opportunities against our values.

I have been interested to read about social enterprise initiatives that combine commercial trading with some kind of mission. The trade is not just to generate funds for mission. An example of this would be a café which trains unemployed youth to become qualified baristas. Government will sometimes fund such enterprises providing they can raise an equal contribution from private investors.

Some people like to be able to be involved in the choices about how their money is used whereas others prefer to leave it to someone else to make the decisions about what to produce, who to employ and where to find a market.

We need to acknowledge that by leaving the choices to others we abdicate the responsibility for the choices and weighing it against our values. The money in your superannuation fund might be invested to develop a new mine, to turn old forest timber into furniture or to build a new child care centre.

It can be good to understand your investments so that you know how your money is being used and whether it matches your values. "Godliness with contentment is great gain."

Rev Kaye Ronalds
Queensland Synod Moderator

Monday Midday Prayer

*Creator, Redeemer, Comforter,
as we make our choices in life
guide us to invest in your kingdom
and the things that moths cannot
eat nor rust destroy.*

Amen

Moderator's diary

8 August

Induction service for chaplain,
Rev Ben Webb, The Lakes
College

14 August

Synod Interfaith Committee
hosts Dr Ozawa for a workshop
on *Disaster response in a multi-
faith context*, Auchenflower

24 August

Blue Care Sunday
Granite Belt, Stanthorpe and
Severn Lea congregations

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Australia loses credible climate voice

The repeal of the carbon tax will reportedly reduce household electricity bills by up to 50c per day, but is the long-term cost worth it? **Rohan Salmond** reports.

Bucking global trends, Australia became the first nation to repeal its carbon price legislation when bills cleared the Senate in July.

In a joint media release, Prime Minister Tony Abbott and Minister for the Environment Greg Hunt said, “Scrapping the carbon tax will take a cost burden off Australian businesses. It will make it easier for them to compete and create more jobs.

“The carbon tax was a \$9 billion a year hit on the Australian economy. Australian businesses either had to absorb the costs or pass it on to consumers.”

A July 2014 Australian National University report found household electricity prices rose by an average of 10 per cent under the tax, but it was effective in reducing Australia’s national carbon emissions.

According to the report, “The combined impact attributable to the carbon price is estimated as a reduction of between 5 and 8 million tonnes of CO2 emissions (3.2 to 5 per cent) in 2012/13 and between 6 and 9 million tonnes (3.5 to 5.6 per cent) in 2013/14.”

The Uniting Church in Queensland Uniting Green Liaison Bruce Mullan said, “I believe we have lost any entitlement to have a credible voice in the international conversation about climate change strategy.

“Although only responsible for a small percentage of global carbon emissions, Australia has by far the highest emissions per capita of any country. What a terrible example we set for the rest of the world.

“Our responsibility is not just to ourselves but also to our near neighbours in the low-lying atolls of Tuvalu and Kiribati and to the millions worldwide who will be displaced or whose lives will be put at risk because of climate change.

“In our first Statement to the Nation, the Uniting Church in Australia said, ‘We are concerned with the basic human rights of future generations and will urge the wise use of energy, the protection of the environment and the replenishment of the earth’s resources for their use and enjoyment.’ I hope we can hold ourselves to that bold and visionary commitment and encourage our nation to do likewise.”

*Read the full ANU report on the impact of the carbon tax at tinyurl.com/CarbonTaxReport
Sign up for the Uniting Green newsletter at ucaqld.com.au/social-responsibility/uniting-green*

“I believe we have lost any entitlement to have a credible voice in the international conversation about climate change strategy.”
Bruce Mullan



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Storing up treasures for good



Investing ethically is all well and good, but the realities of it are more complex than you may think. **Mardi Lumsden** explores.

Prior to the last Queensland Synod meeting in May 2013 the New South Wales/Australian Capital Territory Synod in Session resolved to divest from stocks and shares in corporations engaged in the extraction of fossil fuels and to redirect their investments to renewable energy. This sparked nationwide media interest and reinvigorated a six-year discussion for the Queensland Synod around having an ethical investment policy of its own.

The Queensland Synod Finance Investment and Property (FIP) Board has drafted an ethical investment policy and is seeking feedback from Uniting Church members.

The United Nations Principles for Responsible Investment state that responsible investment is, “an approach to investment that explicitly acknowledges the relevance to the investor of environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors, and the long-term health and stability of the market as a whole”.

Ethics in a rich man's world

Matthew Moore Senior Portfolio Manager—Treasury and Investments (NSW/ACT Synod), sits on various committees including the NSW/ACT Synod Ethical Investments Monitoring Committee, the Christian Investors Advisory Forum (as chair) and the Assembly Investment Committee (as chair).

Matthew says ethical investing has been a long-term conversation for the NSW/ACT Synod, with a policy in place since the late 1990s which has had continual review to reflect changing contexts.

The 2014 policy reflects the fossil fuel divestment strategy that was approved by the NSW/ACT Synod last year.

“Our strategy was to look at all organisations that have a direct exposure to fossil fuel extraction and then we would implement a three-year staged divestment process.

“This process included whether the companies in question had potential offsets from income that came in from the renewables sector. We felt that the renewables sector was fairly immature in Australia and we would like to see that industry developed in some way and having a policy that encourages renewables would see some of the mining companies start to put some Research and Development into that sector.

“Things are starting to gain momentum not only with faith-based investors but mainstream investors are starting to look at this as well.”

According to the Responsible Investment Association Australasia (RIAA), in 2013 eight of the top ten investment managers in Australia had signed on to the UN Principles for Responsible Investment. In their 2014 report, released in July, responsible investments were up 13 per cent to \$153 billion. That equates to 14 per cent of total assets under management.

Risky business

In Queensland, FIP Board Chair Andrew McBryde says getting ethical investment right is very tricky.

“The complexity of the world that we live in makes framing a pure ethical investment strategy very difficult,” he says. “On one hand to be prudent and manage risk you need to invest with certain institutions and you could simply say that in Australia that means the four big banks. Once you move below that, the credit risk of investing with some funds increases.”

“We wouldn’t want to get supernatural returns from industries we don’t ethically believe in”

Neil King



Despite their relatively low risk, the big four banks have their own demons. In 2009 the Uniting Church Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, along with other organisations, was part of a successful campaign to convince the ANZ Bank to stop funding companies involved in the production of cluster munitions.

Just prior to this revelation, the Queensland Synod had organised a much-needed line of credit through the ANZ bank.

“We’d done the deal before it happened. It was very inconvenient,” says Andrew. “The logical question you could leap to is would we have changed our minds [if we’d known]? Given the situation we were in at the time, possibly not.

“At the time we took a view that we don’t have any money to invest so we will put the whole of our investment strategy, which included the ethical investment policy, on the back burner.”

Andrew says it is up to investors, individuals and churches to find out exactly what and who they are investing in and if there is a mistake, to move out of that investment.

“The church’s strong sense of social justice permeates many of the financial decisions that are taken,” he says. “The view of the FIP Board is that this is subject to continuous review so nothing is locked in forever.

“We wouldn’t have crafted a policy that we couldn’t work with. We are not currently locking ourselves into any investments that are illiquid.”

Comparing apples with oranges

According to Treasury and Investments (NSW/ACT Synod) Executive Director Neil King, the amount of investment held in a company or industry under ethical review shouldn’t be important; if a church is making an ethical stand, it can’t afford to have a cent of unethical investments.

“If you make an investing decision based on how much money you have invested you are not making an ethical investing decision, you’re making a normal investing decision. Stewardship in our sense is both ethical and financial.”

Neil says it’s important that ethical and non-ethical investments are not compared directly to the same index.

“As soon as people see your returns, if you have benchmarked against the ASX 300, the variance, either positive or negative can be due to the fact is that you are excluding 15 to 20 per cent of the benchmark because of ethical investing. It is not a fair direct comparison.

“It creates endless debate but we bring it down to the centrality of what stewardship is. We wouldn’t want to get supernatural returns from industries we don’t ethically believe in. That is where our stewardship of the church’s money actually has to take precedence over the pure return that we get.”

It is important to manage people’s expectations, but on many measures ethical funds have been outperforming non-ethical funds in the last three years. Ethical investment of the church’s funds does not preclude responsible returns.

“Mining resources have battled over the last couple of years so the ethical investments have probably out-performed,” says Neil. “It has probably been a good play but we are not focusing on that.”

Neil says it is important to remember the intent behind an ethical investment policy.

“Don’t get caught up in the volume of the investment but get caught up in the story of why it is being done and our stewardship of the whole of creation.”

For Andrew McBryde and the Queensland Synod FIP Board, an ethical investment policy only scratches the surface.

“It’s not just about where we put our money in order to get a cash return. It’s about how we, as the people of God in the space that we are in, actually invest everything: our lives, our talents and the money.

“The challenge from the FIP Board to the rest of the church is, OK, we’ve talked about this much; what about the rest?”

To read the Queensland Synod’s draft ethical investment policy visit bit.ly/U179w7

To give the FIP Board your feedback on the policy visit surveymonkey.com/s/7FVF5BS



Lovelyn Tonavi from Guadalcanal United Church in Solomon Islands congregation and Kristy Coleman from Beenleigh Regional Uniting Church participate in a pastoral care workshop in Aola village.
Photo: Alan Robinson

Both are transformed

Bruce Mullan looks at two very different churches with a great partnership.

The United Church in Solomon Islands Guadalcanal Circuit and Beenleigh Regional Uniting Church in Logan have nothing much in common except a partnership which has been inspirational and transformative for both churches.

Stephen Haase first travelled with two others from Beenleigh to the remote village of Koleasi in the mountains of Guadalcanal in 2011. He says the partnership is all about mutuality. "It's always been about that," he said.

Eleven members of the Guadalcanal Circuit have visited the congregation at Beenleigh over the past three years and 18 members from Beenleigh have travelled to the Solomon Islands. Others who have not travelled have been engaged in hosting visitors and writing letters.

Stephen led the most recent visit to the villages of Kolosulu and Ao where the group carried their bags for four hours with eight river crossings to stay with local congregations.

Having previously participated in a UnitingWorld work party in Papua New Guinea, Stephen finds the partnership concept much more challenging. "It's hard to get your head around it," he said.

"I'm a sort of blokey kind of bloke and if you say it's all about relationships it sounds a bit airy-fairy.

"I still get mates that say to me, 'Are you going over there to build something?' and I say 'No. We're just going to visit friends'."

The Guadalcanal Circuit has 15 congregations, most located in the rugged, mountainous interior of the Guadalcanal Island. Only three are accessible by road.

School teacher Kristy Coleman travelled to the villages of Kolosulu and Aola in 2012 and hopes to return to the Solomon Islands in 2015. Kristy described it as "a life-changing experience".

"It opened my eyes to all the different ways people live and still worship the same God," she said.

For Beenleigh Minister Rev Alan Robinson this long-term partnership has become an important part of the whole congregation's life and work and has given people a bigger vision of what church is.

"One of the temptations for a place like Beenleigh is that you become pretty much enclosed in the region you're familiar with and the way you go about doing things and take a lot of things for granted," he said.

"It's one thing to read in *Journey* about places overseas or the churches involved. But now, these are not just people in a photograph they are actually individuals whose names we know and whose children we learn about."

unitingworld.org.au

“It opened my eyes to all the different ways people live and still worship the same God”

Kristy Coleman

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- not be or have been in paid employment connected to their volunteer work

Nominations close **Friday 22 August 2014** and should be submitted electronically via the UnitingCare Queensland website www.ucareqld.com.au



Enemies come together in love

It is possible to express genuine love for your enemies. **Rev Amel Manyon** describes how she lives out one of the hardest parts of Christian faith.

I grew up in South Sudan, which has a lot of different people from different tribes with different beliefs and languages. Recently the Dinka and Nuer people in South Sudan have been in conflict, and many people have died.

I am Dinka but I am married to a Nuer.

I love Nuer people. They are my husband's people; they are my people. Sometimes I find it difficult telling the Dinka that Nuer people are good. They think that maybe it's just because I am married to them.

But as a Christian I see it in a different way. God is calling us to love our enemies.

Who is our enemy? Is it the one who does bad things? How about the one who lets someone do bad things?

I think the one who lets the person do bad things is my enemy, but because this person is innocent I can bring them near to me with different ways of behaving with them. If I keep telling them different stories and keep loving them, in the end they will come back and say sorry for what they have done. That tells me they are not responsible for what they have done because there is something pushing them to do it. Behind the reasons there is always an evil spirit pushing them.

How do we push past these evil spirits?

Firstly, we put it in prayer because in prayer everything is possible in God's name.

Secondly, we step forward and ask, what are the common things that we can come together on? Instead of talking about what I don't like, it would be better to talk about what is common for us. What things do we share that can bring us together? I think this is very important.

There are a lot of ways that we come together. Even in South Sudan there are people preaching saying, "This is not a conflict between Nuer and Dinka, it is a misunderstanding. There are people being misled by another group and we need to come back to reality."

We understand that we have lost a lot of people but this is not the first time; it has happened before, and we came back together. We can come back together again.

Amel was a speaker at the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women, South Pacific Area Seminar in Brisbane and is minister with Uniting Church Northern Suburbs Dinka Speaking Faith Community, South Australia.

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“What things do we share that can bring us together? I think this is very important”



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Photo: Ashley Thompson

Courageous faith paves the way

How does a self-described shy and nervous girl from the bush become a pioneer for Pacific mission? **Ashley Thompson** reflects on the life of 92-year-old Uniting Church missionary **Betty Willis**.

From country Queensland to the Pacific islands of Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, Betty's faith journey as a woman in mission spans across war, seas and generations of change.

Reliable, steady and committed are the characteristics that describe Betty's generation. Thoughts of self-interest and the luxury of choice are foreign concepts to her. When asked, "Looking back over your life, what would you do differently?" Betty is silent.

"Nothing," she finally replies, "Everything fits in."

"I was never uncertain of God."

The stoicism and resolve of her generation underpins the philosophy of a woman content and adjusted to the turns in her faith journey.

A selfless generation

Born on 28 July, 1922 Betty Willis grew up in the small rural town of Dalveen, Queensland to the tales and sayings of the First World War.

Second eldest of four children and only girl in the family, Betty spent the first half of her life in various administration roles, including a secretarial role at St Stephen's Presbyterian Church (now Uniting) and as general secretary for the Young Women's Christian Association in Toowoomba, before pursuing overseas mission.

Betty grew up during the Great Depression, part of the generation which also fought in the Second World War. It is a generation familiar with struggle and which selflessly serves others, not for recognition, but because it is the right thing to do.

Therefore placing the needs of others above her own is not something this Toowoomba Blue Care resident and Middle Ridge Uniting Church member considers special. Yet her work in championing the role of women in the Pacific Islands is highly regarded across the Uniting Church and has even helped earn her an Order of Australia (OAM).

Close friend and fellow Middle Ridge Uniting Church member Sandra Jessop has been inspired by Betty's humility and long-term commitment to mission.

‘I got a letter saying “Request Miss Willis for Rarongo, Papua New Guinea.” It was almost as though it was something I was supposed to do’



“She was never one to blow her own trumpet. She would get in, she would do the job and if she couldn’t do the job she would try to find someone who could,” says Sandra.

“When I was helping clean up, her Order of Australia was just in amongst other papers. It wasn’t on the wall or anything like that.”

Betty lives a life of courageous faith as documented in her memoirs *Another turn in the road*.

The road less travelled

Seventeen at the outbreak of the Second World War, fate conspired to send Betty in a completely different direction to what society intended. As a single woman in post-war society, Betty found she was free to take up opportunities of work, mission and travel, embracing God’s given direction with open arms.

“As young people in our youth group at church we supported overseas missions (Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands) and I’d been asked to go a couple of times in different capacities but it just hadn’t worked out,” explains Betty.

“So after my father died I was free and waited to see what would happen ... then suddenly one day I got a letter saying ‘Request Miss Willis for Rarongo, Papua New Guinea.’ It was almost as though it was something I was supposed to do.”

In the years that followed, Betty developed women’s programs for Rarongo Theological College of the United Church of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. She became fluent in Pidgin English and has advocated for the advancement of Pacific women ever since.

“I was expected to help the women with basic home care and crafts and encourage them to share weaving patterns,” Betty writes in her memoirs.

“Fortunately I knew enough about the situation in Papua New Guinea to understand that women would need many more opportunities for development than that.”

Best known for her commitment to her Pacific friends, it is surprising to learn her journey in overseas mission only began in 1972 when she was 50 years of age. That act of faith going to Papua New Guinea has led Betty into a position of admiration and respect across the church.

The home front

Since retiring from travel in 2003, Betty has remained an active member of the Middle Ridge Uniting Church in Toowoomba. While Parkinson’s disease has caused her to reconcile herself to a “road with fewer turns,” her continued involvement in the combined mission committee of Middle Ridge and St Stephen’s Uniting Church has never wavered.

Bruce Mullan, former UnitingWorld associate director of church solidarity in the Pacific, has witnessed Betty’s inspiring commitment to the people of the Pacific both overseas and at home.

“For Betty mission has been about people and about relationship. She has mentored and supported so many Pacific people, welcoming them to her church community, providing for their training and development and facilitating their growth as leaders,” says Bruce.

“Whether it’s providing books for the theological college library at Seghe or bringing Solomon Island teenagers to Queensland to participate in youth camps, Betty is always looking for the next opportunity to make something happen for her Pacific friends.”

For as long as he’s been connected to the Uniting Church’s Pacific church partners, Bruce remembers having Betty there: prodding and poking, stirring him to do more.

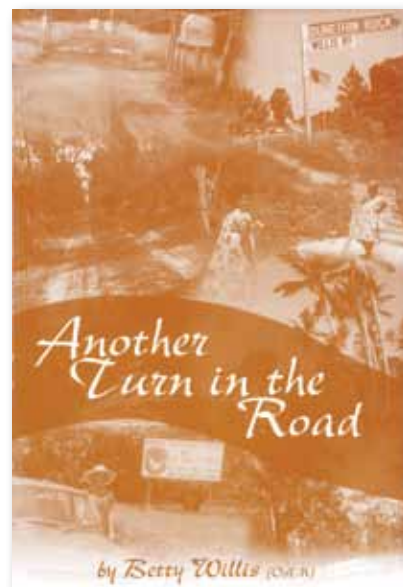
“The most amazing thing is that Betty has continued to do all this into her 90s,” says Bruce. “In the years when most people are retired and taking a rest Betty has been tireless in her continual search for ways of supporting the church partners.”

“The government has given Betty an Order of Australia medal; I think God will give Betty a very special place in his eternal scheme.”

This stoic Uniting Church woman has refused to let age or illness deter her from mission and while her story still has a few more chapters left, the final reflections of her memoirs show her story has already begun to leave an impact.

“As different friends have heard portions of my story, they have commented mainly on two things,” she says. “Firstly, how a small contribution can make a big difference in a life or situation, and secondly, that no matter at what age, there are still contributions we can all make.”

Read more about Betty Willis in her books *Another turn in the road* (available at Trinity Theological Library) and *Poems and stori-yarns*.



In search of the great Rediscovering Christian meditation

The ancient practice of Christian meditation is experiencing a revival, and Uniting Church members are among those rediscovering the value of silence. **Dianne Jensen** reports.

When the street noise and the background chatter finally fade into nothingness, there is silence. And in this place of deep stillness, all subterfuge cast off, we may find that the peace of God does pass all understanding.

“Christian meditation is so that we can participate in the Trinity—the all-encompassing love that holds the whole universe”
Dr Patrick Oliver

This is Christian meditation, an ancient practice which still draws seekers from all traditions to rediscover the spiritual gifts of simplicity, silence and stillness.

Meditation and contemplation have been practised since the genesis of Christianity, from the early writers and Celtic mystics to the monastic traditions of Ignatius of Loyola, Teresa of Avila and Benedict. In the 500 years since the Protestant Reformation, some churches have continued to nurture these practices while others rejected them as medieval and even un-Christian.

The contemporary revival in Christian meditation is credited to John Main, a Benedictine monk who was drawn to explore the Christian roots of the practice which he had first encountered in the East. In 1975 Main opened the first Christian Meditation Centre at Ealing Abbey in London, inspiring the growth of a world-wide community network which transcends culture and denomination. Father Laurence Freeman is currently director of the World Community for Christian Meditation.

For Uniting Church members, versed in worship which is both corporate and austere, those chants and long silences can smack of high church mumbo-jumbo. There's something vaguely heathen about sitting cross-legged or (God forbid) lying on the floor whilst praying. Generally, we are more comfortable rolling up our sleeves for work than spending an hour in quiet contemplation. Like Mother Teresa, we believe that service is love in action.

But sometimes the heart seeks something more, and Uniting Church members are among the growing numbers of contemporary seekers. Congregations across Queensland, from

Rockhampton to Maleny and inner-city Brisbane have formed Christian meditation groups, and others have incorporated meditative elements from the Taizé ecumenical monastic community into their worship.

Learning to let go

Brisbane-based spiritual director Dr Patrick Oliver describes meditation as “a way to help us to hold our perceptions and perspectives a little more lightly, so grace can have a chance to enlarge and enrich them”.

He says that many of us are already using simple meditative techniques when working in the garden, walking or swimming, or through the creative arts.

“Some people find that images such as works of art, sculptures, statues or photography can take them into a space where they aren't endlessly worrying about their mortgage, their children, their futures or their pasts ... music is probably one of the most common portals into a meditative space, along with dance, poetry, drama or spaces of silence or deep mutual love.”

Patrick conducts retreats and workshops around Queensland, including training in spiritual companionship and pastoral care. In his retreats he employs many different prayer forms, including breath prayer (for example, breathing in and out the name “Yahweh” or “Jesus”) and contemplative practices based upon scripture passages and stories.

“We all need to have some form of meditative practice that can lift us out of the sticky swamps of ‘How am I coming across?’, or ‘How can I make sure I'm safe?’ or ‘How can I maintain control?’” he says.

“Some writers have called this mind that is always proving and protecting our ‘false self’. Meditation is a way to ‘clean the lens’—that is, to loosen the hold of the false self so we can focus the mind, or still the mind into a more serene space.”



silence

Shirley Sargeant facilitates contemplative prayer sessions at Stillpoint in Toowong.
Photo: Holly Jewell

He suggests that within this quiet space, our minds, freed from the clutter of anxieties and expectations, might come to a deeper awareness of God's presence.

"St Paul implores us to 'pray always'—which doesn't mean saying holy words every moment, but it does mean to live prayerfully. Meditation can help us in this, for it focuses our anxious little minds away from the myriad of thoughts and distractions that can drive us crazy at times, and which keep the focus upon the rather narrow and ultimately boring question 'How am I doing?' Meditation can help us ask a much bigger question, 'To whom do I belong?'"

Although a wide range of health and wellbeing practitioners encourage the use of meditation practices, Christians and other religious groups regard meditation and contemplation as "states of mind" rather than techniques.

"Many use meditative techniques for peace of mind—and that's great. Or they may use it in order to make better decisions or to cope with the storms that life dumps us into—and that's great too," says Patrick. "Yet Christian meditation is so that we can participate in the Trinity—the all-encompassing love that holds the whole universe. Contemplation is so we can grow more at home in the 'mind of Christ', as Paul terms it."

Opening the door to God

Shirley Sargeant, who teaches contemplative prayer at the Stillpoint centre for personal and spiritual growth, describes meditation as the key to her Christian journey. Shirley is a member of The Gap Uniting Church, where she first encountered Christian meditation at a course run by former Trinity Theological College lecturer Douglas Galbraith.

"It was a revelation to me and to all of us who participated," she recalls. "I felt God had been waiting to speak to me for a long time and what I had done was shut him out by monopolising the conversation. This course opened our eyes or should I say ears, because we came to see that conversation with God has to be a two-way dialogue, so there has to be listening as well, and we have to make space for that."

When the course came to an end, the participants formed their own weekly meditation group which ran for more than 20 years. Once she had retired, Shirley gravitated to Stillpoint in the inner western suburbs of Brisbane as both practitioner and teacher.

She understands that stepping outside the boundaries of traditional practices can be challenging. Long silences are unfamiliar, even confronting.

"I think that is part of our need to be in control, and what we gradually learn in our Christian journey is to give God the place of control ... as you come to know that you are loved unconditionally by God, and to know it deeply and not just intellectually, I think that is when you can totally trust God," says Shirley.

"One of the things that I teach in meditation is that we prepare ourselves, we make an intention that this hour is going to be an hour spent with God, that is entirely for God. We relax ourselves physically and mentally, and we let go of all the other issues of our life that dominate us the rest of the time, and pray to be open to that infilling of the spirit that comes when we ask."

Shirley uses a variety of approaches including scripture reading and prayer, and stimuli such as

graphics, music, Taizé songs and self-imagining.

"Often there might be some kind of object as a worship focus that is placed in the centre of the circle; a cross or a candle if we are talking about Christ as the light of the world, a jug of water if we are talking of the water of life, a pair of old walking shoes if we are talking about following Christ."

Where do I start?

Yes, you can meditate at home, although a meditation group and a spiritual companion will provide invaluable support and direction.

Patrick Oliver suggests "Perhaps the best way to start being open to meditation and contemplation is to begin the practice of noticing your thirst for a deepening awareness of God's presence.

"Living prayerfully is about listening with the ears of the soul (or perhaps we could say 'the third ear'). It's not that we decide one day to pray to God; rather the very inclination within us to pray is itself God's Spirit at work in us.

"Train yourself to be aware of what is happening within you—as Jesus said, 'Stay awake!'"

(Left) Andy's place volunteers at Friday lunch. (Right) A young patron enjoying the Andy's Place 15 years celebration dinner. **Photos:** Frank Millett



Setting a place for everyone

Bundaberg families are “one unexpected expense away from crisis,” UnitingCare Community regional director Richard Johnson told *NewsMail* late last year. A free hot meal has never been in greater need. **Ashley Thompson** reports.

If you find yourself in a difficult season of life, the churches of Bundaberg have you covered:

Anglican Parish of Bundaberg (Dorcas soup kitchen):
Thursday 12–2 pm

Bundaberg Living Word Fellowship (Harvest kitchen):
Tuesday 6–7 pm

Bundaberg Uniting Church (Andy's Place):
Monday and Friday 12–1 pm,
Wednesday evening 6–7 pm

Heritage Christian Centre:
Tuesday 12–12.30 pm

All kitchens apart from Andy's Place require a Centrelink card.

Established 15 years ago by Judy Gallagher out of Bundaberg Uniting Church, Andy's Place is a community-run soup kitchen offering three free meals a week to anyone in need.

“I felt this strong pull that we had to do something, you know we had to actually get out there and physically do something,” says Judy.

“There are a lot of people out of work right now with the slump in the mining boom, a lot of people living on social welfare and there are certainly homeless people out there.”

The Australian Council of Social Services defines poverty in Australia as a single person with less than \$358 of disposable income a week after housing—a situation which affects more than a million Australians. UnitingCare Community says the Wide Bay–Burnett region's poverty level is 50 per cent above the national average.

Offering low-cost housing and a warm climate, Bundaberg has been described as a hotbed of disadvantage. Andy's Place clients demonstrate

the reality that soup kitchens are not just for the homeless but everyday folk experiencing a difficult time.

“There are all sorts of need,” says Judy. “Some soup kitchens want to see a Centrelink card but we just feed anyone who comes without question.”

From small beginnings in 1999 when a young backpacking couple was invited in for a free hot meal, Andy's Place now regularly provides around 150 meals a week, and has served over 68 000 meals in 15 years.

Fully funded by congregations and community members, this soup kitchen has adapted to the evolving needs of the community, never questioning demand in its low socio-economic city.

“We hope to extend this to people from the country that come down for hospital visits and there is grave need for housing, especially for men,” says Judy, “but these are just thoughts at the moment, any way we can be of assistance.”

4–10 August is Homeless Person's Week in Australia.



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small ways congregations can make a difference

1

Stop arguing about the Christmas pageant debacle of 1968 and whose turn it is to wash up the communion glasses.

Small congregations can be like families, drawn together by bonds of love and habit. Don't let familiarity blind you to the gifts and the needs of every member; support each other in faith and remember that longsuffering is an under-rated biblical virtue.

2

Consider the lilies, and how they grow.

Save mowing time and start a small community garden. Clean out the old infants' room and invite a local UnitingCare Queensland service to use the space. If other groups already use your facilities, try to build a relationship based on being partners in the community rather than only landlord/tenant (invite the dance class to perform in worship for example!)

3

There's a lot to be said for a nice cup of tea and a sympathetic ear.

Surprise the teachers at the local school with morning tea, and ask the school chaplain how you can support their

ministry. Build relationships with community business owners and staff by buying locally and encouraging church groups to meet occasionally at the local café.

4

We have it on good authority that there are Christians in other denominations.

Partner with local churches to do things you can't do on your own such as day camp or after-school club. (If your congregation is elderly, avoid climbing walls and high ropes courses.) Community carols, craft stalls, World Day of Prayer are all activities which build community and enhance church profile.

5

Who's counting anyway?

Don't measure your church by the number of special groups or ministries listed in the pew sheet. Instead, assess your many strengths, and the needs of the community outside the church door, and seek to discern how your congregation is called to live out the gospel today (not yesterday or tomorrow).

6

We are one, but we are many.

Connect with UnitingWorld to form partnerships with congregations in other countries. By supporting people working to build sustainable communities you can make an enormous difference. The Uniting Church is a vibrant, dynamic movement of the people of God and your congregation has an important place.

7

Reach out and speak out.

Wherever you live, people in your community care about social justice issues ranging from disability access to saving the Great Barrier Reef. Offer to host community forums or speak out about the Christian commitment to justice and peace. Visit the social responsibility section of the Queensland Synod website for resources. Be part of the conversation.

How else can small congregations make a difference? Join the conversation at journeyonline.com.au

Redcliffe Uniting Church's 2014 Art Competition



Entries close **19 September**, entry forms and further information
Ph: 3283 4066 or visit redcliffe.unitingchurch.org.au

Seeking original entries of any genre: painting, pottery, poetry, photography, drama, dance, music, multimedia, song, short story or anything else based on a theme or story from the Gospel of Mark.

\$1000 in prize money (five \$200 prizes).

Gala presentation and performance night. Saturday 8 November 7.00 pm
Made possible through the Neil James Grant Bequest.



Redcliffe Uniting Church
At the heart of the Peninsula



Day camp blossoms in Roma

Take 45 primary school children with loads of energy and a bush paddock under a wide blue sky, and you have a Uniting Church day camp. **Dianne Jensen** reports.

“It was cold and windy, but we had an absolute blast!” says Jodie Beitz, Roma Uniting Church member and one of the directors of the day camp held in Roma in the July school holidays.

The three-day camp was organised in partnership with Go West, a long-running activity of the Redlands Uniting Churches to support ministry to children and families in rural churches.

Maranoa Uniting Church members Mel and Max Johnston set aside a field at Waverley Downs, their South-West Queensland property, for the event.

“We had a flying fox, low ropes, craft, cooking, and a devotions tent and chill-out zone staffed by Rev Faye [Talatonu] and a chaplain from local schools,” says Jodie.

“One beautiful girl stood up at the end of camp and said that until she had come to camp she hadn’t

had a chance to know who Jesus was and to know about church, and through coming to camp she wanted to know more.”

The local churches were strong supporters, with pastors from other denominations helping with leadership, group assemblies and music. Roma businesses and community groups such as the Maranoa Archery Club also got behind the project.

For the Go West team, the Roma camp was their 15th year of partnering with rural churches. The initiative has sent teams to Longreach, Barcaldine, St George, Charleville and Mundubbera. Redlands churches have run their own day camp every September for more than 35 years.

Project organiser Rev Stephen Rothery, Minister for Youth and Families at Cleveland and Victoria Point Uniting Churches, says that Go West is about encouraging rural churches while challenging people in mission.

“The biggest thing that we are trying to do is to plant the seed for something to grow on its own. All the indications this year are that not only was the camp great fun for all the kids and the parents, the engagement from local churches was really good.

“These activities are a practical experience of ecumenism and a way that both our volunteers and the folk at Roma can get to know other members of the local church—not just in a shared church service but actually spending three or four days working together.”

For the 13 Redlands visitors, the camp was an opportunity for some to step outside their comfort zone.

“Some of our people had only ever been team leaders, but coming out to help launch the activity in Roma allowed them to step into some of the larger roles and areas of responsibility,” says Stephen.

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Navigating the moral minefield

When I was younger, making ethical decisions seemed a fairly straightforward process. As a Christian I had the Bible and centuries of Christian tradition to draw on when it came to making wise ethical choices—all pretty black and white and all pretty easy to understand.

Now I am older things seem much greyer. As a practising Christian and in the minority in an increasingly pluralistic and secular culture, making ethical decisions is a much more complex process.

This is the challenge that Noel Preston addresses in his new book *Ethics With or Without God: Christianity and morality in the 21st century*.

As Preston says, “The twenty-first century is probably the first century in the human era in which a significant proportion of humanity confronts ethical choices without the reference points traditional religion has provided.”

As a Uniting Church Minister and academic who has researched and taught applied ethics in universities, Preston comes to the question of ethics as one for whom the Jesus story is central, albeit from the more progressive end of the Christian spectrum.

Like many of us searching for a common language that Christians and other people of faith might share with secular society when it comes to ethics,

Preston recognises that religious faith still has much to contribute to questions of social and eco-justice but doesn’t own the territory.

He doesn’t dodge the centrality of faith but neither will he let us off the hook on ethical responsibility by acquiescence to simplistic dogma. There is no place in Preston’s ethic for doctrinaire use of scriptural injunctives. Rather, the search for ethical integrity is enlightened by the community and person-centred ethic modelled by Jesus.

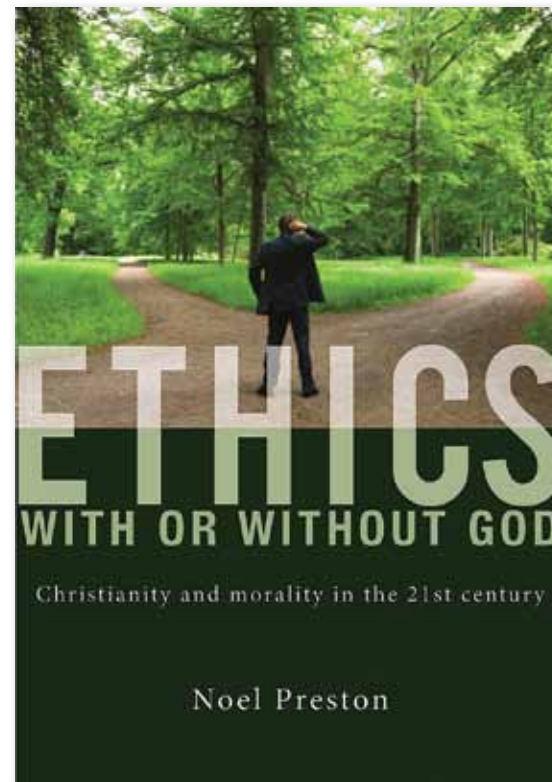
Throughout the book Preston seeks to cultivate a shared, secular-sacred ethic and devotes his attention to how faith and non-religious people together might develop an eco-spirituality for all humanity.

Preston concludes that compassion is the fundamental virtue which underpins ethical integrity and will be the key to the shared creation of a just economy and a peaceful global community.

Peppered with personal recollections, wisdom and stories, this book doesn’t shirk the ethical challenges in the potentially controversial subjects of love, sex, politics and the development of responsible ecological and global principles. You may not always agree with Preston but it’s a challenge worth pursuing.

Available from Morning Star Publishers or the author at (\$22 incl postage) n.preston@griffith.edu.au or 0419 789 249.

Bruce Mullan



Ethics With or Without God: Christianity and morality in the 21st century

Noel Preston
Mosaic Press 2014.
RRP \$22.95



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Andrew Coleman went from participant to site supervisor.
Photo: Wesley Mission Brisbane



Plugging into employment

Wesley Mission Brisbane is assisting jobseekers through a social enterprise which gives them the skills to find employment. **Jessica Mewburn** writes.

Rewired IT, an e-waste recycling business, is a new addition to Wesley Mission Brisbane's employment services area.

Set up late last year, thanks to a Federal Government grant, the Australian Disability Enterprise is recycling computers that would otherwise go to landfill, providing affordable computer equipment for the community and plugging people back into employment.

The operation runs in three sites across south-east Queensland, servicing the Brisbane, Gold Coast and Logan areas.

Program Coordinator Dave Stern says the program is a social enterprise with a focus on serving the community.

"We repair and recycle perfectly good computers and sell them back to the community for an affordable price. We also support local job seekers going through the Work for the Dole Program and provide employment opportunities to people living with a disability.

"It's a fantastic business model. We're giving people an affordable option for a second household computer while helping the environment and job seekers," says Dave.

The program works closely with job agency Max Employment to engage people on the Work for the Dole program and has the capacity to take 15 participants a day on each site.

Along with gaining invaluable IT skills by refurbishing the computers, Dave is passionate about helping his job seekers to leave the program job-ready. He has set the program up to give participants the opportunity to learn new skills in customer service, business operations, career advice, résumé development and job searching.

"The goals are different for all of our participants; for some people it might be getting back into the routine of getting up in time to get to a job and sustain it. For another young guy it was about educating him on basic IT skills—he didn't realise he could access his emails wherever he was and we were able to walk him through that process," says Dave.

"We've already had great success stories and many people only stay with us for a short time before they've been able to re-enter the workforce, which is a great outcome."

rewiredit.simplesite.com

“It’s a fantastic business model. We’re giving people an affordable option for a second household computer while helping the environment and job seekers”
Dave Stern



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(L-R) Rev Peter Lockhart, Rev Kaye Ronalds and Aaron Ghiloni at the Launch of Trinity College Queensland.
Photo: Mardi Lumsden

Trinity College Queensland launches

Trinity College Queensland was formally launched with a celebration service in July. An amalgamation of Pilgrim Learning Community, Chaplaincy Education and Trinity Theological College, the college enables and supports lifelong, professional and ministerial learning.

Theological education for ministers, lay people and chaplains in the Queensland Synod will continue under Trinity College Queensland which now also provides some online courses.

For more information visit trinity.qld.edu.au

Moderator's Medal search begins

The search is on for nominations for the 2014 Moderator's Community Service Medal. Successful nominees will have the opportunity to be presented with their medal during the Uniting Church in Queensland's 31st Synod meeting at Alexandra Park Conference Centre 10–15 October.

To be considered for the medal, nominees must be a volunteer, past or present and have exhibited outstanding service over a number of years. They need to have been involved in community service work other than congregational work and must not be in paid employment connected to their volunteer work.

Nominations can be made via the UnitingCare Queensland website ucareqld.com.au. Detailed information about the nominee and their outstanding contribution to the community should be included to assist the judging panel. Unsuccessful past applicants are encouraged to resubmit their nominations this year.

Nominations close Friday 22 August, 2014.

To the editor

Wesley palliative care is not new

I read with interest your article entitled "Prepare to Meet your Maker" (*Journey*, July 2014, page 12).

I found this enlightening and informative and was pleased to read of the work being undertaken in palliative care at the Wesley Hospital.

However I and several ex-colleagues were somewhat taken aback by the opening comments in the article.

We need to correct your erroneous assertion that 12 years ago palliative care did not exist at the Wesley. There may not have been a dedicated unit as such, but in the 90s palliative care was very much part of the hospital's ethos.

A dedicated palliative care team was formed and comprised nurses, nurse counsellors, therapists, oncologists and chaplains. This group of caring staff under the aegis of Judy Marshall, the then director of nursing, and Libby White, assistant director of nursing-oncology, provided skilled and compassionate care to those patients at the latter stages of their lives.

Joyce Pagan
Banora Point Uniting Church

Submission guidelines for letters to the editor
can be found at journeyonline.com.au/contact/submit



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- Adult faith education via our new online learning platform, Trinity OLÉ
- Certificate IV in Pastoral Care in face-to-face and online modes
- Undergraduate and postgraduate theological studies in affiliation with Australian Catholic University (ACU)
- A growing ebook collection through Trinity Theological Library
- Guided formation in conjunction with the UCA Qld Synod for a range of ministries, including Ministry of the Word, Ministry of Deacon, Pastor, Chaplain, and Lay Preacher



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2. Submit your entry online or by post.

3. 13 winning entries will be published in the 2015 calendar. Winners receive \$50 for themselves and \$50 for their chosen charity.

Hurry! entries close
15 September 2014

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