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Re-emphasising Christmas

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It's a privilege that as Christians we are given time off to observe Christmas. You'll get Christmas Day off almost anywhere in the world (except for some parts of Asia and in the Middle East) which means nobody is expecting you to work on one of the most important days in the Christian calendar. People of other faiths don't get such widespread recognition of days important to them.

But the widespread recognition also means there is pressure to secularise the day. It's one of the most important times for consumer spending, and the holiday frenzy to prepare for entertaining friends and family comes at exactly the time we are supposed to be waiting in patient expectation during Advent! Every year there are stories of people getting anxious about retailers replacing the word "Christmas" with "holidays". For Christians, re-emphasising the true meaning of Christmas has itself become a Christmas tradition.

This year I'm no different. On page six I ask a minister and an academic theologian about how to get past all the cultural baggage we have put on Christmas and really engage with the story again. What we find is messy, surprising and full of life.

On another note, thank you to those who completed the readership survey last month. The *Journey* team will take the (often contradictory!) suggestions on board as we plan *Journey* into 2016.

Thanks for reading *Journey*. Have a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

Rohan Salmond
Cross-platform editor

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Journey

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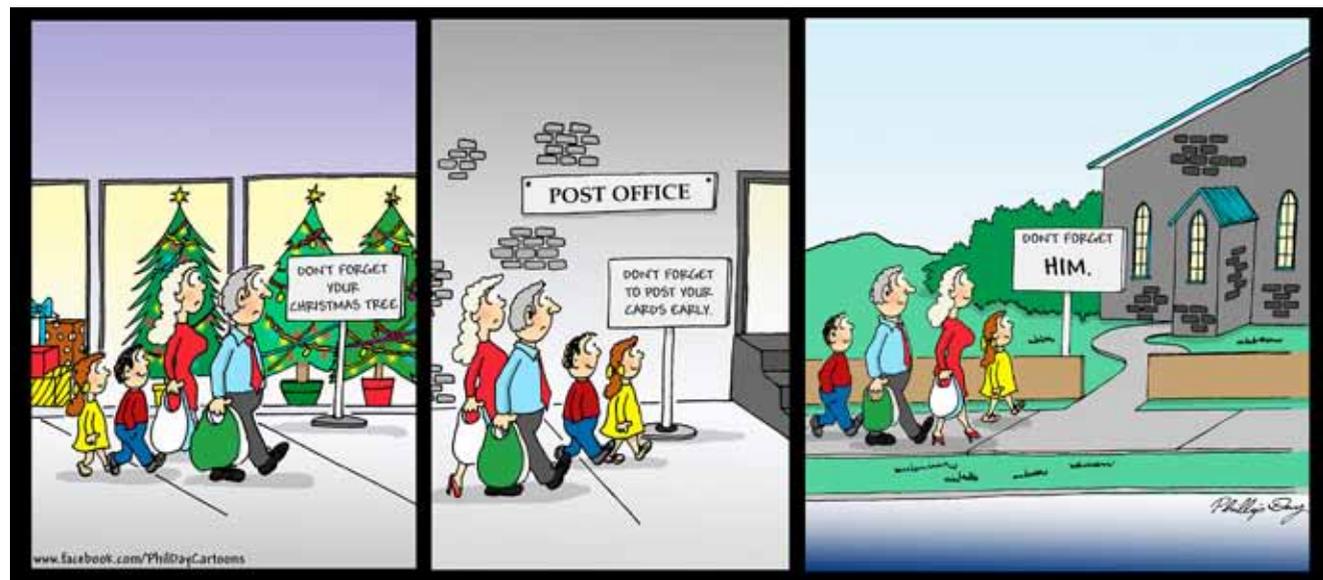
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Closing date for editorial and advertising for February *Journey* is Monday 18 January. The next issue of *Journey* will be available on Sunday 7 February



Open hearts at Christmas

Monday Midday Prayer

Lord,

In the midst of all that this season is for us, help us to be touched by the wonder of "Emmanuel": God is with us.

Amen

Moderator's highlights

10 December

Government House Christmas reception, Paddington, Brisbane

14 December

Queensland Synod Royal Commission Task Group, Auchanflower, Brisbane

I remember over the years hearing older folk, being confronted with new challenges and disturbing news, saying, "Would you bring a child into this world?"

At this time of year we move into Advent on the journey to Christmas, and the readings of the lectionary for our worship and devotion may evoke the same response. The gospel readings are about endings—violent, earth-shaking endings at that. Then they move to John the Baptist's crisis producing fire and brimstone preaching.

I hope you also get to hear the other readings too, as they are full of joy and wonder—particularly the Old Testament readings. Most of these come from the time after the great trial of exile, and they speak of hope and restoration.

So we are offered juxtaposition, and that is really the dynamic of Christmas and the dynamic of a realistic faith. It's like the number of times in the scriptures the phrase, "but God" occurs. It's usually around times when things in the salvation story look really bad and hopeless—Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Joseph. But God intervened to save and to restore.

Then there are the times things looked really good—human arrogance and pride saying to itself, this is all my doing. But God states God's mind on the issue (I'm thinking of King David here).

In the shadow of the events of Paris, Kabul, Beirut and Sinai, and in the great underlying philosophical challenges that are before the West—and in the challenge of climate change—it might be easier and tempting for us to retreat. Somehow Australia's geographical location in relation to the rest of the world tempts us that way, yet the whole of the story of salvation draws us in a different direction. It draws us into a radical hope. It paints the world as it is, without any naivety, in realpolitik terms; yet it also paints a picture of the world as it will be, because there is a player in the midst of it who is its creator.

Christmas is the revelation of the way of the creator in the midst of the reality of the world as it is. Christmas is Emmanuel "God is with us". Christmas, teasingly—for whose heart stays cold at the sight of a baby?—invites us to look further into the ways of God; the hope and justice that lie at the heart of all things. Put yourself somewhere you can touch that hope. There are places that are open for that this Christmas.

Rev David Baker
Moderator, Queensland Synod

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Double mod gets the nod

Bruce Mullan describes how after almost 25 years of conversation the Queensland Synod Standing Committee has determined to take up permission given by the Assembly in 1991 to waive the regulation prohibiting moderators serving two consecutive terms.

Historically, by Uniting Church regulations, moderators have not been allowed to serve consecutive terms but the 6th National Assembly of the Uniting Church meeting in Brisbane in 1991 did agree to waive the provisions of that regulation for Queensland. That decision enabled the Queensland Synod to elect a moderator for a term of up to a maximum six consecutive years.

This option had never been taken up by the Synod.

The argument for longer terms was first proposed when the decision was made to move from a part-time to full-time moderator position at the 14th Synod meeting in 1990.

The thinking behind the proposed change was that a moderator is just starting to “get the hang of it” before his or her term comes to an end and that it was important for moderators to make a sustained contribution to the life of the church during their time in the significant leadership position.

Determined to come to some conclusion after decades of conversation, the Synod Standing Committee revisited the issue in 2013 and 2014.

In a report to the Standing Committee in August 2015 Rev Bruce Johnson who served as moderator from 2008

to 2011 said, “It seems that every conversation we have had since 1983 has decided that a longer term for the role of moderator would serve the church well, but we have never had the confidence to test it at the Synod in Session.”

On 5 November the Synod Standing Committee formally resolved by consensus that it would be acceptable but optional for the 31st Synod meeting next May to allow a moderator to serve a maximum of six consecutive years (two terms of three years) through a process of renominating candidature after eighteen months.

Queensland Synod general secretary Gary Doyle said the decision about how long a moderator will serve is still absolutely in the hands of the Synod meeting.

“The second term is only an option for the Synod. A serving moderator can renominate alongside the field of candidates for moderator-elect,” he said. “In fact, this is exactly what will happen at the Synod in May. Nominations are currently being processed and Rev David Baker is one of the persons nominated. More information about the candidates will be available when the Synod papers are prepared early next year.

“In the end it’s up to the Synod to discern the will of God when it comes to this key leadership role in the church.”

‘A serving moderator can renominate alongside the field of candidates for moderator-elect’

Gary Doyle



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Tear away

Christmas marks the time God physically became part of the human story. What does it actually mean to live out the spirit of Christmas? **Rohan Salmond** explores.

Gleaming light softly illuminates a huddle of people gathered around a sleeping baby as he lies nestled in a small box of yellow straw. Three bearded men in crowns and turbans and a young shepherd gaze upon the infant along with a small assortment of barn animals. The child's mother, head bowed, has an expression on her face a bit like Mona Lisa. Her fiancé stands behind her with a hand on her shoulder. Some angels in white robes fly overhead. The whole idyllic scene is made of plastic and sits in your local shopping centre. The place is packed. JB Hi-Fi is having a sale.

Among the saccharine sentiments and stress of the holiday time it can be difficult to focus on what Christ's birth really means. We have told and retold the story for nearly 2000 years, smoothing out the wrinkles and overlooking any unpleasantness, but rediscovering the radical truth requires us to peel away the glittery decorations.

"I think we need to strip the tinsel from the Christmas tree and see the raw guts of the story," says Rev Susan Pickering, minister with West End Uniting Church.

"I don't think it's named: We have a teenage girl, unmarried, giving birth. The stigma that's still attached to that, it's all there—it wouldn't have all been sweetness and light."

Christmas is the time we celebrate the birth of Jesus—God become flesh. Far from the plastic nativity scene, it's messy, surprising and full of life.

Messy

The idea that God, who is perfect and all-powerful, would become a human and get involved with the world from a position of weakness is moving and shocking for Rev Dr Malcolm Coombes, assistant director and lecturer in New Testament at Trinity College Queensland.

"The exciting thing about Christmas is the fact that we honour a God who is so willing to be engaged with humanity," he says.

"Unlike most other religions we have a God who is able to be a human being in every sense of that word. So being vulnerable enough to sit with us, to be with us, to share with us, to undergo the joys and hassles that we endure in our lives, and finally being so vulnerable to be open to the instigation of violence.

"It's so topical these days in our violent world that Christ would come and be exposed to that violence that we show towards each other. I think it's just a great display of love in human form."

That a God so powerful would become so vulnerable and subject himself to his own creation is a mind-bending idea. The radical vulnerability of the Christ child continued to characterise Jesus throughout his life, and was ultimately borne out in his death. Christmas and Easter are intimately connected, says Susan.

"Ultimately, if you have the Incarnation without the Easter event then it really does just become the hype that is mince pies and Christmas trees.

"God in the flesh, if we really do look at it, is a vulnerable child who needs its mother to care for it. So we've got the vulnerable God who's come to change the way of the world. That's how I see the Incarnation."

Surprising

In the gospel of Luke, when Mary is pregnant with Jesus she travels to see her cousin Elizabeth. When they meet, Mary sings the Magnificat, now one of the most famous and widely-used hymns throughout Christendom. She talks about the mighty being humbled and the lowly being lifted up. It's a promise of drastic, surprising change to the way the world works.

"Christmas is actually more than just the birth of this baby. For me it's about the birth of a new social order," says Susan.

"Christmas is the birth of that; it's the birth of this fully human fully divine person who would stand up against the authorities, that was going to lead a new way, and the

‘Christmas is actually more than just the birth of this baby. For me it's about the birth of a new social order’

Rev Susan Pickering



the tinsel

ultimate cost was going to be his life. It's the celebration of that birth.

"Think about Luke 4, 'I came to give sight to the blind and set the captives free,' and in Matthew 25, 'When I was hungry you fed me'. This is what was born. This was the beginning of it."

Malcolm says Jesus is the personification of the kingdom of God, and that Jesus demonstrates what is possible for humanity.

"I see in the person of Jesus what the reign of God is meant to be like—what kingdom life is meant to be like. What is God's will for humanity? How does God want us to live together? God doesn't give us a list of do's and don'ts; we actually see what God wants for our world in the way that Jesus has acted and spoken and shared."

Malcolm particularly likes how the gospel of John talks about the coming of Jesus.

"It's the Word becoming flesh," he says, "[Jesus is] what God wants to communicate to us about his love ... God's desire for humanity is being expressed in this person Jesus as something that can be seen and felt and touched and smelled and listened to and obeyed and followed and all of that."

"It's not the cute manger story, but still behind it is this presence of this Word of God, this plan of God for our world. So even in all the Christmas paraphernalia that happens, I try to see through that to the underlying message of God becoming a human."

Full of life

As we tear away the tinsel, we do the same to the protective layers that shield us from pain, disappointment and the suffering of others—following Jesus' new way of life is no small task. But as God has become vulnerable for us, so we need to be vulnerable for others.

"It seems to me that the presence of Jesus in this world was representing the very presence of God among us," says Malcolm. "It's drawing us constantly to something

that is totally exciting, totally loving, totally caring, and totally a great model for what our behaviour is to be towards each other as well.

Susan says, "It's about ethics. It's about liberation. Freedom."

"I think incarnational ministry for me comes down to being present; to follow the way is to actually be mindful of how we're being present and standing against injustice. When we say, 'My identity is in Christ', we need to think about well what does that mean? To be Christ to others is to meet them where they're at."

Malcolm says, "Our care for each other and love for the world is meant to be an expression of Christ's love. We love because God first loved us, and we see that love in Jesus Christ coming in human form and expressing God's love for us in very human ways."

"We are encouraged to share that same love with the whole world. Not just to those who love us back, but for those who don't. We need to be able to respond in love to all sorts of actions done against us."

ucaqld.com.au/christmas-2015



Rev Peter Blauw with members of the Mareeba Uniting Church.
Photo: Supplied

Christmas boost for isolated families

Mareeba Uniting Church and UnitingCare Community have joined forces to deliver neighbourly support to drought-affected families in north Queensland this Christmas. **Dianne Jensen** reports.

The Mareeba Uniting Church congregation is hoping to raise at least \$3000 to provide gift vouchers to nearly 70 families served by UnitingCare Community's North Queensland Remote Area Families Service (RAFS). Burke, Carpentaria, Doomadgee and parts of Mareeba were listed as drought-declared in May, pushing Queensland to a record-breaking 80 per cent of shires.

Mareeba Minister Rev Peter Blauw says that the small congregation of 50 to 60 members has a strong focus on mission, running at least four projects each year.

"They are a generous community that tries to pull together when times are tough, and people have really seen supporting remote families as being vital," says Peter. "Through RAFS, we hope to bless as many families as we can to bring the hope of the Christmas message in a practical way."

The gifts will be delivered by early years educators Diane Sherman and Jo Simpson on their regular visits to families living in remote areas. Every second week the two women travel long distances to coordinate mobile playgroups and provide support for families, staying overnight on properties before heading off to the next destination.

"We do individual planning for children, following the national Early Years Learning Framework—but we do

it under a tree or in a hay shed or on the veranda of a homestead—or in parks in towns that don't have any early childhood infrastructure," says Diane.

"Some families are in a central area with a cluster of families, and people will drive up to two hours to attend a playgroup session. It's a social event for the mothers and sometimes the fathers come as well.

"We have some families who might be six or seven hours from any other family, so quite often we will offer them home visits. We will do a little tailored playgroup just for their children."

Diane says that the drought is taking a toll on families.

"We have noticed that people are pushed for time because they are hand-feeding cattle or carting water ... and there are families that haven't had an income for 12 months—they have been on a negative income."

The gift vouchers from the Mareeba church will deliver more than a financial boost, she adds.

"The families will know that there are other community members who are thinking of them—that they are not alone, and that people are aware of their struggle and want to help them."

Contact mareebauc@telstra.com or call the church on (07) 4092 1175 for more information.

‘Through RAFS, we hope to bless as many families as we can to bring the hope of the Christmas message in a practical way’

Rev Peter Blauw



7 ways to engage your inner child this Christmas

There's no doubt Christmas is a wondrous time for children, but for adults the stress and frenzy can detract from enjoying the time together. **Rev Paul Clark** gives some tips on how to recapture the joy this Christmas by engaging your inner child.

- 1 Plan fun family time**
Throw some water balloons or board games into the Christmas stocking—and ensure you use them a number of times these holidays. Do this even if you don't have children.
- 2 Get down on the floor**
Spend time on the floor playing with your kids/grandkids/friends' kids and their new toys.
- 3 Get decorating**
Go all out or keep it simple, but decorate the house, Christmas tree or put up Christmas lights with loved ones.
- 4 Give presents away in a public place**
You might need to get permission, but spread the joy at a nursing home, kindy, school or workplace that you have a connection with.
- 5 Watch the *Home Alone* movies**
Go on, watch all five of them over the Christmas season.
- 6 Go carolling**
Find an opportunity to sing carols—by candlelight, in a nursing home, or go door-to-door! Have some fun and change the words to make you and your audience laugh.
- 7 Read the Christmas story with wide-eyed wonder**
Maybe from a children's Bible or storybook, read the Christmas story and ponder the events with the wonder of a child.

Staying calm,
when everything
seems impossible



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Imagining Christmas afresh

What happens when we consciously imagine ourselves as part of the Christmas story? It helps us recognise Christ as he dwells among us today, writes **Rev Dona Spencer**.

‘I believe if we are to be witnesses, we need to find new, creative and splendid ways that invigorate and breathe new life into the grass and dung surrounding the manger’

Whilst Christmas is a time when we remind ourselves that Jesus came as a baby, the challenge for me as a minister and as an artist is to make real the truth that Jesus continues to come—to speak to all. The imagination is an underrated gift within each of us to help us to allow the person of Christ, and the Christmas story, to penetrate our hearts and feelings, and to come to know Christ as a living person—more than a name, a baby or a historical figure.

If we were to place ourselves in the story of the birth of Christ as described in the second chapter of Luke, how would we feel? Let’s imagine we were near that manger, sitting, smelling the earthy smells of the animals and feed. Let’s sit on the hill with the shepherds, hearing the praises of the multitude of angels.

As we do so, our imagination is stirred as it witnesses personally to an event that would inspire other writers, artists, poets, musicians and architects for over two thousand years.

Christmas for me is a time of renewed astonishment, when I consider afresh the boldness of the creator spirit who overshadowed the body of a young woman, causing her to give birth to the Son of God; who surprises me still with the careless splash of turquoise-gold across the sky; who intrigues me with the abundant diversity

of character and culture from the jumping Maasai in deepest Kenya, to the ancient Himalayan elder with etched face behind beaded headscarf. And that same Creator Spirit challenges me with the expressive sounds, lines and marks furtively and honestly sung, engraved, drawn or sprayed by contemporary western youth.

At Christmas, I too am challenged to witness honestly, courageously and boldly to the birth of the Son of God, in the same spirit! With a vigour, and newfound creativity, that witnesses to the dramatic bold truth of the miracle of this birth.

I believe if we are to be witnesses, we need to find new, creative and splendid ways that invigorate and breathe new life into the grass and dung surrounding the manger, provoking one another to a life worthy of the call, stirring one another to good, beautiful, and stunning works reflective of the creator.

Too hard? Let it begin in the imagination. Let it tumble into words, phrases, notes, ideas, lines and shapes. Let them grow with the encouragement and inspiration of one another, into theatre, puppetry, poetry, musical compositions, murals, mime, installations, sculptures, community gatherings, choirs, calendars, cards, dancing and designs. The possibilities are endless and who knows? The energy they will bring to your own community and beyond just may be life-giving and transformational.



The Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland



2015

Synod office
annual report



From the moderator

I commend this 2015 Synod office report to you, with thanksgiving to God who has called us to this work of being witnesses to the hope and love of the gospel, and to the church for our common partnership in our calling.

The year 2014/15 has been a transitional year for the Synod. New people have joined us across most of the key leadership positions in the Synod office. So it's been a time of "getting to know you, getting to learn all about you" for these folk and the church. Significant Synod office projects such as developing the Synod's information management system (the CARIS portal) and new UnitingCare Queensland governing arrangements are progressing well, and new initiatives such as leadership development for people in congregational placements and a new, consultative budget-setting process have been put in place.

There are still significant bodies of work to be done, but the level of energy around the Synod office and a renewed sense of focus and alignment to purpose are giving every encouragement that this work will be tackled with thoroughness and acumen.

Rev David Baker
Moderator, Queensland Synod

A season to be bold



The Queensland Synod has many success stories but equally as many challenges as we look to engage more effectively with our communities through our congregations. As a member of the church for over 40 years I have witnessed periods of growth and now the challenges of an ageing church demographic that has come about with our loss of focus on youth and young family engagement in recent years.

In 2009, 57 per cent of attenders of the Uniting Church nationally were aged 60 years or older. Attendance at our Queensland Synod in 2014 was reflective of this, with 74 per cent over 50 years of age.

This lack of engagement with the younger demographic of our society is not an emerging issue but a critical issue that has been at the feet of the Queensland Synod for almost two decades. Why have we failed to address this matter effectively with the urgency and resourcing it deserves?

The Synod Standing Committee and the Synod office are cooperatively planning to address this matter, particularly through aligning resources and a planned approach to the life blood of our church—the people. As part of its commitment to developing effective leadership for people in congregational placements, the Queensland Synod has engaged the Uniting College for Leadership and Theology to run a graduate certificate in ministry. The first intake is early 2016 with a second cohort in August of the same year. We are about growing and investing in our leaders so in turn they can grow our people.

You will note to this point I have avoided the word “change” as I have observed this word encourages anchors to be dropped from all sides of the church in a false belief that we will lose our theology and identity. We do have many congregations taking on the challenges of relevance and engagement and sadly I have witnessed that many, within our church, foster negative conversations towards those who have growing and thriving congregations as if they are doing something wrong in being a lighthouse for others. We must encourage and resource those congregations that are meeting the challenge, and learn from them. I firmly believe one size does not fit all but this is no excuse for doing nothing. With the loss of our youth has been the loss of our challengers, high-energy trail blazers who seek new territory for God.

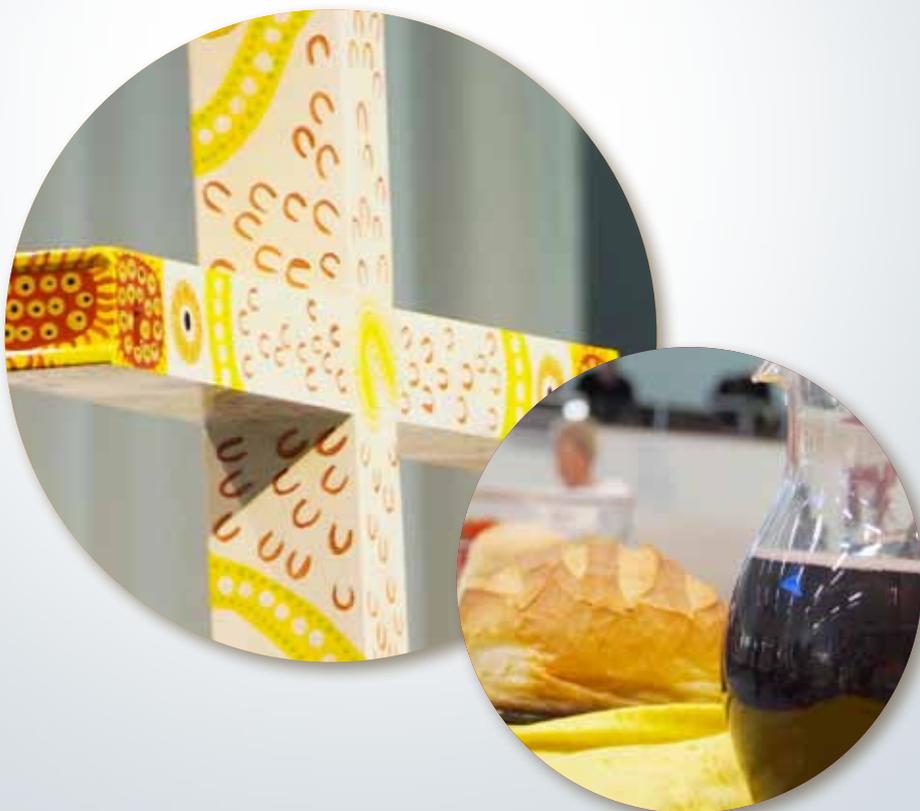
I will leave you with the purpose statement from the Uniting Church in Australia Constitution to reflect upon as you seek your place in the renewal journey:

The purposes of the church are to provide for the worship of God, to proclaim the gospel of the Lord Christ, to promote Christian fellowship, to nurture believers in the Christian faith, to engage in mission, to assist in human development and toward the improvement of human relationships, to meet human need through charitable and other services and to do such other things as may be required in obedience to the Holy Spirit.

We should also remember that every season passes.

Matthew 9:37–38 (NKJV) “Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest.’ ”

Gary Doyle
General secretary, Queensland Synod



Synod office staff values

The following values guide the Synod office staff as they work together to achieve goals and be accountable for their actions:

We will provide consistent, fair, courteous and timely **service** to the best of our ability.

We will be loyal, diligent and accountable by taking **responsibility** for our actions.

We will show **respect** through trusting and treating each other with compassion, dignity and without discrimination.

We will demonstrate **integrity** by acting ethically, honestly and faithfully; valuing truthfulness and justice in all that we do.

2015 highlights



Many changes were introduced during the year in response to the proposed Australian Prudential Regulation Authority regulatory changes. The congregation audit declaration note was removed from the annual return process and a separate specific declaration was created to heighten focus on fraud awareness. An Employee Services Portal (ESP) for lay staff and ministerial agents has been implemented to allow employees and ministerial agents to remotely access payroll data and exercise control over the maintenance of records.

Jim Barry
Chief financial officer



Robert Packer retired as the director of Finance and Property Services after seven years of dedicated service. Amongst many achievements, Robert calmly steered the Synod finances through the impacts of the Global Financial Crisis and other difficult matters. The CARIS project, relationships phase, was completed to a point to allow some of the functionality to be moved out of the testing environment and used as envisaged.

Peter Cranna
Finance and Property Services director



Significant progress has been made in documenting an evolving Synod office organisational structure that reflects change in how we interface with the congregations we serve. Work is continuing with the Synod Standing Committee in developing the alignment of the Queensland Synod priorities and goals.

Gary Doyle
General secretary



To enable better communication in the Synod office, Information Technology has created a website called the CARIS Portal for staff and UConnect 2.0, a corporate directory for people in specified active positions and active or retired ministerial staff to enable communication within the church. The IT systems of the Synod office are running with an uptime of 99.1 per cent in an environment with limited redundancy.

Peter Evans
Information Technology manager



Uniting Communications continues to inspire, resource and engage the Uniting Church in Queensland through the regular production of the award-winning *Journey* magazine, *Uniting News* e-newsletter, Facebook posts and maintaining the Synod website. We ran marketing campaigns for ecumenism, Trinity College Queensland and the \$10 for 10 Appeal, which funded Indigenous Learning Pathways grants to students in Uniting Church schools. We also developed the new Called to Care mental health resources and the e-newsletters *Reach Out Speak Out* and *Uniting Green UPDATE*. Communications road shows and Christmas and Easter resources continued to support congregations in their work.

Bruce Mullan
Uniting Communications acting director



There has been a strong competitive insurance environment in 2015 and Uniting Church congregations and agencies in the Queensland Synod demonstrate the qualities and risk profile that insurers of this sector of the market look for. During this financial year Peter Rose conducted site visits to 101 congregation properties across the Synod, making 983 risk improvement recommendations.

David Munro
Risk and Insurance manager



The Schools and Residential Colleges Commission has continued to build strong relationships with each organisation under its umbrella and has been involved in key elements within the life of the schools and colleges. The commission and its executive officer have been involved in many staffing aspects of the schools and colleges, particularly in the appointment of school chaplains.

Dr Daniel Pampuch
Schools and Residential Colleges Commission executive officer



Property Resources has handled 43 proposals for discussion and approval together with 611 licenses, agreements and other matters for the attention of the Finance Investment and Property Board. The last of the impaired loans has been retired through the successful sale of the last units in residential developments, and new property modules in the Synod information management system (CARIS) with improved workflows are being progressively rolled out.

Stephen Peake
Property Resources manager

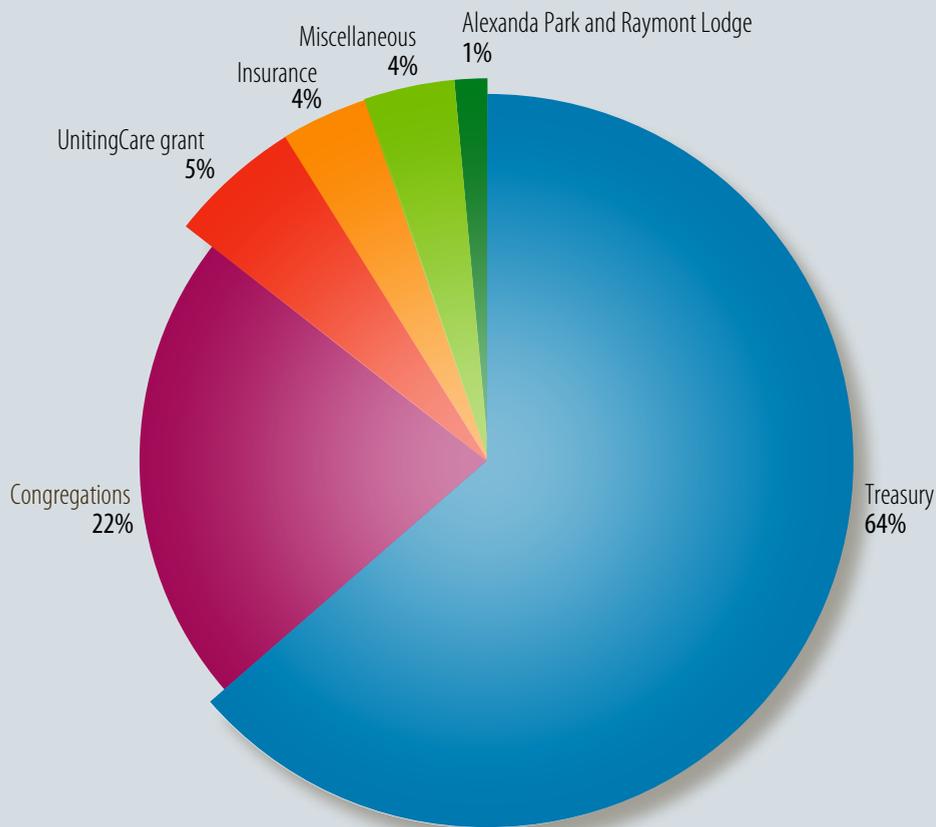


Trinity College Queensland enters into an affiliation agreement with Charles Sturt University in 2016 and has undertaken a comprehensive promotion of lay preachers, Cert VI in chaplaincy, Grad Cert RAVE (religious education in schools), bachelor of theology, masters of ministry, diploma of ministry, PhD programs; all available face-to-face, online or by distance. Trinity's Online Learning Experience (Trinity OLÉ) has been further developed and Trinity College Queensland has partnered with the Synod mission project officer to provide "Mission Shaped Ministry—Fresh Expressions of Church" training.

Rev Dr Wendi Sargeant
Trinity College Queensland acting principal

Synod office financial snapshot

Synod operating funding sources



Statutory accounts summary for the financial year ended 30 June 2015

	2015 \$	2014 \$
Total revenues	46,658,413	43,702,626
Total expenditure	38,748,028	34,669,880
Surplus for the year from continuing operations	7,910,386	9,032,746
Total assets	596,359,178	442,226,054
Total liabilities	548,324,785	401,629,782
Net Assets	48,034,393	40,596,272

2014/15 operating result

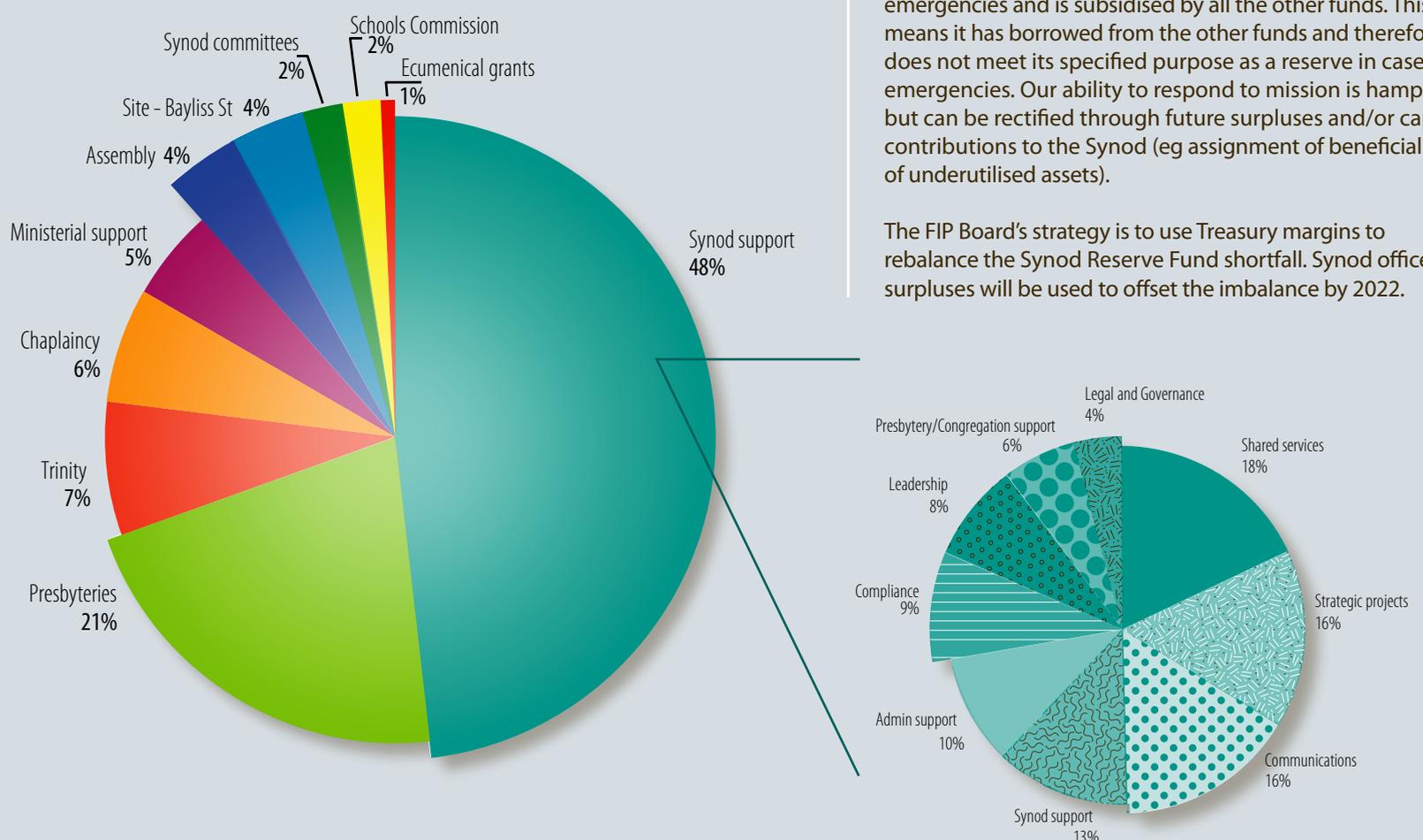
The operating surplus for 2014/15 is \$7.9 million which was \$5.5 million better than budget. This was primarily due to Treasury performance and operational expenditure savings.

The operations of the Treasury (formerly U.C.I.S) continue to fund most of the Synod's activities.

The Synod Reserve Fund deficit (\$13m) cannot fund emergencies and is subsidised by all the other funds. This means it has borrowed from the other funds and therefore does not meet its specified purpose as a reserve in case of emergencies. Our ability to respond to mission is hampered but can be rectified through future surpluses and/or capital contributions to the Synod (eg assignment of beneficial use of underutilised assets).

The FIP Board's strategy is to use Treasury margins to rebalance the Synod Reserve Fund shortfall. Synod office surpluses will be used to offset the imbalance by 2022.

Synod operating funding uses





Kama and her daughter collect water from a water point in Akula community in Gambella, Ethiopia, that is hosting over 1600 refugees of the Bruer ethnic group from South Sudan.
Photo: Supplied

Giving the gift of clean water

Every Christmas the National Council of Churches' international aid agency Act for Peace runs the Christmas Bowl Appeal to support people around the world living through conflict and displacement. *Journey* reports.

“Nothing could have prepared me for the shocking reality facing refugees living in Akula camp,” says Delphine Vuagnoux, who coordinates the Christmas Bowl appeal for Act for Peace.

“Walking into Akula on the border of Ethiopia and South Sudan I was immediately aware that the refugees living there had next to nothing.”

Akula is the location of one of Act for Peace's international programs and is the focus of this year's Christmas Bowl appeal.

“This year we are hoping that the combined effort of churches around Australia will make a huge difference to the lives of South Sudanese refugees and other people in need,” says Delphine.

After decades of conflict in surrounding countries, Ethiopia is now host to more refugees than any other country in Africa. As one of the world's poorest countries, they are struggling to cope.

Akula camp is home to South Sudanese refugees who have fled ongoing civil war to find a better life for their families.

“One of the largest problems facing refugees in Akula is a lack of water, sanitation and hygiene,” says Delphine. “There are no toilets and just one working water pump.

“People are forced to go to the toilet out in the open. The lack of water means that there is no way

for people to wash their hands and deadly diseases are spreading rapidly. Children are particularly at risk from these diseases including one young boy I met named John.”

John is an eight-year-old boy who caught Hepatitis E from unclean drinking water.

“I remember very clearly John being too weak to move and the desperate worry his mum, Tuskur, had that he would die.

“Meeting refugees like John was an experience I will never forget. What stayed with me the most was how simple it was to fix the problems they were facing and to finally give these caring people a chance at a safe and dignified life.

“I hope sharing my story will encourage people to once again be involved in the Christmas Bowl appeal.”

Last year members of the Uniting Church in Queensland raised more than \$142 000 as part of the Christmas Bowl that supported Burmese refugees and communities around the world.

Uniting Church president Stuart McMillan encourages the Uniting Church to participate in the Christmas Bowl Appeal.

“Love is at the heart of the Christian faith. The Christmas Bowl is a bowl of love, at the centre of our gatherings in homes and communities,” he says.

actforpeace.org.au

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Give a refugee clean water and help save a life this Christmas.

FREECALL 1800 025 101 ACTFORPEACE.ORG.AU

ACT FOR PEACE

The Christmas appeal of Act for Peace, the international aid agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia. ABN 64 693 941 795

Christmas Bowl

Please give today



Christians awake

Young leaders talk about faith

Four emerging leaders in the Uniting Church talk to *Journey* about their passion for living out the gospel.

Stephen Longbottom, 29, lives in Toowong, Brisbane and has a background in corporate accounting and finance.

At Toowong Uniting Church I participate in a leadership residency program, coordinate our English as a Second Language program and help lead our junior youth. I also volunteer with Student Life, teach religious education and lead an inter-church young adults ministry called Converge.

What are you passionate about?

During the last half of 2015 I've been volunteering with Student Life International Student Ministries (ISM) at the University of Queensland.

What I love about the Student Life ISM model is that it has such a strong missional focus. New Christians are disciplined and mentored for only three months before they are expected to start leading their own Bible studies and discipling others. In this way, we have seen several students spread the gospel down to four generations in under 18 months!

I have seen ISM Brisbane experience rapid growth in 2015, with scores of students getting saved and baptised. Many of the students are from families who will disown them for becoming Christians. Following Jesus comes at a great cost, but they have real joy on their faces when they tell you about the radical change Jesus has made in their lives.

Working closely with ISM has inspired me to re-imagine the typical Western church experience. My dream is to help create a modern version of the first church described in Acts 2. The excitement of seeing non-believers coming to know Jesus for the first time has realigned me with our commission as Christians: teaching and sharing Jesus with others and letting the Holy Spirit do the rest.

If you've caught a similar vision I'd love to hear from you. You can email me at stephenlongbottom7@gmail.com

Kauvaka (Ben) Tupou, 22, lives in Boondall, Brisbane and is a student.

I am currently in my final year of studying for a Bachelor of Business (majoring in marketing) at Queensland University of Technology. I also have the privilege of leading the awesome youth group at Park Church Uniting Tongan congregation which I have attended since I was little.

What are you passionate about?

Growing up I suffered with severe depression and anxiety disorder and as a teenager had sought out many ways to cope with mental illness. I've always attended church and found that during my darkest hours, God had surrounded me with amazing family members, leaders and mentors. Experiencing the impact of God's love through my family and faith community, I then felt that I have purpose, hope, and that by God's grace I had been saved so that I may serve others.

Today I serve in our youth ministry, and with the guidance of our minister Rev Maile Molitika have set up a safe environment in which our youth can come and share their journey and prayerfully seek God.

Currently one in four young Australians is experiencing some sort of mental health condition and the number one killer of young Australians is suicide. By raising awareness and participating in Mental Health Week (the week of 10 October) we can try to eliminate the negative stigma and provide people with the opportunity to have open conversations.

Furthermore, simply providing a safe place—be it at home or church—where our young people can comfortably share and seek God will allow us the opportunity to pray with them and direct them to further assistance.

ucaqld.com.au/calledtocarelifeline.org.au

‘I've always attended church and found that during my darkest hours, God had surrounded me with amazing family members, leaders and mentors’

Ben Tupou



Gamuchirai Makoti (Gamu), 13, lives in Atherton.

I live with my parents, Rev Johnson and Bridgetta Makoti, and have four siblings. I attend worship at the Atherton Uniting Church.

What are you passionate about?

To sing is to let your soul speak. Praise and worship has been a part of our churches for years and we have come to make music an essential part of our services. Music has been a part of my life for as long as I can remember; music can express things words cannot. Music can make the presence of the spirit noticeable and I have always been able to communicate with God better through song.

Children, teenagers, middle-aged people and the elderly all have one thing in common; they enjoy music of different types, whether rock ‘n roll, pop, rhythm and blues or country. Gospel music is the music of the church and I believe that it should not be considered anything like the stereotype of old, slow and boring, but should be able to produce a meaningful message in an upbeat symphony.

If we could invite more instrumentalists and singers to step up and share their talent our churches would grow rapidly and be alive, flooding with new members, young and old. This does not mean a church should not contain old hymns and songs, but that as a growing church we should be able to extend our range to songs past and present.

I have faith in the modern church of today, that our churches will grow and we will be a healthy, happy, living church with music that we love. People say we should have faith without sight, but I have faith with sight because I can see it happening.

Jemma Whittaker, 27, is the youth and young adult resource person for the Northern Synod.

I attend Nightcliff Uniting Church and am a member of the Pilgrim Presbytery of Northern Australia, the Northern Synod and the 14th Assembly. I am also connected with the national young adult scene, the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) and UnitingJustice.

What are you passionate about?

One of my passions is seeing people within our church engage authentically with our First Peoples. At the briefing before the 14th National Assembly in July, the youthful members met with Uncle Sealin and his family, central figures in Congress WA.

The experiences of ongoing pain and dispossession they shared were echoed by the youthful members of Congress from Queensland, South Australia and New South Wales, and the whole group was deeply moved by our time together. It was a special, sacred, and painful space.

Driven to respond to what they had experienced, the youthful members stood before the Assembly and called upon the church to intentionally reengage with covenanting, with a focus on building meaningful relationships.

We dream of a 15th Assembly rich with stories of how congregations and communities, families and friendships have been transformed through the development of meaningful, creative, life-giving connections between first and second peoples.

I am passionate about seeing this dream become a reality, and feel called to help encourage people and congregations link in and begin to imagine what covenanting looks like in their context.



‘... the youthful members stood before the Assembly and called upon the church to intentionally reengage with covenanting, with a focus on building meaningful relationships’

Jemma Whittaker

Bringing in the sheaves



Church community gardens

There's something deeply rewarding about growing and eating your own food, and what better way to get your hands dirty than in a community garden? **Dianne Jensen** talks to Uniting Church congregations who are digging deep in search of connection.

As backyards shrink or disappear and our memories of home-grown produce fade, a quiet revolution is taking place across Australia. Community spaces are being transformed into shared gardens where individuals and families tend their own plots or pitch in together.

For churches looking for ways to better utilise their facilities, community gardens have created new opportunities for mission, says Uniting Green liaison David Weddell.

"Churches have realised this is a way we can connect with our local community," says David. "Just from a purely practical level, being part of a community garden you can learn from other people about what are the best tips for growing things. From a church perspective, sometimes the conversations might go deeper than that; we share our different advice or opinions or experience on growing carrots but we might also share our advice, experience and opinions on life ... that's where the more spiritual or the real relationship bit happens."

David facilitates the Community Gardens (Uniting Church) Facebook group, and he says there is no one-size-fits-all model.

"A big garden works well if your church has a huge chunk of land. You can divide it up and a family can say, yes, we would like this chunk and we'll take care of that. Others are smaller and more shared—here is the area, and if you've got an interest in strawberries, grow some here, but we'll all water the garden and the guy who loves doing composting, he'll compost the whole garden.

"There's also the model of going offsite, where people from your church join the local community garden. The logistics are up to your individual circumstances—the core is having an activity where Christians and non-Christians can interact and form community."

Community gardens attract everyone from older couples down-sizing to people living in high-rises or renting.

"Like any successful community project, community gardens mentor novices, encourage people to actually get their hands dirty, and celebrate success together," says David.

Sowing the seeds

The garden at Mudgeraba Uniting Church on the Gold Coast began three years ago with a school holiday project to assemble a timber garden kit. Passionate gardener Diane Kelly and other church volunteers gradually added seven more beds, and the garden is now producing an abundance of fresh, organically-grown vegetables, herbs and flowers.

"Those experiences have united us—dirty hands and rubber boots definitely help us get to know each other!" says Diane. "I've noticed that after church, people now tend to gravitate to the garden and take a look at what is growing—and they chat to one another, and enjoy a different environment for fellowship."

Once the initial setup is done, "no dig" gardens don't require a lot of work, she adds.

"Watering needs to be done regularly, but the tranquility of the early evening in a quiet spot, or the pleasure of watching the bees visit flowers in the early morning makes that job worthwhile.

"The dream for the future is simple—to teach our community how to grow their own food—and then to bring the excess to our church hall to prepare and share meals together. This would involve time and education, but would be a wonderful experience," says Diane.

‘Like any successful community project, community gardens mentor novices, encourage people to actually get their hands dirty, and celebrate success together’
David Weddell



L to R: Diane Kelly, Mudgeeraba Uniting Church garden manager.
Photo: Bruce Mullan
 Sylvia Pitt and Con Janduris planting rosella bushes at Sunnybank Uniting Church community garden.
Photo: David Pitt



BELLS Faith Community tent at the Bells Reach community garden.
Photo: Phil Smith



John Loneragan (garden coordinator) and Rachel.
Photo: Linda Hanson



Gardens at Trinity Uniting Church, Redlands.
Photo: Lyn Gilmour

sunnybankuc.org.au/community-garden

www.bells.org.au

coorparoouniting.com/ourcommunitygarden

mudgeerabaunitingchurch.org/village-garden

Find Trinity Uniting Church, Wellington Pt and Community Gardens (Uniting Church) on Facebook.

BELLS, Caloundra

The Bells Reach Community Garden is established in Aura City, south of Caloundra as part of a large community space. There are 16 private plots bid for each year by local households and a long shared bed. The BELLS Faith Community has two beds, open to passers-by, and members serve on the garden committee.

BELLS helped organise the official opening of the garden and has been asked to facilitate summer evening get-togethers every second Friday.

Phil Smith

Trinity Uniting Church, Redlands

The Trinity Uniting Gardening Group is situated on the southern end of the property at Wellington Point. The garden was started in 2013 and went in to disrepair by October 2014. In June 2015, the decision was taken to re-establish it with a view of reaching out to the local community. There are now six church families and three community families enjoying the fruits of their labour.

Through the support of Councillor Wendy Boglary we received a grant from the Redland City Council and have built six raised garden beds with the view to having our playgroups and other community groups use them.

Lyn Gilmour

Faithworks Uniting Community, Brisbane

The Coorparoo Community Garden is located behind the manse at Faith Works @ Coorparoo. Presently there are community beds and individual plots. We hold a community working bee on the first Saturday of each month to work the communal beds where the produce is shared. The other beds are cared for by family groups.

One family in the district rang and asked for a plot as they are tenants and didn't want to lose their crop if they had to move. They are now part of our church family and join us for our monthly pizza nights where we use our produce on our wood-fired pizzas.

Linda Hanson

take root

Many hands make light work

The garden at Sunnybank Uniting Church in Brisbane grew out of the men's shed which the church started three years ago in partnership with Sunnybank RSL.

Congregation member David Pitt, secretary of the gardening committee, says that some of the 50 men who joined up were just as happy to work outside under the gum trees, and the garden concept was born.

"We spent the first 18 months building sleeper-type beds and digging up the ground and putting fruit trees in and doing all sorts of other things, followed by a grand opening in May this year," says David.

With the help of a Brisbane City Council grant, the "sheddies" have built a potting shed, a tool shed, two greenhouses and an office, and there are a growing number from the community joining the gardening group.

The garden operates on a membership model and is overseen by a management team responsible to the church council. There is no ownership of plots, and members are encouraged to grow produce as they please or to simply join in with the general maintenance.

"There's always plenty of work to be done in a garden," says David. "The fact is that we are now doing something with this huge area of church land, and beautifying it, and everyone is much happier with the arrangement."

Caring for the earth

Growing and harvesting our own food re-connects us with the beauty of this fragile earth, says David Weddell.

"In a way it's extending the biblical tradition of Adam and Eve—taking care of a garden. We have been left a wonderful earth to nurture and sometimes we don't do that good a job of it. Here's an opportunity to say—this is our little section of the earth, we are going to take really good care of at least this bit."



Blue Christmas lights the way

Considering introducing a Blue Christmas service? David MacGregor offers these tips:

1. Don't be maudlin. This service is not in Holy Week, leading up to Good Friday. Christmas is a time when the light of Christ comes into the world.
2. Don't try and do too much.
3. Be circumspect in the use of music. If people are dealing with grief and loss, they might not want to say or sing anything.
4. Provide an opportunity for people to express their loss in some sort of kinaesthetic way such as lighting candles or placing stones.

When the joy of Advent seems to mock the darkness in our hearts, Blue Christmas is a reminder that the light of God still illuminates the path. **Dianne Jensen** talks to Rev David MacGregor.

Like every congregation, the people at Wellers Hill–Tarragindi Uniting Church, Brisbane have experienced their share of grief and struggle during the year. Some will take the opportunity at the beginning of Christmas week to pause with family and friends for reflection at the Blue Christmas “Service of the longest night” offered by the church.

Congregational minister and well-known songwriter Rev David MacGregor has revived the church tradition, adapting a Methodist (US) resource to the Australian context.

“There is joviality and joy at Christmas—as there should be—but it’s very hard to enter into that when there’s emptiness inside. If you have lost a loved one, it hurts more,” says David.

“There are and always will be times that we find ourselves having to deal with tough stuff ... I believe that we’re denying God ultimately and denying who we are unless we can express that, and I think it’s helpful to do that in some sort of liturgical worship ritual.”

The short service is structured around the lighting of the four blue Advent candles—symbolising grief, courage, memories and love—followed by the Christ candle. Participants are invited to light tea candles in remembrance of others or in acknowledgement of their own struggles.

“In any service of lament—and the psalmists bear this out—when someone pours his or her heart out, there’s always a place where the hope that God offers is also known and claimed and sought,” says David.

“The gospel is the light of Christ and the darkness has never put it out. The Advent candle provides a sense of God’s presence, the light of Christ with us, even if it does seem like a flickering light in the corner of a dark room.”

For more information contact Rev David MacGregor at dmacgreg1@optusnet.com.au dmacgreg1.wordpress.com ucaql.com.au/calledtocare lifeline.org.au



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Candles burn for Paris

Alan Austin is a Uniting Church member and former *Crosslight* journalist who lives in Nîmes in the south of France. He shares his reflections on the impact of terror in his adopted homeland.

The message was rapidly shared among neighbours in our small village near Nîmes: we will place a candle—*une bougie*—in our window tonight to show *notre solidarité*. At that time there were no answers to the questions: what motivated such horrendous attacks overnight in Paris killing almost 130 people and injuring hundreds more? What could have or should have been done to prevent this? What can now be done in response?

Late that night my wife and I walked through our village to see the candles and share the mourning across the nation. A neighbouring couple—whose children lived in Paris—had multiple candles in every window.

As this is written, four days later, there are still no answers. Plenty have been offered, of course. For some, this is proof that military spending must be increased, for others, that spending must be cut. To several, this demands closure of national borders to refugees from war zones such as Syria. To others, this requires renewed efforts to welcome and support those needing a safe haven and at risk of radicalisation if refused.

Some have claimed this attack on an overtly secular nation with a strong Christian history is evidence of the hatred Islam has for secularism or Christianity. Others, including Stafford, our Anglican minister here in the Gard, reminded us the day after the massacres that “the events in Paris have also been

the experience of Ankara, Istanbul, Lebanon, Syria and Pakistan in the last month”.

Some are warning that religious fanatics prepared to die to bring about a worldwide caliphate are increasing in number and boldness. Others highlight the rapid condemnation of such action by Muslim leaders in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, Qatar, Iran, Iraq, Morocco and Egypt. Saudi Arabia’s foreign minister responded immediately with “our condolences to the government and people of France for the heinous terrorist attacks that took place yesterday which are in violation and contravention of all ethics, morals and religions”.

While processing all these conflicting opinions, the support of the entire world, including Australia, has been received and greatly appreciated. Everyone with a television in France saw footage of Sydney’s opera house lit with the tricolour, along with similar images of the Penshaw monument in England, New York’s One World trade centre and Rio de Janeiro’s statue of Christ the Redeemer.

In our window three candles burned through Saturday night. One for the deceased, as is our local custom, biblical or not. One for the injured—some hundreds physically, thousands grieving for family and friends lost, and millions sharing in that suffering. And one for the leaders—of France, of other nations, of international agencies and of the religious communities—to whom we look for decisions which will take the world towards justice and peace.

This article originally appeared on crosslight.org.au

‘In our window three candles burned through Saturday night’



Our sporting heart

There's something almost spiritual about how we gather to watch sport. Now, just as the cricket season begins, **Rev Tim Winslade** writes about how sport gives us an opportunity to reflect Christ to the nation.

‘Our sporting culture needs redeeming, but it also has redemptive qualities that provide many opportunities for engagement’

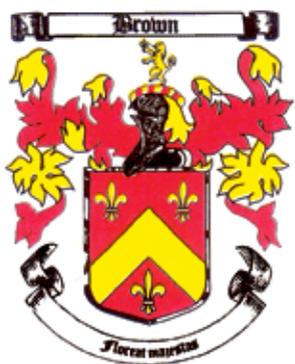
Twelve months is a long time in the world of sport. On 27 November 2014 we were shocked at the tragic death of a young Australian cricketer named Phil Hughes. His death led to an outpouring of emotion across the country and many households “put out a bat” in his memory. Although some thought the focus on Phil’s death was overdone, it served as a reminder that sport is a significant part of the Australian psyche that we must engage with if we are to truly incarnate the gospel message.

D H Lawrence (1885-1930) once said that our Australian soul was defined, “not on the battlefield of war, but rather [our] exploits at Lords”, and that “Australians play sport like [our] lives depend on it”. Although we are not the only country that exhibits a passion for sport, it is clear that sport holds a unique place in Australian society that warrants theological investigation. However, apart from the metaphors used by the Apostle Paul, such as “running the race” (Gal 5:6-8) and “winning the prize” (Phil 3:12-15), or his boxing analogy in 1 Corinthians 9:25-27, very little is said about sport in the Bible. Across the ages, sport has often been seen as contesting the same

psychological ground as faith. Yet it is imperative that we resolve this sacred/secular dichotomy to engage with this feature that is at the heart of our culture.

Play and playfulness is a gift from God. Play’s only real purpose is enjoyment, and sport, in its rawest form, is just an institutionalised version of play. In the middle ages, Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) introduced the concept of Godly play and suggested that games and play were not “anti-god”, but reflected part of the nature of God, and that we, being made in God’s image, exhibit these qualities. All human gifts and talents, from this perspective, originate from and are supported by God and it is our role to help uncover the treasure placed by God in each sphere of life, including sports.

Following the example of Jesus, who incarnated himself into a context (John 1: 14), we must not stand on the edges of our communities, but get involved in the heart. Our sporting culture needs redeeming, but it also has redemptive qualities that provide many opportunities for engagement, but this can only be done relationally and incarnationally, if it is to have any long-term impact in bridging the divide between the church and our sporting culture.



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Love each other in Christ's name

I am very proud of all that the Uniting Church is doing in terms of social justice. Well may Jesus tell the parable of the "Good Muslim" as Lesley Bryant suggests ("The truth shall set you free", November 2015, page 10). We should, of course, show love to and dialogue with Muslims. Ellen Degeneres tells us every day to "be kind to each other". The gospel of Jesus, however, is much more than this.

Sadly the name of Christ was rarely mentioned in the November *Journey*. Rev Orrell Battersby very excitedly described the church planting that is taking place and people are "desperate to see other people coming into a relationship with Christ" ("Get the dirt on church planting", November 2015, page six). This is exciting and it is obvious that where the supremacy and power of Christ as God is preached and the spiritual, together with the social gospel, is shared due to the infilling of the Holy Spirit, there is growth.

Ross Fraser-Smith
Tallebudgera Uniting Church

Don't knock the boxes

Reference was made in the 17 November issue of *Uniting News* to an article by Bronwyn Fraser from UnitingWorld in which she is very critical of the Christmas Shoebox project, an initiative supported by many congregations, including my own. This article, which saddened and disappointed me, will be very hurtful to many generous members of the Uniting Church. It uses the word "trinkets" a number of times to describe the contents of the shoeboxes and suggests (very judgementally) that donors are mostly driven by a need to "feel good" about themselves. My own congregation has supported this project for years. This year we sent 350 boxes. We have also given thousands of dollars to support long term on-the-ground mission projects in Africa and India, and in response to special appeals, like the one for Syrian refugees. Surely UnitingWorld can seek support for its own valuable work without passing judgement on the commitment and generosity of others.

Rev Dr David Pitman
Centenary Uniting Church

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. Letters should be no longer than 150 words. Full submission guidelines for letters to the editor can be found at journeyonline.com.au/submit

Synod office role changes

Former associate general secretary of the Queensland Synod Rev John Cox will take up a new role at the end of January 2016 as executive officer to the national Assembly's National Engagement and Response Task Group to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Based at the Queensland Synod office, John will lead the church's response to the Royal Commission.

"This work has been a part of my role here on behalf of the Synod, and I strongly believe that this is a priority for the church. Being a safe place for people to experience the fullness of life is core to who we are," says John.

Rev Heather den Houting is currently acting associate general secretary.

New covenant with Congregational Federation

The Uniting Church in Australia and the Congregational Federation of Australia and New Zealand (CFANZ) have agreed to welcome members of each others' churches for Holy Communion.

The following covenant was approved by the August 2015 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee: "We agree together: to invite and welcome members of each other's church to share in the Eucharist according to pastoral need."

National Consultant for Christian Unity, Doctrine and Worship Rev Dr Chris Walker marked the new covenant by presiding over the Holy Communion service at the biennial Assembly of the Congregational Federation in Sydney on 18 October 2015.

The covenant was formed under the National Council of Churches in Australia's Australian Churches Covenanting Together process.

General secretary resigns

After thorough prayer and reflection Gary Doyle has resigned from the role of Queensland Synod general secretary. He will finish up on 18 December 2015.

"We pray every blessing on Gary and his family as they discover God's will for them," says Rev David Baker, Queensland Synod moderator. "We thank him for his service in the role and commitment to the life and wellbeing of the church.

"I will be working with Synod Standing Committee to determine a way forward and will communicate that as soon as possible.

"The Queensland Synod has demonstrated that we can manage the many challenges that come our way. Please pray for discernment during this time of change."

UnitingCare Target Christmas Appeal

UnitingCare Queensland has partnered with Target for the 24th year to assist people who are doing it tough at Christmas. This year UnitingCare hopes to raise \$1 million dollars during the UnitingCare Christmas Appeal, which runs until Christmas Eve.

Shoppers are asked to purchase a \$1 gift tag and Target will donate 100 per cent of sales. Unwrapped gifts can be left at the layby counter in any Target store.

Nearly 5400 gifts were distributed to individuals and families in Queensland and 42 000 families were assisted across the country last year.

Classifieds

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*“I
think
we need
to strip the
tinsel from the
Christmas tree
and see the raw
guts of the story”*

Rev Susan Pickering
West End Uniting Church