



The Uniting Church in Australia
QUEENSLAND SYNOD

inspire • provoke • engage

Journey

In the
footsteps of
Mary Magdalene

Leading
like Jesus

**Thirty years
of Journey**

General Secretary

Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod

The Synod of Queensland is seeking a new General Secretary to commence from 1 July 2016.

The General Secretary provides collaborative leadership to develop the Synod's capacity for mission and ministry in partnership with presbyteries, congregations and agencies. The General Secretary leads Synod Support Services and exercises the responsibilities of Secretary to the Synod (as per Regulation 3.6.3.4).

Expressions of interest are encouraged in writing (email is appropriate) to the Chair of the General Secretary Selection Committee, Rev David Baker.

For full details of the position including position description please go to ucaqld.com.au/administration/personnel-services

Please mark correspondence with the title General Secretary – Expression of Interest to careers@ucaqld.com.au or Rev David Baker, GPO Box 674, BRISBANE QLD 4001.

Applications close 29 February 2016.

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The Uniting Church in Australia
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Vacancy: Executive Minister

Kippax is a modern, vibrant Uniting Church and one of the ACT's largest community service agencies. Our community of faith and our community services are deliberately integrated in order to support our ministry focus: empowering, transforming and creating a loving and nurturing community, "where the yeast of love will rise".

An Executive Minister who is mature in their faith and their ability to manage relationships; able to communicate in inspiring ways; work constructively and positively with a diversity of people in multiple settings; and lead, motivate and challenge the community to live out its call, vision and values will be well suited to Kippax.

As is required by Synod, the applicant must be willing to hold a Working with Vulnerable People card and must have the lawful right to work in Australia.

For enquiries and position documentation please contact: Geoff Wellington, e: presbyterymande@tpg.com.au or ph: (02) 6248 9311, or Jon Freeman, Chair, Kippax Uniting Church Council, e: jon.freeman@outlook.com or 0427 113 073

Applications should be sent to: Synod Associate Secretary Rev Jane Fry janef@nswact.uca.org.au.

Applications Close Friday 26 February 2016



Uniting Church in Australia
NORTHERN SYNOD

Minister of the Word Living Water, Humpty Doo NT

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

Living Water Uniting Church, located in Darwin's rural area, are seeking a Minister of the Word to join with them in ministry and mission. This is a welcoming congregation who are actively involved in church and community life. Mission activities include school chaplaincy and a very busy Op Shop. They are looking for ways to grow their ministries and mission, in particular with youth.

You will be part of a diverse and multi-cultural congregation, with opportunities to share the Love of Jesus with the surrounding rural community.

This is a full-time position based in Humpty Doo. The manse is located on the large (1.2 ha) church block.

Applications for this position are sought by 11 March 2016.

For further information about this position please contact Rev Bruce Slater, Presbytery Chairperson, bruce.slater@ns.uca.org.au or ring 08 8982 3400.

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Uniting Church in Australia
NORTHERN SYNOD

Minister of the Word Nhulunbuy

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

Members of the Nhulunbuy Church in the Northern Territory are looking for a Minister of the Word to join with them to share God's love in this unique corner of Australia. This is a welcoming congregation who is keen to be involved and use their gifts in church and community life. They are looking for ways to grow their ministry beyond the four walls of the Church and to engage more in the region.

This is a half-time position based in Nhulunbuy and an off-site manse and vehicle are provided.

This position would be an ideal placement for a family looking for a change, a single person keen on adventure, or a minister nearing retirement.

Applications for this position are sought by 11 March 2016.

For further information about this position please contact Rev Bruce Slater, Presbytery Chairperson, bruce.slater@ns.uca.org.au or ring 08 8982 3400.

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Lead and share

I've been fortunate to have grown up in schools and churches that have taken deliberate steps to cultivate and mentor young leaders. It's been a great help to me over the years.

On page four the moderator talks about leadership in a non-hierarchical Uniting Church context. Far from absolving us of the need for strong leaders, it puts the onus on all of us to be able to lead when the situation calls for it. Leadership is vital!

This unique church context also means we look at leadership differently; a collaborative, empathetic style of servant leadership is called for, and what better example of this do we have than that of Jesus, described to us in the gospel accounts of his life.

On the cover this month we have Mary Magdalene, one of Jesus' most devoted followers and the first person to testify of Jesus' resurrection. The church has a lot to thank her for, because she immediately and enthusiastically invited other people to journey with Christ.

The sacrificial, servant leadership of Christ, putting all others before himself, is worth sharing with other people. On page six we take a look at evangelism—God is already at work in the world and invites us to participate in it and tell others about it.

Here's to the year ahead. Thanks for reading *Journey*.

Rohan Salmond
Cross-platform editor

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Closing date for editorial and advertising for March *Journey* is Monday 15 February. The next issue of *Journey* will be available on Sunday 6 March.



In whatever you do, be a leader

Monday Midday Prayer

*Create in me a clean heart,
O God, and put a new and
right spirit within me.*

*Restore to me the joy of your
salvation, and sustain in me
a willing spirit.*

Amen

Greetings for the new year; I trust and pray that you will know God's leading and blessing in it.

There are some articles on leadership in this month's *Journey*. Leadership is one of those constant, big buzzwords. It seems, in the West, everyone is crying out for it, yet those who are in positions of authority across many of the sectors of our life, particularly the public sectors, seem to be struggling profoundly. I'm not sure it's all their fault; I've heard it said that the issue in the West isn't leadership, but followership! It reminds me of Jesus looking at Jerusalem, saying, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!" We seem to be living in a fickle time.

I'm intrigued by how to define leadership. It's a very elusive concept. When I ask people how they'd define it, it's often in idealistic, heroic and individualistic terms. One definition I found helpful was "taking responsibility for achieving a purpose". I found that helpful for the Uniting Church because it says leadership happens everywhere in a group or organisation—congregationally, it happens when anything is done with that intentionality.

From the unseen work of keeping the accounts in order, cleaning, ensuring the blue card register is up to date, to the public work of leading worship, teaching, discipling, exercising hospitality and expressing solidarity with others, it's all leadership when it's about taking responsibility for achieving the purpose of the church.

In any organisation in which you live, work, or play, you're exercising leadership when you "do your bit" to help the organisation achieve its purpose, whether that organisation is your family, your church, your work or your community group.

A corollary definition of leadership is "behaviour worth mimicking". That's a sobering definition for anyone who takes their communal relationships seriously. "What about my behaviour today will be worth mimicking?" is probably not the question you got out of bed with, yet, for a disciple of Jesus Christ, it's a question we should be asking in all humility.

So, as you read, in whatever corner of the vineyard of life you find yourself, have a think about the leadership you're called to exercise. God bless.

Rev David Baker
Moderator, Queensland Synod

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Not so super: Retirement incomes slashed

More than 1000 retired Uniting Church ministers have had their retirement incomes slashed by Federal Government superannuation changes that came into effect on 1 January.
Matt Pulford reports.

Changes to the tax treatment of defined benefit super schemes mean more than 80 per cent of retired members in the Uniting Church Beneficiary Fund are losing thousands of dollars a year, principally because it will now be harder for them to receive the age pension.

The scale of lost income varies, with initial feedback suggesting a range of \$5000 to \$10 000 a year.

Retired ministers and in many cases their widows are struggling to adjust, with the Uniting Church Beneficiary Fund fielding reports of financial hardship. One widow describes herself as “being forced into a survival situation again” at the age of 76, while other former ministers are reportedly considering selling out of retirement villages.

As of 30 September last year there were 637 Uniting Church ministers contributing to Beneficiary Fund defined benefit schemes. Uniting Church ministers are the only clergy in Australia caught up by the changes, which the Federal Government brought in to improve the fairness and sustainability of the pension system.

“As far as we can tell, we are the only mainstream church that operates a defined benefit superannuation scheme

for our clergy, so Uniting Church ministers are uniquely affected,” says the chair of the Assembly’s Employer Committee Bruce Binnie, who is coordinating the church response.

“I believe that the effect on Uniting Church ministers is an unintended consequence of the government’s legislation ... so we are appealing to social services minister Christian Porter to review the legislation and exempt ministers from its effects.”

Outgoing Assembly general secretary Rev Terence Corkin wrote to Minister Porter in November last year to ask him to review the legislation in light of the potential for significant reductions in income and quality of life for Uniting Church ministers.

Christian Porter responded just before Christmas but made no commitment to review the legislation.

Uniting Church ministers or their families impacted by the changes are being urged to contact their local federal Member of Parliament.

If you are a Beneficiary Fund member experiencing hardship as a result of the superannuation changes call the Mercer Super Trust Helpline on 1800 682 535 or Centrelink on 132 300.

Copies of correspondence between the Assembly general secretary and Minister Porter are available on the Assembly website.

“
One widow describes herself as “being forced into a survival situation again” at the age of 76, while other former ministers are reportedly considering selling out of retirement villages



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Hey!

Good news!

Telling others about the good news of Christ's death and resurrection is a vital part of mission and discipleship, but it can be difficult—even intimidating. **Rohan Salmond** looks at how to overcome some of the challenges to evangelism.

When Jesus was betrayed and crucified, the movement which had built up around him was shattered and immediately went underground. The eleven disciples locked themselves away in terror, and Peter, on whom Jesus said he would build his church, publicly denied ever knowing him.

“
I think the
Uniting Church
is agnostic about
evangelism

Rev Stu Cameron

At first, none of the men who knew Jesus best were aware that on the third day something incredible had happened—hope had not been lost.

Jesus had risen from the dead.

There's only one person all four gospels specify by name as a witness to Jesus' execution, burial and resurrection. Out of all the followers of Jesus, Mary Magdalene was brave enough and faithful enough to be present for these things, and she was the first person to tell others about the good news. Upon being the first to see Jesus alive again, she ran to the disciples and told them what she saw.

She was, arguably, the early church's first evangelist. Her unique role in the formation of the church earned her recognition as apostle to the apostles. She remains a towering hero of the faith and an example to follow today.

What is it?

The word “evangelism” simply means “to proclaim good news”. Before he ascended into heaven, Jesus came to the disciples and delivered what is now known as the Great Commission, saying, “... go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you ...” The charge to share the gospel with others is one the Christian church has carried out over nearly 2000 years, both when it was easy and when it was hard.

Today, the cultural landscape in the West makes sharing faith a challenge. The Uniting Church claims within its heritage evangelists like John Wesley and has produced powerful evangelists of its own, like Sir Alan Walker, but the 2010 and 2014 meetings of the Queensland Synod in Session both identified faith sharing as an area now in need of work.

Rev Stu Cameron is lead minister with Newlife Uniting Church, a large congregation on the Gold Coast which makes concerted efforts to share faith and invite new people to participate.

“I think the Uniting Church is agnostic about evangelism,” he says.

“Understandably we've reacted to some of the abuses of evangelism in the past, where people have been browbeaten, and we've reacted with some cultural cringe to the approaches that might have worked in the 50s and 60s but no longer work today—again, understandable—but we're at risk of throwing the baby out with the bathwater.”

Jordan Gauchi is pastor with Mallala Uniting Church in South Australia, a regional congregation which had closed many of its outreach ministries. It entered into a covenant relationship with a larger urban church in Adelaide, Gawler Uniting, which sent Jordan to help re-establish some of that outreach.

“The Uniting Church has its heart in the right place; we as a body want to see the world receive the love and grace of God,” says Jordan.

“To me evangelism isn't bold conversations, door-opening questions or clever arguments but rather a by-product of a flourishing and authentic faith.

“I think the Uniting Church, like most churches, wants evangelism, but we've made it out to be so big and complicated it's hard for us to live it out and achieve our goals to make disciples,” he says.

Stu says there are other factors at work in the Uniting Church's apparent hesitancy to actively evangelise.

“The second thing is there's been a drift, from my perspective—not everywhere and not everyone—but in some cases we've lost something of our confidence in the gospel story itself. Is the gospel story transformative? Not just for communities, but for individuals.

“The whole question around eternity and life after death and resurrection and these sorts of things—these have been hotly debated within scholarly circles and have spilled over into the life of the mainline church. And I



Mary Magdalene.
Illustration: Kaitlyn D'Arcy

think to a certain extent we're unsure of the heart of the story itself so we're reticent to actually share the story. That may have led to a withdrawal from a more overt gospel sharing."

But how?

For many churches, particularly in rural and regional areas, a lack of confidence in the gospel story isn't the problem—it's resources. While elaborate evangelistic outreach programs just may not be feasible, Jordan says taking stock of what you've actually got on hand—loaves and fishes style—is the first thing you have to do to get started.

"The most crucial thing that must be counted is the energy of the congregation," he says. "If it's low, you've got to be very wise and realistic about where, when and how you expend the energy that you have ... it's about being clear and focused on what you as a church want to achieve."

Stu agrees, and says every church should be engaged in some sort of evangelism institutionally, as well as through the lives of individual members.

"A church or a faith community that is not engaged in evangelism, I would question whether they actually can claim the name of *ecclesia* or church."

Will you come with me?

For some, that's difficult to hear, and Uniting Church members may not feel confident they have the tools to do it. The last time the Uniting Church took part in the National Church Life Survey (NCLS) in 2006, it found only five per cent of Uniting Church congregations had provided training in outreach and evangelism in the previous two years.

But just as evangelism must be practised by every church, it also something any Christian can do. You don't have to be

clever or charismatic, you just have to extend an invitation to someone to join in with what God is already doing.

"I don't think you're ever going to argue someone into relationship with Christ," says Stu. "The best evangelism happens out of relationship.

"I think evangelism is much less event-based and more relationally based. It always has been, because it would take an invitation for someone to go to a Billy Graham crusade: 'Will you come with me?' But the event was to enable that sort of invitation.

"I think we're all called to do the work of evangelism, that is, all believers are called to give reason for the hope they have."

Mary Magdalene wasted no time inviting others into her newfound hope on Easter Sunday, and Uniting Church members in Queensland are being encouraged to do likewise by inviting someone they know to church this Easter.

"Provide people with the opportunity to come where they might not otherwise be," says Stu.

"What that requires of us is for the church environment to be one which will answer the questions and address the issues that are actually relevant and pertinent to them."

To those who thought that Jesus' story had come to an end, Mary Magdalene's news was surprising, provocative, and life-changing—and she could not wait to pass it on.

"We're challenging ourselves to develop an invitational culture," says Stu. "Not just inviting people to church, although that's part of it, but inviting people into our lives."

Downloadable invitations for Easter services are available at ucaqlld.com.au/easter2016. Other Easter resources are also available free of charge.

“
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Rev Stu Cameron



Now for something completely different

Looking for innovative ways to connect to the broader community? **Dianne Jensen** finds out why mission shaped ministry may be able to help.

“
The MSM course is about equipping people to lead innovative, edgy and creative fresh expressions for those who don't normally get church

Scott Guyatt

Mission shaped ministry (MSM), the innovative course from the UK challenging the way we think about church, will be rolled out to more Queensland Uniting Church members in 2016.

“A mission shaped church is a church fundamentally shaped by its approach to mission,” says Synod project officer (mission engagement) Scott Guyatt. “The MSM course is about equipping people to lead innovative, edgy and creative fresh expressions for those who don't normally get church.”

The course was launched in Brisbane last year by Moreton Rivers and South Moreton presbyteries in a joint venture with Synod and Trinity College Queensland. This year Bremer Brisbane and at least one ecumenical partner (Churches of Christ) will join the team, which is convened by South Moreton Presbytery mission project officer Rev Beth Nicholls and Moreton Rivers Presbytery mission and education officer Rev Dr Robert McFarlane. Participants meet weekly over six months, with some Saturday field trips.

“The experience in the UK has been that this approach to resourcing fresh expressions of church has resulted in significant growth,” says Scott. “What they are finding is that only about 20 per cent of the people involved are church people—the rest are either ex-church or people completely new to faith—so as an approach to

introducing people to faith and finding ways for Christian communities to connect to their broader community, the fresh expressions of church have been really effective.”

Scott says that bringing together people on a regular basis who are interested in shaping new communities of disciples can be a powerful catalyst.

“One of the really exciting things in the course last year was the way that the community of people participating shaped up.

“This year we want to really focus on that, particularly on the Saturday field days, by doing less content and more networking, storytelling and sharing. The other thing is to think about what learning networks or partnerships might look like, where a number of people from a region might do some work together, be mentored or coached or work together beyond the course itself to build on what they've learned.”

The MSM team are keeping the momentum going by exploring models for regional delivery of the course. Following a successful trial in Toowoomba last year, more introductory intensive weekends will be offered outside metropolitan areas, and a webinar course will be available in the second half of 2016.

An introductory intensive weekend for the next Brisbane MSM course will be held 18 and 19 March with the course then continuing from April 13. For more information contact 07 3366 0236 or visit msmqld.com



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Less talking, more leading

Christian leadership isn't about becoming a household name. **Rev Ralph Mayhew** looks at the need to develop new leaders in the Uniting Church.

Christian leadership is always about minimising ourselves while seeking to maximise Christ. It stands in contrast to other models of leadership, where leadership is about becoming known in order to change the world.

A Christian leader can only lead a person as much as Christ is leading them. Christian leaders understand they don't change the world themselves; it is what God does through them that changes the world.

If this is true, for God to do more, and do it through Christian leaders, something has to make way. That something is the leader! The goal of the Christian leader is for selfish ambition to completely die. As this happens, the work and presence of Christ is revealed. Christian leadership is at its best when a leader is most transparent, so that their influence is aligned with God's.

For a long time we in the Uniting Church have had a tendency to view leadership with suspicion because leadership outside of the kingdom of God doesn't resonate with how God wants things to be within the kingdom. As a result of our suspicion, missteps, cultural responses and a plethora of other things, we find ourselves in dire need of developing more leaders.

Developing new leaders is perhaps the greatest and most pressing issue we face as a church, if we are to continue to

have an effect on Australian society. We need to begin to empower those still in the church before they slip away, as many before them have.

The first step is to develop a kingdom mindset of leadership—an anonymous leadership which is about Christ and his desires for his church rather than what the church or its leaders want.

We then need to identify these leaders and pour time, passion, grace and skill into them. One of the richest commodities we have as a church is our people who have been faithful disciples for many years. What a gift the wisdom gleaned from so many years of walking with Jesus could be to young emerging leaders feeling called into ministry.

For this to happen we need to create environments where the exchange of wisdom can occur. Our churches should be places where emerging leaders can be upskilled and have placed in their hands amazing resources that will both sharpen and equip them, where they can encourage one another and be encouraged that Jesus is still building his church. It is a great honour to have the opportunity to serve God this way.

Ralph is associate pastor with Newlife Uniting Church. His new book, The Anonymous Leader, is available at theanonymousleader.com

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Music for the soul

Robin Mann has been a familiar name to churchgoers for more than 40 years. **Dianne Jensen** talks to one of Australia's most successful and prolific songwriters.

“... a hymn writer is a poet under vows of restraint—and that applies both to music and words

Contemporary Australian worship owes much to Robin Mann. From the enduring popularity of “Father welcomes all his children” (1973), written for the baptism of his first child, to the haunting “Sorrowing song” (1986), his music has given a fresh, authentically Australian voice to the way we express our faith.

More than 100 of Robin's songs have been published, the largest number in the All Together series from Lutheran Publishing House Openbook. *Together in Song II* contains eight Robin Mann songs, including “When our life began again” (1980) “Feed us now” (1976) and “A Christmas blessing (may the feet)” (1983), for which he wrote the music.

Robin, now 66, and his wife and music partner Dorothy have deep roots in the German Lutheran community in South Australia. They have been singing together since they were teenagers, and continue to be deeply involved in their local St Stephen's Lutheran Church in Adelaide. Their most recent musical collection is *Heroes*, songs for children of all ages.

Catching the beat

“My writing has come out of a combination of folk and early pop, a good deal of hymnody, and certainly Lutheran and probably the Methodist tradition to a degree,” says Robin. “I grew up on the pop of the 50s, I'm the ninth of 11 kids ... so the Everly Brothers and Elvis Presley and all that music was very much part of my growing up and influenced everything I've written since.

“Then from the 60s—the Beatles, Simon and Garfunkel, Peter, Paul and Mary, and various pop stuff like The Animals. Bob Dylan was a very big influence, and in terms of writing he remains an influence.”

The catalyst for Robin's songwriting career came in 1971, when he and Dorothy joined Kindekrist, arguably

Australia's first Christian rock band. In parallel with the Jesus movement of the 1970s in the United States, Kindekrist sang about social justice and challenged establishment values.

The search for contemporary Australian music inspired Robin to begin writing and performing his own songs, which he combined with a teaching career and then chaplaincy and lay ministry before turning to full-time freelance work in 1995.

Hitting the right note

Robin Mann's distinctive blend of simple, eloquent lyrics and haunting refrains arranged in a less formal style struck a chord with a generation seeking to break away from tradition.

“Earlier on I wrote a lot of songs that were to be performed, not for people to sing together. As time went on, the songs that worked for people to sing together became much more the ones that I would write, and that required a different approach,” says Robin.

“It's a common complaint that contemporary songs are difficult to sing—even more so for people who have grown up on Wesley, but many of these are not really community songs, they are performance pieces.”

Even older classics such as “Hark, the herald angels sing” are pitched so high that they challenge most people, he adds.

“There's a quote, ‘a hymn writer is a poet under vows of restraint’—and that applies both to music and words. It's restraint in the sense that for a start, individuals can sing a couple of octaves, so if you are working for a congregation it needs to be an octave, may be a fraction more, because [otherwise] it just doesn't work. It needs a certain pitch for regular people—I generally think between D and D or C and C, and I try not to go too much lower than C and try not to go too much higher than C or D.”



Singer/songwriter Robin Mann.
Photo: Supplied

Passing on the faith

Together the Manns have produced a wide range of songs with melodies and lyrics for all seasons of life, many drawing directly on scripture. In comparison to the simple themes of contemporary Pentecostal music, their music reflects the teaching tradition exemplified by the great hymn writers such as Charles Wesley and Isaac Watts.

“Hillsong have really pushed towards that single theological focus, and to me that is more like religious pop songs. It’s more about me than it is about God, whereas the traditional hymnody of the church—if you look at *Together in Song*—most of that is teaching,” says Robin. “It always incorporates a sense of this is who God is, and this is what he does and this is how we relate to God.”

Some of Robin’s most poignant and well-known songs are based on the Psalms, laments he describes as “complaining songs”—such as “Comfort, comfort all my people” (1975) and “Sorrowing song” (1986)—have been used by many churches across Australia in times of national disaster and personal crisis. Robin added extra verses to “Sorrowing song” in 2002 after the Bali bombing.

“It is a bit surprising that lamentation is not in more of the hymns of the church over the years because certainly it’s there in any number of psalms—you get people crying out for help and justice. I feel that’s what any honest relationship with God is about—if we are unable to protest and complain and ask serious questions, I’m not sure that that’s a very healthy relationship really.”

Soul food

We all have our Robin Mann favourites, with individuals and congregations zeroing in on particular songs that express their theological stance.

“‘Deep stillness’ is one of the songs which is really big in the Uniting Church, and ‘Comfort’ was bigger in the Uniting Church first than it was in the Lutheran church,”

says Robin. “Likewise there are some songs like ‘The way is low’ which is very widely used in the Lutheran church, but not much in the Uniting Church.”

His most controversial song, “God. Version 1.0” (1991) is not used at all by some Lutherans. The lyrics refer to God as “mother-sister just as much as father-son”, and begin “I don’t believe in a God up in the sky, who sits in heaven and never hears me cry”.

“I’ve been asked on quite a few occasions, ‘It would be great if you would come and sing here, but don’t do “God. Version 1.0”’,” says Robin. “There’s at least one theologian in the Lutheran church who basically thinks it’s heretical.”

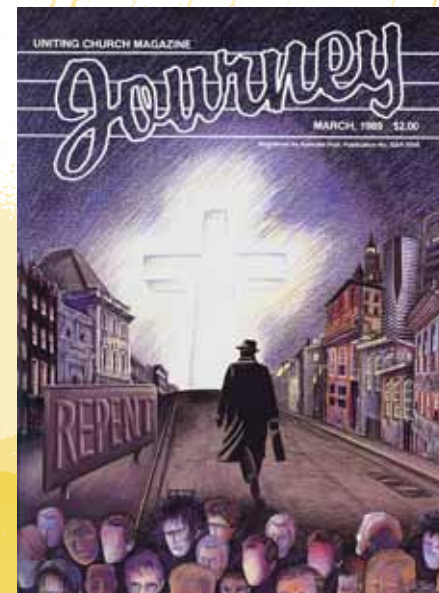
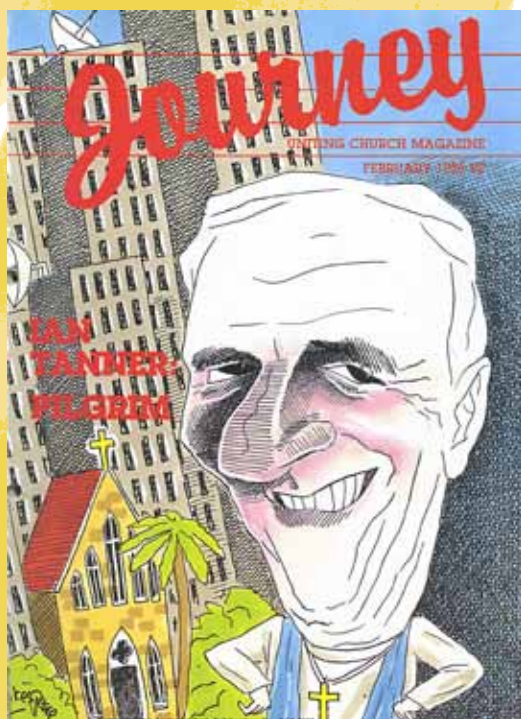
Robin’s work as a freelance composer and performer takes him across Australia leading workshops as well as writing, recording and promoting Christian music. In 2013 and 2015 Robin was a presenter and mentor at the Uniting Church in Australia Songwrite national gathering. Many of his most popular songs are available on the Assembly Songs that Unite website.

Will coming together in song continue to play an integral part in our worship?

“There is a resurgence of choirs, replacing the disappearing ones in churches perhaps, but community singing is uncommon,” says Robin. “Nevertheless, I think we should persist with it. I don’t think there’s any better expression of a communal faith than singing our faith together, combining brain and heart.”

songsthatunite.org.au
robinmann.com.au

“
I don’t think
there’s any better
expression of a
communal faith
than singing our
faith together,
combining brain
and heart



Our 30-year journey

This edition marks 30 years of *Journey* magazine. **Mardi Lumsden** explores the past, present and future of church communications.

“
The future for
Journey is to be
a Facebook page
and a YouTube
channel because
that is where
media content
is going

Dr John Harrison

Leafing through newsprint is a fast-disappearing luxury. The dusty 30-year-old pages of the *Journey* archives are filled with stories of the church at work in the world, calling out injustice and celebrating global, national and local milestones.

This is a record of the difficult conversations the church is willing to have about its purpose and voice in the world. The masthead itself is a constant reminder that the Uniting Church is on a journey towards a promised goal; always moving forward, always uniting.

As we look back on 30 years we are reminded that the purpose of *Journey* has not changed, but the format continues to evolve as we look to the future.

In February 1986 a new magazine emerged for a relatively new church. The previous publication *Life and Times* was reshaped into *Journey*. Then-executive editor and manager of the Communications Services Unit Dr John Harrison says the change was significant.

“*Life and Times* was based on the ‘reporting the church to the church’ model, whereas *Journey* was designed to be evangelical in the best sense of that term,” says John who is now a senior lecturer in journalism and communication at the University of Queensland.

Inspire

“*Journey* was designed to tell the good news and was quite indiscriminate in its audience,” says John. “It was prepared to tell the good news to anybody who would listen.”

Journey was intended to be the kind of thing a church member or elder could take with them when visiting people on the edges of their congregation. That purpose remains to this day.

Today *Journey* is delivered to Uniting Church congregations across Queensland and shared throughout the church’s agencies, making its audience broad and varied. Two out of the three largest subscribers to *Journey* are the Wesley Hospital and St Andrews War Memorial Hospital, both in Brisbane, where staff and patients read the magazine. But as John says, the magazine is just the start of a conversation.

“Its intention was to be an adjunct to the sharing of faith and faith stories,” says John. “That is the link between a small synod publication like *Journey* and the great mission of the church.”

Queensland Synod moderator Rev David Baker says *Journey* lives up to its mission to inspire, provoke and engage.

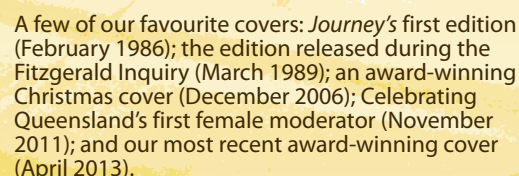
“In the midst of being assailed by messages day-in and day-out, *Journey*—all its media platforms—is that inspiring, sometimes provocative voice of the church that comes from the hope and confidence in the gospel.

“It is a space where we can speak and listen to each other, and that is critical if we are to grow in understanding the height and depth, the breadth and length of the love of God for all creation in Christ Jesus.”

For those involved in producing this publication over the years (through natural disasters and Synod meetings), the sense of vocation has been paramount. In true Uniting Church style the magazine is a collaborative effort between the editor, writers, graphic and web designers, printers and volunteer proof readers and envelope fillers.

Looking forward, John points out that the church needs to empower young communicators in this vocation.

“We would get a lot better value from our communication work, both in mainstream media and in the religious press, if we were more attentive to fostering young people in our faith tradition in exercising their communication gifts,” he says.



journeyonline.com.au

Rohan Salmond



Gold Coast games countdown begins

Photo: Supplied

The race is on to prepare for the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games, as **Dianne Jensen** reports.

“
We are
encouraging
churches to
not just see the
Commonwealth
games as an
event, but as an
opportunity to
build a legacy

Rev Dr Tim Winslade

Games fever may be two years away for most Australians, but Christians in south east Queensland are already counting down to the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games in April 2018. Rev Dr Tim Winslade from Ashmore Uniting Church is delighted to be at ground zero for the event, which will bring together 71 teams representing the 53 members of the Commonwealth.

Tim is one of the local pastors behind Beyond Gold GC, a partnership between local churches and mission agencies aimed at maximising a Christian presence before, during and after the games. He chairs the operations team, which is coordinating a broad range of ministry areas.

“We are encouraging churches to not just see the Commonwealth Games as an event, but as an opportunity to build a legacy,” says Tim. “Some people might dream that their legacy will be 1000 souls saved; others might want their church members to be trained in new mission initiatives that have a lasting impact on the community—what potential outcomes could you dream about if churches in the region started to work together?”

Beyond Gold will have input into the official multifaith program during the games, but Tim Winslade suggests that there is a range of less formal ways for individuals and congregations to be involved.

“Momentum is already building at the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games Corporation, with the current 180 staff expected to expand to 3000 paid workers. They will be calling for 15 000 volunteers at the end of this year, and this is a great opportunity to have a presence,” he says.

“There will also be a number of ‘live’ sites during the games in community spaces, with the opportunity for local groups to help facilitate those events.”

Tim is a keen sportsman who was involved with the More Than Gold committee at the Sydney Olympics and has led outreach teams at both Olympic and Commonwealth events. He wrote his Doctor of Ministry thesis, “Redeeming Sports”, about the link between sports and spirituality in Australian culture.

“Sport is something that’s closely connected to the Australian spirit—it is at the heart of what many Australians are passionate about,” says Tim. “Rather than see this as something that the church needs to compete against, I’m more inclined to say—let’s see how we can get involved in sporting activities to connect with the community and rebuild some of the bridges that the church has lost in the last 30 or 40 years.”

Beyond Gold will be launched on 24 February at Arundel Community Centre. For more information visit beyondgoldgc.com.au

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L: Shahn Dee, R: students Jason Mountjoy, Joshua Capuano, James Hunt
Photo: Bruce Mullan

Newlife College celebrates one year

One year after opening, Queensland's newest ministry college continues to grow. *Journey* explores.

Newlife Uniting Church is celebrating the first full year of operations for its new ministry college.

Newlife College ran two full semesters last year, and campus coordinator Shahn Dee is looking forward to what 2016 will bring.

"We've just finished our first year of enrolling and teaching students," she says. "It's been exciting; it's been a good year."

"We've had more students than we'd business planned for, and now we've got new subjects for this year."

"We've had a really broad cross-section of age groups and genders, but I would say half of the students are young ... I'd say it's a 50/50 split between people who are looking to pursue a career in ministry and people who are doing it to grow their faith."

The college was founded at the tail end of 2014 and is accredited through the Adelaide College of Divinity. It operates in partnership with the Uniting College of Leadership and Theology in South Australia and the two institutions share lecturers.

Ori Zacher is young families pastor at Newlife Uniting Church and a student at the college.

"The calibre of the teaching we've been able to sit under has been excellent, and you're challenged to think critically," he says.

"You're pushed into some of those more uncomfortable spaces where you work some of these things out for yourself in terms of your theology and your convictions and so forth."

Newlife College is one expression of Newlife Uniting Church's commitment to developing missional leaders, says Shahn.

"I think Newlife Church particularly has embraced and understood the need for well-equipped leaders in our churches and our community. So that really has been the philosophy behind the college," she says.

"We see a need to equip people to be leaders in their fields and more and more we're looking at this as a vehicle to equip students theologically, biblically, giving them a sound biblical theological grounding."

"It's very exciting. It's exciting to watch it grow and as we're growing we're developing ... We're looking at ways we can fine-tune it into being a resource that equips people to plant churches so that we can grow the kingdom. That's the vision for what we're doing."

newlifecollege.nu

“

We see a need to equip people to be leaders in their fields

Shahn Dee

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Seed program founder Merilyn Thomas from Townsville Central City Mission.
Photo: Peace Nam

Sowing seeds of love

When Merilyn Thomas heard the story of a small boy medevaced from remote Papua New Guinea (PNG) in 2008, she was shocked by the harsh realities of the famine unfolding on Australia's doorstep. Dianne Jensen reports.

“
It's a cost-effective and cheap form of foreign aid, and it's a way of helping people in very remote areas who haven't got a lot

Merilyn Thomas

Merilyn Thomas is a member of Townsville Central City Mission, and the force behind a seed distribution program that has transformed the lives of people living in remote and disadvantaged communities across the world.

The image of a child, who had his hand chopped off for allegedly stealing a sweet potato, stayed in her mind.

“I realised that it's closer from here to the PNG Highlands than from Townsville to Brisbane ... what could I do to help? I couldn't send them a sweet potato, but I could send them seeds!” recalls Merilyn.

With the encouragement of her church community, Merilyn began building a small distribution network through church contacts in PNG. She bought seeds, added a bookmark with 1 Corinthians 13, and sent the packages on their way.

“In the parable of the sower it's said that the seed will be multiplied sometimes by 100, sometimes by 60, sometimes by 30—and that's just what happens,” says Merilyn. “A couple of contacts will take the seeds hundreds of miles into the remote parts of the PNG Highlands—some will only distribute it in their family, some will take it and send it further, or they might take it to the local school and church.”

The tiny packets have literally saved lives, enabling communities to quickly replant lost crops, and providing new sources of nutrition when traditional food sources fail.

“On Daru Island in Torres Strait, I'd sent them to the Catholic Church, and the priest has reported that the children are no longer showing symptoms of malnourishment, which is fantastic. Another result is a village in the Highlands where parents now have enough money to pay for shoes and so the children can now go to school.”

Merilyn, now retired, brings 50 years of gardening experience plus a Bachelor of Science and postgraduate research in salinity to the project. The home-grown ministry now reaches at least 240 people in 40 countries, including Australian communities such as Doomadgee and Palm Island.

The program is supported by individual donations and since 2014 a small regular church contribution, but Merilyn generally depends on her own resources and ongoing prayer to meet the ever-increasing costs of postage and seeds.

“It's a cost-effective and cheap form of foreign aid, and it's a way of helping people in very remote areas who haven't got a lot. And it's value-added—God takes these seeds and then spreads them and then they do their work in other people's hands.”

For more information visit centralcitymission.org or call 07 4771 2584.



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Photo: Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures

The Force awakens secular spirituality

The *Star Wars* juggernaut is back, crushing all other box office contenders in its path, and much to the relief of fans, this one is pretty good.

From the very beginning *The Force Awakens* echoes the original trilogy in tone, theme, and even plot. That's not a bad thing; as one generation of devotees overdoses on nostalgia, another discovers the franchise and its rich universe for the first time.

The sheer cultural impact of *Star Wars* has been shaping the way we view the world since the release of the first film in 1977. What is the nature of good and evil? Is power inherently corrupting? Are living things really all connected? What is the divine? And can someone truly evil ever be redeemed?

Of course, good and evil function differently in *Star Wars* compared to Christian belief, as does the concept of the divine—anyone writing their next “faith in film” sermon inspired by *Star Wars* needs to tread carefully. It would be easy to accidentally promote Gnostic dualism and offend a super fan's finer understanding of the light and dark sides of the Force all at the same time. Still, the ideas and themes in these films are worth drawing from, if only because they make for such handy cultural shorthand.

Redemption is the central theme of all the *Star Wars* films (except the prequel trilogy which was about, uh, trade disputes or something). *The Force Awakens* indicates this new trilogy will continue to explore who can turn from their old ways and follow a new path, even after seemingly selling their soul.

It's worth remembering that *Star Wars* takes place in a universe where religion plays an active, integral role. The Jedi are monastic and overtly spiritual—unusual characteristics for such undeniably cool characters. That's not to say Uniting Church ministers should start wearing robes and carrying around lightsabers (honestly, please don't), but the Jedi's wisdom and service to others obviously goes down well with audiences who aren't put off by the mysticism and unusual language either.

The Force Awakens, like the rest of the series, both reflects and shapes the ideas and beliefs of our time, and according to Disney's production schedule, will continue to do so until at least the year 2020. May the Force be with you.

Rohan Salmond
Cross-platform editor

***Star Wars:*
*The Force Awakens***
Directed by JJ Abrams
Starring Harrison Ford,
John Boyega, Daisy
Ridley, Oscar Issac
2015, M

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Palestine resolution

It was reported in the *Australian*, (“Uniting Church in Australia faces backlash on anti-Israel boycott”, Tuesday 15 December, page 3) that the Uniting Church Assembly had decided to embrace the anti-Israel Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement.

Uniting Church president, Rev Stuart Macmillan, said the church had “encouraged members to be informed and to consider personally boycotting” goods produced “within the occupied territories”.

It is concerning that the Assembly can make such a decision that apparently was not one of consensus.

Surely occupants of the “occupied territories” and HAMAS who indiscriminately fire rockets, mortar shells and promote knife attacks on innocent citizens in Israel, should also be sanctioned.

Why have we, in the Uniting Church, decided to become a mouthpiece for anti-Jewish movements just to satisfy such lobbyists?

At this time of the nativity we should remember that our Lord was also a birth member of the race which all churches have persecuted both historically and contemporarily.

Richard Morcom
Coolum Beach Uniting Church

Editor’s note: The resolution referenced in this letter was unanimously adopted by the 14th Assembly and does not endorse the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement. More information about the resolution, its rationale and the Uniting Church’s commitment to peace with justice in the Middle East and to relationships with other faith communities can be found at assembly.uca.org.au/palestine

Queensland Synod members honoured on Australia Day

Congratulations to Queenslanders who have received Australia Day honours for their work with the Uniting Church. Please let us know if any other Queensland Uniting Church people have received an honour this year.

Neil Summerson was appointed a Member (AM) of the Order of Australia for significant service to the finance, commerce and business sectors, the arts and the community. He was UnitingCare Health chairperson (2002–2003) and St Andrew’s Hospital, Brisbane, governor (1998–2000).

Those awarded the Medal (OAM) of the Order of Australia were:

Edith Fairlie for service to aged-care. Edith had been an elder, parish councillor and church councillor at Hervey Bay Uniting Church since the 1970s.

Joycelyn Rieck for service to aged persons and to the Uniting Church in Australia. She has served at Cabanda Care and has held many positions at Rosewood Uniting Church including as a lay preacher, church council member and convenor of Meals on Wheels.

Pastor Linda Sivyer, for service to local government and to the community of Aurukun. Linda was Kids Club coordinator at Aurukun Uniting Church from 1998–2014. She is a minister with Australian Christian Churches.

Retraction and advice

The December edition of *Journey* ran an article entitled “Double Mod gets the Nod”. The article contained some inaccuracies for which I apologise.

I have been informed that:

1. The statement “This option has never been taken up by the Synod” is untrue;
2. Rev Bruce Johnson did not make a report to the Synod Standing Committee in August 2015, and
3. The statement “but we have never had the confidence to test it at the Synod in Session” is untrue and was not made by Rev Bruce Johnson.

The Moderator Elect Candidature Task Group continues its work on fielding candidates for the Synod in Session to consider, and has a shared view that the Synod in Session be given an opportunity to express its view on the matter of two consecutive terms, prior to the field of candidates being considered for the vote on Moderator Elect. I will be seeking clarification from the Synod Standing Committee in February on the implementation of its decision, including the option of inviting conversations with presbyteries around this decision prior to a formal proposal being put to the Synod in Session.

Robert Packer
General secretary



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