

GARAGE SALE

Deliver the goods

Colour me in

Deputy General Secretary "Worship, Witness & Service"

The Uniting Church in Western Australia is seeking a visionary and strategically oriented person to take responsibility for the ministry across the congregation base of the church involving community engagement, faith formation and leadership development.

As part of the leadership team of the church in Western Australia, the successful applicant will work with the General Secretary and General Manager (Resources) to ensure that the core areas of worship, witness and service support the ministry, mission and planning directions of the whole Church.

Applicants need to be members of the Uniting Church in Australia, passionate about and committed to the Church and God's mission in the world, and, as such, would be a person of prayer with a commitment to Jesus' call to make disciples. We expect the successful applicant to have a driving desire to make a difference and to have a commitment to work ecumenically.

Applicants must have at least a Bachelors degree in Theology, with units in Missiology. It is expected that the applicant will be ordained or be qualified to be admitted to Ministry of Pastor. As such, the position is considered as a placement in the Uniting Church in Australia.

It would be desirable for the applicant to have a management qualification or commensurate management experience.

Background documentation, including the Position Statement and Position Specification can be obtained by emailing Monica Pettersen, Human Resources Advisor, 9260 9800 or monica.pettersen@wa.uca.org.au, quoting DGS Enquiry.

Confidential applications which address the required criteria may then be made in Word format, by email to Monica Pettersen, Human Resources Advisor, monica.pettersen@wa.uca.org.au, quoting DGS Application.

Application close 5pm on Sunday 15 May 2016.



Position vacant

Director of mission, UnitingCare Queensland

Full Time | Fixed Term Placement

UnitingCare Queensland claims its place in the mission of God through its health and community services, research, advocacy and community development. Our mission is to improve the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities and our service groups—Blue Care, UnitingCare Health and UnitingCare Community—are vital expressions of this mission.

Applications are invited for the role of Director of Mission for UnitingCare Queensland. Ministers of the Word, Deacons and those in the other specified ministries within the Uniting Church in Australia are encouraged to apply. The period of this full time placement will be negotiated and will be consistent with the placement regulations and processes of the Uniting Church in Australia.

As a member of the Executive team, the Director of Mission plays a pivotal leadership role in supporting UnitingCare Queensland to be a mission and values led organisation reflecting the mission of the Uniting Church in Australia.

For further information and a position description, go to ucaqld.com.au and search for "vacancies". Enquiries in relation to the placement can be made directly to Rev Heather den Houting on 3377 9716.

Applications close 27 May 2016.



Position vacant Minister of the Word, Western Australia

Applications are invited for expressions of interest from a Minister of the Word to fill a vacant placement at Lighthouse Geraldton.

Lighthouse Uniting Church is multigenerational and a multicultural congregation with more than 200 attending activities in the church throughout the week. It has a strong emphasis on building relations within and beyond the church with service in mission, discipleship, children and family ministry and small groups for all ages. A strong sense of unity is evident between congregations of all Geraldton churches.

(Geraldton is a large coastal, rural city with many facilities. Please visit lighthousegeraldton.com and cgg.wa.gov.au)

The successful applicant will have:

- A solid Bible belief and support a biblical world view,
- A compassionate heart for pastoral care,
- A keenness to work with the congregation and community, leading outreach ministry,
- Supportive of current mission focus,
- Skills and passion to train and mentor leaders to build on the small group program within the church, and
- Be able to focus on children and family ministry.

For further information, or for sending your applications, including a ministerial profile or CV, contact Rev John Barendrecht, Manager of the Pastoral and Placements Unit on (08) 9260 9804 or email john.barendrecht@wa.uca.org.au

The closing date is 31 May 2016.



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Editor's note

Welcome to the May edition of *Journey* and my first in the editor's seat. I'd like to acknowledge the fine work of my predecessor, Rohan Salmond who produced a magazine that truly lived up to its core mandates: to inspire, to provoke and to engage.

The major question I ask myself as I settle in the role is, "What kind of journey do we want our audience to embark on in terms of the 21st century media ecosystem?"

Print publications face significant challenges in an increasingly online world but there is still something special about the haptic, the tactile sensation of flipping through these pages rather than swiping your finger across a tablet device.

The magazine will remain a print publication but I strongly encourage you to explore our website, the Synod Facebook page and YouTube channel as we grow these information hubs to cater to the online community.

Speaking of community, May brings the 32nd Synod in Session meeting, a "gathering of the tribe" to quote Rev David Baker in his moderator's message (page 4), and we offer up seven prominent things to look out for during the event (page 17).

A much-beloved staple of any community is the garage sale. Our handy how-to guide (page 6) features local success stories, best-practice tips and reveals the environmental benefits of turning unwanted items into fundraising dollars.

Our feature on modern missionaries (page 10) unveils inspiring stories of Australians who venture into international communities to help build capacity in developing regions: a timely reminder that a sense of community extends beyond our local postcodes.

If you're thinking of positive ways to contribute to your community, National Volunteer Week (page 5) arrives in mid-May. It's a great opportunity to find out more information on how you can volunteer and embody the spirit of Jesus' teachings.

Ben Rogers
Cross-platform editor



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Closing date for editorial and advertising for June *Journey* is Monday 16 May. The next issue of *Journey* will be available on Sunday 5 June.



Monday Midday Prayer

Lord,

At Pentecost your Spirit transformed the early church in power. May we be transformed to live in your way.

Amen



On the road again

Later this month some 350 people of the Uniting Church in this state will gather at Alexandra Park Conference Centre for the 32nd Synod in Session. The word “synod” comes from the Greek language: “syn”, meaning together, and “hodos”, meaning a way, a road.

So a synod really is about “together on the way”. Archbishop Mark Coleridge, in talking about the recent Roman Catholic Synod on the Family, also articulated that synods aren’t one-offs; they are a dialogue with those that have happened, and set up the dialogue for the next.

More prosaically, I call synods “a gathering of the tribe”. They are about the business of reporting and deciding, but they are also about catching up with old friends; worshipping and breaking open the scriptures together; hearing the diversity of views that make our church a rich place for reflection; picking up some resources from the bookstore and the trade fair; and opening up space to reflect on the themes that are influencing our life.

The 32nd Synod’s theme (“on purpose”) and the symbol of the runners takes inspiration from Hebrews 12, “being surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us run with perseverance the race set before us”.

If the church is called into being to be a sign and foretaste of the promised reign of God, then the Synod will be asking “How are we going with that?” “What have we learned that informs our next lap in the race?”

The Synod’s fruitfulness is directly related to our readiness to speak our truth in love and to listen in love; that is how we discern more clearly the word of God that is ever ready to come to us.

Over the past three or four Synods, *Together on the way enriching community* has been the over-arching theme.

At the 2014 Synod, the members discerned, though not as a formal resolution, the following priorities:

- Develop our worship times as places that were accessible to the non-churched.
- Grow our capability to confess our faith.
- Grow leaders and plant new Christian communities.
- Grow our ministry to young people.
- Ensure we are resourcing each other across the state.

This Synod we’ll hear the message from the other councils as to what they discerned and how they went, and then we’ll discern together again.

It is messy, cyclical and not as direct as some would like, but we are the Uniting Church and we are seeking to live out the vision of the church given to us in the *Basis of Union*: a vision we believe was inspired by the Spirit, a new gift to the whole church and the Australian people.

Rev David Baker
Moderator, Queensland Synod

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Wesley Mission Brisbane volunteers.
Photo: Supplied

Volunteers giving and living happy

The 2016 National Volunteer Week theme is “Give Happy, Live Happy”, a message that resonates with Uniting Church members who volunteer in the Queensland community. *Journey* reports.

Every year National Volunteer Week is a prominent opportunity to draw attention to the vital work volunteers do across the nation. This year’s theme for the week, from 9–15 May, continues on from 2015: “Give Happy, Live Happy”, a message to remind people of the positive impact volunteering brings for both provider and recipient.

The facts are clear that volunteering strongly correlates with the happiness, health and longevity of people who are compassionate and kind in their charitable work, and that sustained volunteering is associated with better mental health.

Wesley Mission Brisbane is always eager for new volunteers, experienced or otherwise, to get involved and has over 80 different volunteering programs throughout Queensland.

For National Volunteer Week, the organisation will hold “thank you” celebrations within various volunteer programs and release the full results from their 2016 Volunteer Satisfaction Survey. Most notably the survey data aligns with national trends that the volunteers “feel good giving others a helping hand”, they “really enjoy being part of, involved in, and contributing to the community”, and that they consider Wesley Mission Brisbane a good place to volunteer.

For social and community groups a volunteering partnership with Wesley Mission Brisbane is a wonderful

way of cultivating team work skills while making a genuine contribution to those in your area.

Uniting Church members who volunteer certainly have direct experience of the positive impact their work has for the lives of others and their own spiritual wellbeing.

For Barbara Beattie, a member of the Living Rivers Uniting Church, her volunteer work with Youngcare Coomera began with its inception when Wesley Mission first decided to establish a place for young people with high care needs.

“It’s very rewarding going to Youngcare, they make you feel welcome. It’s great to be able to do something for these people who can’t do it for themselves,” says Barbara.

“It’s what we were taught, to love your neighbour. I have to be prepared every Monday morning and God is with me.

“I think Wesley Mission Brisbane is doing a great job for people with disabilities as well as everybody else. I was over at our church this morning and thought, ‘what’s that noise?’ and they’ve started to build extra units.”

And for those contemplating volunteer work, Barbara has a simple yet motivational message: “Take the challenge and do it.”

For further information on National Volunteer Week
volunteeringaustralia.org/nvw/

To access information on volunteer programs
at Wesley Mission Brisbane visit
wmb.org.au/get-involved/volunteering

“

It’s great to be able to do something for these people who can’t do it for themselves. ...

It’s what we were taught, to love your neighbour

Barbara Beattie



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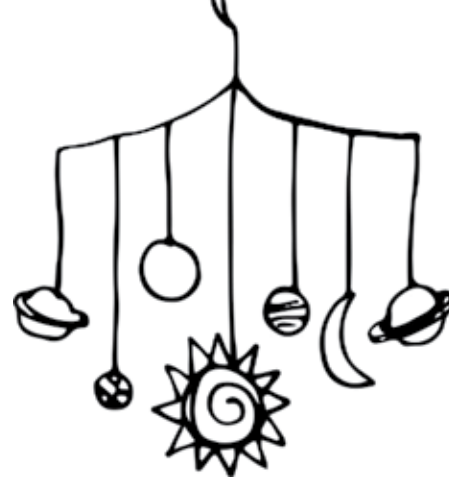
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Great garage sales deliver the goods

Every weekend someone, somewhere is having a garage sale. And who can resist the allure of finding just what you need or a hidden treasure among the piles of household items? *Journey* asks churches for their tips for turning trash into treasure.

Garage sales can be important fundraisers for local churches as well as great opportunities to connect with the local community. But like any successful event, a well-run garage sale requires planning, team work, marketing and focus.

It's also important to have fun working together and socialising with the neighbours and passers-by who are visiting your church, perhaps for the first time.

Queensland Synod Uniting Green liaison, David Weddell points out that many of our transactions these days are clinical and non-personal.

"In a world of online shopping, home delivery and self-scan groceries, it's a pleasant change to meet the person who owned the item before you. It also adds emotional value to the item when you know its history," says David.

"In environmental terms it's a double win each time you find a new home for an old item. First, you avoid sending your old item to landfill. Second, you help others get what they need with less environmental impact. By buying second hand, we save resources and reduce the pollution that comes from production and transport of new items."

If the shoe fits

Before you start accumulating piles of second-hand goods in your garage, there are a few things to consider.

Firstly, what model is right for your church community?

Chermside Kedron Community Church in northern Brisbane has chosen a model which minimises people power and organisation, allowing the church to run about four garage sale events a year since 2013.

Pauline Thomas says the church was looking for a regular community event that would provide an avenue for selling craft, baked goods, plants and so on.

"We had staged a couple of fetes in the previous ten years and this seemed an alternative that might offer a steady income with less risk and fewer people involved in the planning/running of each event."

The church raises about \$750 at each event, which goes into general funds. Stallholders pay \$10 per car space, and provide their own tables and seating.

"We have a church stall in the foyer of the church (mostly craft items, jams, pickles and plants), a sausage sizzle with cold soft drinks, tea and coffee available and, if possible, a car wash as well. Our thrift shop is open on the day from nine to noon and often provides a table of second-hand books," says Pauline.

The church office deals with stallholder bookings which mostly come from email contact with previous stallholders or as a response to their large sign on Gympie Road.

Refresh your stash

On the other side of Brisbane, the members of Sherwood Uniting Church held their first craft garage sale last year. The church runs quarterly market days with local stallholders, craft classes, a stall at the Sherwood Street Festival, and is known for its quilting group activities.

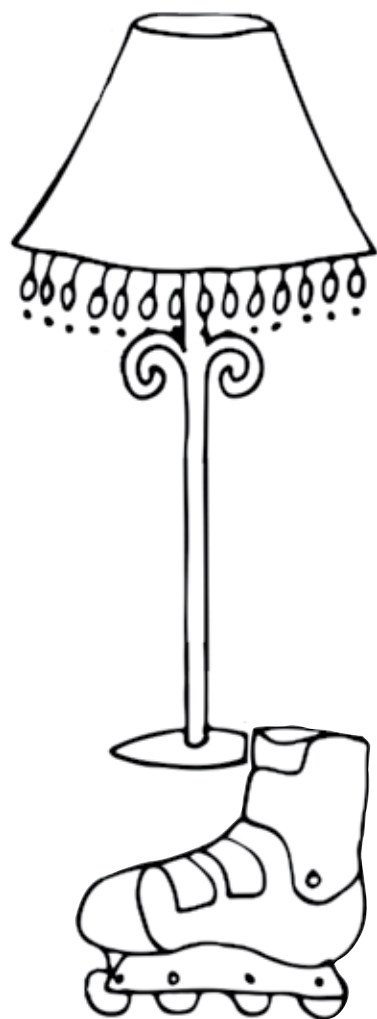
Margaret Cullen-Erickson says that Refresh Your Stash was aimed at providing local quilters with a way to meet up and buy and sell craft supplies.

"We have our own sale tables with donated craft supplies but also hire out table spaces to others. We try to partner as well with other groups for the catering; last year, Community Bridges did a wonderful job of feeding visitors, workers and stallholders alike.

"As our volunteer numbers are small, this helped us to concentrate on the craft side whilst providing a fundraising opportunity for another group."

Every year, Sherwood partners with an organisation that receives the profits from the church's events.

"Last year our partner was Act For Peace; this year it will be the Sherwood Neighbourhood Centre. As well as fundraising, we use our events to raise awareness of the work done through our partner organisation," says Margaret.





Chermside Kedron Community Church's car boot sale.
Photo: Pauline Thomas

Paradise Point Uniting Church's monster garage sale.
Photo: Peter Alfredson



Sherwood Uniting Church's Refresh Your Stash garage sale.
Photo: Refresh Your Stash Facebook page

The bigger the better

Gympie Region Uniting Church undertakes one big garage sale each year, with the organisation and sales run by the congregation. Between \$2500 to \$3500 is raised for general church funding through the sale of general goods, homemade baking and plants.

Charles Wakeham has been running the event for the last two years.

He starts preparations three months prior to the sale, collecting items if necessary and sorting them into various categories for pricing and setting out.

"All work is undertaken by the congregation with teams each with a separate leader. We have a dedicated team which price the general goods in pricing sessions over the preceding month; we set prices low to encourage their sale. Everyone helps in setting out the items on the Friday prior to the sale and packing up the unsold items."

The organisers at Paradise Point Uniting Church on the Gold Coast have been running garage sales for more than 20 years, and Peter Alfredson says they are a good way to raise funds and foster interaction with the community. With two garage sales a year, the church raises \$30 000 each year to support the church budget.

"Our garage sales cover a wide variety of goods: books, clothing, collectables, jewellery, craft, cooking, electrical goods, furniture, hardware, kitchenware and crockery, manchester, pictures, plants and toys—and we target the whole community looking for items at a bargain price," says Peter.

Goods are stored in a shipping container, in storerooms and private garages until the preparation week, when 50 or so people will spend every morning sorting and pricing.

"All goods are donated by members and particularly by the community where we have a great reputation for our garage sales," says Peter. "All stalls are organised and staffed with our own church members—about 70 involved in all. An excellent builder of fellowship in the congregation!"

Get the word out

Garage, jumble or car boot sales, market days, trash and treasure: congregations state-wide promote their community outreach fundraisers under different names—

but if you're looking to expand your reach, hopping on the trendy Garage Sale Trail bandwagon may be your best option.

"Garage Sale Trail is an initiative encouraging people to hold their garage sales all on the same weekend," explains David Weddell.

"The idea is that on that day the neighbourhood would have a variety of garage sales all happening and locals can hop from one to the next as they look for bargains. It's a great idea to build community, and it's also a great chance to get free publicity for your garage sale."

Other low to no-cost ways of promoting your event include listing your event on your church website, the Synod website's What's On, Gumtree and Nabo; creating a Facebook event and inviting friends; and cross-marketing at public events held at your church through posters, flyers and outdoor signage.

Find or add your next Uniting Church garage sale event on ucaqlld.com.au/whatson

Get involved in the 2016 Garage Sale Trail by registering on garagesaletrail.com.au, then download ready-made signs to use on the day and in your promotions.



Tips from congregations:

- Avoid the dates of elections, local markets and school holidays.
- Advertising is important—your outdoor sign is your best asset!
- Make use of church and community notice boards, local newspapers, radio listings and paid ads in the local paper's garage sale section.
- Use social media to keep in touch with interest groups.
- Have a dedicated person to handle marketing and use your contacts to spread the word.
- If you have a small congregation, partner with other groups for catering and so on.
- Keep the congregation informed on a weekly basis.
- Put together a large team of committed volunteers with a good coordinator.
- Keep prices low so that goods sell.
- Do not store unsold goods from one sale to the next. Donate to other charities or take them to a council waste transfer station.

Finished reading the article?

Turn to the front cover and see if you can find and colour these ten items: teddy bear, cactus, golf club, hammer, hat, watch, framed painting, vinyl record, skateboard, cupcake. Once you're done snap or scan your cover and email your entry to journey@ucaqlld.com.au before 31 May 2016 for a chance to see your creation become the permanent online cover of May *Journey*.

Making mission possible
for young people in rural
Queensland.
Photo: Simone Thorlton



Youth revel in Easter Madness

The new Uniting Church youth camp Easter Madness was a great success. *Journey* reports

Over 100 young people from across the Uniting Church in Queensland celebrated the Easter weekend together at the inaugural Easter Madness youth camp in March.

“
The youth of
our church have
people who are
cheering them
on in faith even
though they may
not know it

Beth Nichols

The Easter Madness Appeal also meant that 13 young people, including two leaders, from rural and remote Queensland were able to attend the camp held at Mapleton. These generous donations paid for registration and full travel subsidies for young people from Napranum in far north Queensland, the outback town of Chinchilla, Blackall in central western Queensland and Ingham in north Queensland.

Queensland Synod marketing and fundraising manager Raushen Perera was very encouraged by the response to the appeal.

“I would like to extend our deep appreciation to the donors for enabling such a fantastic opportunity for these young people,” she says.

“It is a clear indicator of the value placed on the spiritual development and leadership of youth in our community.”

Easter Madness key organiser Rev Beth Nicholls says the camp was a great success.

“We had an amazing weekend and want to thank everyone involved for their participation and for making Easter Madness such an awesome time for everyone,” she says.

“We spent time getting to know one another, encouraging each other, sharing our life stories with each other, and helping each other to grow in our faith.”

Beth says some of the weekend highlights were walking through the events of Easter together, interactive worship, experiencing indigenous cultural dances from some indigenous attendees, creative activities like building a solar oven from scratch and a bush dance.

“It’s hard to be the only young person at your church, so it’s good to mix with others and to meet others who are also the only young person at their city church.”

Beth says the young people were touched by the donations made by people and churches across the Synod to make Easter Madness happen.

“The youth of our church have people who are cheering them on in faith even though they may not know it.”

For Katelyn, a Chinchilla Uniting Church member, the journey from her hometown to Mapleton may have been long but it was definitely worth it.

“Many aspects of the camp have resided with me, and I can truly say I am a better person because of it. The camp overall was a catalyst for my journey with Christ and I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to have attended and also to the people who sponsored me,” says Katelyn.

“I honestly hope that everyone who contributed to both the camp and fundraising realise what a major impact this has had on my life. Thank you.”

eastermadness.com.au
missionpossible.ucaql.com.au

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Jack Shao.
Photo: Holly Jewell

Lay education takes root in Taiwanese youth

Brisbane Taiwanese Uniting Church youth mentor and Trinity College Queensland alumni, Jack Shao is encouraging the next generation of youth to undertake lay education. **Ashley Thompson** writes.

Immigrating with his family to Australia at 14, Jack Shao has been attending the Brisbane Taiwanese congregation for 25 years. A Brisbane Boys' College old boy, he was baptised at 17 and has been serving the youth group in different capacities ever since.

"I think the most dramatic change I've seen in the Taiwanese congregation over the past 25 years has been the rise of the younger generation," reflects Jack.

"Our Sunday attendance is nearly 200 and our youth group has 50–60 people. That's just the youth—younger than university."

While general youth attendance within the Uniting Church is on the decline, its multicultural ministry continues to thrive as the church's commitment to inclusivity remains a priority.

"There is a really big diversity of culture just within our church," explains Jack. "I'm passionate about seeing the rise of the youth group and want to use my experience to act as a bridge between them and the older group."

Feeling the need to acquire "a good foundation of the Bible", Jack undertook and has now completed the lay preaching course at Trinity College Queensland, the Queensland Synod's primary theological training body.

"When I was preaching in youth group in my early 20s,

a lot of the time I felt like I was teaching them in my own knowledge. So I felt like if I wanted to keep serving I needed to make sure I'm teaching them the right way," says Jack.

"The part I like about the Uniting Church is that we accept a broad view of Christianity. Like when you study the Bible there are a lot of ways to interpret the same scriptures. They give me freedom and a broader view of the teachings."

Trinity College Queensland's new director of education for ministry, Dr Leigh Trevaskis believes theological education for youth should "equip them with tools for reading Scripture, a theological framework for tackling difficult questions, and impart models for communicating what they believe to other people".

"We need to foster a culture where young people undertake this kind of education so that the church is better placed for engaging in gospel mission at the coal-face," says Leigh.

Leigh plans for Trinity College Queensland to play an essential role in turning the tide of declining church attendance in the Uniting Church in Queensland.

Meanwhile, Jack's advocacy for lay education has already resulted in fresh faces. "The course has helped me a lot so I have been encouraging our youth—now two of them are studying the lay preaching course this year."

trinity.qld.edu.au

“
I think the most dramatic change I've seen in the Taiwanese congregation over the past 25 years has been the rise of the younger generation

Jack Shao



Position vacant:

Dr Livingstone, I presume? Forget images of formally clad white missionaries venturing into deepest Africa, the modern missionary could be easily mistaken for a local as they blend seamlessly into the culture of their hosts. **Dianne Jensen** reports.

“
The call to spread
God’s love is
something that
can’t be done by
just preaching
the word inside
the four walls,
but by serving
others outside
those walls,
whether that be
overseas or at
home

Alex Baker

Anyone from a student to a mid-life professional to a retired tradie can become a missionary with UnitingWorld, the overseas relief and development agency of the National Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia. All they need is a sense of adventure, a love of God and a willingness to share their skills with others.

Laura McGilvray, program manager (Experience Volunteers and India programs) at UnitingWorld, says that the contemporary understanding of overseas mission reflects the huge socio-political upheavals which have transformed the contemporary world.

“One hundred, 200 years ago there were lots of missionaries going out into the overseas context spreading the gospel and setting up local churches,” says Laura. “That was really valuable work and a lot of the partnerships we have today started through those connections, particularly in the Pacific where we have long-lasting partnerships”.

UnitingWorld has partnerships in Africa, Asia and the Pacific with Methodist, Presbyterian, Congregational and United churches, alongside newer partnerships such as those in China and South Sudan.

“Today the concept of mission has changed to recognising that God is working through these churches and that we can connect with and build the capacity of those churches and people to share the gospel in their own context,” says Laura. “All of the volunteer placements (and we use ‘volunteer’ and ‘missionary’ interchangeably) are working with those local churches and organisations, recognising that that church and those people are really the experts in that context.”

Sharing talents

Through UnitingWorld’s Experience volunteer program, people from across Australia spend anything from a few weeks to six months living and working with overseas communities. The tasks and locations are diverse, from teaching carpentry in Kiribati to financial management with the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe.

Brisbane student Alex Baker first heard about the program at church and was sufficiently intrigued to follow up with UnitingWorld.

Alex was offered a placement as a teacher at Goldie College in the Solomon Islands, returning the following year as well as undertaking a hostel assistant/tutor role for the Diocese of Durgapur (Church of North India) at the end of 2014.

“I love being in the developing world,” he says. “There is a certain type of raw energy about it, particularly in India. There have been situations on placement that have been personally confronting, in which you witness poverty first-hand that you couldn’t imagine before. But this is the reason that NGOs like UnitingWorld work with these partners to set up programs that address issues such as poverty, health and education.”

Particularly important for Alex is the fact that everything he does is at the behest of the partner churches and organisations.

“The great thing about UnitingWorld’s Experience program is that the programs that are advertised and offered are constructed in the best interests of the overseas partners. The placements on offer are designed to be productive for them, with the idea of assisting in areas in which they see a need and helping to grow their capacity.”

Off the beaten track

Retirees Sylvia and Don Wright from the Capricorn Coast near Yeppoon, outside Rockhampton, have recently relocated to Hervey Bay. They downsized to free up their time and resources and have travelled far and wide as UnitingWorld volunteers.

A former TAFE teacher, Sylvia connected with UnitingWorld in 2009, working first in Tonga. When Don—an architectural draftsman—retired along with Sylvia in 2010, the couple decided that the time was ripe to do something different with their lives.



Illustration: From H. M. Stanley's 1872 book *How I Found Livingstone*

modern missionary

“Early 2011 we had a call from UnitingWorld asking us to coordinate the Orphans and Vulnerable Children project in Western Zambia, Africa for three months and so we agreed to that. There have been lots of things happening like that, and almost every year something pops up,” says Sylvia.

“I’ve had a second placement in Tonga, and we also took our own InSolidarity (short-term visit) group to Zambia in 2013 with a group of seven volunteers. We’ve also been to Bethany Home for the disabled in Perak, Malaysia a couple of times where UnitingWorld has a connection.

“Over the last five or six years, most years we’ll find a placement where we are needed and we’ve kept up that flexibility about our life ... we can pick up sticks here, we can be gone within a month.”

The Wrights joke that their CVs don’t represent anything like their current work life.

“We have become jacks-of-all-trades,” says Sylvia. “It’s just a matter of stepping outside your comfort zone and saying ‘yes’ to everything—I’ll have a go at that ... you’re not there just trying to turn stones over because sometimes the stones don’t turn very quickly at all in other cultures, but to link with people. It’s also the fact that we have a great love of God and those communities that we join with also have that.”

Towards sustainability

Laura McGilvray says that the short-term nature of volunteer placements is important.

“We are not sending people over to fill a role, but to build the capacity of the church to do what it does. A lot of that is skills transfer—the phrase that is used in development is ‘capacity building’ and it’s also a more sustainable way of working,” she says.

“If you have a person in a role, even if they are working as a teacher for a couple of years in a school, unless they are training up other teachers or assisting the school or the education system to up-skill or improve the way that they work, once that volunteer comes home, while they’ve probably done fantastic work in those two years, not a lot has changed by the time they come home.

“The focus for our placements is for them to be working alongside, to be strengthening the church, institution or organisation so that when they come home that work can continue within that organisation.”

Still called to serve

Many older Uniting Church members have warm memories of those who devoted their lives to missionary service, often at great personal cost. Does that same call to leave home and family to spread the gospel continue to resound in this millennium?

“It is still relevant, there’s just a bit more to it,” says Laura. “I think there’s a call to use your gifts and skills in different ways and in different places, and a lot of our volunteers feel the call—that the church is not just their own congregation or even the Uniting Church in Australia, that the boundaries of the church are not national borders, and that we are part of a global church.”

“Amen, it is!” says Alex Baker. “We live a very content life in Australia and as a church (and society as a whole) we have become too comfortable in our own skin. The call to spread God’s love is something that can’t be done by just preaching the word inside the four walls, but by serving others outside those walls, whether that be overseas or at home.”

Visit unitingworld.org.au/experience to find out about volunteering with UnitingWorld.



Alex Baker from Brisbane with UnitingWorld’s Diocese of Durgapur representative Nita Pyne.
Photo: Supplied



Sylvia and Don Wright from the Capricorn Coast, outside Rockhampton.
Photo: Supplied



Trading fair for the future

Rev John Martin illuminates the links between fair trade and the church, and what we can do to keep our purchases fair.

“
Fair trade
is a way of
expressing the
love of God and
neighbour by
helping people
overseas within
our personal
shopping budget

One of the appealing characteristics of the Uniting Church is the passion many members have for social justice. We acknowledge that from the Old Testament prophets through Jesus' commands that we love God and our neighbour there is concern for the poor and the disadvantaged. There are 2000 verses in the Bible which speak about the poor.

Many congregations have impressive ways of helping the needy at a local level and Christians are generous in responding to financial appeals. On every aid agency website there is often a big button which says “donate”. However, there is a limit to how much we are able to give financially.

Fair trade is a way of expressing the love of God and neighbour by helping people overseas within our personal shopping budget.

We can start with fair trade tea, coffee and chocolate. These products are now regularly available on supermarket shelves.

The label fair trade simply means that the people who produced the goods received a fair wage for their labour, working in healthy conditions and in an environmentally sustainable way. This is surely what we expect for workers in Australia.

Although many Christians recognise the fair trade label it seems we are often blocked from taking the step to purchase those products because we are thinking more of what satisfies us rather than how our purchases affect the producer.

I believe we need to move towards a fair trade culture where our default purchasing position for all sorts of goods is to seek first the fair trade option.

Edinburgh now has Fairtrade City status where fair trade is a part of the culture of the community. The city council officially works towards associated goals and regularly meets with businesses to find ways to promote the issue in the Scottish city.

Our churches can develop a similar fair trade culture by becoming fair trade faith communities. This means that fair trade tea and coffee are served after church and at church functions, and that an event is held annually promoting fair trade.

At this month's 32nd Synod meeting there will be a fair trade stand providing more information, so if you are attending please drop by and say hello.

The Fair Trade Association website has further information and a comprehensive shopping guide, fta.org.au. Many resources can also be found at Fairtrade Australia, a labelling authority, fairtrade.com.au

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Wesley Hospital chaplain Julie Mackay-Rankin (left) and Clinical Nurse Manager of Maternity Nicola McGlynn with one of the donated cuddle cot units and bassinet.
Photo: Holly Jewell

When words are not enough

A Wesley Hospital chaplaincy initiative is providing Uniting Church congregations with opportunities to support bereaved parents during the darkest of times. **Dianne Jensen** reports.

Chaplain Julie Mackay-Rankin is passionate about the role of the church in supporting people through loss. Working in consultation with the midwives, Julie helps manage the Perinatal Bereavement Program at Brisbane’s Wesley Hospital, and she understands what it means to walk alongside parents facing the rawness of neonatal death.

“The chaplains bring with them the compassion of Christ. We don’t have a clinical approach, we don’t have a counselling approach—we sit with them in their pain and allow them to ask, how am I going to live with this pain; how am I going to remember my baby?”

Julie’s work in the maternity unit reflects a generational change in how health professionals and society in general deal with miscarriage, stillbirth and neonatal death.

“Our society has moved from what was seen as reasonable at the time, the notion of simply forgetting that you’ve lost a baby and moving on, without recognising that the grief continues,” she says.

When the pastoral care department began offering a blessing for babies who had miscarried before 20 weeks (for whom there is no birth certificate or funeral) Julie started thinking about how congregations could provide support once parents returned home.

She approached ministers at the 2014 Synod to garner interest in sponsoring self-care packages for mothers, and offered perinatal grief and loss training to participating congregations.

“It’s a two-pronged approach; one is aiming to connect congregations to the Wesley and in turn owning what we have to offer here, and the other is to encourage congregations to gain some understanding of this particular type of grief and loss,” says Julie. “The long-term goal is for young parents to feel safe in a community, and for that congregation to grow and to nurture the family.”

About 20 Uniting Church congregations from across Brisbane and in Ipswich, Dayboro, Samford Valley and Redcliffe are supporting the Perinatal Bereavement Program, with four undergoing grief and loss training.

Funding from the churches was also used to supplement the cost of a Heartfelt Camera Kit, given in memory of a bereaved couple’s baby. The camera allows families to capture memories of their time together. Thanks to donations from two other bereaved families, the maternity unit is also able to offer parents the use of cuddle cots, a type of cold bassinet that allows parents to spend more time with their stillborn child post-birth.

For more information contact Julie Mackay-Rankin on (07) 3232 7289 or julie.mackay@uchealth.com.au

“
We sit with them
in their pain,
and allow them
to ask, how am
I going to live
with this pain,
how am I going
to remember my
baby?”

Julie Mackay-Rankin

Adrian Plass: Honest to God

At the tail end of a two-month speaking tour of Australia, **Ashley Thompson** catches up with British author and poet Adrian Plass to reflect on his last 29 years of unintended ministry.

It's been almost 30 years since Adrian Plass broke through the silence of church niceties with brutal, hilarious honesty. Bracing for "evangelicals with pitchforks" upon the release of his 1987 fiction bestseller *The Sacred Diary of Adrian Plass Aged 37³/₄*, Adrian never anticipated the side-splitting laughter and warm embrace of Christians worldwide as they recognised themselves and others in his satirical commentary on Christian life.

Encircled by fans, Adrian and his wife Bridget (not to be mistaken for the fictional Anne in *The Sacred Diary* series) were back in Queensland last month sharing stories and fiery gems to a packed Redcliffe Uniting Church, north of Brisbane.

"I think principles are the devil for Christians," Adrian told the audience, referring to tradition for tradition's sake.

"We get caught up in this Christian world where we use phrases we don't even know the meaning of and say things we can't possibly understand."

"People want the food, not the recipe," adds Bridget, suggesting we get caught up in the theology of Christianity and forget to live it out.

Together they affectionately challenge the religious conventions of church, championing an honesty about the messiness of life that has Christians worldwide echoing "me too".

Dealing with disappointment

In 1992, Andrew Demack interviewed Adrian Plass for the February *Journey* cover story following his appearance at the National Adult Christian Convention.

Adrian shared an ordinary but powerful revelation that struck a chord with this Christian community: "God is nice ... and he likes me."

The return of this more childlike faith came off the back of a stress illness caused by disillusionment with the

institution of church and work as a residential child care worker with disadvantaged children. It was this period of time in the mid-1980s that inspired Adrian to pick up a pen and write as a form of therapy.

"When I wrote *The Sacred Diary of Adrian Plass*, I wasn't trying to change the world, I was trying to express how I felt," Adrian told Andrew Demack.

"I thought of God as a cross between a bank manager and a headmaster. But he changed, or rather I changed, and perceived him to be someone gentler, someone who must be as nice as the most sympathetic person I know ... my mother for instance."

In an interview with John Cleary on ABC local radio's *Sunday Nights* midway through his 2016 Australian speaking tour, Adrian reflected on how he and Bridget have become an informal source of pastoral care to many Christians "suffering under the 'big D'".

"I'm afraid we deal with many people who are suffering under the 'big D': disappointment with God, with the church, with their own lives," Adrian told John Cleary.

"In the hearts of many long-term, disappointed Christians, I think many of them are saying 'I want to meet my Daddy and I want him to tell me he loves me,'" stated Adrian, relating it to the "explosive encounter" between father and son in the Biblical parable of the Prodigal's Son.

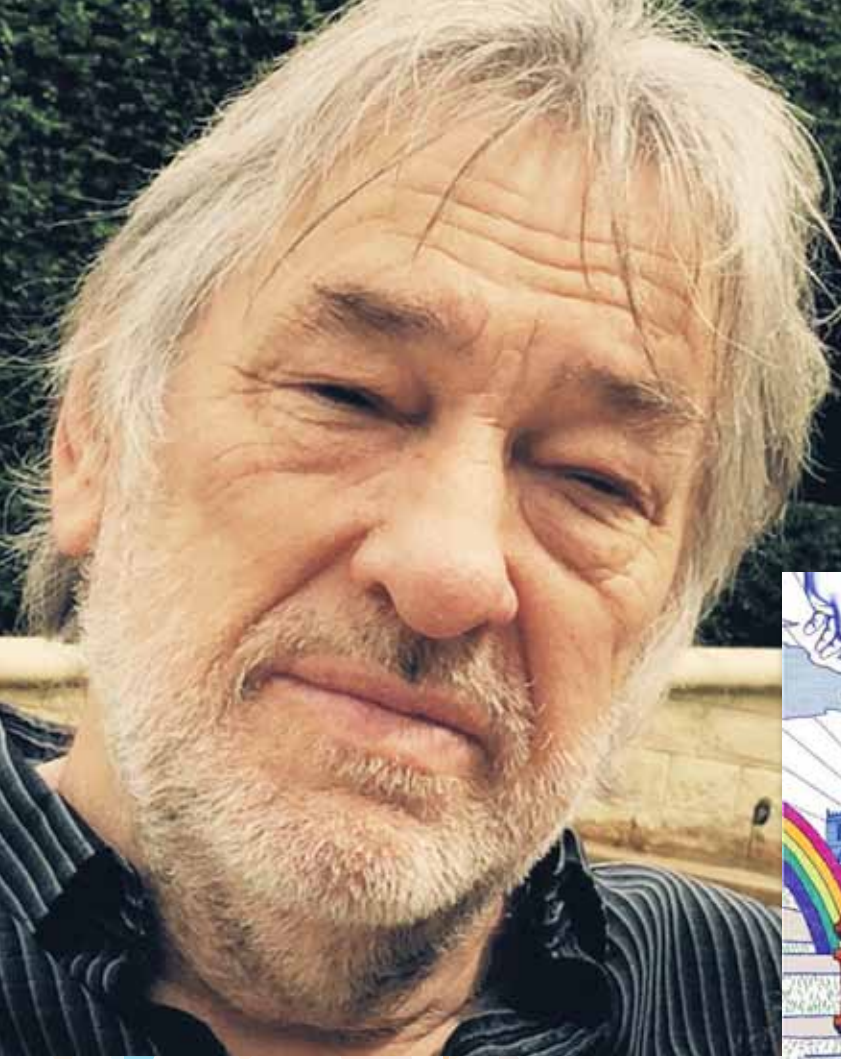
"That's the passion in me to try and help that."

Comic relief

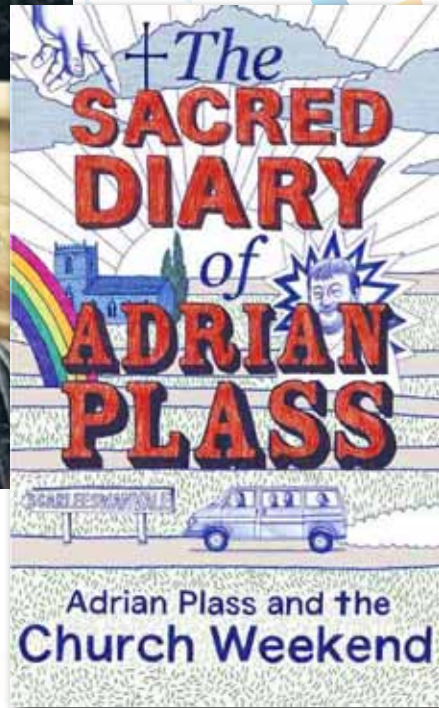
Adrian's satirical and at times black humour has cemented him as one of the few widely celebrated Christian comedians.

"I think humour is regarded as a poor relative of serious ministry," says Adrian. "But it is phenomenal how it can explode tense situations and give people a new perspective."

"I think humour is regarded as a poor relative of serious ministry but it is phenomenal how it can explode tense situations and give people a new perspective"



Adrian Plass.
Photo: Supplied



*The Sacred Diary of
Adrian Plass:
Adrian Plass and the
Church Weekend*
Hodder & Stoughton
2013
RRP: \$19.99

“Back in the mid-80s when I wrote *The Sacred Diary* nobody in England knew what to laugh at—what was sacred, what wasn’t and it was a great relaxation I think for people who I never thought it would be.”

To date, Adrian Plass has written 42 books including *The Growing Up Pains of Adrian Plass* (1994), *Bacon Sandwiches & Salvation* (2007) and *Seriously Funny 1* and *2* (2010 and 2012), among the six books that make up the *The Sacred Diary* series—stumbling unexpectedly into fame.

“Usually people writing Christian books are striving very hard to make them worthy,” says Adrian reflecting on the success of *The Sacred Diary* series, which has sold over a million copies.

“Well mine wasn’t at all worthy, it was just truthful and I think the truth really does set you free when you face it.”

The foreword for his latest book, *The Sacred Diary of Adrian Plass: Adrian Plass and the Church Weekend* (2013) sees him reflecting back on the evolution of the series.

“I used to think I would never write a funnier book than the first *Sacred Diary*—precisely because I was unlikely to experience such profound unhappiness again,” writes Adrian.

“I am very far from being as unhappy as I was in those days, but the truth is that I find life, work, the church and God much funnier and at the same time much more serious than ever before. Perhaps I have grown up a bit, and so, inevitably, has the Adrian of the *Diary*.

“If there is a God, and it looks increasingly as though that may be the case, we have to face ... he is not looking

for wonderful Christians, but for inadequate followers with a willingness to be obedient.”

This is a great relief to human kind (which includes Christians).

Tell the truth

Frank and perceptive honesty is what readers worldwide have grown to love in Adrian Plass, yet he rejects the “culture of worship we have of individuals in the church”.

His advice to pastors looking to connect honestly with their congregation is a willingness to “be vulnerable and change shape” while maintaining a strong core.

“What I can’t stand are pastors who will not acknowledge weakness and failure in people in their churches. There is a sort of neurotic optimism in the church that does us no good at all,” says Adrian.

“Someone said to me once when you counsel people you have to keep one foot on the bank and one in the ditch, and I think that is the leaders’ perspective: to be steady so that people can rely on you but be down there with them as well.”

And his advice for budding Christian authors?

“Write out of your passion and tell the truth.

“If you look into yourself, into your own heart, you will see what you really think and find some amazingly original material.”

*Listen to the podcast of Adrian and Bridget Plass speaking at Redcliffe Uniting Church via redcliffe.unitingchurch.org.au
Learn more at adrianplass.com, purchase his books on amazon.com or borrow them at library.trinity.com.au*

Karana Downs supporting rural ministry



Frontier Services' Cunnamulla Patrol minister Rev Sunil Kadaparambil.
Photo: Supplied

A church partnership between the Cunnamulla and Karana Downs Uniting Churches has resulted in a much-needed building upgrade. *Journey* reports.

“
I enjoy each and every moment of my ministry in this beautiful part of the country and I love that the people welcome me as part of their family

Rev Sunil Kadaparambil

Last month members of Karana Downs Uniting Church, west of Brisbane, celebrated with Frontier Services Cunnamulla Patrol minister Rev Sunil Kadaparambil on the completion of a restumping project for the Cunnamulla Uniting Church.

This restumping project is the result of a spontaneous association between the two churches which began back in September 2014 when Karana Downs Uniting Church member Russell Dwyer met patrol minister Sunil while in Cunnamulla on business.

“Their conversation began a friendship that has united two congregations and brought the city and outback closer together,” recounts Megan Walters, another Karana Downs congregation member.

“Since that September day in 2014, working parties from Karana Downs Uniting Church have helped repair the Cunnamulla church and hall, donations of winter woollies have rolled their way westward and now, the extravaganza that is Music on the Hillside!”

First held in November 2015, the Music on the Hillside benefit concert attracted 150 people and raised over \$4000.

“This money will be used to fund a number of projects including restumping the Cunnamulla church, whose sixteen perimetres concrete posts were split, cracked and rapidly crumbling.”

Based in Cunnamulla, the Cunnamulla Patrol covers an immense area extending 230 km north to Wyandra,

180 km east to Bollon, 570 km west to Innamincka on the South Australian border and 630 km south-west to Cameron’s Corner.

Rev Sunil Kadaparambil has always had a passion for mission. “From my childhood onwards I had a dream to become a missionary, and at age 15 I joined the seminary for priesthood training.”

After working as a Catholic priest for nine years in India and almost three years in Australia, Sunil joined the Uniting Church so he could work with people in remote Australia.

“I enjoy each and every moment of my ministry in this beautiful part of the country and I love that the people welcome me as part of their family.”

After the success of the 2015 Music on the Hillside concert, Karana Downs congregation members will continue to support Sunil and the Cunnamulla Patrol ministry with planning already underway for another concert on 6 November 2016.

Project chair Ray Crompton extends warm thanks to all the congregation members involved and is proud of how this community of faith has pulled together to support patrol ministry.

“It is indeed our privilege that we as a congregation can support this work,” says Ray.

The next Music on the Hillside will be on 6 November 2016. For more information or early bookings email Ray Crompton at rbcrompton@bigpond.com



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Synod in Session stand-outs

This month's 32nd Synod in Session offers a wealth of activities to inspire and enjoy. *Journey* suggests seven great things to look out for.

1

Unchained

Ever had a risky or dangerous idea for our church that you weren't quite brave enough to name? *Unchained* is a festival where some of those dangerous ideas will be set free. Listen and share in conversations, contribute a poster and have your say.

ucaqlld.com.au/unchained
4.00 pm–9.00 pm, Saturday 21 May

5

Norman and Mary Millar Lecture

Dr Neil Preston on being a "Christian witness in a post-Christian era". Neil's expertise includes helping faith-based organisations remain true to purpose, facilitating effective joint ventures, and helping organisations and individuals grow in health and fruitfulness.

4.00 pm, Saturday 21 May

2

Bible Studies

For the first time, Bible studies will be presented by the Synod's Multi-Cross Cultural Reference Group so it's a wonderful opportunity to reflect on the scriptures through different cultural lenses.

8.30 am each morning

6

Presbytery reporting

The 32nd Synod introduces a new cross-platform approach to presbytery reports which will be available to members in both written form and short videos. During the Synod meeting a presbytery Q&A forum will allow members to interact with presbytery leaders.

Q&A forum, 2.00 pm, Saturday 21 May

3

UnitingCare Queensland information sessions

Hear more about the church's health, aged care, disability and community services including how individual funding models have impacted the aged care and disability sectors, and how health and community services are delivered in some of the most remote areas of the country.

2.00 pm, Monday 23 May

7

General secretary and moderator appointments

The General Secretary Selection Panel will bring recommendations to the 32nd Synod and Synod members will vote to appoint a new general secretary to provide leadership for the Synod. A moderator elect will also be chosen to lead the church from the 33rd Synod in 2017 through to 2020.

Keep an eye on the *UnitingChurch Queensland* Facebook page for Synod updates.
facebook.com/unitingchurch queensland

4

Discernment

The Synod listens to reports and proposals, participates in Bible studies and worship, and members speak and engage in prayerful dialogue. On the last day of Synod, members will undertake a final discernment process to tie together the themes that have emerged to guide the church for future work as the people of God.

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Anne Wiazemsky plays a farm girl caring for the titular donkey
Photo: Supplied

The trial of a country donkey

Faith in film is a new regular *Journey* column on Christianity in the history of cinema.

Ben Rogers reviews a masterpiece of sacrifice and purity.

Au Hasard Balthazar

Director: Robert Bresson

1966 rated PG

Au Hasard Balthazar is available on DVD

Noted for his austere formal style and unique approach to performance, French filmmaker Robert Bresson is globally celebrated as a master of the cinematic arts. He has inspired generations of filmmakers including Martin Scorsese, Andrei Tarkovsky, the Dardenne brothers and Lars von Trier, and renowned screenwriter Paul Schrader (*Taxi Driver*) stated he was the “most important spiritual artist living—a spiritual artist who has forged a style so singular it resists imitation”.

This spirituality courses through the veins of Bresson’s 13 feature filmography, perhaps most famously in *Diary of a Country Priest*, *The Trial of Joan of Arc* and *Pickpocket*, and this aspect of his work is critical to understanding and appreciating his acclaimed 1966 film *Au Hasard Balthazar*.

Boasting spectacular religious imagery and highly charged symbolism, *Balthazar* may be considered rather simple in terms of plot as it traces the tragic trajectory of a donkey in rural France, but the subtext is clear. French auteur Jean-Luc Godard once declared of *Balthazar* it was “the world in an hour and a half” and audiences today can still revel in its striking ability to mesmerise through exacting visuals and editing rhythms, while reflecting on its timeless messages of sacrifice and divinity.

It is no coincidence that Bresson would employ a donkey as the chief protagonist to underline the sense of spiritual importance central to the narrative. The animal carries a special resonance in the Christian faith, the very same creature cited as carrying Jesus for his triumphal journey into Jerusalem, and it will have seven masters, numerically significant for those who might connect such a number to the seven words from the cross or the seven deadly sins.

Balthazar’s journey is obviously a story of hardship and endurance with parallels to the life of Jesus, but Bresson was always careful to ensure that his tales were not just simplistic religious allegories. This is cinema that carries enormous spiritual messages that transcend any one particular faith and unite us all. The brutality and suffering enacted upon the donkey is a stark reminder of the inhumanity that is always lurking within us, and the psychological traps which perpetuate oppression from the dawn of humanity to the present day.

In an age where the silver screen seems drenched in blockbuster superheroes and gross-out comedies a film as graceful, groundbreaking and transcendental as *Balthazar* is mandatory viewing. A tale of hardship, a tale of sacrifice and ultimately a tale of deliverance, *Au Hasard Balthazar* is the “world in an hour and a half” and a message from the past for the future of the world.

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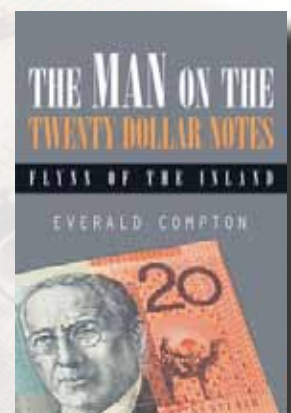
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Chaplaincy Sunday

Chaplaincy Sunday will be held on 29 May to highlight the ministry of chaplaincy to congregations within the Uniting Church. There are currently seven sectors of chaplaincy—aged care, health, police and emergency services, defence, community services, education, and tourism and sport—and congregations can celebrate the activity in their services on the Sunday.

Bulimba celebrates major milestone

To commemorate the 150 year anniversary of the Bulimba Uniting Church in Brisbane, Rev David Baker will be guest preacher on 12 June. Beginning at 10 am, the church will hold an anniversary service followed by lunch.

An open invitation is extended to all friends of the Bulimba Uniting Church, and due to lost contact with many former members it would be greatly appreciated if attendees could spread news of this occasion to interested people.

On a related note, a commemorative service to mark 150 years of the Bulimba State School will be held on 24 July commencing at 9.30 am.

For catering purposes please email bulimbauc@gmail.com if you plan to attend. For those with concerns about the climb up the hill to the church entrance, a lift has been installed for easier access.

National Day of Thanks

National Day of Thanks (28 May) is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate and show gratitude for our God-given heritage as a nation while turning to each other and recognising those who have made a difference in our lives and the wider community.

From those in the medical field—such as your local doctor, dentist, hospital staff or pharmacist through to your community's unsung heroes—there are many out there you can make a point of thanking on the day.

Gestures such as sending a card or a gift that demonstrate the meaning and regard you hold for the recipient are a good way of embodying the spirit of the day.

Churches are encouraged to think creatively in celebrating for the community. One such example may be to dedicate a time of worship and thanksgiving on the Saturday night of the date or include a special segment during Sunday services.

Please visit austhanks.org.au for more information and downloadable resources.

World Environment Day

In anticipation of this year's World Environment Day on 5 June there will be an online information pack including stories, theological content, worship resources and activities available from the Synod website on 5 May.

This year's theme, "Join the race to make the world a better place", is reminiscent of a passage from Hebrews 12:1, "and let us run with endurance the race God has set before us".

Visit ucaqld.com.au/social-responsibility/uniting-green where a link will be made available to the content on 5 May.

Chaplaincy on the Gold Coast

As part of its annual tradition to celebrate Chaplaincy Week, this year running from 14–22 May, the Elanora Uniting Church will take part in the Ks4Kids walk along the beach on 18 June.

After nominating a particular school to receive sponsorship funds, participants raise money by getting people to sponsor their walk, a 30 km journey from Southport to Coolangatta although many choose a shortened 10 km route from Palm Beach to Coolangatta.

The church is strongly involved with chaplaincy programs in the area and is financially supporting two chaplains at the Elanora High School with annual donations of \$15 000.

Last November a fundraising dinner attracted over \$17 000 in donations in support of the Southern Gold Coast group of chaplains which has chaplains at the Coolangatta, Palm Beach, Currumbin, Currumbin Valley, Tallebudgera and Elanora primary schools as well as the Elanora High School.

Classifieds

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