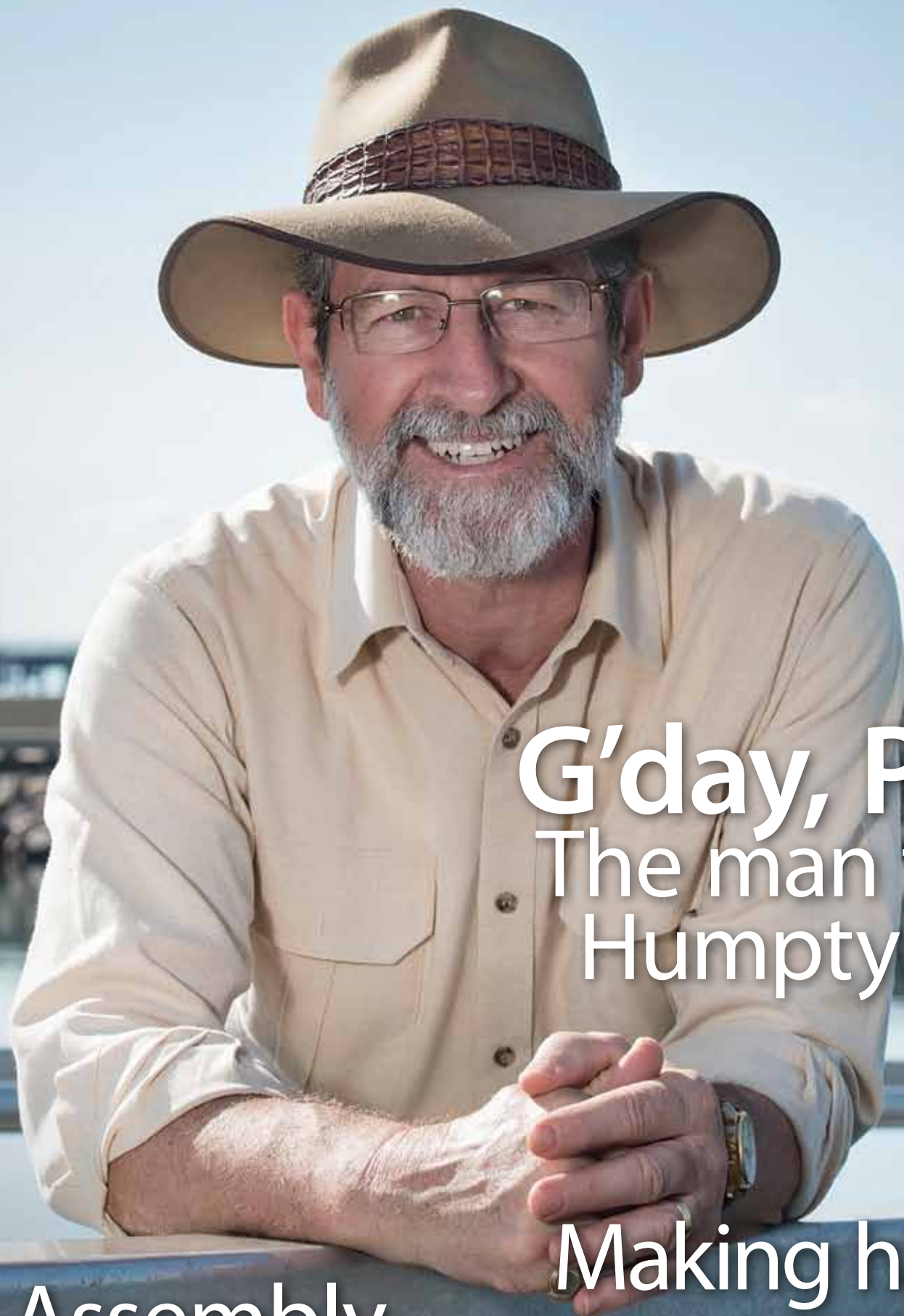




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QUEENSLAND SYNOD

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# Journey



G'day, Prez  
The man from  
Humpty Doo

Making happy  
campers

8 Assembly  
issues

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# Church, assemble!

On 12 July, the Uniting Church Assembly will gather in Perth to discuss a range of issues affecting the church at the national level.

It's an exciting time for the church; the Assembly meeting is held in a different city every three years, so every meeting has a different flavour. The last time the Assembly met in Perth was 1997.

At this Assembly, Stuart McMillan will become president of the Uniting Church. Stuart was moderator of the Northern Synod for five years and speaks often about the enriching mentorship he has received from Aboriginal people in his time living in the Northern Territory. Read his full profile on page six.

Stuart often talks about how forming cross-cultural friendships leads to a richer community of faith. As *Journey* explored last month, this Assembly meeting also marks 30 years since the formation of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) and the *We are a Multicultural Church* statement. It seems like a good time to double down on our commitment to multiculturalism, and Stuart's leadership in cross-cultural matters will surely be invaluable during this time.

There will be a broad range of issues discussed at this meeting. A full list of proposals and reports is available on the Assembly 2015 website, and we cover some of the highlights on page 14. Some of these issues, such as our response to the Royal Commission and our continuing discussion on marriage, will likely catch the attention of mainstream media.

Part of what's so wonderful about the Uniting Church is our commitment to listen. At its best, the Uniting Church is a consultative, deliberative community of faith always seeking to discern the movement of the Holy Spirit. When the outside world looks our way, let's show them our best.

**Rohan Salmond**  
Cross-platform editor

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# Journey



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



## Monday Midday Prayer

*Disturb us, Lord, when we  
are too pleased with ourselves.*

*When dreams become true  
because we dreamed too little.*

*When we arrived safely because  
we sailed too close to the shore.*

*Amen*

—Sir Francis Drake

## Moderator's highlights

**12–18 July**

The Uniting Church National  
Assembly, Perth

**21 July**

South Sudan prayer service,  
Auchenflower, Brisbane

**25 July**

Mary Burnett Presbytery  
meeting, Murgon

# Listen and learn

**For about a year, when I was a young bloke, a mate and I used to go to King George Square once a week on a Tuesday, walk up to people having their lunch break, and ask them, “If you were to die tonight, where would you spend eternity?” This was seen in my circles at the time to be real evangelism. I’m still amazed at how politely people responded, but that was some time ago.**

Generally, Uniting Church members feel that they don’t share the gospel as much as Christians from other traditions, and don’t feel confident in doing so. As they say, “Fools rush in”.

I reckon most times it’s best to let your life speak, then explain why you do what you do; what inspires and motivates you.

But it is important to be able to explain it, to give reasons for the hope that lies within. We must be a pathway for others to discover the grace that enlivens and enlightens our lives—otherwise, it’s all about us!

More and more, I believe evangelism starts with listening, being open to the other and their world. The God revealed in the scriptures is certainly an initiating God, but also one who listens, who sees, who is in solidarity—think Yahweh’s speech to Moses about the Israelites in Egypt—

“I have seen, I have heard, I know”. Or think Yahweh’s noticing of Hagar, the rejected concubine of Abram, or of Jesus’ interactions, particularly with those who were marginalised, and of his compassion.

So if you want to grow your capability to speak the hope of the gospel, just start by listening more deeply and follow the other’s agenda with love. When the dialogical ball gets thrown back to you, you’ll have the words to say, simply because you have listened well. “When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you” Matthew 10:19.

We worry about whether our words or actions will bring our intended result, but maybe it’s about—after listening—sharing the gospel of God’s solidarity with us and being open to let happen what will happen. Are we capable of being surprised? Are we willing to seek first the reign of God in our time and place, and let the Spirit do its work?

**Rev David Baker**  
Moderator, Queensland Synod

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Brisbane's civic and religious leaders gather in St Stephen's Cathedral with the Dalai Lama.  
Photo: Rohan Salmond

# Brisbane's faith leaders welcome agent of peace

A visit from the Dalai Lama brought Brisbane's civic and religious leaders together in June at a multifaith service of prayer for world peace. **Rohan Salmond** reports.

**The moderator of the Uniting Church Queensland Synod has gathered with the Dalai Lama along with Brisbane's other religious and civic leaders at St Stephen's Cathedral for a multifaith service of prayers for world peace.**

The June service included prayers from Baha'i, Theravada Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Mahayana Buddhist, Islamic, Sikh and Christian religious leaders, along with an address by the Dalai Lama, an important monk from the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism and the spiritual leader of Tibet in exile.

Moderator Rev David Baker attended the event along with the other heads of each of the Christian churches in Brisbane: Anglican, Australian Christian Churches, Baptist, Churches of Christ, Greek Orthodox, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Salvation Army, Wesleyan Methodist and Queensland Churches Together.

Catholic archbishop of Brisbane, the Most Reverend Mark Coleridge, gave a welcome address to the Dalai Lama, describing him as "a man in the world, but not of it".

"You ... Your Holiness, have suffered many things that should have destroyed you, but they haven't. Living the life of a Buddha—arduous and finally enlightened—you have found your way ... beyond cruelty to compassion.

"And that is why we look to you today, as a witness to hope."

The Dalai Lama was quiet but jovial during his short address, pausing briefly to reflect upon the crucifix at the front of the Catholic cathedral before addressing those in attendance.

"We are all born the same, and we will all die the same," said the Dalai Lama.

"Harmony among our different religious traditions is important because each one of them is a living source of love, tolerance and forgiveness.

"They may have differing philosophical points of view, but they all convey a message of love and compassion.

"Compassion is the heart of all religion," he said.

"Friendship is essential, but trust is the basis of friendship, and trust comes only if we show others sincere affection."

In response, Dr Mohamad Abdalla, the director of Islamic Studies at Griffith University and imam at Kuraby Mosque, said "There is no doubt that the promotion of harmony, especially religious harmony, is of great significance and thank you so much for reminding us of that.

"Hopefully we are able to overcome the prejudices within our hearts and work collectively."

‘ We are all  
born the same,  
and we will  
all die the  
same ’

**Dalai Lama**



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# Travelling north

From 12 July Stuart McMillan will become president of the Uniting Church—only the third lay person to ever hold the position. **Matt Pulford** writes.

**Stuart McMillan says he had a really good first week working for the Uniting Church in the Northern Territory. But the way that week started wasn't promising.**

‘My life has been so deeply enriched by Aboriginal people sharing their spirituality with me.’

Six weeks after being interviewed in Sydney for an accountant position at the Uniting Church Northern Synod, Stuart found himself standing alone with his swag on the edge of a dirt airstrip at Ramingining. No one got the message that he was coming. No one knew who he was, and more practically, no one was there to pick him up. So he hitched a ride into the community with some locals.

The year was 1982. Stuart was 27 years old. He and his wife Ros, a behavioural scientist, had taken the big decision to leave their comfortable community in Sydney's suburban northwest to move to Darwin with their young family. Stuart and Ros had known for some time that they wanted to do something in their lives to make a difference in the world and to live up to their shared Christian faith.

## Call of the north

Stuart remembers feeling a deep concern for Australia's First Peoples from when he was in primary school in the 1960s. By the early 1980s Stuart and Ros were active in social justice issues at the former Chester St Congregational Church in Epping, and keenly followed news about Aboriginal land rights that would filter through from Darwin via Rev Jim Downing. From time to time Jim would send telegrams to his friends down south, urging them to advocate for various Aboriginal causes to their local members of parliament. After consideration and discernment, Stuart and Ros's

opportunity came when they spotted the Northern Synod's job ad in the newspaper one Saturday.

Six weeks later, as he stepped off that deserted airstrip in the middle of Arnhem Land, Stuart began to live out his lifelong passion, and form his personal covenant—to use the modern Uniting Church expression—with the First Peoples of Australia.

“Things went well,” says Stuart, despite the initial logistic challenges. “My job was to work with Aboriginal bookkeepers so that we had a summary of monthly information for various businesses and operations. I learnt a lot that first week about the capacity of Aboriginal people to do things. Everything was in great shape. These people really knew what they were doing, and I'd been led to believe anecdotally that wasn't the case. They were as good as any bookkeeper that ever worked for me in Sydney.”

## Learning from the best

In the 33 years since, Stuart has had many roles: accountant, operations manager, general manager, pastor, cultural awareness trainer, resource worker, community developer and moderator of the Northern Synod. From 12 July 2015 he'll add president of the Uniting Church in Australia to that list. He will be only the third lay person to serve as Uniting Church president; Sir Ronald Wilson and Dr Jill Tabart were the others. His path to the presidency has been uniquely informed by the lives of Australia's First Peoples, particularly the Aboriginal people of northern Australia and members of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress.





President-elect Stuart McMillan.  
Photo: Louisa Sams

“My life has been so deeply enriched by Aboriginal people sharing their spirituality with me. I have been shaped by Aboriginal mentors. They have strengthened and shaped my faith,” says Stuart.

Rev Dr Djiniyini Gondarra OAM, the first Aboriginal moderator of the Northern Synod (1985–87); Vince Ross, chair of Congress Elders Council and Rev Rronang Garrawurra, past Congress chairperson have all mentored Stuart.

### Communication is key

Stuart’s education about Aboriginal Australia has been a long journey. Ten years into his life in the Territory he was general manager of the Arnhem Land Progress Association (ALPA)—the largest employer of Aboriginal people in the NT with a turnover of around \$20 million a year. But over time he realised that his inability to communicate with Aboriginal people in their own language was holding him back from deeper relationships. To the people he worked with he would always be *bunggawa*—the big boss—and a whitefella to boot. So he stood down as general manager and began an intensive course of study in the Yolŋu language.

The relationships that opened up from his language study led to a new level of spiritual connection. In due course the old men of Elcho Island sat down with Stuart in the dirt under the trees and schooled him in their law. A man he knew adopted him as his brother in the Gupapuyngu clan of the Yolŋu nation with the skin name *bulany* meaning red kangaroo. To complete the induction, the man’s sister adopted Ros as her sister to make sure Stuart and Ros’ relationship was proper in Yolŋu

kinship terms. The intricacies and responsibilities of Aboriginal relationships across Arnhem Land and the traditions and taboos that came with them were now fully part of Stuart and Ros McMillan’s everyday lives.

“This meant maintaining protocols—such as not addressing or looking directly at Djiniyini’s wife—because in Yolŋu terms she’s a person with whom I’m in what’s called an avoidance relationship,” explains Stuart.

Stuart worked for Djiniyini Gondarra for 12 years through the heady days after the High Court’s Mabo decision established native title. Aboriginal and Islander groups all around the country were making their cases. This meant a lot of research for Stuart and trips to Canberra to resource Djiniyini and others as they gave their input on the drafting of the Native Title Act under Prime Minister Paul Keating.

While they were drawn ever deeper into Aboriginal Australia, the Uniting Church has remained a constant in the McMillans’ lives. After settling down at Humpty Doo on Darwin’s rural fringe, the McMillans joined with five other couples to set up a new congregation, the Humpty Doo Uniting Church, now the Living Water Uniting Church. After two ordained ministers in placement Stuart was recognised as pastor, presiding over weddings, funerals and “everything a normal ordained minister would”. Stuart and Ros both went on to hold senior leadership roles in the Northern Synod with Ros serving as moderator from 1996–99 and Stuart finishing an extended five-year term as moderator last month.

### In layman’s terms

As a lay president Stuart’s role in worship will be slightly circumscribed. Under Uniting Church regulations he won’t be able to perform baptisms or preside over communion outside his synod without the authorisation of the host presbytery.

So what kind of leader will Stuart McMillan be for the whole Uniting Church? One who will work for a more inclusive, intercultural church across generations to bring about reconciliation and renewal for the whole creation.

“We are challenged to be a community of Christ, to bring that unity of Christ into play across the many different cultures in God’s church,” says Stuart.

“With our Indigenous brothers and sisters, the challenge remains for us to really listen to them and to the Spirit and to find ways to grow our relationship so that it becomes a truly interdependent one.

“I am energised by the way our next generation is embracing our diversity and applying their gifts and talents in leadership right across the Uniting Church.”

Whatever other challenges may lie ahead, Stuart McMillan is set to face them with patience, perseverance and a profound spirituality.



Community Care Op Shop  
volunteer, Anne Dodd.  
Photo: Bruce Mullan

# Friendship found among the bargains

On the Gold and Sunshine Coasts, church op shops are bridging the gap between congregations and the community. **Ashley Thompson** speaks with volunteers from the Mudgeeraba and Mooloolaba Uniting Church op shops.

**If you find yourself browsing through the eclectic treasure of Mudgeeraba Uniting Church Community Care Op Shop on a weekday morning around ten, it's likely you'll be invited into the kitchen for a cup of coffee.**

This is the community atmosphere chairperson Noela Lister and other hard-working volunteers have spent 25 years fostering in their locally renowned charity shop.

"It wasn't ever started to fund the church," explains Noela. "The vision was to meet the needs of people in the community and to reach out to the community".

Originally run out of a tiny heritage building on the church property by two church members who shared a vision for community outreach, it wasn't long before the Mudgeeraba congregation's op shop outgrew this space and moved into a bigger building.

Twenty years later the op shop has an active volunteer base of around 60 and annual income of \$213 000, last year giving away \$112 000 after expenses.

"We support lots of different people," says Noela, "first locally, then nationally, then overseas."

Currently the profits from the Community Care Op Shop fund a full-time community counsellor, a full-time play group coordinator and four local school chaplains. That's in addition to supporting local charities, giving out food parcels and tithing 10 per cent of its monthly income to the church.

Noela is in no doubt that the work is worth it.

"For the friendship—the community within the op shop is really worth it even if it isn't financially worth it. There is a real community built with our volunteers and with the regular customers," she says.

Likewise, the three-year-old Helping Hand Charity Op Shop run out of the Mooloolaba Uniting Church began not for profit, but for friendship.

"It grew out of us wanting to be together," says op shop coordinator, Narelle Hinde.

"I mean everyone's been lonely at some stage in their life and just need someone to talk to. And that's what I find—that even though the internet gives you access to so many people, you can't beat speaking to people. You can't beat a hug from someone."

For more information visit [mudgeerabaunitingchurch.org](http://mudgeerabaunitingchurch.org) and [mooloolabaunitingchurch.org.au](http://mooloolabaunitingchurch.org.au)

‘There is a real  
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built with our  
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with the regular  
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**Noela Lister**



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# Sharing the gift of faith

University chaplain and evangelism trainer **Rev Dr Ian Robinson** reminds us that evangelism is about demonstrating a real faith in a real God in the real world.

**Jesus was loved by the people for the way he evangelised. In faith-sharing, we offer seven beautiful gifts to another person.**

## Time

The single most precious gift we can give is the time to be with another. It can never be made up or paid back. Do you make yourself accessible to the people who need you? Have you gone out of your way to meet people and spend time building understanding and trust?

## Listening

There is hearing what someone says, and there is listening for what it really means. Do you know that feeling when someone else is really listening to you, meeting you at heart? Do you seek to understand others, to walk in their shoes?

## Blessing

In a world full of people experiencing unworthiness or rejection, find what you can bless and bless it. Almost everyone appreciates being prayed for, even atheists accept it as our best and deepest goodwill. Just ask first—hardly anyone says no.

## Authenticity

Of those who come to faith in Jesus, over 80 per cent report that it was due to the life and witness of an ordinary, everyday, garden-variety, don't-know-all-the-answers Christian. How powerful is the love story of an authentic Christian!

## Community

If it takes a whole village to raise one child, then your church is that village. The credible church has a diversity of approaches to their community. Every single preferred approach that I have ever seen has reached someone and offended someone else. Get used to that diversity. It was God's idea.

## Respect

1 Peter 3:15 is clear and simple: "singleness of heart, readiness, gentleness and respect". Everyone deserves respect. Everyone is a sacred site. You may not like their smell, their religion, their sexuality, their politics, but the New Testament is clear that you must communicate your respect for them. Everyone is a gift from God to the planet. It is up to you to uncover that gift.

## Hospitality

In Jesus' life, so much takes place around sharing food. The idea of a "welcome" is a description of salvation in John 1:12. Don't work at being too impressive—it creates distance. Let's not pretend that we are doing better than we are. Our slender hold on hope is really appreciated by others in their struggles.

*Adapted from Burning Hope, available at Trinity Theological Library. In November–December Ian will lead a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Find out more at [youngadultspilgrimage2015.yolasite.com](http://youngadultspilgrimage2015.yolasite.com)*

‘In a world full of people experiencing unworthiness or rejection, find what you can bless and bless it’



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# Gone camping

## Time out for young Christians

Remember looking up at the stars at midnight, talking about God and faith and wishing that you could always hold worship in a bush chapel or on the beach at dawn? **Dianne Jensen** finds out why youth camps still play a pivotal role in faith development.

**Youth camps are a tradition in the Uniting Church, drawing on the legacy of the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational traditions. You can't turn around in most churches without bumping into someone over the age of 30 years who made their faith commitment through camps—and possibly met their spouse at the same time.**

Recent research commissioned by the Christian Venues Association has backed up the anecdotal evidence that youth camps play a pivotal role in spiritual development and faith commitment. *Social shifts, spiritual trends: Four decades of change* revealed that over a quarter of church attenders make their first faith decision in the key youth years (10–19 years). One in ten attenders cited church camps as a significant factor in helping them come to faith, rising to 28.7 per cent of current 15–29 year olds.

“Whilst traditional ways of people engaging with Christianity in our community are declining, the role of other activities, such as youth groups and camps, seem to be having an increased prominence and impact in faith decisions for these younger generations,” says the report.

“In a post-Christian, missional context that Australia is now in, the need to actively engage young people in helping them come to faith is pertinent for the future of the church.”

Christian think tank Here2Stay backs up this data, nominating “peak experiences” such as camping as one of the top ten formational pillars in faith development. Many of us—regardless of age—will remember those moments of revelation and shared experience as turning points in our lives.

“A peak experience can be a planned event that becomes a wonderful and positive encounter with God. A peak experience can also be unplanned, a place where God shows up and something happens that grows and challenges you in your faith journey,” says Here2Stay.

### Asking the God questions

Camping veteran Rev Beth Nicholls, project officer at the Presbytery of South Moreton, began teaching craft at children's camps when she was a teenager. She has led camps across Queensland for 35 years, including Redlands Uniting Churches Go West day camps in rural communities.

“I have always known that camping is one way of building relationships with kids and helping them to hang in there until their faith kicks in,” says Beth.

“It's an opportunity to engage faith in an intentional way, and you can build a relationship. Whether it is a live-in or a day camp, you've got their undivided attention and the space and place to be able to actually ask the ‘God questions.’ ”

Ian Edgar, manager of the Uniting Church Alex Park Conference Centre on the Sunshine Coast and chair of the Christian Venues Association Queensland region, has seen many teenagers attend camp as participants and return to take on leadership roles.

He estimates that about two thirds of the Uniting Church people who attend Synod have had a spiritual experience through youth camp.

“There is some really significant data for the church to consider about where they focus their ministry. If we go to a generation that doesn't have that camp experience, are we going to lose those decision points in young people's lives when they can get away, have time to reflect and have time to share with their peers?”

### Outside the comfort zone

Eliza Childs from Cleveland Uniting Church, a 20-year-old currently doing her teaching prac in Roma, has connected with young people across rural Queensland through her participation in Go West camps.

“You form close bonds with people who you are working with, have a lot of fun together, and make some fantastic memories,” says Eliza. “I think it definitely widened my experience, being with other people who have those same values, and being able to share with the children about our faith.”

Being away from parents and school and being part of a dedicated team is an important part of the camp experience, she adds.

“When we went to Mundubbera, we would have devotions in the morning and afternoon, setting the purpose for the day—instilling the idea that our work is our worship, trying to live your faith in everything you do during your time there.”

‘That’s where those beautiful conversations which are vital and life-giving and faith-giving to young people happen’

**Rev Alison Cox**



### Changing hearts and minds

Since 2008, Summer Madness events have brought the camping experience to a new generation.

Rev Alison Cox, children, youth and families coordinator at Moreton Rivers Presbytery says a Synod-wide event is one of the rare times where young people and youth leaders from across the state come together.

“One of the key focus areas has been about inclusion, and particularly honouring the relationship with our Indigenous brothers and sisters, and this has really enhanced the whole event. It changes people’s hearts and minds and makes them live in that camp community differently—and in their own communities when they go back home.

“We have been really intentional about asking congregations to invest in their young people, not just by sending them but by coming with them. We have home group time each day, so even if you don’t see your young people during the day because they are off having a great time with everyone else, there’s this moment to re-connect each night that allows them that space to talk about what’s been happening, what’s changing, where have they seen God ... that’s where those beautiful conversations which are vital and life-giving and faith-giving to young people happen.”

The camping ministry is an opportunity for congregations to sponsor young people from other churches doing it tough, she adds.

“In those regional communities where cost is usually the prohibitive factor—it’s not that the kids don’t want to come or that the leaders don’t want to come—but there’s no cash available to do the extras. If a church that doesn’t have young people has the ability to share, that would be incredible and such a blessing for the whole church.”

Preparations are underway for a new Synod-wide youth event in Easter 2016.

### Getting it right

No one wants their youth camp to be memorable for all the wrong reasons, so what’s the secret of a great youth camp?

Careful planning and strong leadership are important, says Beth Nicholls, and food is a key thing to get right.

“A camp runs on its stomach. And proper planning will allow you to be spontaneous, having everything organised beforehand. I am also conscious that the young people who come on camp, it’s their holiday, so you need a leadership team that will actually work together to make the experience as special as it can be.”

Eliza Childs suggests that with younger campers it is important to link the adventurous with the spiritual.

“Having the balance between the faith aspects and the activities that draw kids in and give them those different experiences like archery and orienteering ... and helping them to connect the two, so they can pray for a safe day and look after each other as a team.”

Everyone agrees that the heart of the camping experience has always been about providing space to think about God, the universe and everything—and nurturing that spark of faith when it flares into existence.

“We know how vital youth camps are in terms of faith formation, and there are a thousand reasons for that, from the community to the hype to the lack of sleep,” says Alison Cox. “We have got to keep providing those opportunities for kids to meet with God and each other beyond their local setting.”

‘Camping is one way of building relationships with kids and helping them to hang in there until their faith kicks in’

**Rev Beth Nicholls**



Summer Madness brought camping to a new generation.  
Photo: Shannon Rothery

# Porn kills love

## The corrupting influence of sexual images

Experts confirm that hardcore pornography is the biggest source of information about sex for young people. **Ashley Thompson** explores how its entrenchment in mainstream society has warped sexual expectations—leaking lies into the hearts and minds of our youth.

**It's not like you have to go looking for pornography, today it comes looking for you. In 2011, the University of New Hampshire's article *Trends in Youth Internet Victimization* cross-analysed three youth internet safety surveys to reveal 23 per cent of minors had experienced unwanted exposure to pornography.**

Over recent months, various mainstream media outlets have documented the harmful impacts of hardcore porn on young people. News.com.au reported that “girls are presenting to doctors with sex-related injuries” and in the *Daily Mail Australia* a young man confessed that “watching explicit internet porn as a child warped his attitude towards women”.

Australian author and women's advocate, Melinda Tankard-Reist told *ABC News*, “I go to schools where 12 and 13-year-olds will show me on their mobile phones the number of requests they've had that day for sexual images [from] boys.”

“They are looking at porn as a sex education handbook, which can only have damaging impacts.”

### Hard and soft

Unsurprisingly, the porn industry remains at the forefront of technological innovation, business and communication models—raking in \$97 billion worldwide, according to Kassia Wosick, assistant professor of sociology at New Mexico State University.

It also accounts for 14 per cent of all internet traffic according to the Internet Service Providers Association—a significant figure considering the internet's largest portal of porn, Pornhub, received 18.35 billion website hits in 2014 alone.

Meanwhile the sexualisation and objectification of females has reached beyond the hardcore and into mainstream media; evident most strongly in the easily

accessible *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Zoo Weekly*— which can be bought on the supermarket shelf, and softly by TLC's *Toddlers and Tiaras* and the hyper-sexualised transformation of post-Disney icons such as Miley Cyrus, Lindsay Lohan and Hilary Duff.

### Porn harms

As a contributing editor of *Getting Real: Challenging the Sexualisation of Girls* and *Big Porn Inc: Exposing the Harms of the Global Pornography Industry*, Melinda Tankard-Reist speaks at schools across the country about the objectification of women and sexualisation of girls in media—linking the attitudes born from these injustices to the porn industry and violence against women.

Melinda says people of faith often question why she writes and speaks about pornography.

“To me the mystery isn't that I'm doing it, it's that more aren't—and I don't think we've fully understood or comprehended just how radical Jesus' responses to women were [in his] time.”

Melinda is not alone in her use of strong language to publically oppose “liberal feminists” and those with vested interest in the porn industry. As co-founder of grassroots movement Collective Shout, she leads the charge to name, shame and expose parties that objectify women and sexualise girls for profit in Australia.

“My colleagues and I do think that much of pornography constitutes harmful speech and incites violence against women and girls—and that any ethical society should restrict that content,” she says.

And to those who argue it as liberating, Melinda counters, “Well really, how liberating is torture porn, rape porn and incest porn? You know—humantoiletbowl.com which shows them having their heads flushed down toilets during sexual acts—really? This is how they're defining liberation? Is this the best we can do?”

‘My colleagues and I do think that much of pornography constitutes harmful speech and incites violence against women and girls’

**Melinda Tankard-Reist**





Fight the New Drug, a non-religious and non-political organisation, joins the online movement to educate youth on the harmful effects of porn.  
**Photo:** fightthenewdrug.org

### School of porn

The 2012 *Let's Talk About Sex* survey, conducted by the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition and Youth Empowerment Against HIV/AIDS, reveals 64 per cent of young people rely on pornography to learn about sex.

And the evidence mounting about the normalisation of violence in sex has become increasingly diabolical according to Wosnitzer and Bridges' 2007 content analysis on *Aggression and Sexual Behaviour in Best-Selling Pornography*.

The study revealed that in the 50 of the best-selling adult videos, across all scenes, 48 per cent contained verbal aggression while more than 88 showed physical aggression. The analysis details that 94 per cent of the aggressive acts were committed against women.

"The average age of exposure to porn is 11 years so children are being exposed to porn while they're still forming their sexual identities. They're seeing hardcore porn before they've even had their first kiss, let alone had sex," Melinda says.

One thing is clear—both soft and hardcore pornography is harming young minds.

### Questionable credibility

But the church's ability to speak out on issues of sex has been weakened by the Royal Commission into Institutional Child Sexual Abuse says Graham Leo—author, educator and member of NewLife Uniting Church on the Gold Coast. Graham is a longtime supporter of Melinda and Collective Shout.

"Unfortunately, the church has lost much of its moral voice in the public space. We failed to protect young people in our care for so long, and when we were found out, we vacillated and ducked for cover," he says.

"Now we are paying a very heavy price—and I don't mean in fair compensation to victims. I mean that we have lost the high moral ground from which we were once able to speak."

Yet Queensland Synod moderator, Rev David Baker believes the loss of this "high moral ground" is not necessarily a bad thing, "if it helps us speak with a greater degree of humility and causes us to address the issues in a way that's intelligible."

"Certainly the issues around the Royal Commission should humble us but the issues around pornography and the commercialisation—the commodification of human beings, we should still be addressing clearly and openly," says David.

However, before that can happen Graham Leo believes the church needs to "grovel in apology to the community for our failure to protect children".

"Until we find the moral courage to make those apologies, we will have to do the best we can, trying to find a place to stand on other matters such as pornography which are desperately in need of Christian principles being applied with intelligence, compassion and holy indignation."

### Fight back

As a father, grandfather and former school principal, Graham is in no doubt that the use of online pornography is also damaging to the wellbeing of boys and men. However, he finds access to hardcore porn not as big an issue as the "unavoidability of soft porn in advertising, comedy shows and M and PG television shows". He believes that the majority of responsibility to educate children on these issues should fall on the parents.

"If a boy grows up in a household where the mother and sisters and other women are treated and spoken about with dignity and respect, schools will barely have to mention the topic," says Graham.

"Any parent who lets their under-18 child use a web-enabled device in the privacy of their own bedroom without frequent, random checks on content and usage is either an idiot or irresponsible. Or both."

Taking the wider fight, Melinda Tankard-Reist says, "It takes a village to raise a child and we need help. It's too hard on our own. I've got four children and I think how hard it is myself—and how parents are often used as scapegoats for the lack of government action."

The harmful effects of porn on women and the vulnerable is the central concern of anti-porn feminists, and David Baker agrees we cannot stay silent.

"We've got to continually critique the commodification, the objectification of human people and of relationships," says David.

"It is of course completely contrary to how we're called to understand one another through being baptised into Christ and how we're called to understand one another as being made with dignity in the image of God."

Join the fight for a world free of sexexploitation on [collectiveshout.org](http://collectiveshout.org). For more information visit [melindatankardreist.com](http://melindatankardreist.com) and [grahamleo.com](http://grahamleo.com)



# 8

## Assembly topics to look out for

Deciphering the 60+ Assembly proposals and reports before the meeting is a challenge even for the Assembly's members. Check out some of the highlights and get the jump on the meeting.

### 1

#### Anglican–Uniting Church dialogue

Assembly Standing Committee commends the adoption of the *Weaving a New Cloth* document, which advocates local cooperation between Anglican and Uniting churches throughout Australia.

### 2

#### The Royal Commission

The chair of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse Justice Peter McClellan AM will address the Assembly on 15 July. Later, Assembly Standing Committee will ask for authority to make any changes to Uniting Church Regulations required to respond to the Royal Commission without having to wait for the next full Assembly meeting.

### 3

#### Marriage

In response to the *Discussion Paper on Marriage* submissions, Assembly Standing Committee proposes further exploration on how multicultural groups can engage in further discussions on same-sex sexuality in culturally appropriate ways and establish a task group investigating the implications of

changing the church's current relationship with the government regarding marriage. Another proposal by two Queensland ministers is asking the Assembly to reject public covenants for same-gender unions.

### 4

#### Annual week of prayer and fasting

The Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) would like the week of prayer and fasting observed during the Destiny Together demonstration to become an annual event.

### 5

#### Living out the Covenant

The UAICC also proposes a higher degree of scrutiny for issues affecting First Peoples, continued work on how councils of the church can give authority to Congress and support for Congress' opposition to fracking on Aboriginal land.

### 6

#### Necessity of synods

The Presbytery of the Illawarra suggests the Uniting Church is over-governed and wishes to authorise Standing Committee to commence a review into Uniting Church governance, specifically with an eye to whether synods are really necessary in the life of the church.

### 7

#### Asylum seekers and refugees

UnitingJustice has an extensive proposal calling Uniting Church members to advocate for asylum seekers and refugees and to demand the Australian Government end offshore processing.

### 8

#### Palestine

Andrew Dutney and Felicity Amery propose an awareness-raising campaign about the plight of Christians in the Holy Land, and to determine the Uniting Church response to requests for action from the World Council of Churches and Palestinian Christians.

A full list of proposals and reports can be found at [assembly2015.uca.org.au/proposals-and-reports](http://assembly2015.uca.org.au/proposals-and-reports)

Not going to Assembly? Keep informed by signing up to the Assembly's mailing list at [uca.org.au](http://uca.org.au)

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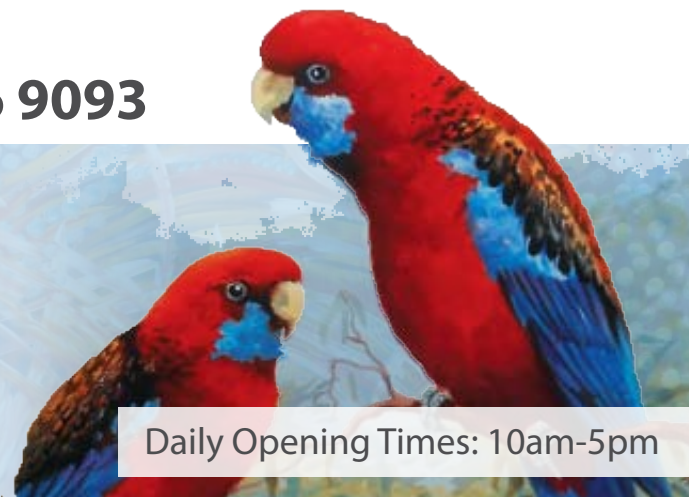
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# What's cooking in the Valley?

**Dianne Jensen** goes behind the kitchen doors at a community meal in Fortitude Valley, Brisbane.

**There's nothing like a pleasant night out, with fresh flowers on the table and a three-course meal over friendly conversation. The hospitality is especially warm when the food is prepared as part of a training program for women prisoners and served by volunteers to needy people.**

An agreement between Wesley Mission Brisbane (WMB) and Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre has cooked up opportunities for prisoners to learn hospitality skills while putting food on the table for those doing it tough. WMB has been providing weekly community meals in Brisbane's Fortitude Valley for ten years, with assistance from Foodbank Queensland and food rescue charity OzHarvest.

Volunteers and staff join clients every Wednesday evening to share dinner at the long tables laid with tablecloths and cutlery in the upstairs premises of a former restaurant.

Former state coordinator Prison Ministry UnitingCare Community Beatriz Skippen was the link between the Helana Jones Centre, Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre and WMB. Prisoners are supervised by a team from Wesley Mission Brisbane Albert Street Uniting Church.

"Corrective Services wanted to facilitate the women practising their hospitality skills in an environment where they can learn, like an industrial kitchen," says Beatriz.

"There is not a lot of choice when it comes to putting the community meal together, so the women need to be creative, to see what kind of meal they can prepare with very little. That is close to what will happen when they go back to their homes because they won't have much, and they will need to put in practice what they have learnt.



Cooking up a storm at the Wesley Mission Brisbane community meal.  
Photos: Holly Jewell



"For the women, preparing these meals is the closest thing to having a normal life, and they see that there are people in a worse situation than them. This whole dynamic is helping them to recognise—I can help others, and I can prepare good food."

The chef and his assistants cater for an expected 80 to 100 diners. All the kitchen prep is completed by mid-afternoon, the stainless steel benches are pristine, and the women inmates are ready to leave.

"Food connects with people, creates a safer space," says Beatriz. "We demonstrate that we care for others through providing food, and we break down barriers in conversation. I think that when you have food on the table you bring out the best of another person."

For more information visit [wmb.org.au](http://wmb.org.au) or call 1800 493 75 39.

**'Food connects with people, creates a safer space. We demonstrate that we care for others, and break down barriers in conversation'**

**Beatriz Skippen**

## A time to remember



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Hugh Jackman with  
Ethiopian coffee  
farmer, Dukale.  
Photo: Supplied



# Correcting the trade imbalance

The rich get richer and the poor get poorer, but fair trade documentaries *The True Cost* and *Dukale's Dream* show the economic future of the developing world is far from hopeless. **Ashley Thompson** writes.

**“Fair trade is a citizen’s response to correcting the social injustice in the international trading system that is largely dysfunctional,” says Safia Minney—founder and CEO of fair trade fashion brand, People Tree.**

## *The True Cost*

Directed by Andrew Morgan  
Starring Vandana Shiva,  
Stella McCartney, Safia  
Minney  
2015, PG 13 (US)

Economic inequality in the fashion and coffee industry has been long ignored in return for corporate profit and first world convenience. This is the premise of fashion documentary *The True Cost* and Hugh Jackman’s latest altruistic entrepreneurial pursuit, documented in fair trade coffee film, *Dukale’s Dream*.

Where both films converge in their advocacy for the fair trade solution, they diverge in their storytelling style and invested interests: *The True Cost* is no cinematic triumph, with director Andrew Morgan’s formulaic arrangement and stilted narration, while *Dukale’s Dream* is a clear marketing tool for World Vision of which Hugh Jackman and his wife Deborra-Lee Furness are ambassadors.

That is not to say that director Josh Rothstein’s intent behind *Dukale’s Dream* is unworthy, but simply narrow, and unable to communicate the fair trade coffee industry’s true breadth.

Meanwhile, one particularly powerful scene from the *The True Cost*—as seen in the trailer—shows the juxtaposition of American Black Friday crowds, red carpet fashion and

Youtubers’ shopping hauls next to the garment worker’s despairing conditions. Overlaid by Natalie Taylor’s powerful “I want it all” and a talking head’s comment “My God, we can do better than this” the film’s essence is so poignantly communicated in this one scene it easily makes the rest of the 90-minute film redundant.

Focussing on stories of individuals you grow to care for, both films successfully leave behind a sense of moral conviction and a case for a sustainable, compassionate business model—as you see “first-hand” the worker’s struggle in the currently skewed trading system and their attempts to overcome these obstacles for the benefit of their children.

The case for this socially responsible business acumen is supported by experts’ references to the long-term economic benefits that come from treating workers in the developing world well.

“I think one of the problems we have in the current model is it’s all about the profit,” says American cotton farmer, Larhea Pepper.

“And it doesn’t take into consideration this cost—at what cost?”

Watch the trailers and then buy the films on [truecostmovie.com](http://truecostmovie.com) and [dukalesdream.com](http://dukalesdream.com). To find ethical fashion and coffee brands visit [search.fairtrade.com.au](http://search.fairtrade.com.au) and [behindthebarcode.org.au](http://behindthebarcode.org.au)



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# On the wings of a song

Choirs are becoming less common in Uniting Church congregations, but some communities are continuing this proud tradition. **Rohan Salmond** writes.

**While church music is trending toward more band-focused music style, some congregations are maintaining their choirs because of the opportunities for community building, outreach and enriching worship on a Sunday morning.**

Adele Nisbet is choral director of Saint Andrew's Uniting Church Sanctuary Choir.

"In the community in general, choirs are alive and flourishing. School choirs continue to be an important ensemble activity when there is good musical leadership in the school," she says.

"Post-war Australia was blessed by churches that took the initiative to establish activities that fostered community, good health, civil responsibility and companionship, but as secularisation changed this pattern, the church may have lost its vision for the important role that a choir can play in nurturing community and enhancing worship."

The choir at South Rockhampton Uniting Church is a longstanding tradition.

"I've been director for 30 years this year," says Christine Netherwood. "I was actually in the choir as a teenager as well, so I've been associated with it for 40-something years."

Christine says the choir is a significant point of connection for people in the congregation, even if they come from different generations.

"Probably the youngest in the choir is 50-something, and our oldest is 100. Elsa Stone is 100 this year.

"Everyone is all very good friends. We have a giggle and it's usually a very fun night."

Adele says the same thing happens at Saint Andrew's. "A choir within a church forms its own small-group dynamic, providing a strong sense of belonging, and offering mutual support and nourishment for each member of the group."

Christine believes that choirs play an important role in maintaining the musical tradition of the non-conformist churches.

"While there is harmony in a praise band, it's a different style, it's more your twang and chesty sort of sounds, whereas in the choir you still have this beautiful sound. We're keeping some of the traditional music alive. There has to be a balance."

Adele adds, "The spirit is so often carried on the wings of a song, and with a wealth of traditional and contemporary music available for choirs today, there continues to be a special place for choral leadership in our church."

**'Everyone is all very good friends. We have a giggle and it's usually a very fun night'**

**Christine Netherwood**

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wmbMailpaQ production officer Marley Capper (left) with employee Aaron Gilbert.  
Photo: Wesley Mission Brisbane



# Packing provides purpose

Having a job provides people with a sense of purpose, hope and dignity, writes **Jessica Mewburn**. For over 40 years the wmbMailpaQ printing, packaging and mailing warehouse has offered thousands of people living with disability this opportunity.

**“To get here I leave home at 6.30 am and catch two buses and push my wheelchair to the warehouse and to get home I catch a bus and a train and push more than a kilometre,” says longtime employee David Diehm, “I do a lot of packing, mailing, envelopes—labelling is my favourite,” he adds.**

“You’d think after 34 years I could be put on that station every day—but it doesn’t work like that! We’re all equal here; we don’t talk about our personal problems or health issues. We take our work seriously and then have fun during our breaks and down times.”

As part of Wesley Mission Brisbane’s Employment and Training Services, wmbMailpaQ operates in Rocklea as an Australian Disability Enterprise with the core mission to provide a supported workplace for people who otherwise wouldn’t have the opportunity to gain employment in the mainstream workforce.

“Employment not only provides a means of additional income for many of our employees, it promotes self-esteem, confidence and importantly provides an extended social network. Many of these guys meet up for tenpin bowling and parties outside of work,” says warehouse manager Greg Ryan.

“While you and I might be able to decide to have a career change tomorrow, for this group of people that’s not an option. They need a bit of support in the workplace which is why this model is so successful.”

Working like a well-oiled machine, everyone on the warehouse floor knows their roles for the day—their individual goals—and together they form a cohesive and capable production line, busily meeting the needs of their growing corporate clientele.

With them since the program’s conception, warehouse worker Terry Lennon’s mother recalls the limited supported employment opportunities available to him after finishing school and before finding his place in the mailing and packing warehouse.

“That he has been able to engage in meaningful work and to have a degree of independence has meant such a great deal to him and his family,” she says. “We are extremely grateful to Wesley Mission Brisbane and its management for the care, concern and the opportunities that have been afforded Terry to enable him to have a working life.”

Manager Greg Ryan concurs, “It’s rewarding to know that we are part of a workplace that fosters difference and acceptance.”

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

‘While you and I might be able to decide to have a career change tomorrow, for this group of people that’s not an option’

**Greg Ryan**

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## Logs and splinters

If only the moderator had been forced to react to numerous letters outraged by the revelation that wife abusers are more likely to go to church than average, and more likely to be in leadership positions in those churches than the average attendee. Why so much outrage that a man might marry a man, and so little that some men actually do beat, rape, humiliate and in other ways abuse their wives, including in the presence of children?

I am not criticising the moderator, I understand why he decided to focus where he did, given the bevy of letters on gay marriage versus none on abusive marriage. But I found it so very sad. Sad? Outrageous.

Could we pray that when the Assembly addresses marriage, it focus on some practical actions, such as bringing marriage abuse into our disciplinary processes? Let's start with the log in our eye before we go on to the splinter.

**Rev Dr Jason John**  
Valery, NSW

## Some marriages will be more equal than others

In regard to the letters about the gay marriage debate (June 2015, pages 18–19).

Marriage equality for everyone, irrespective of their LGBT+ other sexual preferences, involves not just parliamentary legislation but harsh penalties for those resisting change. For new laws to work, community attitudes must be changed, through early education to replace traditional with unisex family values.

The de facto marriage of Humanism (the atheist's religion) with Christianity meant the compromise of biblical teachings with progressive "rights" attitudes leading to sexual promiscuity—millions of single mothers, many of them just schoolgirls; 100 000 abortions every year; gay rights; easy divorce; etc.

Beware—promised exemptions for churches or any others holding biblical objections to same-sex marriage are at best temporary, as international anti-discrimination laws prevail and Australia can be hauled before the International Court of Justice if we fail to (eventually) fully comply with various UN treaty commitments on discrimination.

Welcome to Animal Farm.

**Jackie Butler**  
Wynnum

*All letters must directly address articles and letters from the previous month's edition of Journey. Opinions expressed are only indicative of the individual writer, not their entire congregation. While direct responses to letters are acceptable, ongoing discussions about an article more than two months old will not be published.*

*Full submission guidelines for letters to the editor can be found at [journeyonline.com.au/submit](http://journeyonline.com.au/submit)*



## Multicultural women's fellowships proposed

At the recent Uniting Church Adult Fellowship (UCAF) consultation held in Perth, a proposal was presented by the UCAF Queensland Synod Committee that the participation of women from all cultural groups in women's fellowships across Australia be encouraged.

Fran Moss and Alyson Madsen presented the proposal and were pleased that all synods expressed enthusiasm in endeavouring to work more closely with women from all multicultural groups. Currently there is not much cross-cultural engagement of women's fellowships among different cultural networks in the Uniting Church.

"Many people in multicultural congregations do not have a deep engagement with the wider church, as much of their congregations' involvement in the Uniting Church matters is transacted through their (mostly male) leaders," says Alyson Madsen. "The wider Uniting Church Adult Fellowship network may offer welcome opportunities for a broader cross section of people from multicultural congregations to build stronger relationships with the wider church."

## More centenarians emerge

After publishing the story about 100-year-old Lorna Rickert from Nobby (April 2015, page 14) Trinity Uniting Church in Ipswich has alerted *Journey* to another centenarian, Elizabeth Jordan, who is 103.

Elizabeth is an award-winning knitter and seamstress and has been a member of the Methodist and Uniting churches most of her life. She is a talented baker and made a double-tier fruitcake for her 100th birthday.

"We are very fortunate to have such an active, beautiful Christian lady as part of our congregation," says Elizabeth's friend and Trinity Uniting member Glenda Coleman. "Elizabeth is a remarkable woman."

Another centenarian, Elsa Stone at South Rockhampton Uniting, appears in a story on page 17.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, as of 30 June 2014 there were 4080 centenarians living in Australia.



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### GENERAL SECRETARY

The Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) was formed on 22 June 1977, when the Congregational Union of Australia, the Methodist Church of Australasia, and the Presbyterian Church of Australia joined together. The Uniting Church Synod of Western Australia is the legal and administrative body of the Church in Western Australia. Please visit [www.unitingchurchwa.org.au](http://www.unitingchurchwa.org.au) for additional information on the Synod.

The Synod now wishes to appoint a new General Secretary who will be accountable to the Church in Western Australia through its General Council. This position is the Secretary of the Synod, the Secretary of the Presbytery and the Chief Executive Officer of the Uniting Church Centre.

The General Secretary will lead a team of approximately 45 people with responsibility for the management and control of the Church's: financial operations and property resources; its media and communications; as well as its social justice and chaplaincy support activities.

This role will encompass broad stakeholder involvement and require a capacity to lead through times of change with a strongly pastoral approach whilst also ensuring the managerial and governance responsibilities of the Synod are met.

To be considered for this position, you must be a committed member of the Uniting Church in Australia.

Lester Blades – Executive Search, Selection & Retention has been retained to assist the Uniting Church Synod of Western Australia with this recruitment process. A Position Description for this role may be obtained by emailing a request to [applications@lesterblades.com.au](mailto:applications@lesterblades.com.au) or by calling Tony Lester on 08 9221 0744.

Confidential applications may then be made in Word format to [applications@lesterblades.com.au](mailto:applications@lesterblades.com.au) quoting Reference LB301759.



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