



The Uniting Church in Australia
QUEENSLAND SYNOD

October 2014

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Journey

**"Screw
pretending"**

Nadia Bolz-Weber

What to do
about the G20

Who does
gambling
benefit?

Vacancy



Board member

The Queensland Synod of the Uniting Church in Australia is seeking to appoint a new member to the Board of UnitingCare Queensland. The appointment will take effect from April 2015.

UnitingCare Queensland provides health and community services to thousands of people every day of the year through its service network - Blue Care, UnitingCare Community, UnitingCare Health and ARRCs (Australian Regional and Remote Community Services) in Queensland and the Northern Territory.

On behalf of the Uniting Church, UnitingCare Queensland's 15 000 staff and 9000 volunteers provide health care, residential aged care, seniors housing and community services for older people, people with disabilities, and children and families. It has a significant regional and remote presence. UnitingCare Queensland has an annual turnover in excess of one billion dollars.

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Journey

Cover: Rev Nadia Bolz-Weber
Photo: Holly Jewell

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Closing date for editorial and advertising for November *Journey* is Monday 13 October. The next issue of *Journey* will be available on Sunday 2 November.



Unapologetically us

My housemate has a moustache. It suits him, but it's unusual to see someone in their 20s wearing such a style. If you ask him about it he'll shrug and say "I've just got to do me". It's an authentic expression of himself.

Our cover story this month is a profile of Rev Nadia Bolz-Weber (page ten), the keynote speaker at the Uniting Church women's conference, UnitingWomen. For obvious reasons I was unable to attend, but the women in my team came back raving about it.

Nadia is a Lutheran minister from Denver, Colorado. She is sharp, eloquent and creative but most of all, she is authentic. Her congregation ministers in innovative ways, like the Blessing of the Bicycles—a day each year they bless implements of human-powered transportation (including crutches and wheelchairs). It's an authentic expression of that congregation which resonates with the wider community.

Nadia's style is unapologetic and exciting. It breathes new life into old forms of worship and forges new friendships between people who are radically different to each other. These are things we should also pursue—and we do some of them already—but the point isn't that Uniting Church folk all need to go out and start sprinkling holy water on bicycles. That's not necessarily who we are. Would it be an authentic expression of your faith?

Uniting Church President Rev Dr Andrew Dutney says that for whatever reason, we are the kind of church God has decided is best to minister in Australia today. It means we can also be unapologetic about who we are, and we don't have to mimic others in order to be the church God wants us to be. What is our authentic expression? How do you "do you"?

Rohan Salmond
Cross-platform editor



Put your hands together for our church!

The trouble with the Uniting Church is that we have taken too literally the biblical principle of not letting the right hand know what the left hand is doing. Not only that, we are not good at blowing our own trumpet in the community.

On the one hand, in Blackall a part-time youth worker is supported by his congregation. Scott meets with the young people in town to talk about life and introduce them to Jesus.

On the other hand, we have lots of congregations that have no young people at all, but their ministry with seniors is legendary.

There are lots of quiet achievers in our church. Without any fanfare they give their time volunteering at the local church or they turn up at work, week after week, in one of our schools or serve on a board.

People in the community know about Lifeline, Blue Care and Frontier Services and many have been treated at one of our fabulous hospitals. Many Queenslanders have a relative in aged care provided by Wesley Mission Brisbane or UnitingCare. Yet the Uniting Church is not the first name that comes to mind if you think of welfare services.

One thing that I appreciate about our church is that it is brave enough to have difficult conversations about sexuality and leadership and

marriage. In Caloundra the congregation holds together members of widely differing theological perspectives but rather than focussing on their different points of view they work together to support our partner church in Tonga.

Our church is prepared to take risks—like having a female moderator.

Our church invites people to be passionate in speaking up and reaching out. Right now a bunch of dedicated youth workers are planning Summer Madness, the youth camp which will include Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people from the Cape to the border.

There are so many fantastic people and great things happening in our church.

So put your hands together and celebrate the stories, gossip the good things and be proud of our church.

North American preacher, William Willimon wrote: “One of the great gifts of God is God’s ability to come to us. To catch up our little lives in God’s purposes, to transform job into vocation, work into witness and life into adventure.”

Thank you for the adventure and privilege of being your moderator for the past three years.

Rev Kaye Ronalds
Queensland Synod Moderator

Monday Midday Prayer

God in community,

*Catch us up into your purposes
that we might live and work to
your praise and glory, with Jesus
our Lord.*

Amen

Moderator’s diary

8 October

Induction of Rev John Adams
and Rev Dennis Corowa,
Presbytery Ministers,
Calvary Presbytery

9 October

Chaplaincy Affirmation Day,
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10–15 October

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induction of Rev David Baker
as Moderator

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Christian protesters decline to leave the Hon Peter Dutton's office.
Photo: Love Makes a Way

Christians protest "state sanctioned child abuse"

An ecumenical group which held a peaceful prayer vigil in federal Health Minister Peter Dutton's office in September was removed by police. *Journey* reports.

Eleven priests, nuns, ministers and Christian lay leaders were removed by police from the Strathpine office of federal Health Minister, the Hon Peter Dutton on 9 September. The ecumenical group was holding a peaceful prayer vigil protest calling for the release of children from Australia's immigration detention centres.

The group had declared its intention to continue their prayer vigil and not leave until Mr Dutton had indicated his unequivocal support for the protection and mental wellbeing of children in immigration detention, and had moved to release them immediately from detention.

Police were called, and group members declined to leave as directed. They were detained, led outside the building and then released without charge.

Those participating in the vigil were from a range of Christian traditions: Wesleyan Methodist, Anglican, Uniting, Catholic, Quaker, Baptist and the Waiters Union, a grassroots Christian community network. Dr Charles Ringma of the University of Queensland also attended.

Another 15 people supported the vigil outside, holding placards and praying.

The group is part of a nation-wide Christian movement of prayer and non-violence called Love Makes a Way, which has a particular focus on the plight of children in detention.

Spokesperson for this Brisbane action, Uniting Church pastor David Busch, said, "We believe the federal Health Minister has a duty to advocate for the health and wellbeing of all people in Australia. We have been praying for him, and for the children in detention who experience mental and emotional suffering because of our nation's policies."

As part of the prayer liturgy in Mr Dutton's office, the group read extracts from a report recently published by the Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce, called *Protecting the Lonely Children*, which concluded that the current treatment of children seeking asylum was "state sanctioned child abuse".

Mr Busch said, "That report makes clear that these children have nobody to advocate for their needs, and their stories are rarely heard. By taking this action today, these Christian leaders have sought to draw fresh public attention to what that report says is an unconscionable situation."

Find more information at facebook.com/LoveMakesAWayForAsylumSeekers

“By taking this action today, these Christian leaders have sought to draw fresh public attention to what that report says is an unconscionable situation”

David Busch



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Deal or no deal?

While Queenslanders spend up to \$175 million at the pokies each month, some congregations are receiving a portion of the state government's take in grant allocations. **Bruce Mullan** explores the ethics of churches accessing gambling revenue.

Australians spend a staggering \$20 billion dollars each year on gambling, and in 2013 Queenslanders spent more than \$2.1 billion on pokies alone—the equivalent of \$464 per person.

Gambling has been with us a long time. The earliest six-sided dice date from about 3000 BC and were unearthed in what is now Northern Iraq. Ivory, porcelain and stone dice (some of them loaded) were found in the ruins of Pompeii after it was destroyed in AD 79.

Now the options are extensive. Punters can choose from casinos, poker machines, lotteries, racing and sports betting, not to mention the meat tray raffle. The introduction of internet gambling has further increased accessibility and television advertising for gambling options is widespread.

The ethical response to this proliferation of gambling options and activity unearths a crucial distinction between those Christians who believe gambling is inherently wrong on moral or religious grounds, or both, and those who believe it is not.

The historic denominational traditions that made up the Uniting Church in Australia had strongly entrenched views that gambling, per se, is wrong.

Traditionally arguments against gambling focus on questions of stewardship of resources, the importance of earning one's income, the incompatibility of gambling with Christian ethics and Christian responsibility to protect those who are weaker.

But most would agree that the real danger is when individuals engage in excessive gambling. The Queensland Council of Social Services estimates that almost eight per cent of Queenslanders are at risk of developing gambling-related problems (this equates to 68 000 adults), and that 14 000 are already problem gamblers.

Community benefit?

Clubs and other gaming machine operators claim that poker machine revenue makes an important contribution to local communities including the operating costs of sporting facilities, football grounds, bowling greens and golf courses; donations to worthwhile causes such as charities, local sports teams, and the reallocation of a small proportion of gambling tax money for community groups.

UnitingCare Australia research in conjunction with Monash University (*Assessment of poker machine expenditure and community benefit claims in selected Commonwealth Electoral Divisions*, April 2012) suggested while in greatest need of community developments, those communities with low levels of median income are also where the largest gambling losses occur, both absolutely and proportionally.

Gambling addiction is also likely to be a key factor in intergenerational deprivation in disadvantaged communities. The public health and community welfare implications of this are significant, not simply for current users, but for their families, children, neighbours, employers and the community generally.

A number of funds, established between 1987 and 1996, were designed to invest in not-for-profit organisations from the funds raised from gambling taxes but the real question is whether that investment offsets the substantial damage caused by the gambling that funds it.

The UnitingCare research suggests the community benefits claimed by gambling operators do not offset these impacts to any serious degree, if at all, and while churches have generally condemned gambling, some congregations and agencies have been the direct or indirect recipients of gambling proceeds.

‘Forty per cent of profits from poker machines come from addicts; it's morally bankrupt’
Lin Hatfield Dodds



Poker machines and problems

In 1980 the Queensland Synod reaffirmed its complete opposition to gambling which “encourages a spirit of acquisitiveness in the community” and particularly opposed the introduction of any new gambling initiatives such as poker machines and casinos.

In the same resolution the Synod asked that “ways and means be sought for a percentage of Government revenue from gambling facilities be applied to the rehabilitation of the social victims of gambling.”

Jupiters Hotel and Casino on the Gold Coast was the first casino opened in Queensland in 1986. Poker machines were introduced to Queensland in 1992 under the Goss government.

Former Premier Wayne Goss later told the *Courier-Mail* (2008), “I wish I’d never brought in poker machines, I think they’re a scourge.”

“The problem with poker machines in my view is that the people who mainly play them are the people who can least afford to do so. I wish I hadn’t done it,” he said.

The UnitingCare Australia research confirmed that poker machines are an extremely inefficient and high cost method for funding community sporting and charitable activities.

UnitingCare Australia National Director Lin Hatfield Dodds said that one of the top three reasons people walk into UnitingCare’s emergency relief and counselling services across the nation is poker machine addiction.

She described poker machines as “a business model based on addiction”.

“Forty per cent of profits from poker machines come from addicts; it’s morally bankrupt,” she said.

Community benefits constitute a very modest proportion of the value of user losses garnered by poker machine operators—less than 1.5 per cent according to the UnitingCare report.

The report concludes that as a mechanism for providing benefits to community, poker machines are “demonstrably extremely inefficient, imposing significant costs and transferring small proportions of the revenue generated from player losses”.

To apply or not to apply

The Gambling Community Benefits Fund is Queensland’s largest one-off grants program, distributing approximately \$49 million per year. Established in 1994 under the *Gaming Machine Act* 1991, the fund returns to community groups a portion of state revenue raised through gambling taxes.

The stated aim is “to allocate funding to not-for-profit community groups to enhance their capacity to provide services, leisure activities and opportunities for Queensland communities.”

The state government has recently amalgamated four community benefit fund programs: the Gambling Community Benefit Fund, Jupiters Casino Community Benefit Fund, Breakwater Island Casino Community Benefit Fund and Reef Hotel Casino Community Benefit Fund into a single, state-wide funding program.

Applications can be submitted for funding between \$500 and \$35 000 and there are four funding rounds per year. Because the Uniting Church is incorporated by an Act of Parliament, applications from individual congregations must be submitted with The Uniting Church Property Trust (Q.) as the sponsor.

While the amounts expended on community benefit purposes appear to be large, they only seem so if they are reported without reference to the total level of gambling losses and harmful impact on individuals and community.

Given that the community benefits received through gambling revenue are very small, and an almost insignificant proportion of the amount of money lost by gamblers, the question remains about how the church should respond.

Some congregations have debated the ethics of applying for and accepting funds from the Gambling Community Benefit Fund and others are invited to do so.

What will your congregation do?

A discussion guide to assist congregations to talk about this issue is available from ucaqld.com.au/social-responsibility/ethics. For more information about poker machines and their impact visit the Australian Churches Gambling Taskforce website gamblingreform.org



The UnitingWomen conference celebrated rich and diverse stories of faith.
Photos: Holly Jewell, Megan Graham and Assembly communications

Women's conference seeks deeper story

In September 500 women from across the Uniting Church in Australia gathered in Sydney for the inaugural UnitingWomen conference. **Mardi Lumsden** reports.

The concept of a Uniting Church women's conference is not a new one; the most recent similar event was Women Clothed with the Sun held in Brisbane in 1996.

UnitingWomen's theme, *Seeking a deeper story*, was expressed through excellent teaching and heart-felt stories of faith from seemingly ordinary women doing extraordinary things.

Thirty-five Queensland women took part, including two brave young women who shared their personal faith stories: Marda Pitt (from Old Mapoon, Cape York) and Katie Wallis (from Centenary, Brisbane).

Keynote speaker Rev Nadia Bolz-Weber challenged those in attendance to be honest and unapologetic about who they are, especially those in leadership.

"People want spiritual leaders who aren't going to lie to them or pretend they are someone they're not," she said.

"Often the church is trying to be something rather than really being something. It's like the difference between someone trying to be funny and someone actually being funny!"

Nadia is the founding pastor of House for All Sinners and Saints, an Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) church in Denver, Colorado. Her theology of inclusion seeps into all aspects of the congregation.

Other inspiring speakers included then-incoming NSW/ACT Synod Moderator Rev Myung Hwa Park who shared her experience of growing up in a Buddhist family. South Australia Synod Moderator Deidre Palmer reflected on the need for alternate feminist narratives of the Bible.

UnitingJustice National Director Rev Elenie Poulos reflected on Isaiah 58:1-12, saying it offers a vision of the call on a Christian community, but warned that answering that call was not easy.

"As rich Christians, how do we live out this call and not be assimilated into the empire that we live in now?" she asked.

The 13 elective workshops were as diverse as the attendees with everything from craft as a spiritual exercise to rethinking leadership, feminist theology, eco spirituality, Godly Play and gender equality issues for Pacific women.

UnitingWomen was an extremely positive experience that grew from an idea around a kitchen table into something that will surely be a regular event on the Uniting Church calendar. The only question left is who will take on the challenge to run the conference again.

unitingwomen.org.au

A Radio National interview with UnitingWomen organisers Sureka Goringe, Dayan McLeod and Ellie Elia can be heard at **tinyurl.com/RNUnitingWomen**

“People want spiritual leaders who aren’t going to lie to them”

Rev Nadia Bolz-Weber



Let it go

Janet Staines explains how an oft-repeated line from a Disney song reminds her to forgive.

I recently saw a sign outside a school classroom that read, “This classroom has gone 28 days without singing the song from *Frozen*: ‘Let it go’.”

If you have children or grandchildren you will know well the award-winning song from Disney’s animated film *Frozen* and perhaps you have been haunted by it! It is not unusual in my home for someone to break into song, “Let it go, let it go!” when a family member becomes fixated on a problem or an offence and it seems an appropriate call to discipleship when it comes to the topic of forgiveness.

In the past few months the world has seen war and terrorism on a broad and varied scale. The idea of forgiveness can sound naïve amongst geo-political conflict simmering for generations, repeating cycles of violence, division and scapegoating. But without forgiveness we are unable to move away from using violence to end violence or to find the path, which alone can bring peace and healing.

In our own personal relationships forgiveness might also seem naïve, especially when they are entrenched in conflict and marked by avoidance, coldness and irritability. But the way of Christ calls

us to begin the process of reconciliation, regardless of how the distance or the alienation began. If any relationship has cooled off or has weakened in any way, it is always our move. We are responsible to reach out to repair a tattered relationship. Christians in community are to never give up on one another, never to give up on a relationship, and never to write off another believer. We must never tire of forgiving (and repenting!) and seeking to repair our relationships.

Perhaps “Let it go” could be more than a pop culture cliché and the first step in this process of reconciliation. For to make the first move we have to let go of our need to be exonerated and our need for revenge. We must let go of our pride and our understanding of how the world should be and we must let go of power and risk vulnerability. In this process of letting go we un-centre ourselves and become re-centred in the being and action of God. We centre ourselves in the God who forgives, the God who heals and the God who engages us with warmth and compassion.

*Janet is pastor with Sherwood Uniting Church.
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‘The idea of forgiveness can sound naïve amongst geo-political conflict simmering for generations, repeating cycles of violence, division and scapegoating’



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Screw pretending

Be yourself

You are who you are. **Ashley Thompson** speaks with *New York Times* bestselling author Rev **Nadia Bolz-Weber** about why Christians should be authentic and vulnerable.

You'd be forgiven thinking Rev Nadia Bolz-Weber is anti-authoritarian: the short spiky hair, striking tattoos and cynical wit—if it wasn't for her clerical collar you'd never guess this foul-mouthed, weightlifting, mother of two is a Lutheran minister.

“You have to be deeply rooted in tradition in order to innovate with integrity”

Growing up in 1970s Denver, Colorado, Nadia's fundamentalist Church of Christ upbringing both founded her strong ownership of the gospel while driving her to reject the way in which it was packaged. In a denomination where women were expected to be silent and submissive, Nadia's snarky and assertive personality stood out.

“The gospel, the church, these hymns, all of them are mine,” says Nadia. “The really crappy way that was expressed—the narrow-minded, dualistic, us-and-them, fundamentalist sectarian way that was presented to me in my youth—doesn't mean that I have to walk away from the symbol system that formed me.”

This is her view now, almost 30 years after walking away from the church that burned her. In the intervening years she experimented with Wicca and became an alcoholic. She was also a stand-up comic.

Her spiritual memoir *Pastrix: the Cranky, Beautiful Faith of a Sinner and Saint* bluntly shares her “deeply faithful and deeply flawed” journey towards pastoring the faith community she wished she had growing up: House for All Sinners and Saints.

“This faith helped me get sober,” writes Nadia. “It helped me forgive the fundamentalism of my Church of Christ upbringing. And it helps me to not always have to be right.”

Stop apologising

Between the ages of 12 and 16, Nadia was plagued with Graves' disease, a thyroid-related autoimmune disorder. After corrective surgery, she started tattooing to reclaim her body. Not apologising for who she is or the space she takes up is central to her message.

“We're not the default gender of it being okay to take up space on the planet. Any woman who has shared an airline seat with a man knows: women will tuck their arms in, they'll fold their hands and they'll take up as little space as they can but as soon as a man sits down he'll take up as much space as he possibly can and neither of them are aware they're even doing it!”

The ordination of women into ministry is a controversy long disputed among Lutheran denominations in the United States. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to which Nadia belongs ordains women and is far larger than the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, who do not.

Likewise, the Lutheran Church of Australia—who flew Nadia to Australia to speak at Faith Lutheran College in South Australia—does not ordain women or allow them to preach in church.

“I don’t really have an agenda about that,” says Nadia. “I don’t go in there with the thought that I’m going to be a rabble-rouser, that’s not my place. But at the same time I’m not going to apologise for who I am and I’m not going to avoid a question about women’s ordination if it comes up. I’m just going to be me.”

Nadia’s “me” is eccentric. Profiled by major media outlets around the world as “tall”, “tattooed” and “forthright” she is commonly singled out for her looks and by extension the assumption she is “progressive” or “liberal”.

“I don’t really fit those categories. I have progressive social views, like around gender and sexuality, but that’s not the same as being liberal theologically. So I am an orthodox Lutheran theologian who happens to be progressive socially,” says Nadia.

The tattoos that define her public appearance are, on closer inspection, extravagantly Christian. Depicting biblical narratives, Nadia embraces the opportunity they give her to talk about the gospel. When asked what they mean she replies, “Let me tell you about Jesus!”

“There are things about me that stand out. That people see first. But hopefully after they’re done with those things, they hear what I actually have to say.”

Traditional, not conventional

It’s this focus on substance that led to Nadia being keynote speaker at the UnitingWomen conference in Sydney in September. There she explained to 500 Uniting Church women that people still want tradition and good liturgy but the delivery system has changed.

“You have to be deeply rooted in tradition in order to innovate with integrity,” she says.

Often presumed to be anti-authoritarian, Nadia laughs: “Are you kidding? I’m the reason we have bishops!” She says she needs one to keep her in check.

But Nadia believes that people want leaders who are the same in public and in private, leaders who don’t lie and leaders who are willing to admit to their mistakes.

“I’m anti *bad* authority. I’m not going to give someone my respect just because they have a title; they still have to be worthy of the respect.

“I think that for a long time we had this system where spiritual authority meant being the person who was the best at being a Christian ... and we’re not interested in that anymore. I think we’re interested in people opening a space for us to have questions and to also have belief and community and the best way to do that is to have a leader who is also doing that, alongside everyone else.”

Showcasing a refreshing honesty about herself and the church, Nadia is vulnerable to her audience but also says she preaches from her scars, not wounds.

“The reason I’m so honest about my failings is not to point to myself but to create a space where hopefully the other person is invited into that truth about themselves also. Like, ‘Ok screw it, I’ll go first,’” she says.

“Honesty about our mistakes is important and makes us better leaders.”

House for All Sinners and Saints

Despite being a highly sought after international speaker, Nadia’s first commitments are to her family and parishioners. A collection of “soccer moms, drug addicts, pathological liars and corporate lawyers”, House reflects Nadia’s deep theological belief in inclusion and unconditional love.

“If I was in a nice little lady suit and pearls, the people who I interact with in my life probably wouldn’t interact with me. But it’s not like I got tattoos so that I could seem more relevant! It’s literally just who I am, those are just the places I hang out in naturally, it’s not contrived. So I have access to people most clergy probably wouldn’t and they have access to people I wouldn’t,” says Nadia.

Her unique calling to be the face of sarcastic, deeply faithful sinners everywhere is not one she lightly accepts, but she takes it on solely to testify to God’s grace, the overarching theme in her painfully honest memoir.

Locally, she pastors the faith community she herself would have loved to belong to and internationally, encourages Christians everywhere to be honest with who they truly are.

“Jesus meets us when our feet are dirty, not after we’ve cleaned them up and had a little pedicure for him,” she says.

“Screw pretending, it is finished. Amen.”

nadiabolzweber.com

Read more about Nadia Bolz-Weber in her book *Pastrix: the Cranky, Beautiful Faith of a Sinner and Saint* available at Trinity Theological Library. **trinity.qld.edu.au**

“Honesty about our mistakes is important and makes us better leaders”

Hearing voices

Why the G20 matters

The desperate woman who pushed through the crowd to tug at Jesus' robe took a chance that his minders were too distracted to notice. There are better ways to make your voice heard at the G20, as **Dianne Jensen** reports.

‘Following Christ is about being part of a movement that breaks down barriers and this is an opportunity to do just that, to be distinguishable by protests of non-violence and peace’

Rev Susan Pickering

Raising your concerns directly with world leaders such as US President Barack Obama, German Chancellor Angela Merkel or Chinese President Xi Jinping when they come to Brisbane from 15–16 November is a risky game.

Along with a security lockdown which will restrict access to inner city suburbs, the 20 leaders from advanced and emerging economies will be accompanied by 4000 international delegates, 3000 media representatives and the heads of major world organisations like the United Nations, the World Bank and the World Trade Organisation.

These 20 people might just squeeze onto your back veranda but together they represent two thirds of the world's population and 80 per cent of its trade. From international labour protections to the murky world of multinational tax evasion, the G20 leaders have the power to collaborate on policies which affect everyone from small Aussie manufacturers to garment workers in Asia.

What's on the Brisbane agenda?

As host, Australia sets the agenda for the G20. The Australian Government's priorities set out by Prime Minister Tony Abbott include free trade, tax reform, long-term infrastructure financing, and building the resilience of the financial sector.

Business and community forums have fed into the G20 process through a series of summits bringing together industry, youth, civil society and labour representatives throughout 2014. Their concerns have included the importance of ensuring that global economic growth is inclusive and sustainable, and concerns about employment equity and labour protections.

Outside the formal consultation process, many social justice advocates have taken the opportunity to campaign about issues such as climate change, tax justice, and the protection of those disenfranchised by economic systems which benefit the most powerful.

Rising damp

Climate change is one subject where the little people are literally being swamped by the actions of powerful players, says Synod Research Officer and Uniting Green Liaison Bruce Mullan. He says that there is increasing dismay over the Australian Government's refusal to include climate change as a separate agenda item at the G20.

“The EU and the USA are not the only nations expressing concerns,” says Bruce. “Current climate trends are widely acknowledged as a threat to future economic prosperity and regional political stability, and the G20 nations are responsible for about 80 per cent of the pollution that is causing the earth to warm.”

In his former role as UnitingWorld Associate Director Church Solidarity (Pacific) Bruce saw first-hand the effects of climate change.

“The tiny Pacific islands of Kiribati and Tuvalu are at enormous risk. Australia, as one of the highest per capita contributors to greenhouse gas emissions, has a particular responsibility to our exposed island neighbours. Climate change may mess up our own lives in terms of environment, food security and economic stability but for our Pacific neighbours it will be catastrophic.”

Taxing times

Churches and Christian networks are also at the forefront of the campaign to promote transparency and integrity in the global financial system.



Mark Zirnsak, Director, Justice and International Mission for the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, was one of the speakers at the C20 (civil society) summit. The Uniting Church in Victoria and Tasmania hosts the Australian branch of the Tax Justice Network. He says that the G20 provides a critical forum for the global collaboration required to address the complex issues behind tackling corruption, lack of transparency and profit shifting.

“Even if we only look at two forms of tax dodging, Christian Aid estimates that developing countries lost \$160 billion a year at a time when total foreign aid was \$130 billion,” says Mark. “Clearly the flow from corporate and wealthy individual’s tax dodging far outweighs anything that is given back in aid.”

How to speak up

You don’t have to venture to downtown Brisbane to take a stand on these or any other social justice issues.

The Micah Challenge Australia *Shine the Light* campaign (shinethelight.com.au) is encouraging congregations and individuals across Australia to take action on tax justice. Micah Challenge, a coalition of Christian agencies, churches and individuals, has partnered with the global EXPOSED campaign to provide information, worship resources and an action plan.

In Brisbane, the Tax Justice Network (taxjustice.org.au) will hold an event at Indooroopilly Uniting Church on 15 November.

Subscribe to Queensland Synod newsletters Reach Out Speak Out at ucaqlld.com.au/social-responsibility and Uniting Green UPDATE at ucaqlld.com.au/social-responsibility/uniting-green for more information about making your voice heard at the G20.

Rev Susan Pickering (West End Uniting Church), Lauren Ash (Micah Challenge Brisbane Coordinator) John Beckett (Micah Challenge National Coordinator) Dave Andrews (Waiters Union) at West End Uniting Church. Photo: Holly Jewell

West End Uniting Church Still open for business

The eclectic community of West End is on the frontline of the G20, with the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre and major hotels just down the road in South Bank.

Far from closing their doors and leaving town, Uniting Church minister Rev Susan Pickering says local Christian groups are working together to ameliorate the impact of the security lockdown.

“My main concern is for the more vulnerable people,” says Susan. “Police presence and powers are increased for the week leading up to and including the G20 ... for those who are homeless, people with intellectual disabilities, mental health issues and so on, this could mean that they find themselves in situations with the police simply because they walk around the area.

“Musgrave Park has been identified as an area where people will protest and the reality is that there may be people caught up inadvertently in protest action.”

West End Uniting Church will be opening its doors on Saturday 15 November during the G20 when volunteers from the Waiters Union Christian network will help provide a safe space for people.

The congregation is joining with local churches and Christian communities to host Micah Challenge *Shine the Light* events on the weekend preceding the summit, including a youth gathering, public action and a Taizé service. It will also be open for Brisbane Community Action Network (BrisCan-G20) activities from 12–14 November.

“We are called to work for kingdom values, the mission of God, and that mission has a preference for the poor and this is an opportunity to be a voice,” says Susan. “We are called to action; following Christ is about being part of a movement that breaks down barriers and this is an opportunity to do just that, to be distinguishable by protests of non-violence and peace.”

Contact Susan Pickering on 0438 141 242 or visit West End Uniting Church on Facebook for details.



#KnowYourBasis

The *Basis of Union* is a major part of our history and identity as a church, but Robyn Goodwin asks, does the next generation understand it or even know what it is?

The *Basis of Union* is something Uniting Church members can be really proud of. The fact that it even exists seems pretty miraculous to me. It's our identity document and it's full of rich, powerful, hopeful, challenging and potentially transformative ideas for the Uniting Church today. It reminds us where we came from, where we are and where we are headed.

‘In fact, when we lose our denomination, I think we lose the larger story of our communal relationship with God’

However, many younger people I know within the Uniting Church don't have a clue what the *Basis of Union* is, let alone its significance. Why? Simply put, because we have no first-hand memory of it. We are not in touch with our history. If, like me, you were born after the time of church union, you probably only have a vague idea about how or why it happened.

What did it mean to be a Methodist, a Presbyterian or a Congregationalist? What did each think of the other denominations? What discussions were had, and how did they go? What sacrifices and compromises were made? Could we do it again? What did it mean and what hopes did people have for the future of the new denomination? In short, many Uniting Church young people—including myself—are in possession of a legacy that we at best don't fully understand, and at worst don't even know about.

Some more intellectual members of the Uniting Church have told me that we are in a “post-denominational” time when many Christians don't really care about which denomination's Sunday service they attend—if church attendance itself is considered necessary at all. On the one hand, this view is helpful because it recognises God's people as not limited by denominational barriers and does away with many unhelpful religious artifices. On the other it's unhelpful because Christianity is at risk of becoming ahistorical and individualistic, of losing its important traditions, heritage and identity. In fact, when we lose our denomination, I think we lose the larger story of our communal relationship with God. We can't continue the journey because we don't know what journey we are on.

Do you remember church union? What do you think about the *Basis of Union*? When was the last time you talked about it with anyone, and who could you talk about it with now?

Older people, we younger people desperately need you! Share your stories with us, catechise us and help us to understand the legacy that is being passed on, lest we create the Uniting Church into an image of ourselves.

Robyn is a member of Leichhardt Uniting Church in Sydney, New South Wales. She spoke at the Basis of Union: Catalyst for Renewal conference in Sydney in August and is an advisor to the World Communion of Reformed Churches.



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6 Awkward meeting moments (and how to solve them)

Everyone knows the Uniting Church loves a good committee. With the 31st Synod sitting this month, *Journey* writers have gathered some helpful hints based on the Assembly's *Manual for meetings* about how to avoid those awkward meeting moments.

1

Why wasn't I told about this?

Similar to "Am I late?" this question indicates that the speaker has ignored their emails or left their printouts folded in the pew sheet. All reports and proposals should be circulated well in advance of the meeting and are deemed to have been read by committee members before the meeting has begun, even if the *Masterchef* finale was on TV last night.

2

Can't we just take a vote?

Welcome! You must be new. Only innocent bystanders or disoriented folk at the wrong church ask this question. The Uniting Church believes that consensus—the process by which the common mind of the meeting is sought about the wisest way forward—engenders a spirit of openness and humility through which we are more likely to discern God's will.

3

What are the cards for?

People, pay attention. As tempting as it might be to fold them into hats or planes, the two coloured cards are used for consensus decision making, not intricate origami. Orange indicates warmth or general agreement, while blue symbolises coolness or general disagreement. Caution: use with care. If you hold the cards back-to-back the people behind may grow agitated at your apparent intransigence. If the cards are crossed, the chairperson will assume that you are ready to move on.

4

That's not the way we did it with our last minister.

Don't be that person. The *Manual for meetings* calls this "the stagnation blues".

5

Point of order!

We all secretly yearn to leap to our feet and shout this, especially when the meeting needs a little drama. You may only speak when called upon by the chair, except to raise a point of order about the proceedings. Caution: use with care! This isn't parliamentary question time; we're all on the same team.

6

I'll only take ten minutes of your time.

If it wasn't so long, this rule would be tattooed on the forehead of every committee member: Unless otherwise predetermined by the council, a member presenting an issue, report or proposal speaks for no more than five minutes and subsequent speakers speak for no more than three minutes. God is truly merciful.

If you want to sound really smart at parties you can read the Manual for meetings at ucaqlid.com.au/administration/governance/governing-rules



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Boyhood grows and grows

Boyhood

Directed by Richard Linklater
Starring Ellar Coltrane,
Patricia Arquette,
Ethan Hawke
2014, M

Filmed with the same cast over a period of 12 years, it's clear Richard Linklater's *Boyhood* is angling to be the greatest coming-of-age movie of all time. At the start of the film Mason (Ellar Coltrane) is a cherub-faced six-year-old. Then, over nearly three hours he grows into an 18-year-old college student.

Mason's path to adulthood is not easy. His childhood is frequently disrupted by abusive stepfathers and moving from place to place across Texas. It isn't particularly exciting, but it is moving and authentic. Although it is scripted, *Boyhood* feels real, like a documentary, but it is structured as a series of short sketches in each phase of Mason's life. Pop culture references litter the script, grounding the film in our world and making it easy to plot our own lives against Mason's. Where were you when that Britney Spears song came out? Did you like *The Dark Knight* as much as Mason? It makes watching *Boyhood* a reflective, multi-layered experience.

Despite its considerable length *Boyhood* feels intimate, mostly thanks to the narrow focus on Mason's life. Secondary characters and their

subplots arise and peter out as Mason moves from place to place, leaving some threads unresolved. What happened to his step-siblings after his mother flees their alcoholic father? Disturbingly, we never find out.

Although called "*Boyhood*", this film actually explores what it means to be a man. Mason's biological father, step-fathers, teachers and work supervisors—all men—exert their influence on him, trying to shape him in their image as they pontificate about manhood and responsibility. Mason navigates them as best he can, heeding some and wisely ignoring others, and it's a testament to his resilience that he is able to thrive. Still, there are no white knights; this is a film about the heroism of ordinary people.

Boyhood is bold and unusual in its structure and tone. It flaunts what audiences have come to expect from the cinema and given the 12-year production time it's a small miracle it was ever completed. It's unlikely there will ever be a film like this again, and it is the crowning achievement in Linklater's strong and innovative career.

Rohan Salmond
Cross-platform editor

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Queensland's leading lady passes the baton

Rev Kaye Ronalds will finish her three-year term as Moderator at this month's 31st Queensland Synod meeting. **Mardi Lumsden** explores what others appreciated about Kaye's time in the role.

Kaye's term as Moderator can be characterised by a comment she made at her induction service: "We need to become better at working together and remembering that there are many kinds of disadvantage in our communities and many opportunities for transforming lives."

Through submissions and meetings with government officials and church partners and attending Uniting Church celebrations around the state, Kaye has embodied her deep commitment to the church and unique insight as Queensland's first female moderator.

The Downs Presbytery minister Sharon Kirk says, "Kaye has led the church with dignity and grace. Her careful listening, compassionate and generous spirit, her deep love of Christ and the church has been evident in the discernment Kaye has needed to exercise as the Synod engaged some significant challenges during her term.

"Kaye's gifts of hospitality and encouragement have created space for others to share insights, gifts and skills. In particular her encouragement, working alongside the leadership of Calvary Presbytery, has strengthened this partnership."

Queensland Synod General Secretary Rev John Cox agrees.

"Kaye has brought real strength of character to the role. She has advocated for the place of regional and rural congregations and presbyteries and a broader understanding of ministry when we're talking about how we resource the wider church," he says.

"She has been absolutely consistent in terms of wanting the church to be its best and naming where she sees that the church is not being its best."

Isabel Thomas Dobson, former Synod of Victoria and Tasmania moderator and now Associate General Secretary of that synod, also commended Kaye's approach to the role.

"Kaye's gentle, firm leadership, care and friendship have been a gift to those of us from other synods who have shared with her the privilege of being moderator. Her clear thinking, planning, humour, stories and her deep love of God and God's church have encouraged us all."

Kaye's next role will be as minister with the Granite Belt congregations in south-west Queensland. Rev David Baker will be inducted as moderator on 10 October.

‘She has been absolutely consistent in terms of wanting the church to be its best’

Rev John Cox



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Jo Munday (left) and Adriana Leonardi (right) pictured with art made out of recycled newspapers by Cooinda mental health participants—to be displayed at the upcoming exhibition.
Photo: UnitingCare Health

Mental health on canvas

Art is at the heart of Cooinda Mental Health Service's vision to normalise mental health experiences within the Sunshine Coast community. **Ashley Thompson** writes.

The Sunshine Coast Private Hospital's Cooinda Mental Health Service is inviting members of the public to participate in its second annual Mental Health Week art exhibition in October.

“I know during parts of my treatment or illness I have just wanted to hermit myself away and the art allows for a breaking out of that”
Greg Wuth

“Mental health is often misunderstood, or ‘if it doesn’t involve me then I don’t need to know about it,’” says Cooinda’s Service Development Manager Jo Munday.

“So this is an invitation to the public, not just the internal patient population, to be artists, to be guests and to come and have a look.”

Stemming from a strategy to inspire and re-energise people participating in Cooinda’s group therapy programs, the art exhibition is a celebration of diversional and recovery craft commonly referred to as art therapy.

Greg Wuth is a calligraphic artist and working party member of the art exhibition. His personal experience as a patient of Cooinda underpins his passionate belief in the therapy of mindfulness and socialisation art exhibitions can offer.

“It is not just the art itself, sometimes it is the ritual of meeting with people, being valued and that sense of worth that comes with people liking or appreciating what you do,” says Greg.

“I know during parts of my treatment or illness I have just wanted to hermit myself away and the art allows for a breaking out of that.”

According to Greg, stigmas of mental health issues are not limited to outsiders but can be carried even by those who suffer from it. He believes art has the power to dispel the “demons and voodooos” carried by those who misunderstand.

“You are looking at and in a sense normalising it and saying ‘let’s not just categorise people according to their mental health issues’—that is just one part of them. They still are intelligent, vital, passionate, caring and loving people who can be a strong part of the community,” says Greg.

“I believe it is a sense of belonging that truly helps to stimulate and excite people with a mental health condition who might otherwise feel that they are useless, worthless or hopeless.”

Mental Health Week is a national event from 5–12 October. Cooinda’s art exhibition is 9 October starting 6 pm. For more information visit tscph.com.au



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Ashley Thompson, Mardi Lumsden and Rohan Salmond at the Australasian Religious Press Association awards evening.
Photo: Belinda Taylor

Journey wins international awards

Representing the Uniting Church in Queensland, *Journey* magazine won four prizes at the 2014 Australasian Religious Press Association (ARPA) awards in Canberra over the weekend.

Judges loved the redesign *Journey* underwent in 2013, awarding gold for best cover (April 2013) and most improved hard copy publication and silver for overall best design. Special congratulations also go to Ashley Thompson for winning gold for best new writer for her piece on child sacrifice.

Other Uniting Church publications also won awards. *Insights* magazine (NSW/ACT Synod) won gold for best feature and best theological article as well as bronze for best cover, *New Times* (South Australia Synod) won gold for best original photography, *Crosslight* (Vic/Tas Synod) won gold for best editorial or opinion piece, *ACCatalyst* (Assembly of Confessing Congregations) won bronze for best faith reflection and *Wesley Impact* (Wesley Communications NSW) won gold for best design.

The awards judged Christian print and online publications throughout Australia and New Zealand.

journeyonline.com.au



Uniting Church in Australia ASSEMBLY

General Secretary

Applications are now invited for the position of General Secretary of the Assembly to succeed the Rev. Terence Corkin when he concludes 15 years of service on 31 December 2015.

The General Secretary is the executive officer of the Assembly and the head of the Assembly staff. The General Secretary is to provide vision and leadership to the Church in its national life, mission and commitment to Christian Unity; to ensure implementation of Assembly policy; and to resource the Assembly and its Standing Committee.

Commitment to the Basis of Union of the Uniting Church, a deep knowledge and love of the Church and its processes, theological ability, pastoral skills and high level communication skills (both verbal and written) are some of the qualities needed.

Intending applicants should first obtain an information package from:

Ms Annette Latham
Personal Assistant to the President
Uniting Church in Australia Assembly
PO Box 171 Highbury SA 5089
Tel: (08) 8416 8431
email: annettel@nat.uca.org.au

Applications are requested by 31 October, 2014

Blue Care wins award for innovation

Blue Care services from the Gold Coast to Kingscliff have won a 2014 Better Practice Innovation Award for their work with people living with dementia through the Play Up program.

Blue Care South Coast introduced Play Up—a play-based program run by the Arts Health Institute—at seven of its residential facilities in the region in response to the organisation's new service model Blue Care Tailor Made.

Blue Care South Coast General Manager Linda Taylor said the program involved regular visits by a specially-trained Play Up performer, who worked with staff members to creatively engage with residents who live with dementia.

"The program gives our residents sunshine, hope and laughter in what can sometimes feel like a cloudy day," she said.

The annual Better Practice Awards recognise innovation and better practice in aged care to encourage improvement across the industry.

bluecare.org.au

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