



The United Church in Australia  
QUEENSLAND SYNOD

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# Journey

**Fresh  
& bright**

Who are United  
Church young adults?

A divine  
invitation

New Year's resolutions  
for your church

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The Uniting Church in Australia  
MORETON RIVERS PRESBYTERY



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# In pursuit of a fresh perspective

**A new year gives you the chance to look at things a bit differently.**

Did you stick to your New Year's resolution, making you experience the world through a different routine? Perhaps you made a new friend over the Christmas break, which has helped you look at things from their point of view. Maybe you attended a gathering or conference in the New Year which has reframed things for you.

A fresh perspective can change everything; it can turn a chore into something enjoyable and can make previously impossible tasks achievable. That's why it's so important to do things that get you out of your own head for a while, like reading fiction or talking to those with whom you disagree—it gives you a new perspective on the world.

It's my hope that *Journey* continues to bring a fresh point of view. This month we talk to some young adults who attended the National Young Adult Leaders Conference last year in Sydney about their perspective on the Uniting Church (page six).

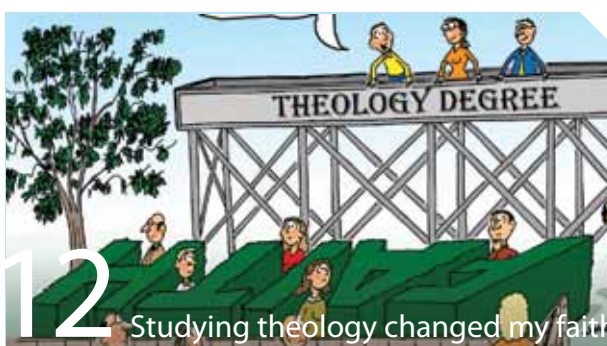
We also talk to some people who have studied theology to find out how that new perspective changed their faith (page 12). Did you go to theological college? How did it change your outlook?

I'm looking forward to what will come this year and I hope you will be part of it too. Don't forget that *Journey* accepts letters of up to 150 words for publication—join in! The full submission guidelines are on [journeyonline.com.au](http://journeyonline.com.au)

Keep it fresh.

**Rohan Salmond**  
Cross-platform editor

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# Journey



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Closing date for editorial and advertising for March *Journey* is Monday 9 February. The next issue of *Journey* will be available on Sunday 1 March.



# Living the gospel in 2015

## Monday Midday Prayer

Lord,  
as we journey into this year,  
may faith, hope, and love be  
our guiding stars.  
Amen

## Moderator’s highlights

- 3 February**  
UnitingCare Queensland board meeting, Brisbane
- 11 February**  
Heads of churches, Wynberg, New Farm
- 16 February**  
Preaching at Trinity College Queensland, Auchenflower
- 18 February**  
Commissioning service for General Secretary Gary Doyle, Auchenflower

**This is the first *Journey* of the New Year, so I want to outline for you again the discernment of the 31st Synod regarding the broad priorities for the church’s life going forward.**

Synod discerned the following:

- making our worship accessible and attractive
- growing our members in their passion and ability to share their faith
- planting new communities of faith
- developing leadership that can grow new communities of faith
- allowing the Holy Spirit to revive us
- forming candidates for ministry
- sharing resources between rural and urban faith communities
- growing ministry with children, youth, young adults, and families.

Between now and the next Synod in Session, *Journey* will feature articles which will inspire, provoke and engage you in these priorities.

I think they’re exciting priorities because they address what is core about our life as church and as disciples. They also connect into our *Together on the Way Enriching Community* journey, and our Call Statement—go to [ucaqld.com.au](http://ucaqld.com.au) to find out more.

Some of these priorities are more about what’s happening in our hearts and minds than about where money needs to be spent. As we reflect on them we will be asked what we ourselves, in our corner of the vineyard, can be doing about them.

Worship is our “flagship” activity; it is called to be the source of renewal and re-orientation, where we, through word and sacrament, find our identity and purpose anew and afresh.

If we listen well, we’ll have the right to share our hope and compassion, and we’ll talk about what’s relevant. But being able to articulate our faith in these challenging days, when everything is questioned, is something we should be able to do.

Queensland’s population is changing rapidly; if we are to fulfil our calling, we will have to plant new faith communities, and find new ways of doing that.

Fundamentally, the church is a communion of the Spirit; we are established and kept alive by the Spirit’s presence, and kept open to where God may be leading.

Leadership development is something we have let go of in the past few years, and I’m reminded, particularly in the stories of St Francis, that building the church isn’t about bricks and mortar, it’s about people!

Having the resources for discernment is vital for our work. One of our great strengths has been our commitment to work together across Queensland—UnitingCare demonstrates that so well—and we want to keep that up.

Churches across the state are renewing their ministry to families through Mainly Music and the Synod will continue to help that ministry grow.

I pray that as you take the journey with us, we all will be renewed in our life as disciples of Jesus.

**Rev David Baker**  
Queensland Synod Moderator

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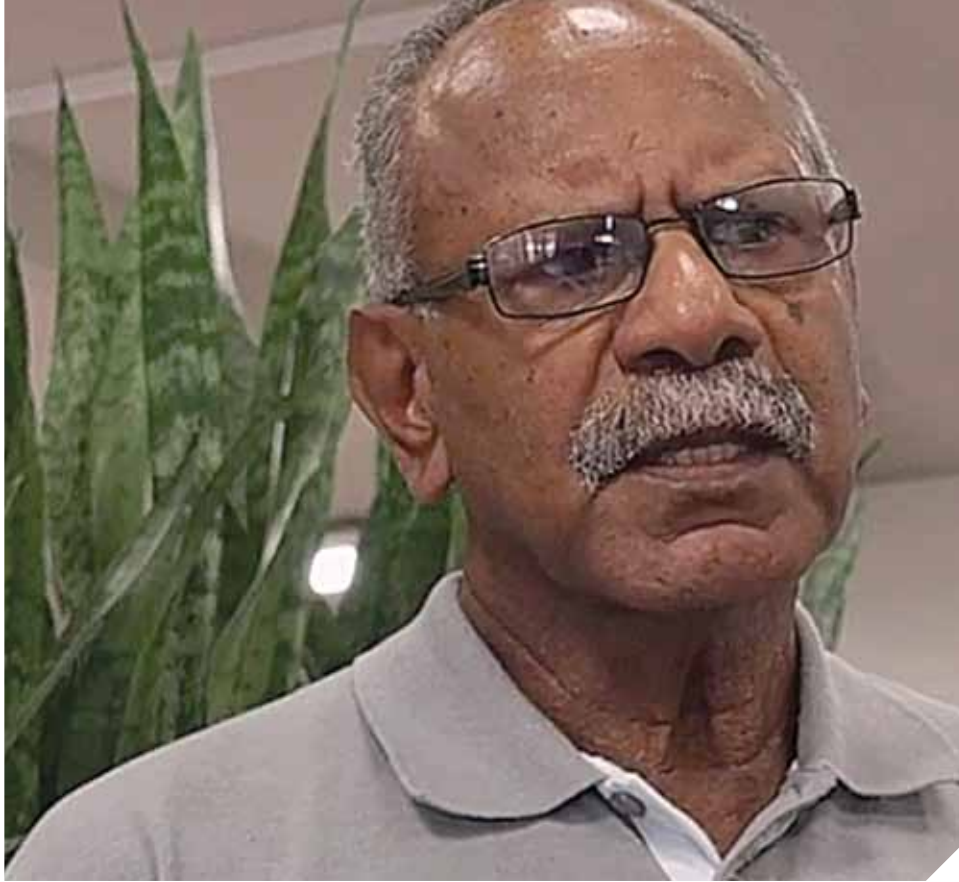
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Rev Dennis Corowa.  
Photo: Rohan Salmond

# New Congress chair calls for greater independence

Queenslander and presbytery minister of Calvary Presbytery Rev Dennis Corowa has been appointed chairperson of the national Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress. **Nigel Trapp** reports.

**New Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress chairperson Rev Dennis Corowa is keen to see Congress operate with more independence, but not at the expense of the interdependent relationship between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous elements of the Uniting Church.**

Mr Corowa, appointed at the Congress national conference last month, said the covenanting relationship was at the very heart of the Uniting Church, describing it as the glue which bound the black and white arms of the church together.

Within that relationship he saw the possibility for Congress to have more independence over its own buildings, property, programs and worship in a relationship which still had all the features of transparency, accountability and responsibility.

Mr Corowa begins the role on the back of more than three decades of involvement with Congress and more than a year as acting chairperson.

Born in the northern New South Wales sugar cane town of Murwillumbah, Mr Corowa moved to Mackay as a preschooler with his mother and stepfather.

After his schooling Mr Corowa completed a painting and decorating apprenticeship and gravitated to the region's fast-growing mining industry, working in industrial coating before returning to his original trade.

In 1989 he began ministry among Indigenous people in Townsville.

A father and grandfather who has co-authored two books on Indigenous theology, Mr Corowa is chairperson of Congress' Calvary Presbytery and Queensland chairperson of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress.

Mr Corowa is also a member of the Covenanting Working Group of Shalom Christian College, based in Townsville, and serves as the college chaplain and elder to the board. He also undertakes chaplaincy work in the Townville Correction Centre and with Blue Care's aged and rehabilitation operations.

He is responsible for Congress' West End congregation in Townsville and is chairperson of the Wontulp-Bi-Buya College, an Aboriginal theological training centre in Cairns.

Mr Corowa sees an integral role for Congress in terms of evangelism, or reawakening the "sleeping" love for God which he believes lies within his people.



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# Who are the 70%?



It's much easier to be a young person in a church full of other young people, and it's no secret that some Uniting Church members are gravitating to younger, cooler denominations—or leaving church altogether. **Rohan Salmond** talks to some young people who have made the choice to stick around.

**It's a statistical oddity that one of Australia's youngest denominations—the Uniting Church founded in 1977—also has the oldest members. According to 2011 National Church Life Survey data, 80 per cent of Uniting Church members are over the age of 50, compared to 65 per cent of Anglicans, 50 per cent of Baptists and just 27 per cent of Pentecostals.**

‘... there's much more to being Uniting than what is perceived by everyone’

**Alieta Molitika**

Only seven per cent of Uniting Church members are between the ages of 15 and 30, which means Uniting Church youth and young adults who stay are choosing to participate in a community which does not always look like them. In fact, the 2013 Uniting Church census taken by the Assembly did not gather data on the number of churches with dedicated young adult ministries, suggesting that 15–30 year olds are a blind spot in the denomination's vision for the future.

## **Graduating youth group**

Alieta Molitika is 24 and a youth leader at Park Tongan Uniting Church in the inner suburbs of Brisbane. Her father is a Uniting Church minister, and she has worshipped in both Anglo and Tongan Uniting churches throughout her life.

“I think the stereotype of the Uniting Church is that it's for old people. There aren't many young people in roles, and I guess that's what all the kids think, they think it's just all about old people.

“But there's much more to being Uniting than what is perceived by everyone. I guess that's the sad thing, because it's run by old people so the young ones don't want to step up and take opportunities,” she says.

The lack of hard data makes it impossible to say definitively, but anecdotally—with a few notable exceptions—young adult ministries are uncommon in the Uniting Church. Instead, young adults often “graduate” from children's or youth groups and take a leadership role in those same ministries which once served them.

Joyce Waia is 26 and a young leader at St Barnabas Uniting Church in Napranum, Cape York.

“I've been attending youth [groups] for seven years and I actually grew up in youth group. I've been among youth for a long time and I've had the opportunity to take over,” says Joyce.

It's a mixed blessing. On the one hand, the opportunity to contribute to the church gives young people the chance to share their gifts and develop leadership skills. On the other, being a token young leader runs the risk of isolation as well as effectively heaping the responsibility for youth ministry on a few brave souls.

Brad Case, 28, moved from Glebe Road Uniting Church in Ipswich to Sherwood, Brisbane when he took a placement as youth and family worker.

“I grew up in a church surrounded by young people who helped form me and shape me,” says Brad, “But moving out of that space to another church where I was the only person between 16 and 35 was a bit of a different kettle of fish.

“I dearly love working with youth, but not having anyone my age to journey with was a bit rough, and it's tough to balance the need for doing discipleship with your own age and serving God's mission in the world.”

According to Alieta Molitika, traditionally it is unusual for young people to be entrusted with leadership roles in Tongan churches, but this is changing.

“This year I got elected to be the youth leader at church and at first I felt I was pressured into it, but mum and dad were like, “They nominated you so don't say no!” so I went into it.

“Everyone else was a lot older. I think for that time me and the assistant youth leader were probably the youngest people to ever lead the youth in that Tongan church so that was a challenge in itself,” Alieta says.



(L-R) Queensland young adults Alieta Molitika, Joyce Waia and Talahiva Taufa at the National Young Adult Leaders Conference in Sydney.  
**Photo:** Rohan Salmond

### A little help, please?

Whether these young adults continue in other kinds of church leadership after they retire from running the youth group is unclear. There is no question that training and mentoring young leaders eases the feelings of isolation and prevents burnout, which in turn helps retain their talent in the church long into adulthood.

Joyce Waia is trying to manage the strains of leadership and maintain a healthy level of self-care. The challenges are even greater given the complex needs of a small Indigenous community.

“I’m a young one in the church for my age, in my twenties,” she says, “It’s pretty hard and difficult for me as I am the only one. I do have other youth but because they’re so young I’m trying not to put a lot of pressure on them. Being a leader is very, very hard and I’m trying not to stress myself out too much.”

Joyce recognises that she needs support, and she spent the last couple of months of 2014 undertaking leadership training at Indooroopilly Uniting in Brisbane’s western suburbs.

“I just don’t know enough. I needed to know more about ministering,” she says.

“I [also] get support from my minister, Uncle Palmer ... he’s encouraged me along and I get encouragement from my church too ... [The Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress] has given heaps and heaps of support for young people and I’ve been pushing things ahead. I think they’ve supported me very well.”

At a national level, emerging leaders are fostered by the Uniting Church Assembly through the biennial National Young Adult Leaders’ Conference (NYALC). Sixty Uniting Church young adult leaders from across Australia converged on Sydney in December last year for training and building networks.

Brad Case says events like NYALC are crucial.

“Encouraging young people’s gifts is always important. We’re not the worst at it, but we can always do better.

Helping young people discover a sense of belonging to the church and creating avenues for them to serve is probably the greatest encouragement of all,” he says.

“The encouragement factor is a big thing, but so is advocacy. Standing up for young people in our churches and gracefully shouldering the weight of criticism and negativity that’s sometimes aimed at them is really important. If we don’t look after them well, their faith journey could be halted before it starts. Encouragement and advocacy are vital for our young people.”

### Why I stay

Uniting Church young adults are passionate about their denomination and the things that make it unique. Alieta is particularly enthusiastic about the cross-cultural aspect of the Uniting Church.

“Young people need to step up because it’s an awesome church, it’s so diverse. Everyone just being able to all connect in the one place,” she says.

“We really care for people outside the church, like through UnitingWorld and all that. I guess if younger kids knew all this they would want to be more a part of it.”

Brad is equally passionate about his church, and believes the Uniting Church has reached a point where decisions must be made.

“I think there’s actually a point right now where the church can look at itself and say ‘What do we want to be in the future? Who do we want to be, what do we want to do?’ That means we need to be encouraging our young people to be free in their creative ways to express faith and allow ourselves to let go of what we believe we own,” he says.

“The Uniting Church has ruined me for anything else. I stick around because of our public liturgy on justice issues and how we love mercy and walk humbly with our God. We have open table communion and do faith with others on the way. It’s not perfect, and no church is, but it’s the church I love.”

‘ Standing up for young people in our churches and gracefully shouldering the weight of criticism and negativity that’s sometimes aimed at them is really important ’

**Brad Case**



# On board for outreach

Rev Bruce Cornish and YWAM volunteer  
Krystal Cochran in front of the MV YWAM PNG.  
Photo: Ryan Alexander

Townsville Central City Mission has partnered with our closest neighbours in Papua New Guinea (PNG) to deliver essential medical care. **Dianne Jensen** reports.



Dr Bill Talbot operating on a patient  
during a YWAM Medical Ships  
outreach in PNG in 2014.  
Photo: YWAM

**The Uniting Church congregation at Townsville Central City Mission were quick to jump on board to assist with financial support and volunteers when YWAM (Youth with a Mission) Medical Ships came to Townsville in 2010.**

Since then the recently retired MV *Pacific Link* has provided over 249 000 health and training services including immunisations, primary health care services, dentistry and ophthalmic procedures to remote PNG communities.

The replacement MV *YWAM PNG* catamaran was purchased at the end of last year for \$6.5 million after a massive fundraising campaign.

Local ophthalmologist Dr Bill Talbot is one of the Uniting Church volunteers who regularly spends several weeks on board.

“Doing any surgery at all in these remote villages is a miracle of faith in action,” says Bill. “There are so many links in the chain that need to be there for it to be possible at all: instruments, disposables, medications, steriliser, operating microscope, electricity to run it, not to mention the YWAM volunteers. It is an incredible team effort which includes all the people at home who send us, yet it is so much more than this. It’s a ‘God thing’, a step from our comfort zone to our faith zone, where God has to act to make it happen.

“I love being involved in outreach as a Christian because you can minister to the whole person both physical and spiritual ... we are able to give them hope even if we can’t do anything physically, and isn’t that what the whole faith journey is about?”

Rev Bruce Cornish, minister at Townsville Central City Mission since July last year, was North Queensland presbytery minister for 10 years and has been on three missions.

“There is always a sense that you are making a difference. When you have people who have never seen a dentist and they have been in constant toothache for two years and suddenly they are not in pain. Or when you share with pastors whose only Bible is a New Testament which has lost some of its pages and you are able to give them a Good News Study Bible—by their reaction you see the impact this can make in their ministry.”

The church also provides financial support for YWAM volunteers such as American Krystal Cochran, a congregation member who leads young people on missions.

“I’m passionate because I see a world out there that still needs help. And I believe that no matter how young or how old, no matter how skilled or inexperienced, people can take the opportunity to serve God,” says Krystal.

For more information contact 07 4771 2123  
or visit [ywamships.org](http://ywamships.org)



# Where are you being invited?

As the conversation about mission, membership and the future of the Uniting Church continues, **Rev Peter Lockhart** encourages us to discover the possibility that we are being invited by Jesus to share in his work in the world.

In his analysis of possible future scenarios for the Uniting Church Dr Keith Suter suggests that the paradox of Uniting Church membership is this: “On the one hand, it seems to be doing the ‘right’ thing: it is one of the most open, inviting of churches; all are welcome in the Uniting Church. On the other hand, the Uniting Church’s hospitality is not attracting many new members.”

It is great to think that we have a reputation as an open and inviting church, and that developing a welcoming culture as a congregation is an expression of faithful hospitality.

Yet being open and inviting could also imply that the primary stance we have is one that waits for others to come to us. It could also infer that we are the ones who have the power and the privilege to do the inviting, even though I believe we do not.

When Jesus speaks of being welcomed by the faithful ones in Matthew 25, the welcome given to the strangers, the sick, the hungry and the thirsty appears far more dynamic than being about people who waited around.

When we consider Jesus’ own ministry these are the kinds of people whom Jesus himself met on the highways and byways of life. In Matthew 25 Jesus identifies himself in those individuals he encountered as he travelled in the community.

If we understand that Jesus is already out there within individuals in the community, then maybe it is we disciples, the church, who are being invited by Jesus to meet him in others.

As a minister I often find myself being invited into the community in a variety of ways to participate in public events or being invited to conduct particular ceremonies. It could be easy to be sceptical about these invitations but if I take the approach that it could be Jesus inviting me, it changes my attitude.

As we go on wondering about how to be welcoming and inviting as congregations, maybe we also need to hear the reciprocal invitations being given by people around us to share in their lives and to meet Jesus where he is already at work in the community.

What invitations have you personally received lately? Did you consider the possibility that it might have been Jesus inviting you?

*Peter is minister with St Lucia Uniting Church and chair of the Board for Christian Formation.*

*A free copy of Dr Keith Suter’s PhD can be downloaded from [churchfutures.com.au](http://churchfutures.com.au)*

‘Jesus is already out there within individuals in the community’



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# Changing the world one step at a time



Telstra Business Woman of the Year 2014 Anne Cross is CEO of UnitingCare Queensland, the largest not-for-profit health and community services provider in Queensland. Anne talks to **Dianne Jensen** about her lifelong commitment to building a more compassionate society.

‘I believe  
that you do  
your best work  
when there  
is coherence  
between your  
personal values  
and those that  
underpin your  
working life’

**Anne Cross**

## **What were the issues that really fired you up as a student?**

I was at university in the 1970s, a time of great debate and activism. Up until then it had generally been considered that the introduction of the welfare state, together with the emergence of an affluent society, had put an end to poverty in “the lucky country”. However the issues related to poverty were highlighted in the 1960s and 1970s when it was found that many Australians had failed to share in the post-war economic boom.

Like many young people I was optimistic about social change and I switched from studying science to social work.

## **What did you learn from your first job as a social worker?**

I was fortunate to do some of my practical work at the Brotherhood of St Lawrence in Melbourne. As part of a Commission of Inquiry into Poverty set up by the Liberal Government and then expanded by the Whitlam Labor Government, the Brotherhood ran a family centre project that worked with 60 “poor” families.

It was a complex program accompanied by research and evaluation. It recognised that change had to happen not only in the system but also with individuals and families. I learnt that there weren’t any easy answers to complex problems, and that change is hard and progress is often

quite modest. I learnt not to be romantic about people and what was possible, whilst remaining optimistic and committed to a more just society.

## **How has your understanding of the issues faced by ordinary people made a difference to the way that you approach your role?**

I have a deep interest in people; I have great curiosity about what makes people “tick”, about their lives, their challenges and how they cope, about what brings them joy and happiness. I deeply admire people who deal with daily challenges and heartache with grace and fortitude.

UnitingCare is all about people—the people who rely on our services, our staff and our volunteers. As CEO, I think it is critical that I remain grounded in the realities of people’s lives and their communities and the realities for our many thousands of staff and volunteers.

## **What were the key challenges in transforming a network of health and community service organisations into a corporate model?**

The Queensland Synod demonstrated extraordinary foresight in the decision to consolidate the many health and community services; as hard as those decisions were, the Synod was ahead of others who have had to do it in even more challenging environments.

Each of the services had a unique culture that of course was influenced by local people, conditions and history. So it will come as no surprise that one of the biggest challenges I have wrestled with over the years is the creation of a culture that is authentic to what it means to be the Uniting Church “at work in the world”; that honours local strengths, contribution and history but is robust for the current policy and funding environment, and that connects everyone to the UnitingCare network as a whole.

I think the Synod showed the same capacity to make bold decisions when it supported UnitingCare to take on the aged-care services in the Northern Territory previously run by Frontier Services. This willingness to support people and communities that are among the most vulnerable in Australia is very heartening.

### **In your annual report you talked about the challenges of sustainability. How can an organisation driven by mission survive?**

It is true that sustainability is a significant challenge. Competition is increasingly fierce and our cost structures are higher than many of our competitors. Some of this is driven by overheads that come from being part of the church (there are a lot of layers to support) and some of it is driven by our footprint and our service delivery profile.

For example in our aged-care services, 52 per cent of our residents are “concessional” residents. This compares with 18 per cent nationally across all providers. If you are driven by profit then you would not provide services in many of the locations we currently do. You would not deliver the full suite of services we provide in our hospitals. You would largely concentrate on services where people have more capacity to pay. You would also pay your staff less and provide them with less support. You would not invest in research and your advocacy will primarily be self-serving, rather than focused on the wellbeing of people and communities.

### **Are aged-care reforms and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) moving in the right direction?**

Aged-care reforms and the NDIS aim to give more control over decision making to people with disabilities and older people. This is a desirable thing because disadvantaged people struggle to have the autonomy in their own lives that most of us take for granted. However, people have many needs and funding alone and control over that funding does not mean that people will get what they need.

There should be more emphasis on reform of service models and quality of service. In some instances market forces will help drive this, but there is a long history of market failure for people who are disadvantaged either because of where they live or due to other circumstances. There is no market in Cape York, in rural and remote areas or for people who have particular difficulties. The reforms will not benefit all people and we will continue to advocate for models that pay attention to good services for disadvantaged people.

### **How important is it for service agencies to have a voice in public policy?**

Being active in public policy is a core part of our mission and we commit significant resources to our advocacy work. Over the past few years we have concentrated on a number of issues where we have a great deal of experience, the main ones being aged-care reform, disability and at the state level, the review of “out-of-home care” for children in the child protection system.

In addition to direct advocacy on issues relevant to Indigenous Australians and rural and remote service delivery, we have also joined the Recognise campaign which aims to achieve recognition of Indigenous people in the Australian Constitution.

I am currently a member of the Family and Domestic Violence Task Force established by the premier and led by Dame Quentin Bryce. This is a great opportunity to review and tackle this serious community issue.

### **How do your personal spiritual beliefs drive your passion for change?**

I believe that you do your best work when there is coherence between your personal values and those that underpin your working life. My commitment to social justice was nurtured through my church involvements as a teenager and a young person. My respect for people and my commitment to people having the opportunity to lead a full and valued life is consistent with the church's view that the work of healing, growth and liberation is God's work.

I learnt the value of prayer life from my grandmother whom I adored, and that learning has been an important “port in the storm” throughout my life. While I have struggled like many people with the institutional church, it has always been important in my life. I can't imagine regular involvement in worship and church life not being part of my life.

### **What are the life-limiting views that we still need to challenge in 2015?**

Some things have not changed. Human beings have always reacted to “negatively valued difference”; if you don't conform to societal expectations, then you are likely to be shunned, discriminated against and treated badly. This has significant consequences for the wellbeing of asylum seekers and many others in the community who are deemed “undeserving”.

Increasingly we live in a society that values individualism and individual achievement over collective responsibility. I think this is having a devastating impact on the most disadvantaged and on the quality of our life together.

*To find out more about UnitingCare Queensland visit [unitingcareqld.com.au](http://unitingcareqld.com.au)*

# Shake, rattle and roll

## How theological study can change your faith

There were plenty of passionate discussions around how the Uniting Church forms people in their faith at the 31st Synod in October last year. **Mardi Lumsden** explores how theological study deepens and even shakes your faith, and why that could be essential to your faith journey.

**The Uniting Church's foundational document the *Basis of Union* outlines the importance of the education of church members and respect of scholarly pursuits. Paragraph 11 states: "The Uniting Church enters into the inheritance of literary, historical and scientific enquiry which has characterised recent centuries, and gives thanks for the knowledge of God's ways with humanity which are open to an informed faith."**

‘Moving beyond black-and-white essentialism towards the nuances of history and context requires patience and subtlety’

**Dr Aaron Ghiloni**

Many Uniting Church members are working towards this informed faith through study and training, but what happens when new knowledge challenges core beliefs?

Trinity College Queensland principal and lecturer in practical theology Dr Aaron Ghiloni says studying any religion's texts, practices and ideas is inherently demanding due to the complex and contested nature of religious tradition.

"Moving beyond black-and-white essentialism towards the nuances of history and context requires patience and subtlety.

"Although theological study is challenging it is a beneficial sort of challenge," he says. "This challenge of Christian learning goes to the nature of Christian faith itself: because faith is dynamic and living it must be engaged and reengaged throughout life's stages.

"If such exploration is easy or tranquil, we may be doing it wrong."

### You gotta have faith

For Adelaide PhD student Caryn Rogers a growing passion for theological study took her on a faith journey she never expected. Growing up in the Pentecostal tradition Caryn had a very particular understanding of God.

"It was a very big God, very 'angels and demons' theology ... I was speaking in tongues when I was six," she says.

Caryn signed up for a Bible college course when she was 18 because she felt she was lacking biblical knowledge.

"It was really challenging for me because I had been brought up in a very conservative experience of church. I believed in quite a lot of out-there things and I believed a lot about the nature of God and the nature of the Devil and the presence of both of them in my life.

"I really hit rock bottom around mid-year because I had stripped away a lot of the faith stuff that I had known. I was studying the Old Testament and fascinated by that and studying doctrine so my brain was really coming alive and asking questions. I was finding that the feelings I had as a young child churchgoer—which were the power, warmth and hugeness of community—weren't there anymore. I was engaging my brain and I felt like I wanted church to be matching that ... When it wasn't, I was really disappointed."

While the faith of her childhood was inherently challenged, Caryn revelled in the intellectual side of Christian belief. The faith that made her heart sing as a

child meant she longed to maintain her relationship with God while exploring the intellectual side of Christian texts and doctrine.

“I think I always really wanted to believe it because my new cognitive understanding never superseded the experiences that I have had personally with God,” she says.

Caryn continues to try to encounter God in a way that makes her brain alive as well as her heart.

“I think 17-year-old Caryn would say I have lost my faith and I have lost my way, but something is still there, a conversation that is not finished. I have friends who became atheists during their theology degree because there were too many questions unanswered. They wanted more absolutes and rationality to their beliefs; what they found was that the more they sought absolutes, the more they lost any faith they once had. I never got to that point.

“I think there is so much that we can enter into our dialogue with God that it is not so much about losing our faith as it is continually to increase it.”

Caryn continues to work on her PhD thesis on rhetorical structures of persuasion in the Hebrew Bible through the University of Adelaide.

### Losing my religion

Former South African Presbyterian youth leader Gareth Beyers now aligns himself more closely with the Quakers than the faith of his upbringing.

“I didn’t know where I would end up but I wanted to be honest about the questions and trust that I would end up where I needed to,” he says of his theological studies at a state university.

“I’d asked some pretty fundamental questions around whether or not homosexuality is right or wrong, is there a hell and a heaven and are people from other religions going to hell.

“The other journey I was going on was a more spiritual journey looking at some of the early mystic writers. As I went further down that spiritual journey I found myself becoming more open but others [were] restricting my theology,” he says.

He says a big trigger for his change in beliefs was reading original biblical texts in Greek and Hebrew and finding a lack of clear-cut answers.

“To be able to view the Bible as a man-made, human-made book with people honestly grappling with this idea of a god and what God is, and they get it wrong sometimes and they get it right sometimes and the God character in the Bible changes as well. To find that out was pretty eye opening.

“In some ways church leaders have the luxury of being able to be professional theology thinkers. It is hard work; it is their job to spend the week reading the text, doing the hermeneutics to understand it and try to work out what the message is for us today, which is why I think

people going to the seminary and losing their faith, or at least it changing a lot, is very common. I think there are a lot of ministers who don’t really believe some of the easy answers they give.”

### Tell it to my heart

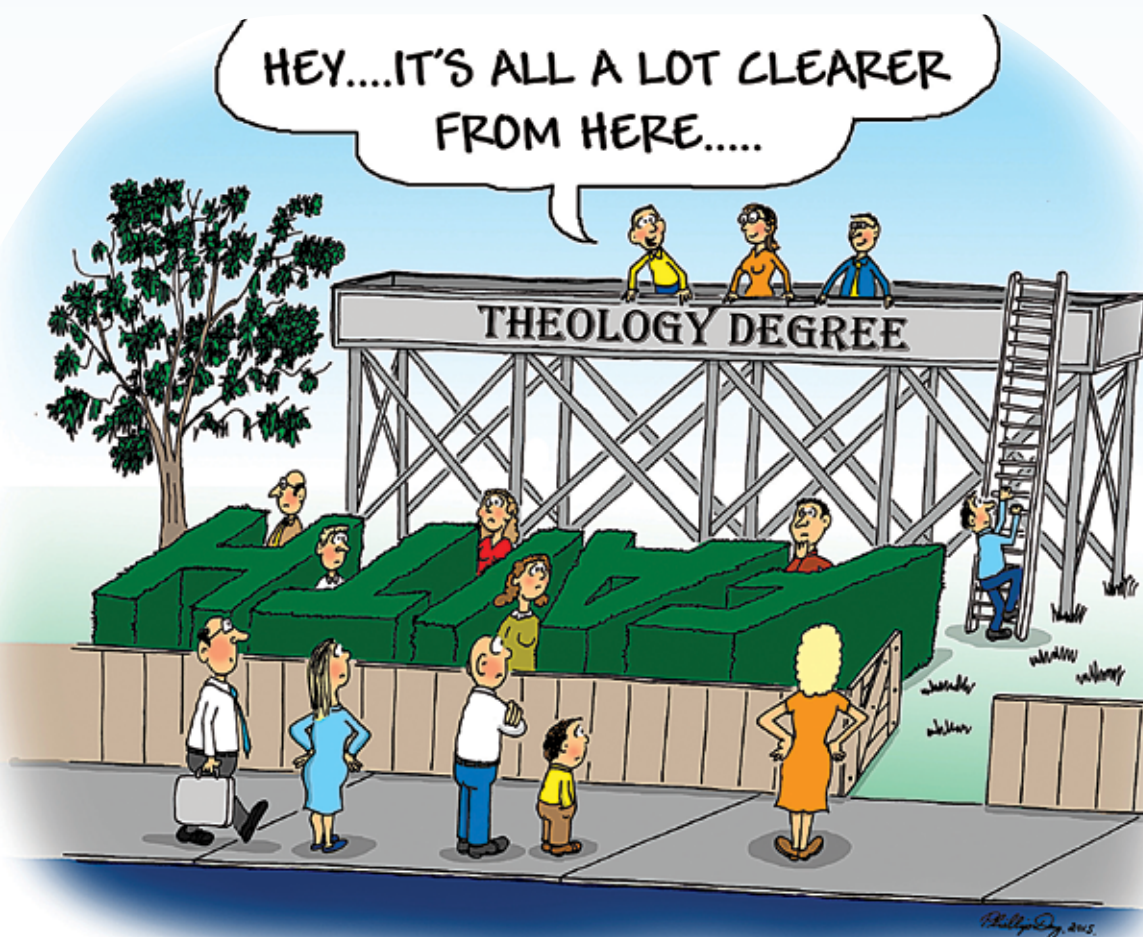
Aaron Ghiloni says an added challenge comes when we approach a religious tradition from the perspective of faith.

“Biblical study enables us to not only see that texts ought to be read in light of their context, but also that particular text demands to be taken seriously as scripts for the readers’ lives. The study of scripture and doctrine within a faith community makes demands not only of our brains but also of our souls and bodies.

“It is tough for some students to feel they have permission to engage with doctrine and scripture critically and curiously. Occasionally this reluctance is inadvertently fostered by the church when it promotes faithfulness, discipleship, orthodoxy, and consensus. If these values are taken as a demand for docility rather than an invitation to adventure than something of the protestant tradition has been lost.”

To explore your faith through courses at Trinity College Queensland visit [trinity.qld.edu.au](http://trinity.qld.edu.au)

Illustration: Phil Day





Gary Doyle.  
Photo: Holly Jewell

# General secretary follows his calling

Ashley Thompson speaks with newly appointed Queensland Synod General Secretary Gary Doyle about his passion for young people and the church.

**Last December Gary Doyle and his wife Helen uprooted themselves from their home in Townsville and moved to Brisbane—enabling him to become general secretary of the Uniting Church in Queensland.**

‘One of the biggest challenges facing the church is the next generation’

Gary Doyle

“I don’t really see this job as a promotion; it’s a calling,” says Gary, who previously held the position of principal of the John Flynn College—a residential college associated with the Uniting and Lutheran churches at James Cook University in Townsville.

A Christian since the mid-70s, Gary grew up in the Methodist Church before joining the Uniting Church at union. The Youth of the State representative for North Queensland in 1978, he has since served the church in numerous youth leadership capacities and worshipped in congregations as far and wide as Moranbah, Dysart, Ayr, Nundah and most recently, Aitkenvale.

“My relationship with the church has been pivotal in developing my leadership skills,” he says. “It was instrumental early on in my life and has always provided Christ-centred mentors.”

Gary has over 25 years experience in education and management. In addition to his role at the John Flynn College he has worked for Education Queensland, BHP Australia Coal, Australian Agricultural and the Australian College of Tropical Agriculture.

A father to two 20-somethings, he remains passionate about engaging young people in the church and recognises the value of their voice in moving forward.

“One of the biggest challenges facing the church is the next generation,” says Gary. “There is definitely a need to look at how the church connects with young people and importantly, how young people want to connect to the church.

“How they want to have community might not be the same as the models that predominantly exist in the Uniting Church at the moment.”

Gary is enthusiastic about his role as a change manager in the Synod and strengthening the link between Uniting Church agencies and the church’s “core business”, growing the kingdom of God.

“I really believe that when the core of why you exist is clearly articulated then the mission can grow tenfold ... if we’re not here to lead people to Christ what are we here for?”

*You are invited to Gary Doyle’s commissioning service to be held on 18 February, 4.30 pm at the Uniting Church Centre, Auchenflower. RSVP Kellie Broderick on 3377 9744 or [kellie.broderick@ucaqld.com.au](mailto:kellie.broderick@ucaqld.com.au)*



# New Year's resolutions for your congregation

There's nothing like the New Year to turn our minds towards setting new goals. Here are some suggestions on how to make the most of your New Year's fresh start.

1

## Update your church sign

The sign outside your church provides that critical first impression. Will people pause for thought or flee for the hills? Consider the most appropriate use of the space and how often you are prepared to update. Use a clean font and keep the content short and sweet.

2

## Be considerate of visitors

Clearly displayed and unambiguous signage is a health and safety basic as well as providing important information about how to navigate church facilities. Put yourself in the shoes of a newcomer—is your church signage using jargon? A sign reading “Women on Fire in the hall 6 pm” should probably be rephrased.

3

## Use the tools at hand

Local newspaper, television and radio are important communication tools but don't underestimate the reach of school newsletters, community centres and professional offices. Think about your target market and plan accordingly. These days everyone's grandma is already on Facebook so don't let those whippersnappers fool you into thinking that social media is hard. It's a darn sight easier than using a roneo machine and you won't get purple ink on your fingers.

4

## Raise your voice

Use the Stats have Faces resource to create a snapshot of your neighbourhood and to help discern your mission priorities. Can you partner with existing Uniting Church agencies and community organisations in your area? The Uniting Church is recognised

5

## Worship all week

Don't be a Sundays-only church. Your church facilities are there every day, so start thinking outside the box about how to be a worshipping community all week. Not every church is big enough to hold multiple services but consider hosting public meetings, fundraising morning teas, community craft groups and Bible studies on site. Move the pews back and plug in the kettle; it's our father's house so make yourself at home.

*The Uniting Communications roadshows are tailored to meet your specific communication needs, so get in touch with Ashley Thompson on 3377 9834 or [ashley.thompson@ucaqld.com.au](mailto:ashley.thompson@ucaqld.com.au) to find out more.*

## A time to remember



When arranging a funeral, one of the nicest things you can do, is to include a photo tribute to help celebrate a life well-lived. Alex Gow's own media team can prepare a photo presentation set to your favourite piece of music that helps honour and remember someone special to you. And afterwards it will be yours to share anytime with family and friends.



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Haileigh Childs (left) from Queensland, and Donna Champion from South Australia, at the UAICC national conference. Photo: Supplied

# First and Second Peoples come face to face

About FACE has been forging relationships between First and Second Peoples for over 30 years. The latest program has continued to build that trust and understanding. **Nigel Trapp** reports.

**Brisbane university student Haileigh Childs admits she had little understanding of Aboriginal culture prior to immersing herself in the About FACE program.**

“My relationship and understanding was virtually non-existent before. I was not actively seeking to be involved but now I will be seeking to learn more about the Aboriginal people in my own area.”

Haileigh, who worships at Bulimba Uniting Church in Brisbane, was one of 17 participants in About FACE 2015, organised by Victoria and Tasmania Synod Commission for Mission. The program ran for 16 days in January.

About FACE stands for Faith And Cultural Exchange and has been an activity of the Uniting Church in Australia since 1984. It aims to build meaningful relationships with Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) communities.

It celebrates the covenant relationship between the Uniting Church in Australia and the UAICC, and encourages participants and those supporting them to be actively involved in covenanting and working together for reconciliation in the church and in the wider communities.

The program has a strong focus on working collaboratively with all partners to ensure that the program is beneficial for everyone, from host communities to participants.

Host communities are identified by the UAICC to strengthen and build upon the already existing relationships with the Uniting Church.

This year the ten female and seven male participants from Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia and Queensland were split between the outback South Australian town of Port Augusta, Alice Springs and Ernabella in the Northern Territory, Lismore in northern New South Wales and Grovedale in Victoria.

Following a week in their chosen community, participants spent a further week engaging with more than 150 UAICC representatives at the UAICC national conference in the northern Tasmanian village of Poatina as well as participating in briefing and debriefing sessions.

Haileigh says she, like so many other non-Indigenous Australians, had little opportunity in the past to sit at the feet of Aboriginal people and learn more about their way of life.

Adnyamathanha elder Denise Champion, the Chair of the UAICC in South Australia, says About FACE is an important beginning point for people seeking to develop a relationship with the First Peoples.

“They are adopted into our families and we welcome them to come back [whenever they choose],” she says.

“It [the in-community experience] is just the tip of the iceberg but it makes it a lived experience which is life changing for many.”

For more information visit [aboutface.org.au](http://aboutface.org.au)

‘They are adopted into our families and we welcome them to come back [whenever they choose],’

**Denise Champion**



Photo: Walt Disney Pictures

# Big hero, big heart

**For a movie about a 14-year-old genius and his inflatable robot nurse, it's a little surprising that *Big Hero 6* is mostly about death and revenge.**

*Big Hero 6* is an impressive achievement for Disney. It's common to find animated children's movies blending kid-friendly slapstick humour with more sophisticated jokes for parents, but *Big Hero 6* goes further, exploring hard, bleak themes through squishy characters and rich backdrops.

Hiro Hamada (voiced by Ryan Potter) is an orphan who lives in the half-Japanese, half-American city of San Fransokyo. He and his older brother Tadashi (Daniel Henney) are robotics prodigies, and when Tadashi is killed in what appears to be an accidental fire, Hiro suspects foul play and vows revenge. Tadashi's personal healthcare companion robot Baymax (Scott Adsit) is unable to harm any human, but naïvely helps his "patient" Hiro apprehend whoever is responsible in the belief it will help Hiro's wellbeing.

Disney is in the middle of a winning streak. After kicking goals with *Bolt* (2008), *Tangled* (2010), *Wreck-It Ralph* (2012) and the global smash hit *Frozen* (2013), Walt

Disney Animation Studios is experiencing the most success it's had in more than a decade. Although *Big Hero 6* doesn't reach quite the same heights as *Frozen*, it measures up admirably and continues Disney's move away from romantic storylines to deal with deeper issues and complex characters which subvert stereotypes.

Although he is highly intelligent and understands how to help humans cope with loss, Baymax fails to grasp that revenge will not actually help Hiro come to terms with his brother's death. Hiro and Baymax help each other to understand and forgive, which is the central theme of the film, but *Big Hero 6* is also a celebration of proactive curiosity and learning. When characters encounter obstacles they encourage each other to find a solution by looking at things "from a different angle".

*Big Hero 6* is proof that Disney's willingness to explore new ground in its animated films is paying off. It deserves its Oscar nomination for Best Animated Feature and, much like Baymax himself, this movie is big and easy to love.

**Rohan Salmond**  
Cross-platform editor

## ***Big Hero 6***

Directed by Don Hall  
and Chris Williams

Starring Ryan Potter, Scott Adsit  
and Daniel Henney

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Rev Tim Griggs.  
Photo: Supplied

# Statistics don't tell the full story

Are the people in your church representative of the people who live in the wider community? The Stats have Faces process helps churches connect with their neighbours. *Journey* reports.

**Queensland Synod Research Officer Bruce Mullan was surprised to discover that the greatest number of people employed in his suburb worked in retail and construction.**

"We often make assumptions about our neighbours and while I wasn't surprised that they were mostly younger than me, I was quite surprised at what they did," Bruce says.

"The profile of the local area certainly didn't match the profile of my local congregation, and it wasn't hard to see that we were not really a representative sample of people who live around our church."

Bruce was one of the Synod team who worked on developing the Stats have Faces resource for congregations.

He said the team wanted to give congregations tools to look at the demographics of their local area but wanted to help people see that statistics don't tell the whole story.

The resources include ways of identifying community assets, a mapping exercise, an exegetical neighbourhood walk, Bible study and prayer as well as interpreting local area demographic and statistical reports.

The Stats have Faces process can be undertaken by a church council, mission committee or a task group recruited for the purpose. It is all managed by a local team leader and will take about six weeks to complete.

Minister of the Lifeworks congregation in Toowoomba Rev Tim Griggs was part of trialling the new resource.

The Lifeworks congregation was in the process of moving to a new location in the growing Glenvale area on the fast-developing western fringe of the city and used Stats have Faces to get a snapshot of their new local area.

"For us, the Stats have Faces process confirmed a number of things we had speculated on but the thing that surprised us were the age groups and how many primary and young teenagers are living in the area," says Tim.

He regards the theological discussion as critical. "The Bible study stuff was really good as it grounded us in what we are actually doing and why we were doing it.

The Lifeworks team found the material easy to use. "It wasn't complex, it wasn't difficult, it was actually quite energising and enjoyable," Tim says.

"I think every congregation should look at doing something like this."

Bruce believes congregations need to constantly attune themselves to recognise God's presence in the ordinariness of our neighbourhoods.

"The neighbourhood is holy ground and it is sacred. Encounter it with reverence and view it as holy."

Find the Stats have Faces resource at [ucaqld.com.au](http://ucaqld.com.au)

‘The  
neighbourhood  
is holy ground  
and it is sacred.  
Encounter it  
with reverence  
and view it as  
holy’

**Bruce Mullan**



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## Interested in improving your communication skills?

This year, Uniting Communications is offering congregations a series of workshops in the areas of websites, social media, fundraising, internal and external communications and community engagement.

Fill out our online survey [surveymonkey.com/s/FYJZXTY](http://surveymonkey.com/s/FYJZXTY) or contact Ashley at [communications@ucaqld.com.au](mailto:communications@ucaqld.com.au)



The Uniting Church in Australia  
QUEENSLAND SYNOD

COMMUNICATIONS

Road show

### Position Vacant Community Engagement Facilitator, Darwin

Darwin Memorial Uniting Church is seeking to broaden its relationship with the community based in and around the Darwin CBD by developing community engagement strategies.

The newly created position of Community Engagement Facilitator, open to ordained and lay people, will assist the congregation to establish networks across a range of community sectors and promote participation in a variety of community events.

The position description is available at [ns.uca.org.au/vacancies](http://ns.uca.org.au/vacancies). For further information please contact James Teh, Church Council Chair, on 0402 334 578.



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**Seeking wisdom research participants.** UQ PhD student Dr Leander Mitchell is seeking participants aged 50 years and over to participate in a research project aimed to define the core qualities of wisdom. To participate fill out the online questionnaire at [ow.ly/GQpvS](http://ow.ly/GQpvS) or request a hard

copy from Dr Mitchell on 3040 8464 by emailing [leander.mitchell@uqconnect.edu.au](mailto:leander.mitchell@uqconnect.edu.au)

**For sale.** Half share in house on 10 beautiful acres, Hampton QLD. Would suit mature Christian gardener, or young family, or cancer survivor, or investment to reside in future. Nice outlook, town water, school bus. Opportunity for full possession in 3-5 years. Conditions apply. Ph 4697 9065.

**Job vacancy.** Office administrator position CHERMSIDE KEDRON COMMUNITY CHURCH on Brisbane's northside, seeks applications for a 20 hour per week, 4 days a week office administration position in the church office of the congregation. Please phone 07 3350 4302 or email [office@ckcc.org.au](mailto:office@ckcc.org.au) for further information and a job description. Applications close on Wednesday 18 February 2015.



### The Queensland Choir

The Queensland Choir is seeking singers of all parts (SATB), but particularly Basses and Sopranos for its exciting 2015 Choral Season.

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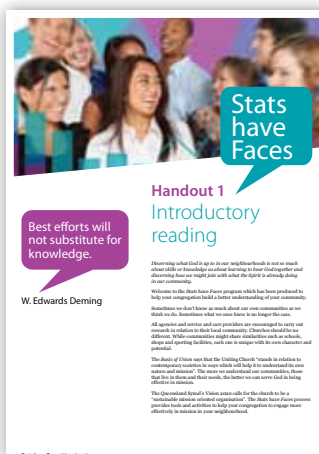
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Stats have Faces is a local area exploration process to help your congregation build a better understanding of your local community.

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Just copy the leader's guide and the participants' handouts for printing or electronic distribution and set about discovering new insights for mission.

[ucaql.com.au/stats-have-faces](http://ucaql.com.au/stats-have-faces)



The Uniting Church in Australia  
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