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# Death do us part?

While Australians still delight in white weddings and happy-ever-after romantic movies, divorce rates are rising and more people are choosing never to marry. This month *Journey* asks what is the place of marriage the new millennium?

By Bruce Mullan

THE LAST four decades have seen a sharp decline in marriage rates and significant changes in relationships sparked in part by the introduction of the oral contraceptive pill in the late 1960s.

Since the mid 1970s there has also been a marked rise in cohabitation, a steady increase in the proportion of children born to unmarried parent(s), a steady increase in the age at which people marry and an ever-increasing gap between marriage and having the first child within the marriage.

There are now up to 20% of couples who will never marry and demographers estimate that if current marriage rates continue 29% of men and 23% of women will never marry.

An increasing number of married couples will remain childless. Once marriage and children were a package deal for everyone except those who were involuntarily childless. This is no longer the case.

Since one of the traditional functions of marriage was to provide a social context for the raising of children, the increasing trend for women (especially middle-class professionals) to consciously decide not to have children in order to pursue a career may further decrease the likelihood of marriage.

Changing patterns have also seen marriage become more secular and there are no longer any requirements in Australia for a religious ceremony associated with marriage.

Since 1973 civil celebrants have provided an alternative for couples who choose not to have a religious ceremony and statistics confirm more marriages are performed by civil celebrants than by ministers of religion.

Divorce rates are also up with 40% of marriages now breaking down.

Who is this handsome young couple, when were they married and where are they now? You might know them. See page 8 for more clues

## CHRISTMAS WE ARE NOT ALONE

CONNECTING THIS CHRISTMAS  
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### More about marriage

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# Confessing Congregations Where to from here?

AFTER considerable thought, I have chosen to make a statement in this issue of *Journey* regarding the proposed Assembly of Confessing Congregations (ACC).

At this point in time we do not have all the information we need, but my comment here is based on the material that has been made available so far and on my participation in a dialogue with representatives of the Steering Committee for the proposed ACC.

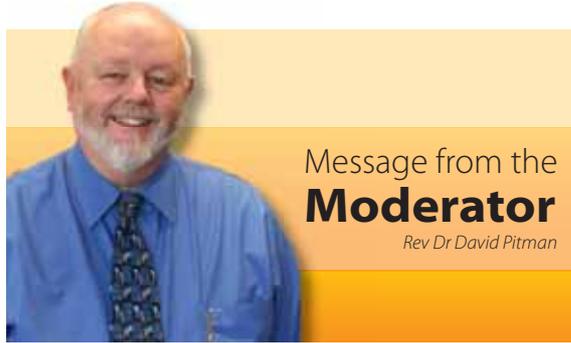
The Confessing Movement is very active within a number of mainstream American Protestant denominations, including the United Methodist, Presbyterian, and the United Church of Christ. Information about this movement is readily available over the internet.

Influential Methodist theologian and scholar, Thomas Oden, is a key figure in the Confessing Movement. For those willing to make the effort, some of his more recent published works provide an excellent introduction to the major tenets of this Movement.

It is very significant for those of us within the Uniting Church that the Confessing Church Movement is committed to an active presence and participation within the denominations in which it has been formed.

So we should note the statement in this regard made on 25 August by leaders from within the proposed ACC:

"We are persuaded that, at this time, Christ is best served by making our confession from within the UCA. Therefore, we encourage members to remain within the UCA and to work for its reform under the Word of God by supporting Synods and Presbyteries in everything that serves the Gospel and the well being of his Church."



Message from the  
**Moderator**  
Rev Dr David Pitman

I welcome this statement of positive intent. It is my hope that this spirit will imbue and influence all that is said and done in the future.

If it does, then I have no doubt that the proposed ACC could provide a robust and significant presence within the life our church, and I would personally welcome it.

Of course, remaining within the Uniting Church can only be on the basis that applies to all of us, which means that we only ever speak and act within the parameters and discipline provided by the Constitution and Regulations.

I do find it somewhat ironic, given the earlier negative response of leaders from within the Reforming Alliance and EMU, that what is now being proposed regarding the Assembly of Confessing Congregations reflects very much the spirit and intention of the proposal that I, supported by Jenny Tymms, took to the Assembly meeting in July.

I wonder what might have been achieved at Assembly if there had been a willingness to work on a common proposal at that time?

I also have a concern at the present time that the declared spirit and intention of the proposed ACC is at odds with the only draft of its

charter that I have seen to date, the language of which is confusing, confronting and aggressive.

I have expressed my hope to those representatives of the ACC Steering Committee with whom I have spoken that in its final form the Charter will clearly express the reality that the ACC cannot presume to speak and act on behalf of the whole church or of its various councils, but only on behalf of its own members.

Some of you may be aware that the Reforming Alliance sought and received legal opinion asserting that Resolution 84 of the 2003 Assembly was invalid.

I am not at liberty to divulge any other information about this other than to inform you that the Assembly Legal Reference Committee, having examined the material provided, has rejected the validity of the legal advice provided to the Reforming Alliance.

In any case, it is quite inappropriate to contemplate resorting to the civil courts to resolve doctrinal or theological issues.

I strongly support the words of our President encouraging congregations and individuals to carefully and thoroughly think through the issues and implications before moving to any decision about affiliation with the proposed ACC.

It is perfectly reasonable to defer any decision until such time as all the necessary information is available and outstanding questions have been answered to your satisfaction.

We should also remember that the Assembly is committed to an ongoing process of study and conversation regarding the way in which our Reformed and Evangelical tradition should inform and guide us in our further deliberations on sexuality and leadership in the life of the church.

I hope that as many of you as possible will seek to be active participants in that process, regardless of whether or not you choose to join the proposed Assembly of Confessing Congregations.

Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

## From the Editor

With Australians spending more than \$3.5 billion a year on weddings celebrations it's no wonder parents quake with anxiety.

A reception for 70 people can cost \$10,000, the dress \$2,500, flowers \$400, wedding cars \$1,200 and a honeymoon to Fiji \$5,000.

It doesn't take long for the cash register to ring up \$30,000 or more; something in the league of a new car or reasonable house deposit.

And that is not to mention the months if not years of planning and the amount of stress that often comes from trying to keep two families happy while stamping the ceremony as uniquely your own.

All of this goes together with some bizarre traditions and symbols which mostly have their origins in pagan fertility rituals.

The familiar tossing of the garter is remnant of the times when the wedding guests would follow the bridal couple to the room where the sexual consummation of the marriage would take place to observe and cheer the bridal couple on.

It was thought that securing a piece of the bride's clothing would bring good fortune so to obtain a piece of the lucky garment guests would tear at the wedding dress leaving it in tatters.

In time a piece of clothing, such as the garter, came to be thrown at the mob to appease their bawdy appetite.

We no longer cheer on the consummation but still applaud the tossing of the garter and close our eyes to the extravagant budgets.

Somewhere amongst all of this nonsense, prayers that the covenant being made is a holy mystery and symbol of Christ's love for the church fade into the blur of confused cultural metaphors and over-priced pageantry.

Perhaps one of the most significant things Christian men and women could do to witness to the faith that transforms their lives is to work with their minister to create and craft wedding celebrations that reflect Christ-like values, use Christian symbolism and speak loudly of justice in the stewardship of God's generous provision.

\*

*Journey* joins the rest of the Uniting Church in expressing our condolences to the Tongan people and to the Queen and the royal family of Tonga following the death of King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV on 10 September after a long illness.

The Uniting Church has a close affinity with the people of Tonga and a long standing partnership with the Free Wesleyan Church in Tonga.

The death of King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV is not only a loss for the Tongan community but for the Tongan Church and Tongan congregations of the Uniting Church in Australia.

## Sign of the Times



An oldie but goodie recently seen outside the Beenleigh Uniting Church in Mt Warren. Send a photograph of your sign to [journey@ucentre.ucaql.com.au](mailto:journey@ucentre.ucaql.com.au)

## JOURNEY

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# Christians seek climate justice

IN AN unusual collaboration between environmentalists and churches the question 'Who is my neighbour?' became a central issue of climate change at a professional development workshop co-hosted by Queensland Churches Together (QCT) and Friends of the Earth (FOE) in Brisbane.

The forum heard that Pacific Island states are threatened by global warming and the tiny nations of Tuvalu and Kiribati are already experiencing the impact of rising sea levels.

Keynote speaker Associate Professor Darryl Jones from Griffith University explained that the weight of evidence for climate change was overwhelming and said more data has been collected on global warming than any other issue.

Dr Jones detailed dramatic increases in greenhouse gas levels in the atmosphere and global temperatures since records have been kept.

Director of Friends of the Earth Brisbane and Lecturer in environmental politics at the University of Queensland Dr John Mackenzie assured the forum that global warming was a reality.

Stressing the need to be more active he told the gathering that "history will remember this time in the context of climate change".

Climate issues have also been the



Our Pacific neighbours face devastation from rising sea levels. Photo by Bruce Mullan

topic of recent discussions across the Uniting Church in Queensland with many taking an ecological footprint quiz and reflecting on their lifestyle impact on the planet ([www.myfootprint.org](http://www.myfootprint.org)).

Trinity Theological College Director of Old Testament Studies Rev Douglas Jones is one person concerned with climate justice and recently reported that Queensland sold 172,000,000 tonnes of coal in 2004-05 which, he estimates, would produce over 300,000,000 tonnes of green house gas, most of which would be released into the atmosphere.

"How am I going to explain this to my grandchildren?" he asked.

Mr Jones has taken personal responsibility by reducing his water consumption to half the average for his shire.

"Our electricity usage is quite low.

"We have a solar hot water system and we have a number of water efficiency measures in our house.

"For example, we catch all the cold water in the shower before the hot water comes through. By the end of the week we have collected enough water to fill our washing machine."

Weipa minister and Deacon Rev Michelle Cook is also concerned enough to try to cut fuel usage by

walking around town rather than driving when she can.

"There is also no recycling in Weipa but we use compost and try to grow our own vegetables," she said.

Australia's Pacific neighbours are most concerned about the potential outcomes of global warming.

Brisbane-based writer and academic Dr Mark Hayes wrote earlier this year about the late February peak tide of 3.26 metres that was predicted on the Funafuti Atoll where the highest point of land is about 3.7 metres above mean high tide (*May Journey*).

He reported on the Tuvalu website how one 2002 storm saw the ocean rise up and viciously assault the atoll.

"A storm surge came out of nowhere on the Pacific Ocean side of the Atoll and scoured a swathe of land about 500 metres wide and 300 metres deep just south of the

end of the air strip I first saw the damage in November, 2002, and it scared me deeply," he said.

"The sea around Tuvalu has noticeably risen in the 13 years detailed measurements have been taken, about 5 centimetres, but these findings are hedged with caveats, and nobody who knows the solid science on global warming can say with certainty about Tuvalu's travails."

The 10th Assembly of the Uniting Church expressed its solidarity with the Church of Tuvalu and called on the Australian Government to immediately sign and ratify the Kyoto Protocols in relation to global warming, particularly because of its affect on the nation of Tuvalu and other Pacific countries.

The Uniting Church also called on the Australian Government "to offer the guarantee of special immigration status to the people of Tuvalu for immigration to Australia when their nation loses its viability for human habitation."

Speakers at the QCT forum highlighted the human rights dimension of climate change and championed a three pronged response including reducing carbon emissions by 80% by 2050, assisting the majority of the world to adapt to climate change and accepting responsibility for future climate refugees.

Speaking on the spiritual and ethical dimensions of climate change Sister Wendy Flannery called for Christians to see beyond their immediate group loyalties to extend to their neighbours the moral concern they naturally extend to their friends and kin.

Bruce Mullan and Don Gibson

## PNG expat heads up multicultural ministry

RESPONDING to the growing number of multicultural and migrant ethnic congregations the Synod has appointed a new Multicultural Ministry Consultant to resource and support the work of multicultural and cross cultural ministry in the Uniting Church in Queensland.

Rev Leva Pat, a minister with the United Church of Papua New Guinea, has been appointed to the position from a background in church leadership in PNG and the Pacific.

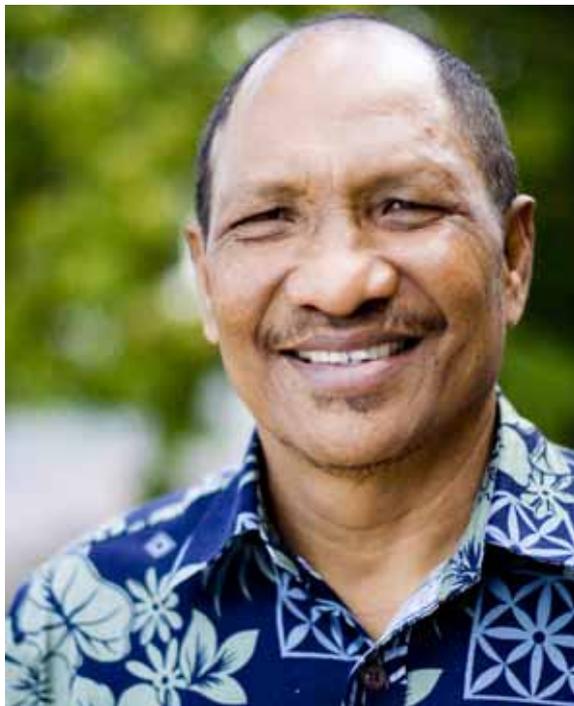
A former staff worker with the Pacific Conference of Churches in Fiji, Mr Pat has also served as a lecturer in Biblical Studies and Dean of Studies at Rarongo Theological College in Rabaul.

Mr Pat holds a number of degrees including a Master of Arts from the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, San Francisco and a Graduate Certificate in Human Resource Management from the University of the South Pacific in Fiji.

Mr Pat hopes to create a bigger space for mutual cooperation and dialogue.

"I pray this project can enhance a sense of belongingness and commitment to multiculturalism as enshrined in the basis of the Uniting Church," he said.

Synod Mission Consultant Rev Dr Graham Beattie said, "We



Multicultural Ministry Consultant Rev Leva Pat. Photo by Osker Lau

welcome Leva to this role and pray God's peace and blessing as he takes up this new ministry.

"Leva brings the wisdom, gifts and experiences that will strengthen and encourage our multicultural congregations as part of the life

and mission of the Uniting Church in Queensland."

People with an interest and involvement in multicultural ministry can contact Rev Leva Pat on phone 3377 9816 or by emailing [leva.pat@uccentre.ucaqld.com.au](mailto:leva.pat@uccentre.ucaqld.com.au).



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The Idea of North singers Trish Delaney-Brown, Naomi Crellin, Nick Begbie and Andrew Piper are ready to change the image of a capella singing. Photo courtesy of Woodlands Media. [www.woodlandsmedia.com](http://www.woodlandsmedia.com)

## Gospel a cappella heads north

By Mardi Lumsden

PROFESSIONAL a cappella singing groups are few and far between in Australia, but one group, The Idea of North, is proving their staying power.

They have just released their fifth album *The Gospel Project* which marks a diversion from the group's other, more traditional jazz focussed albums.

The album is also the first time the group has incorporated instruments other than voice on a recording.

2003 Australian Songwriters' Association songwriter of the year and The Idea of North soprano Trish Delaney-Brown said the small a cappella community in Australia has enabled The Idea of North to create their own sound, not just copy the traditions of Europe or America.

"The fact that Australia is so far away from where most of this music happens, we have had to navigate our own path and through doing that I think we have come up with a sound that is not only unique (because of our four unique voices) but our approach to it is probably a little unique as well.

"One of the good things about being a younger country... is we take all the traditions and we make it work for us, for our environment

and for where we are... rather than feeling locked into a particular tradition because that is what has been done for hundreds and hundreds of years."

*The Gospel Project* also includes the Upstairs Gospel Choir, which is made up of the four The Idea of North singers performing as different characters with different styles and voice types.

"It was a lot of fun," said Ms Delaney-Brown.

"I had a couple of personalities that I have actually found hard to let go of. There was one, Iris, bless her. I think she would be about 75 and she had been a bit of a looker in her day and a bit of a star singer but the vibrato is a bit bad now and she can't quite control it."

The group formed in Canberra in 1993 and have been taking their music around the world as well as into Australian schools and communities since.

"I am really happy that I had music teachers in late high school that made me think that it was actually possible to be a musician; not to just let it be something you did on the side but that it was a worthy pursuit."

In every primary school in Australia there are choirs full of enthusiastic young singers. But why do they stop singing when they reach high school?

"We are out to change that," said Ms Delaney-Brown.

"In Australia you are either into sport or you are into the arts. You can't actually be into both.

"Hopefully that is changing through the space of those terrible reality television shows. I would like to think that something good can come out of it.

"Maybe that is awakening the national psyche that you don't have to be one or the other."

With a loyal fan base and now regular radio airplay, The Idea of North is set for a busy end of the year. The group has embarked on a massive national tour and will perform as the Australian Government's gift to the King of Thailand on his Golden Jubilee.

For The Idea of North it is the music that comes first and the hope that audiences all over the world will enjoy their work and continue to support local talent.

"It is more about people having a great musical experience and at the end of the night we hope they go away thinking about the music and not the fact that there were no instruments apart from the human voice."

The Idea of North perform at the Brisbane Powerhouse on 17 and 18 November. Read a review of *The Gospel Project* on page 13

## Rugs Galore

By Catherine Mullan

THE QUEENSLAND Uniting Church in Australia Adult Fellowship group has launched project 'Knit a Square' to join adults and groups together in reaching out to the community.

There is the potential to gather in excess of 1500 rugs over the next three years from all adults within the Uniting Church of Australia.

A square can be crocheted or made of warm fabric which can be joined to make knee rugs for the elderly or cot blankets for infants.

The rugs will be given to adults and babies in need in Australia or in other countries.

Queensland is the national UCA Adult Fellowship host for the triennium 2006-2009.

The theme for the next three years is 'Let the Son shine through' and the committee aims to link fellowships of the church throughout Australia.

Newly appointed UCA Adult Fellowship National President Alyson Madsen said the group has over 22,000 affiliated members and the rugs will represent each member's individuality.

"As a symbol of the Son shining through us, in all our uniqueness and from all our different situations, we are asking each fellowship to create a rug or rugs made up of squares from each adult fellowship member.



Alyson Madsen gets to work. Photo by Osker Lau

"The challenge is to have all our adult groups join in this project so why not get your group going and participate.

"Let us come together and share the warmth of the Son in a practical way."

Each square should be 20cm by 20cm. Rugs will consist of 30 squares and be edged as desired.

The design is each group's choice and can be knitted, crocheted or a combination of both.

Over the next 12 months, completed rugs are to be sent to the Queensland Synod office, 60 Bayliss Street, Auchenflower, Brisbane 4066.

For further enquiries and details of patterns contact Alyson Madsen on 3398 6109 or email Noela Schloss on [outbacklinks@bigpond.com](mailto:outbacklinks@bigpond.com)

## Blue Care alert to elder abuse

OLDER people today are more visible, more active, and more independent than ever before.

They are living longer and are in better health.

But as the population of older Australians grows, so does the problem of elder abuse.

Every year, about five per cent of people over 65 years are victims of abuse.

But for every case of elder abuse that is reported, experts believe there are as many as one in five cases that are not reported.

Elder abuse doesn't just happen in residential aged care. Research shows most elder abuse occurs in the home while in the care of a family member or paid professional.

Some of the latest statistics show elder abuse is much more under-reported when the abuse is between a child and parent.

Blue Care Director of Care Services Kerry Andersen said that media stories about elderly abuse in residential aged care had sparked greater community awareness of the issue.

"Not all abuse is physical or financial. Abuse can be emotional or psychological and can include behaviours such as intimidation, isolation and coercion which reinforce the abuser's control over the elderly person.

"Abuse can be withholding food, medication, taking away glasses, wheelchairs or ignoring an elderly person's hygiene.

"It can be making false accusations, ridicule, intimidation, harassment and name calling."

Ms Anderson said every Blue Care staff member is aware of the responsibility to report suspicion of or witnessed abuse.

### MINISTER OF THE WORD

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# Church will not go to court on sexuality

THE UNITING Church Assembly Standing Committee has rejected a request from the Reforming Alliance that it make a joint approach to a court for a determination on the validity of the decisions of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Assemblies about sexuality and leadership.

The legal advice given to the Assembly Standing Committee denied the validity of claims made by the Reforming Alliance and contradicts the legal advice received by the Alliance.

Assembly General Secretary Rev Terence Corkin said the Standing Committee had given "serious consideration to the issues and questions that were put before it".

At its meeting in late August the Assembly Standing Committee also affirmed the belief that it is not appropriate for members of the Church to take their theological differences to a civil court.

"Nor would such action be a helpful witness to the reconciling work of Christ," the resolution said.

In a letter to all ministers

and church council secretaries Mr Corkin said members of the Assembly Standing Committee were very concerned for the pastoral dimensions of the issue.

"They are very aware that there are members of the church who are still working through the way they can live and work within the worship, witness and service of the Uniting Church.

"Standing Committee believes that clear guidance is one of the pastoral responses that it can offer to the church."

Mr Corkin also said the Standing Committee had indicated its willingness to meet with representatives of the National Executive of the Reforming Alliance to discuss the matter.

The Reforming Alliance and EMU (Evangelical Members within the Uniting Church) have indicated that they will disband and focus their energies and resources into establishing the Assembly of Confessing Congregations.

Mr Corkin said the proposed Assembly of Confessing Congregations had "no status within the church".

## Assembly urges care on ACC

UNITING Church Assembly Associate General Secretary Rev Glenda Blakefield has released a statement in response to requests from some members, congregations and presbyteries seeking Assembly comment about the proposed Assembly of Confessing Congregations (ACC).

Assembly officers have welcomed the fact that the Steering Committee of the proposed Assembly of Confessing Congregations has stated its desire to remain within the Uniting Church and adhere to the Basis of Union.

"We believe this provides us with a firm basis for positive

relationships between councils of the Uniting Church and the ACC," Ms Blakefield said.

She expressed concern that aspects of the proposed ACC may lead congregations to believe they can pick and choose which parts of the Uniting Church's polity and discipline they can abide by and which they might reject.

"We remind all ministers and members that every congregation in the Uniting Church is under the pastoral and administrative oversight of the Presbytery and the general oversight of the Synod.

"Joining the ACC will not alter these relationships of oversight and accountability."

# CHRISTMAS WE ARE NOT ALONE

Invite your community to share Christmas with you. Register now for your Christmas promotion pack at [www.ucaqld.com.au/signup](http://www.ucaqld.com.au/signup)

[WWW.UCAQLD.COM.AU](http://WWW.UCAQLD.COM.AU)

"CHRISTMAS: we are not alone" is the theme of the 2006 Christmas promotion campaign. The Communication Services Unit is again partnering with congregations to produce high-quality, low-cost posters and postcards for Christmas outreach in local communities.

Synod Communications Manager Mr Bruce Mullan said the campaign aims to present an image of the local Uniting Church as a great place to worship with your family over Christmas.

"The 2005 project saw almost 250,000 invitation post cards distributed to letterboxes across Queensland and congregations reported making strong connections with their local community," he said.

Mr Mullan encouraged congregations to register quickly as all details must be completed by Monday, 2 October 2006 to meet print deadlines.

To read more about the Christmas project and see the post card samples visit the Synod website at [www.ucaqld.com.au/signup](http://www.ucaqld.com.au/signup).

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# Kingdom Coffee

## (mega)church means business

By David Collis

WHEN A FIRE tore through the headquarters of the Australian franchise coffee chain Gloria Jean's in 2003 co-founder Nabi Saleh responded with confidence.

"That is how life goes. You have to have a dream and it has to be bigger than yourself. When things look challenging, that is when you get help from above."

The business recovered in fine form and last year Gloria Jean's was named the Franchisor of the Year by Price Waterhouse Coopers and the Franchise Council of Australia.

At last count Gloria Jean's had 342 stores around Australia, which is more than half the number of McDonalds stores, and was still growing.

### Gloria Jean's: Business flavoured with religion

Gloria Jean's is a business with a religious flavour. co-founders Nabi Saleh and Peter Irvine are both long-term members of Sydney's Hillsong megachurch.

That is where the two men met and undoubtedly percolated their business ideas within the entrepreneurial Hillsong culture.

Nabi Saleh is an elder who sits on the Hillsong board of directors and has been described by the Business Review Weekly as the "business brains behind Hillsong."

Gloria Jean's has a training centre next door to Hillsong headquarters in Baulkham Hills though Peter Irvine is quick to draw a clear distinction between the church and the business: "[T]his is not a diversification for Hillsong... There is no financial link."

*Business Review Weekly* made a different interpretation pointing to a network of commercial links that cross-pollinate the two entities.

"Although there is no legal connection between Hillsong and Gloria Jean's Coffees, there is certainly a strong commercial connection.

"Some of the best Gloria Jean's franchises are owned by Hillsong members.

"There are also Gloria Jean's coffee stalls at the many Hillsong conferences held each year, along with Gloria Jean's outlets at the Hillsong Church in Baulkham Hills."

Gloria Jean's is certainly a business with a strong flavour of religion, even if it drinks from the secular cup of business success.

### Hillsong: Religion flavoured with business

The first thing that many people notice about Hillsong is that it operates within the framework of a business. It makes no secret of this and has adopted a large corporations governance structure with a board and a CEO.

Hillsong promotes a culture of financial entrepreneurialism and Senior Pastor Brian Houston release a book in 1999 entitled, *You Need More Money: Discovering God's Financial Plan for Your Life*.

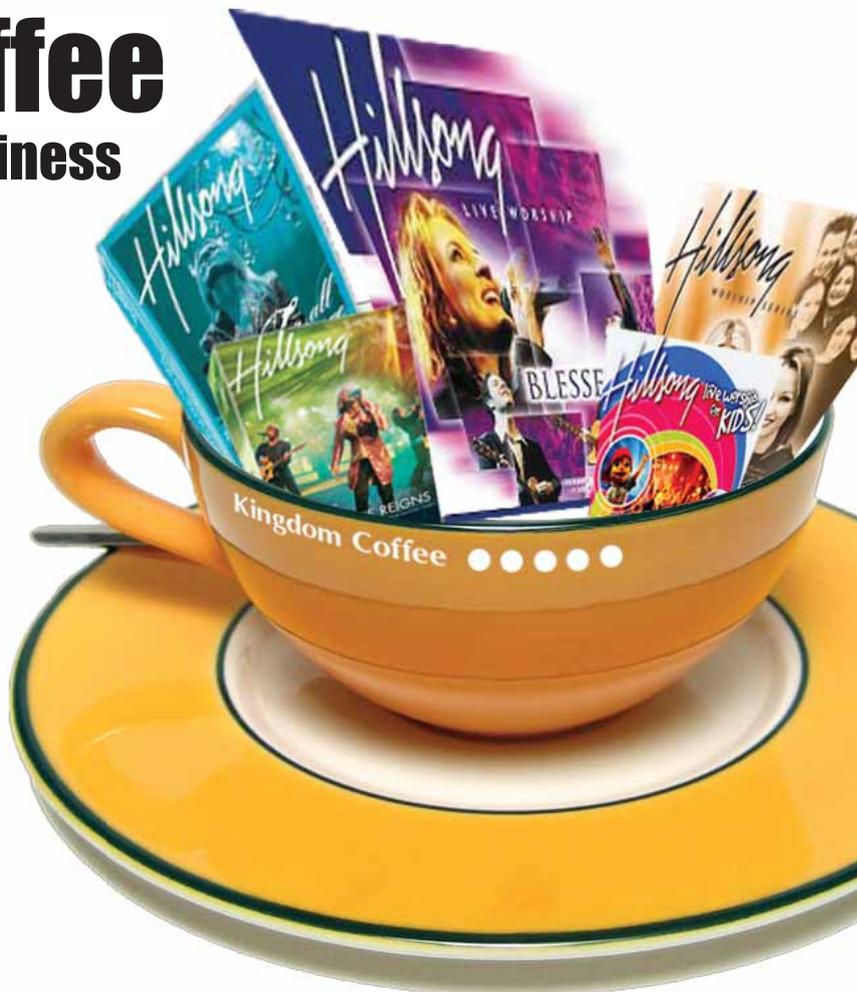
It has also borrowed heavily from the world of corporate management to promote models of success-based leadership.

Typical of large corporations Hillsong has a marketing vision at its heart. When asked about the birth of the church in an interview on ABC's *Australian Story* last year, Hillsong Senior Pastor Brian Houston reached for marketing imagery.

"What God has given us is great, and great means big, great is powerful. I tell you, the devil likes to contain and give the church a small mentality ... I want you to buckle up your seat-belt and get ready for a big year." Hillsong Senior Pastor Brian Houston.

"[I]n those days there used to be a guy who was famous or infamous, whatever, on TV, who many people might remember who used to be on the TV and sell Holdens, sell General Motors, and apparently he was the biggest Holden dealer in Australia.

"And I thought to myself, if you can build a Holden dealer like that, the largest Holden dealership in Australia, surely it must be somewhere where you could build a church. Between those things and me sensing a spiritual pull, we went and started in a little school hall."



Hillsong has been very successful in its endeavour. It is the biggest church in Australia, with over 20 000 people attending each week and a host of conferences, special events, school programs, business networks, welfare, and counselling services.

Financially it is also thriving, with a total annual income that has now reached \$60 million, \$16 million of which comes through sales of books, CDs, DVDs, t-shirts and other merchandise.

It has become part of the national psyche and, as one of the largest megachurches in the Western world, it has a big international profile that surpasses all but the top American megachurches.

Although there are many differences between megachurches and traditional churches in terms of size, music, culture, theology, style and evangelical focus, the fundamental difference is that megachurches are built around a business model.

### Moving beyond attacks on prosperity doctrine

In coming to terms with this new model of church-as-business, critics initially identified prosperity doctrine as the key problem – the idea that following God can help bring success in terms of money, health, and relationships (the so-called 'gospel of health and wealth').

Indeed some of Hillsong Pastor Brian Houston's comments seem to suggest prosperity doctrine.

In *You Need More Money* he says, "If you and I can change our

thinking and develop a healthy attitude towards money, I believe we can all walk in the blessing and prosperity that God intends for us. We will never have a problem with money again."

The most prominent critic at the time of the book's release was Rev Tim Costello, then minister at Collins Street Baptist Church in Melbourne. Not mincing words, Costello went straight to the jugular of prosperity doctrine.

"The quickest way to degrade the gospel is to link it with money and the pursuit of money. It is the total opposite of what Jesus preached. These people have learnt nothing from the mistakes made by the American televangelists.

Most other church leaders seem reluctant to publicly criticise Hillsong's approach.

Tabor Bible College lecturer, Jim Reiher, is a key exception.

His little known book, *The Eye of the Needle*, is a systematic refutation of prosperity doctrine from a biblical perspective.

If we are to have a deep and ongoing prophetic impact we need to move beyond the critique of prosperity doctrine and into an analysis of the organisational foundation on which megachurches are based – the corporation.

Joel Bakan, in his excellent documentary *The Corporation*, argues that the corporations are inherently amoral institutions which "by law are required to place financial interests of their owners above competing interests".

Although there is great potential within the corporate structure for producing wealth, there are also

great dangers of this blindspot to human reality. This amoral heat is, according to Bakan, a structural feature of the bottom-line driven corporation.

Missiologically speaking the corporation is an odd foundation on which to build a church.

Yet the megachurches have done precisely this and become the ecclesiological equivalent of today's large corporation.

Whether or not Bakan tells the whole story, he raises important questions.

Although the megachurches fall into the 'not-for-profit' category, they share much of the organisational forms, leadership styles and consumer marketing culture of the secular counterparts in whose image they are created.

In an interview with ABC *Radio National* last year Tim Costello said that the challenge for the larger Pentecostal churches in Australia was "to stay truly prophetic, to not simply baptise the dominant culture".

We also need to understand the forces that make this uncritical baptism so alluring and seductive.

To help frame these prophetic questions and to graciously engage the megachurches is the task of denominations with deep ecclesiological and biblical traditions.

David Collis is a researcher and theological writer with the Victorian Council of Christian Education (VCCE). He is currently researching Australia's megachurches. To receive monthly updates on megachurches email [davidcollis@vcce.org.au](mailto:davidcollis@vcce.org.au)

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# Churches divorce traditional attitudes

By Bruce Mullan

WITH OVER half a million divorces in the last decade and the number increasing at 1% per annum, marriage breakdown is very much part of Australian life and relationships.

Promises of life-long commitment in a Christian wedding service are made with genuine expectations of happiness and fulfilment but in contemporary society there is an expectation that many marriages will not last.

The question that Christians have to come to terms with is whether this is a "bad" or simply a "sad" situation.

At a simplistic level of interpretation the Bible seems unequivocal about the matter of divorce ("What God has joined together, let no one separate" Mark 10:9) and even states that remarriage is adultery ("Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her" Mark 10:11).

This has placed many under pressure to maintain less-than-helpful relationships.

One minister who is a divorcee said, "My marriage broke down a year after we were married. It just went on for another 14 because we were both so socialised and conditioned vocationally and culturally that it took 13 years to figure out that there's got to be more to it than this."

While some churches have held to the awkwardly specific statements from Jesus claiming there is nothing to suggest that his teachings should be applied selectively, others have framed the issue of divorce in less black and white terms and prefer to witness to God's generous renewing of life in ways that continue to exceed human expectations.

For those concerned with providing pastoral support a dogmatic position which aims to keep people out of the church or to convict them of sin seems inappropriate.

They claim that Jesus was not setting down laws to be rigidly obeyed but rather giving moral guidance.

While some biblical interpretations point to the "cultural context" of Jesus' teaching and suggest that expectations that applied at the time are not necessarily applicable today, Jesus was actually being critical of the "cultural interpretation" and common practice of his own day and setting a standard which was substantially more rigorous than that of Moses (Mark 10:2-9).

Indeed it may have been that Jesus' strict views on divorce were exactly what led the Pharisees to pick this issue on which to "test" him.

Historically the church accepted the more conservative benchmark for centuries to the extent of demanding that victims of domestic abuse remain faithful to their partners because this was the



standard demanded of Christians.

Trinity College Director of Studies in New Testament Rev Dr Malcolm Coombes thinks this reads too much into Jesus' brief mention of divorce.

He sees that Jesus is calling the teachers of the law to recognise the profound spiritual state that marriage represents and not merely a social contract to be dissolved on a whim.

"Jesus is reacting against the attitude that divorce is easy and marriage doesn't matter. Mark is bringing out strongly that marriage is a serious thing and from that point of view Jesus' words are still relevant.

"We need to take Jesus' words about the importance of marriage and commitment to each other seriously."

Those with a feminist theological perspective claim that, given the context in which Jesus was speaking, his prime agenda was to protect the welfare of women whose financial and social security at that time was

shattered if they were victims of easy Mosaic divorce traditions.

Under Australian law prior to 1975 it was necessary for a husband or wife to prove serious misconduct had been committed by the spouse in order to secure a divorce.

The most common of the 14 listed forms of misconduct defined by the law were desertion, separation for five years, adultery and cruelty but the 1975 changes introduced a "no fault" provision.

Despite this the spectre of "fault" has continued to haunt the church.

Divorced people that *Journey* spoke with said church people often needed to find someone to "blame" for the divorce.

One divorcee said that people would ask, "What happened?"

"I didn't want to face all the pity and the judgement of people so I made the decision not to go back to my congregation."

There remains a degree of discomfort among some which may point to anxiety about the unresolved vulnerability in our own

relationships. It is similar to that fear of death which alerts us to our own mortality.

One divorcee said that people he had a really close relationship with since childhood had "cut him off" after his separation and divorce.

"People that I would generally see on a weekly basis and spend lots of time with never saw me again."

Divorce frightens us because it reminds us of the fragile nature of love, marriage and commitment.

These days more would claim it is for Pharisees to assign blame and label divorce as "bad".

Dr Coombes feels it is "sad" and points to the role of Christians in offering care and acceptance to those who grieve the failure to fulfil their marriage vows.

"From all that Jesus said it was about life, and many marriages are not about life."

There were 111,000 marriages registered in Australia in 2004.

The trend towards older age at marriage continues with the median age at first marriage being 29 years for men and 28 years for women.

Marriages in which neither party had been previously married comprised 67% of all marriages registered in 2004. 18% were marriages in which one partner had been previously married and 15% were remarriages for both partners. These proportions have remained constant over the last 20 years.

Overall, men had a shorter interval between previous and current marriage than women. In 2004, the median interval to remarriage was 3.8 years for men compared with 4.4 years for women.

The median interval to remarriage varied by marital status. Previously widowed men and women had a longer interval to remarriage (4.4 and 6.7 years respectively) than previously divorced (3.7 and 4.2 years respectively).

Of those remarrying in 2004, 30% had children aged under 16 years from previous marriages.

Marriages performed by civil celebrants have outnumbered marriages performed by ministers of religion since 1999.

Of the 111,000 couples who registered a marriage in 2004, 76% indicated that they had cohabited prior to registering their marriage.



## RESOURCE OFFICER

NSW Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress



A person is being sought to fill the position of Resource officer for the NSW Congress

This person will have responsibility for the administrative and research needs for the NSW Congress Regional Committee, the NSW Development and Outreach Officer and various local ministries throughout the state. The position involves some travel.

The applicant is expected to have a commitment to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the Congress, an ability to effectively communicate cross culturally and a willingness to work within the ethos of the Uniting Church of Australia.

It is important that the person is skilled in enabling, empowering and supporting the leadership of others and to fulfill administrative tasks competently.

Salary is based on the NSW Uniting Church stipend rates and allowances.

Closing Date for applications - **Friday 13th October 2006**

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NSW Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress



An Indigenous person is being sought to fill the position of Development and Outreach Officer for the NSW UAICC.

This is a key leadership and co-ordination position for the NSW UAICC.

The person in the position will oversee the work and development of the UAICC throughout NSW and be responsible for further developing the state office, supporting existing ministries and planning for the development of new UAICC ministries throughout the state. The position involves travel.

The applicant should have strong Christian faith, good leadership abilities, a commitment to UAICC, expertise in holistic ministry with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and a willingness to work within the ethos of the Uniting Church of Australia.

It is important that the person is able to promote the vision and work of Congress and continue to develop the covenanting relationship between the Congress and the Uniting Church of Australia.

Salary based on NSW Uniting Church stipend rates and allowances.

This is open to Lay and Ordained men and women.

Closing Date for applications - **Friday 13th October 2006**

Send Applications to - Sue Willgoss

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## Real stories: Bill and Pat

PAT AND I have been married for 52½ years. Before our wedding day we had known each other since early teens, growing up in the same church. We have been blessed with some rich memories, four great sons, four wonderful daughters-in-law and ten grandchildren. We are still growing together and living with our faces set toward the future.

Although we have shared our faith journey closely, we have not always thought the same and we have not always made the various transitions easily. I was a high school teacher and we already had one son when I felt called to the ministry so it was our marriage that had to respond, not just me.

The result has been an enriching experience beyond anything we could have anticipated.

Marriage is, in some ways, like the relationships we seek to build in the church. We are held together not by agreement on every issue but by something beyond us, in which we have faith and trust.

I suppose that this is a high church doctrine of marriage, or if you like a romantic view.

Marriage is something greater than the sum of the parts. It is the marriage that holds us rather than the other way around. Sounds very old-fashioned in this day and age but that doesn't mean it is not true.

Somebody said 'building a happy marriage requires two things. One is that you should find the right person. The other is that you should be the right person'.

Bill Adams is a retired  
Uniting Church minister

## Real stories: Catherine and Ruth

MY NAME is Catherine\* and I am a Christian and a female homosexual. Both of these characteristics are an integral part of who I am.

I was introduced to a Uniting Church congregation and 22 years later I still attend this church, 15 years as an elder. In 1995, I met my partner, Ruth\* at church.

Ruth had not long come out of a broken marriage of 16 years, she had two sons in their early teens and she was desperately trying to resolve her fundamentalist Christian beliefs with the shocking (to her) realisation that she was a lesbian.

Fortunately, she had come to the right place and, although it took a long time, through the genuine loving support and acceptance of the congregation and exposure to a more liberal theology she is now entirely comfortable and happy with who she is.

In the early days of our relationship it wasn't easy. Ruth's two sons had continued to attend the church of their childhood, they were happy there and Ruth was loathe to remove them. The trouble is the church was extremely conservative and fundamentalist. Neither boy coped well with the fact that their mother had so radically changed and was now in a relationship with a woman.

I tried to encourage the boys to understand scripture in a more liberal way, but more often than not a heated argument would ensue, one particularly memorable one about Adam and Eve.

Today the boys are in their mid twenties and I have a great relationship with both of them.

They came to realise that I wasn't a threat to them or their mother and that their mum was happy. They also saw that Ruth and I share a deep Christian faith, which is vitally important to both of us.

Neither son is comfortable with the liberal theology of our church but they have met the people and discovered that they are genuine, caring and are sincere about their Christian faith.

Ruth and I rejoiced the day that her eldest son told us that I was to sit with Ruth at the parent's table at his wedding reception.

Ruth and I have both been blessed in the many ways that our relationship has been affirmed within the congregation.

We have a tradition in the congregation of singing a special song (*The Blessing Song* by Sr. Miriam Therese Winter) to anyone who is celebrating a significant event in their lives. In February 2005 the congregation sang the Blessing Song to us to mark our 10th anniversary.

\*not their real names  
Catherine is a Uniting Church elder

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

This is not just a secular problem according to the Barna Research Group in the United States who claim "born again" Christians are more likely than non-Christians to experience a divorce.

"That pattern has been in place for quite some time," said George Barna. "The high incidence of divorce within the Christian community challenges the idea that churches provide truly practical and life-changing support for marriages."

While the church might formally hold to traditional patterns of marriage most members are aware of the extent of changes in contemporary relationships and

acknowledge the need for the church to deal with the trends constructively.

*Journey* spoke to Uniting Church Ministers who reported that around 80% of those presenting for marriage were already cohabiting.

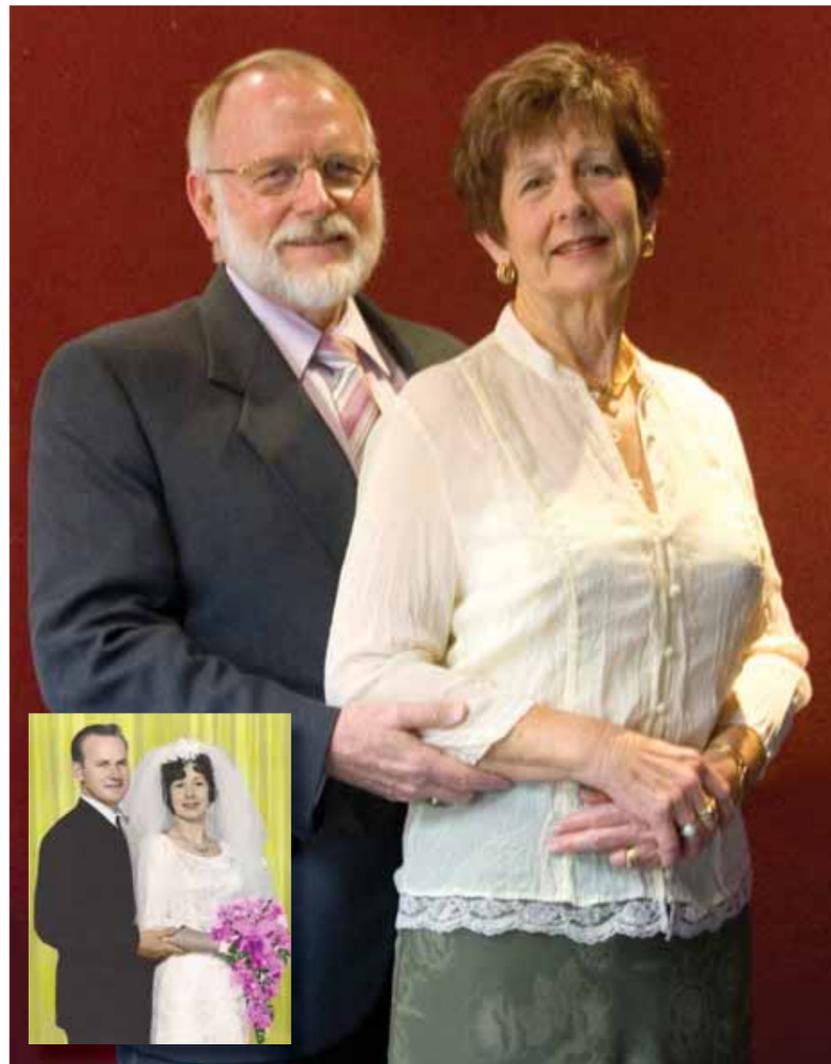
Rev Yvonne McRostie says it's unusual to find couples who are not living together.

When couples present for marriage after years of living together and raising children Ms McRostie often wonders, "why would you bother?"

"I often ask that, and why they want to do it in a church, and they say just want an acknowledgement

# For better or worse

## Modern relationships are expressed in many different ways



From the front page: Eleanor Ruth Coleman and Graeme Norman Adsett were married in the Atherton Methodist Church on Wednesday, 8 December 1965. Officiating ministers were the late Rev Arnold Rose and Rev Cecil E. Schloss. Graeme is currently Chaplaincy Coordinator for the Queensland Synod and Ruth is a retired age-care nurse. Congratulations Ruth and Graeme on 41 years of marriage. Photo by Osker Lau

that God is a part of it."

Rev Ray Herrman from St Andrews conducts about 30 weddings each year and has the same impression.

"A lot of people fear the process and what will happen. They see weddings that are absolute drama and theatre and they want something simple.

"They certainly want the blessing of God, so we sign the documents and offer that blessing."

Some would argue that the traditional values were mythological in any case and that unmarried sexual activity that was once shared in secret can now be openly

expressed in cohabitation with little fear of unwanted pregnancy.

Calls to a traditional Christian benchmark of "celibacy in singleness and faithfulness in marriage" actually reflect a relatively recent standard.

Christians regard the social constraints on sexual activity outside marriage between 1890 and 1960 as normal when they were probably more rigorous than at any time in the last 400 years.

In her controversial book *Sex, Marriage and the Church*, Melbourne academic Dr Muriel Porter

points out that it has been moral consensus, rather than theological imperative, that has driven the

church to radically alter its stance on divorce and contraception in recent decades.

"It is moral consensus which is now pushing Christian thinking towards a radical shift in its attitude to de facto and homosexual relationships," she said.

Dr Porter argues that over its 2000 year history the Christian Church has regularly changed its mind on issues of sex and marriage.

"There are no 'certainties'; there are no tablets of stone.

"It is time that was recognised, and the Church was freed to offer Christ's promise of life, in all its fullness, to all people."

## Real stories: Michelle and James

WE ENTERED into a covenant on the 23 July 2005. We decided to use the term covenant, rather than marriage, for a number of reasons.

Covenant is a term that implies respect, maintenance of autonomy and mutuality as well as freedom.

The baggage associated with marriage, including things like unequal relationships and locked in roles was something we did not want to be locked into as we entered this new phase of our relationship.

We were also aware of the 'church' baggage associated with the concept of marriage. This includes marriage

Michelle Cook is a deacon with the Cape York Patrol and James Hughes is a youth worker in Mapoon

being perceived as only possible between a man and a woman as well as marriage being something expected by the church for most of its members.

Marriage, in church-talk, seems to get associated with a formula of buying a house, having children and settling down to 'normal' life. When you know James, you know that normal is not something he aspires to be!

By using the term covenant we feel able to explore different models of life-long commitment without being limited by the

traditional model of marriage and the expectations that places on us.

For example, many people express dismay when we tell them that we live in two different townships (80kms apart) as they feel that married people should not be separated like this. However, for us, this model works very well.

We both have ministry commitments in our placements that are served best by our living in those communities. In addition, when we do see each other we tend to spend the time doing things together – it is very hard to take someone for granted when you have to drive from an hour to an hour and a half over a rough dirt road!

# Reflecting on marriage and its discontents

By Scott Stephens

I VIVIDLY remember, a couple of years ago, driving my kids home from school.

My oldest son wanted to listen to *Triple M*. The music wasn't great (not enough actual rock), but I went along with it anyway.

To my surprise – it was, after all, mid-afternoon – an ad came on the radio for *Naughty but Nice*, the popular franchise of adult stores.

The ad itself was fairly discreet, but it was the catch-line at the end that really grabbed my attention: "*Naughty but Nice* – keeping couples together!" Nice touch, I thought. Softening the public perception of its tasteless product-range with a warm, conservative message.

But what lies behind this conservative veneer? A very simple idea. Couples, in themselves, can't sustain anything like the interest and mutual fascination necessary to resist all those lures that entice us in our sex-powered culture.

That's where *Naughty but Nice* comes in. By supplementing our drab, boring relationships with something exotic, by providing heat, as it were, from some external source, we can fight off the cold of our libidinal discontents.

I don't even think we should regard this as a particularly extreme or perverse example. Instead, we are confronted here with a glimpse into the heart of marriage itself.

This vacillation between the heat of sexual passion and the cold of domestic familiarity was brought about by the very detachment of marriage from the economic or familial concerns which it formerly served.

With the modern concept of marriage, the sole basis of marriage is this man and this woman – their free choice of one another.

But there was a trade-off. Writing at the beginning of the 19th century, Georg Hegel suggested that, insofar as the choice of one's marriage partner is a free one, with no other reason than the fact it is this person, every marriage is a fake.

This free choice is driven by irrational passion, which fades away once the 'icy winter of domesticity' settles in.

Far from criticising this new form of marriage, Hegel says that it holds unheard of promise. But a choice must be made.

Once the 'winter of domesticity' overtakes the marriage, the couple can either (1) look back nostalgically at the fierce summer of their illicit passion, and try to recover something of its heat through artificial means (maybe a quick visit to *Naughty but Nice*), or (2) look forward to the emergence of a new, deeper connection between them, one that supersedes the fickleness of their former passion.

## Real stories: Alison and Jeff

FOR A LONG time I was very suspicious of the idea of marriage. I remember being about 12 and having a discussion with my mum. She suggested people got married to declare their love for each other before God, to which I argued that God can see what is in our hearts and probably knew how people felt about each other before they did.

My parents have a fantastic marriage, so it wasn't that I didn't have good role models. On one hand I honestly didn't expect ever to be able to love someone that much, and on the other, I just didn't want to buy into the trite commercialisations of what I thought should be a sacred thing.

So, when I fell in love with Jeff, marriage wasn't big on my list of things we had to do. In fact, falling in love isn't quite what happened. He is one of my oldest friends and it was a slow developing love. Not only God, but almost everyone around us knew how we felt before we did.

I didn't change my mind about marrying Jeff until after our first son was born. We went to the wedding of family friends, which was a very small ceremony and I felt incredibly privileged to share in that public expression of their love. So, while I still don't think God needs a piece of paper to bless a relationship, I started to understand that marriage is about celebrating your love in the presence of God and in the presence of your community, because a relationship isn't just personal, it affects all those around you.

I also started to understand that marriage isn't a fairy-tale. It's just daily committing yourself to a journey together. And a good relationship is an earthly way of expressing God's incredible love for us.

Jeff is fairly traditional in his values and was really happy when I decided marriage wasn't such a bad thing after all. However, he isn't a Christian. Sometimes it's a challenge, but I've never met a Christian man who I've connected with in the same way I connect with Jeff. While we don't share the same beliefs, he has always supported me and understood how important my faith is to me, and we've been so blessed in our relationship I have faith this is the person I am meant to be with.

Alison Atkinson-Phillips is Editor of *Western Impact*



Les Amants [The Lovers] by Rene Magritte © Rene Magritte Licensed by VISCOPY, Australia, 2006

Let me use a couple of examples, one from film and the other from fiction, to illustrate these choices.

For the first, take Alfred Hitchcock's classic film, *Vertigo*. Scottie (James Stewart) becomes enamoured with a fairly ordinary girl, Judy (Kim Novak), not because he loves her in any meaningful sense, but because he sees something in her.

What he sees in Judy is her raw potential to become his fantasy-woman, the woman of his dreams.

He then sets about transforming her into a look alike of his supposedly deceased lover, Madeleine (also played by Kim Novak).

The implication here is terrifying: Judy holds Scottie's sexual attention only insofar as she resembles his fantasy-woman.

Judy is, in this sense, merely an incarnation of his fantasy.

And here we have the ugly, violent underside of the *Naughty but Nice* ad.

When you use a novelty item, or try to recover some long-lost passion, there is a necessary transformation of your partner so that they conform to your fantasy.

You thus reduce your partner to serving a self-indulgent lie.

The opposite scenario is presented in a wonderful passage from Ian McEwan's latest novel, *Saturday*.

Henry Perowne, a successful neurosurgeon, reflects on his still sleeping wife during a few inexplicably wakeful hours early one morning:

By contemporary standards, by any standards, it's perverse that he's never tired of making love to Rosalind, never been seriously tempted by the opportunities that have drifted his way through

the generous logic of the medical hierarchy.

Who else could love him so knowingly, with such warmth and teasing humour, or accumulate so rich a past with him?

By some accident of character, it's familiarity that excites him more than sexual novelty.

This is Christian marriage at its purest: a relationship that is sustained by hard-won familiarity, not threatened by it.

And isn't this the most radical commitment of all?

To abandon one's addiction to novelty and discover toughness of love itself.

Scott Stephens is an author, theologian, and minister at Chermerside Kedron Uniting Church

# Marriage is a Christian calling

A FEW months before his death in July 2005 former Professor of Theology and Church History Rev Dr Ian Gillman handed Rev Peter Lockhart a draft of a paper entitled *The Relationship between Baptism and Christian Marriage*.

Whilst his paper was never published *Journey* asked Mr Lockhart to reflect on some of the issues arising out of this paper.

Mr Lockhart said one of Dr Gillman's main concerns was the lack of a well developed theological understanding of Christian marriage within the Uniting Church.

He suggested that most people ground their views in the generally accepted attitude: "marriage is essentially a partnership between a woman and a man of marriageable age".

Despite this lack of a well developed view Dr Gillman noted fresh depth was found in the 1997 report of The Assembly Task Group on Sexuality which said "marriage is the unique sign of the unity which is promised us in Christ... for the Christian, marriage gains its meaning from God's grace in Jesus Christ, and is to be seen as part of the new creation in him."

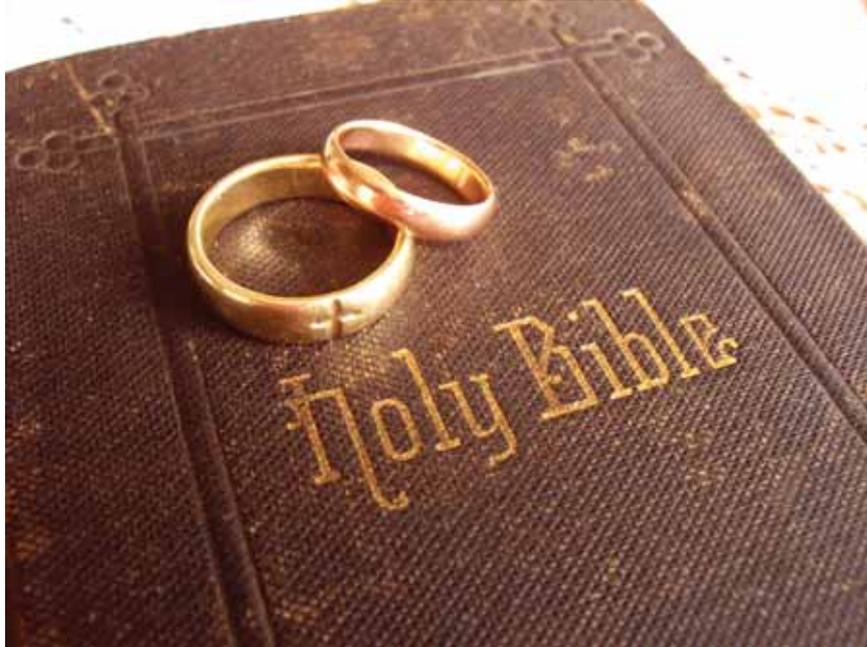
Such a view provides us with greater depth and significance than the essentially "Christless" mantra "chastity in singleness and fidelity in marriage."

Dr Gillman rightly pointed out that this saying would "be acceptable to responsible agnostics and atheists as a guide to sexual behaviour."

Somewhat not surprising was Dr Gillman's discovery that the origins of this saying "are to be found in the reaction to the early sixteenth century epidemic of syphilis in Europe."

Whilst the statement is consistent with a Christian view its demands are not unique and as a statement it is still being used, not to affirm a positive view of Christian marriage, but as a defence against differing views about marriage.

With this inadequacy in mind



Dr Gillman appealed to the mystery of our union in Christ established in Baptism as an avenue towards a doctrine of Christian marriage.

In Baptism we are brought into "union with Christ" and it is this union that provides the basis for the union of a couple.

This lends greater importance to the question, which is somewhat ironically listed as optional, in the marriage service, "N & N, do you believe that God has blessed and guided you, and now calls you into marriage?"

By answering in the affirmative a couple are recognising that marriage is both a calling and a gift and this answer sets the context for the affirmation by the couple and the families as well as the vows which are to be made.

Not only is the couple drawn together through their union with one another in Christ but, as Karl Barth puts it, "They are one in the Lord. That is what keeps them together."

This has all kinds of implications,

not the least of which is that in Christian marriage the bond is not simply a contract between a man and woman, but a covenant relationship that a couple is called to in fellowship with Christ.

So Paul's admonition that couples "Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ" takes on greater meaning because this reverence is not simply out of respect for following Christ's

teaching but out of respect for Christ who is present in both husband and wife.

There is much more to be explored from Dr Gillman's thoughts but a final point to consider is the challenge to develop a doctrine of Christian marriage.

The current legal situation which sees an overlap of state requirements with obligations of the faith creates a complexity for ministers who, Dr Gillman said, were often acting as little more than "voluntary agents of the registrars-general".

Ministers are not only "not paid by the state" but have to "purchase the very government forms" required to be lodged with the registrar.

As long as this situation continues, developing Christian doctrine will be clouded by the relationship with the state and its requirements.

Whilst an unlikely possibility, Dr Gillman believed the European model in which people are required to have a civil marriage with a religious ceremony an optional extra may be a helpful way to go.

Rev Peter Lockhart was mentored in ministry by Rev Dr Ian Gillman and is serving at Clayfield and Hamilton Uniting Church congregations



YACMU Regional staff worker Stephen Kersnovske with Canadian youth worker Ken Moser at the Queensland Youth Ministry Conference in August. Photo by Tom Kerr

## Youth ministry is more than fun and games

By Mardi Lumsden

THERE was a definite change in mindset at the Queensland Youth Ministry conference in late August.

Queensland Synod Youth and Children's Ministry Unit director Michael Jeffrey said the weekend, which focused on the long-term 'Growing Apostles' approach to youth ministry, brought up some interesting issues.

"There was a paradigm shift that took place in the lives of the youth leaders in how they saw youth ministry. For others it confirmed for them changes that they knew they needed to make but hadn't made," said Mr Jeffrey.

"If we don't take faith development seriously in the lives of young people then who will?"

Guest speaker Ken Moser, an Anglican leader in youth ministry who spent ten years working in

Sydney and is now in Vancouver, said there were a number of things youth ministry needed to do to equip young people.

"Firstly they need a personal relationship with a living God, not a pack relationship.

"The second thing is I think they need to develop a rigorous commitment to the local church.

"We realise kids are busy so we run a drop in style of program - come when you can. I think that is unworkable and unproductive and it is a foreign mentality to the average young person.

"We need to equip youth to see that being a Christian takes priority and is really what characterises your life and the other things need to follow."

Mr Moser also emphasised the importance of small, committed youth groups over large youth groups who play games but don't do the theology with kids because

they think it is boring them.

"In my experience, those kids who are going to leave over the games and fun issue were always going to leave.

"I know that is hard to hear but that has been my experience.

"In a youth movement where upwards of 95% of our audience leaves, I think I can say that they were always going to leave.

"If we can develop a generation of young people... if every single Uniting Church had a youth group of 20 people that loved Jesus, loved each other and stayed Christian the rest of their lives and tried their best to live for God in the workplace and the grocery store, that would have a huge impact in Australia.

"When young people get switched on spiritually, that impacts everybody.

"That is how I want to see the world changed."

## Sharing Christmas gifts

WHEN conflict, climate change, social and political tensions, continuing poverty, natural disasters threaten to overwhelm us, Australia's own Christmas Bowl appeal gives Christians the opportunity to respond with compassion.

The Christmas Bowl began in 1949 when the Reverend Frank Byatt of Melbourne placed a bowl on the dinner table on Christmas Day.

The bowl was an invitation for people to donate the cost of their meal to people who were hungry, thirsty, strangers, poor, sick, or in prison.

Frank's vision has grown and the Christmas Bowl now helps bring education, health, equality and empowerment, environmental sustainability, and peace with justice to people in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and the Pacific.

The Christmas Bowl also works in Australia with refugees and displaced people as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

To be part of this program contact Greg Jenks at [qctcws@tpg.com.au](mailto:qctcws@tpg.com.au), on 3369 6792 or visit the Christian World Service web site at [www.ncca.org.au/cws/christmasbowl](http://www.ncca.org.au/cws/christmasbowl)

# Preparing couples for the tough times

UNITING Church ministers are regularly involved in preparing couples for their wedding day and in enriching marriage relationships.

Many use the Prepare/Enrich program based on a set of five inventories that examine major relationship issues and develop skills in assertiveness, active listening, conflict resolution, financial planning and budgeting, and help the couple discuss family-of-origin issues.

Over four million people have taken the Prepare/Enrich programs since they began in 1980 and many Uniting Church ministers in Queensland routinely invite people to take the inventory and participate in feedback sessions to reflect on the strengths and growth areas for their relationship.

Prepare/Enrich trainer Rev Bob Warrick teaches people to use this marriage preparation tool and is enthusiastic about its flexibility.

"All marriage celebrants like to make sure their glue works," he said.

"The couple work out what they need to talk about and that puts the finger very quickly on things that might be good for them to work on."

Other options are available to resource marriage relationships and minister couple Heather and John Selwood have been hosting an Alpha Marriage Course annually in Kingaroy and have had a good response from people both within and beyond the congregation.

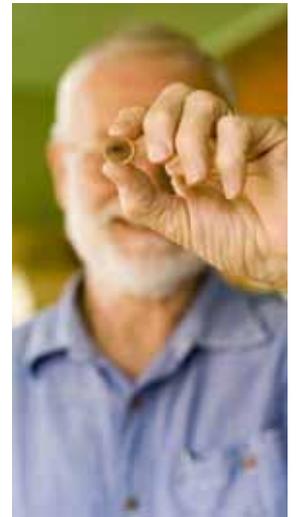
"We believe that doing this as a couple provides positive role

modelling for the participants, and we ourselves have also learnt a lot from our involvement."

Counselling Psychologist and Christian Counsellor Naomi Matheson attended a Prepare/Enrich training program in September and found the material useful for helping couples open up blind spots they might have about their relationship and develop the potential to survive rough times.

"I think that the focus on communication and assertiveness is really important, as it allows each person in the relationship to express their needs and hopes.

"It's amazing how freeing that expression can be."



Prepare/Enrich trainer Rev Bob Warrick. Photo by Mardi Lumsden



Elements of a traditional initiation ceremony were used to present Mr Peinkinna for commissioning. Photo courtesy of Wik Inana

## Aurukun congregation celebrates new pastor

CARRYING branches and singing traditional songs, members of Ralph Peinkinna's clan and ceremonial group presented him for commissioning as a Uniting Church Community Minister to serve the people of Aurukun on Cape York.

Mr Peinkinna is already fulfilling much of the Community Minister role he was commissioned into.

He visits families, leads worship and preaches, supports the local minister and elders, and pastorally cares for the youth.

Mr Peinkinna is also chair of the Aurukun Community Justice Group, the traditional owners

with responsibility for law, order and community well-being.

Calvary Presbytery Minister Rev Shayne Blackman offered words of commissioning to Mr Peinkinna

"Keep visiting and knocking at doorways, keep meeting and reaching out amongst the people, be Christ to them... care and serve them"

Aurukun is a community of approximately 1100 people.

It is two hours drive south of Weipa on Cape York and has its origins as a Presbyterian Mission established in 1904.

## Call to make Indigenous poverty history

GENERAL Secretary of the National Council of Churches in Australia Rev John Henderson has called for an urgent re-commitment to address the pressing problems faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

"The 2006 Social Justice Statement reflects the deep concerns that the member Churches of the NCCA have regarding the continued

disadvantage suffered by Indigenous Australians," Mr Henderson said.

"While communities and governments have rightly responded to the international 'Make Poverty History' campaign based on the Millennium Development Goals, Australians need a similar commitment to Make Indigenous Poverty History.

"To Make Indigenous Poverty

History, we believe that what is needed is a fuller and far more effective program of spiritual and material regeneration than currently exists.

"At the bedrock must be genuine self-determination and funding commensurate with the size of the problem."

The NCCA Social Justice Statement is available at [www.ncca.org.au](http://www.ncca.org.au)



## UnitingCare Queensland Director of Mission

UnitingCare Queensland is the Uniting Church's health and community service provider in Queensland. Its network of services, in more than 300 locations across Queensland includes Uniting HealthCare, Blue Care, Lifeline Community Care Queensland, Wesley Missions - Brisbane & Ipswich, and Crossroads. Employing over 14000 staff with 5000 volunteers and an operating budget in excess of \$730m, it is the largest not for profit provider of health and community services in Australia.

This important role will work with the Director UnitingCare Queensland in ensuring that the development and the implementation of UnitingCare strategic and operational plans reflect the faith foundations and mission of the Uniting Church. In addition, the role will act as the Director of Mission for Uniting HealthCare.

We are inviting applications from suitably qualified individuals who will have knowledge of and/or skills in the following areas:

- Health and community services particularly in hospital/healthcare leadership and delivery
- Policy and ethics research in healthcare
- Change in a large and complex organisational setting
- Communication and education in a variety of forums
- Understanding of the tenets and polity of The Uniting Church in Australia

Applicants should hold relevant qualifications in theology and/or religious education or another relevant area. Ministers of the Word, Deacons and other specified Ministries within The Uniting Church are encouraged to apply.

If you would like further information and/or would like to obtain a job description you can email [uc.hr@ucareqld.com.au](mailto:uc.hr@ucareqld.com.au), or telephone Geoff Rogers on 3512 9400. Alternatively please submit your resume and a covering letter by close of business on 20 October 2006 by email or by post to Human Resources, UnitingCare Queensland, PO Box 2248, MILTON 4064.



# WHAT'S ON

**Wednesdays (during Term time), 9.15-11.30am. Gap UC Craft Experience**, 1050 Waterworks Road. Christmas Medley (cooking, craft & much more), Scrap Booking, Christmas Card Making, Ribbon Embroidery, as well as our usual Unfinished Objects. Contact Janice Harris 3300 6293 or email [thegapuc@inet.net.au](mailto:thegapuc@inet.net.au).

**September 29-October 1. Visionaries art exhibition.** Merthyr Uniting Church, 52 Merthyr Road, New Farm. Contact Geraldine Wheeler on 3437 8743. 29 September 6.30-9pm. 30 September 10am-4.30pm. 1 October 11am-3pm. Artists' dedication service Saturday 5pm.

**October 8, 2pm. Saint David's Welsh Society of Brisbane's annual Gymanfa Ganu** - Welsh hymn singing festival. Holy Trinity Church, Fortitude Valley. Join in the fun of community hymn singing. Refreshments served. For details phone Rev Canon Illyd Loveluck on 3719 5342 or Bronwen Doherty on 3876 0091.

**October 8, noon-2pm. Barnabas Community monthly Fellowship** meets at Oxley Uniting Church. Ph 3279 9065.

**October 13-15. The Young Adults Mission Immersion weekend.** Brookfield Convention Centre. \$50. Contact Andrew Johnson or Heather den Houting on 3377 9911.

**October 14, 9am-1pm. Warwick / Killarney Uniting Church Annual Fete.** Stalls galore. Craft, produce, plants, home made cakes and sweets, white elephant. BBQ and much more. Bands, country and western, fashion parade.

**October 17. Anti Poverty Week.** White Arm Band day.

**October 20-22, Asia Focus Weekend.** OMF International (Qld) Uniting Church at Alexandra Park with Mark Robinson, Director of Intercultural Studies Bible College of Qld. Ph OMF Qld 3359 2758 (Tues-Thurs). Induction of Peter and Mary Chen, new Qld State Directors on Saturday night.

**October 27. World Community Services** receiving the Australian Church Women's (Qld unit) Least Coin. For more information on the Brisbane city service phone 3358 4349.

**October 27-29. Floral church display.** Part of the Annual Warwick Rose and Rodeo Festival. Warwick Uniting Church cnr Fitzroy and Guy Sts. Theme: Alleluia Praise the Lord. Church open on Friday 9am-8pm, Saturday 9am-4.30pm, Sunday 11am-4pm.

**28 October, 6.30am-12 noon. Gigantic Garage Sale!** Paradise Point Uniting Church, 126 Paradise Pde. Enormous volume & variety of stock. Furniture, plants, crafts, homemade cakes and a Sausage Sizzle. Super cheap prices. More information at [www.ppuca.org.au](http://www.ppuca.org.au).

**October 28, 8am-1pm. 10th Brookfield Country Market.** Brookfield Uniting Church, 2 Upper Brookfield Road. Intending stallholders and inquiries contact Edith on 3374 1404. Also, inaugural Art Show in association with the Country Market. Contact Pam on 3374 2453.

**October 29. Moore Uniting Church centenary celebration.** Service at 10am followed by lunch in the Memorial Hall. Contact Harold Kirby on 5423 1060.

**October 29, 5.30pm- late. JAM** at Emmanuel Uniting Church, 249 South Pine Rd, Enoggera. [www.emmanueluc.unitingchurch.org.au](http://www.emmanueluc.unitingchurch.org.au).

**October 31, 10am-1pm. South Moreton Presbytery Adult Fellowship.** Pine Mountain Uniting Church. Annual General Meeting, memorial service and dedication of the 2007 Steering Committee. Morning tea at 10am. BYO lunch. Please advise of person/s who have passed away during the past 12 months to Secretary Gwenyth Manifold on 5561 1676 or [sportuc@dovenetq.net.au](mailto:sportuc@dovenetq.net.au).

**October 31, 10am on. Retired ministers, spouses & widowed members meeting.** The Gap Uniting Church, 1050 Waterworks Rd. \$13.50/person. Guest speaker Moderator Rev Dr David Pitman. Enquiries/replies to Jim & Jill Tame on 3891 6462 or email [jjtame@dovenetq.net.au](mailto:jjtame@dovenetq.net.au).

**November 4, 10am-3pm. 4th Annual Family Fun Day.** Earnshaw State College sports field. Earnshaw Rd, Banyo. BBQ, face painting, fun and games. Everything Free!

Want to promote an event?

Email [mardi.lumsden@uccentre.ucaqld.com.au](mailto:mardi.lumsden@uccentre.ucaqld.com.au) with the subject 'What's on' or fax (07) 3377 9796.

## Almost happy as Larry

DONATIONS from congregations and people around Australia have allowed Innisfail Uniting Church to donate thousands of dollars to families affected by Cyclone Larry.

Exotic fruit growers Rod and Jan Ingram and Ian and Rebecca Kikkert farmed jack fruit, rambutans, mangosteins, durian and lychees.

The effects of Cyclone Larry were devastating. 70% of the trees were blown over, broken, uprooted, and stripped of their fruit.

The exotic fruit farm, just north of Innisfail, was within one week of harvest.

The donations meant the Innisfail Uniting Church was able to give over \$1000 to the Ingram family farm. Despite the generous donation, Rev Glenn Louttit said the gift will not go very far.



Fruit growers Jan and Rod Ingram accept a cheque from Rev Glenn Louttit

"Just a couple of hundred dollars really does not go anywhere, neither does \$1000, but at least it is better than \$100.

"They are looking at seven years before replanted fruit trees will reach maturity, so this family has a long road ahead.

"This will be just one small gift, hopefully along with many others, that will encourage them and assure them that this church loves

them and is prepared to stand by them and support them during this natural disaster," he said.

Support has also been made available at the farm with friends and strangers helping clean up.

Several members of Innisfail Uniting Church have received assistance from willing volunteers.

The church manse was tiled as a gift from two Brisbane families.

Catherine Mullan

## Culture change for young adults

By Catherine Mullan

YOUNG adults from across Queensland will meet in October to discover more about having a mission mindset and God's transforming mission in the world.

The Young Adults Mission Immersion weekend (13-15 October at the Brookfield Convention Centre) is an Assembly initiative and project of Uniting International Mission that aims to share the experiences of missionaries who volunteered overseas and within Australia with young people.

Coordinator Andrew Johnson said, "We want to take young

people who have never travelled, and expose them to a new culture."

Special guest Sandy Boyce, organiser of People in Mission, runs short-term international mission trips to the Philippines, East Timor, Solomon Islands, and Fiji.

The experiences of guests from partner churches and migrant ethnic communities will help attendees discover more about opportunities to serve.

"It's not about converting people, rather building relationships and partnerships," said Mr Johnson.

The event will introduce young people to other like-minded individuals through games, activities and cross-cultural worship.



Andrew Johnson. Photo by Osker Lau

The weekend is aimed at people aged 18 to 35 who might have an interest in international mission or short term or long term mission trips.



# REVIEWS



## The Gospel Project

The Idea of North  
CD

RRP: \$29.95

In this, the fifth album from a cappella vocal quartet The Idea of North, the additions of a band and choir on some tracks show the next phase in the group's career.

*The Gospel Project* is a step away from the group's more jazz inspired other albums, but shows a different side of their music and responds to requests from fans for a gospel-style album.

It is sometimes hard to believe that you are actually listening to four voices. Their intonation is spot on, their arrangements are interesting and their musicality is impressive.

The album opens with a beautiful version of *People Get Ready*.

It includes arrangements of old favourites (such as *Whenever God Shines his Light on Me* and *Down to the River to Pray*) as well as original compositions.

Michael Leunig prayers are also put to fittingly haunting music.

For the comedy lovers there is also a bonus track that tells the story of a chicken waiting to be rescued to get on Noah's arc.

With an album of music spanning extraordinary a cappella arrangements to gospel and rock/jazz, there is sure to be something for everyone on *The Gospel Project*.

*The Gospel Project*, along with other The Idea of North albums are available from most CD

stores including HMV, JB Hi-Fi, Koorong and Word.

Mardi Lumsden is Associate Editor of *Journey*

## 48 Shades

Directed by Daniel Lapaine  
Buena Vista International  
Rated M

Fastest selling film at the 15th International Film Festival in Brisbane in August, *48 Shades* has since received neither critical acclaim nor box office success. I struggled to find a showing and was pleased to see it.

The film is a faithful rendition of Brisbane author Nick Earls' award winning coming-of-age novel *48 Shades of Brown* about 16-year-old Dan who moves into a share-house with his young aunt Jacq and her housemate Naomi.

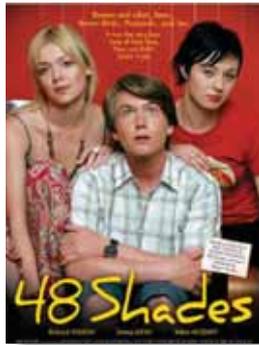
Shot over four weeks in Brisbane in 2005, this film is a light and uneventful offering with occasional comic moments to spice a gentle account of the highs and lows of adolescent life and unreciprocated infatuation.

Perhaps the strongest character in *48 Shades* is the setting, which displays the beauty of Brisbane at its best with familiar scenes of the river, the city skyline, Rosalie shops and the Story Bridge.

The Uniting Church's Brisbane Boys College is a significant feature but its location at Toowong is linked by a geographically confusing ferry trip to the inner northern suburbs.

The familiarity of the landscape and settings somehow made the characters seem more real than expected and a pleasant counterpoint to the stereotypical Hollywood puberty flick.

The film moves at a relaxed Queensland pace and concludes



with an ironic Aussie twist that is a gutsy alternative to the standard boy-gets-girl happy ending.

*48 Shades* won't be around long and you'll be lucky to catch it at the cinemas now but look for it on DVD. It's a home-town production and better than ordinary.

*48 Shades* is rated M for moderate sexual references and themes and infrequent moderate coarse language.

Bruce Mullan is Editor of *Journey*

## Wild Ones

By Michael Duncan  
Urban Neighbours of Hope  
RRP: \$22

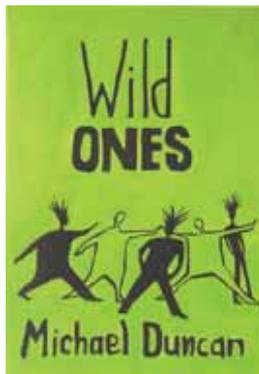
What is it to be real? Radical, enthusiastic, alive, living. These words describe the story in this small book from Michael Duncan.

Duncan, a lecturer at Carey Baptist College in Auckland, reminds me of some people I know (too few sadly and I wish I were one of them). Honestly raw, excitingly engaged and where it's at. So define 'it'. In *Wild Ones* 'it' is the capacity to belong to God with integrity and honesty not just 'nicely' and 'securely' and basically powerless.

You get the sense that Duncan has a knack of stripping down and yet entwining the best bits of charismatic, liberated and evangelical Christianity.

But wait. In our church politics, don't we think these labels describe opposites? "Get Real" is the message, lose the label.

Duncan explores our quite natural "oooh that's awful" response to a few Old Testament characters (like the lady Jael from the Book of

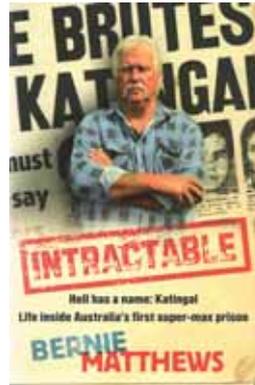


Judges who kills Sisera the soldier, remembering "all scripture is God breathed and useful for teaching") with his own experiences of coming to faith, the difficulty of making life choices and working amongst the poorest of Asia.

Duncan challenges the world view we have of what's motivating a number of these OT characters.

This is not a long academic treatise. It is a smallish collection of wild characters comparing contemporary life experience. Some people will say "um, that was different" and move on, others will be shaken to the core of their being with the realisation God does ask us to be real. I'd be interested to see which one you become.

Michael Hewson is a member of Bray Park Uniting Church



## Intractable

By Bernie Matthews  
Macmillian Australia  
RRP: \$32.95

This powerful and unforgettable autobiography of a convicted armed robber and serial prison escapee is not for the faint hearted.

*Intractable* is the story of Bernie Matthews' from reform schools to award-winning journalist and doesn't claim to be a balanced view of the harshest of the New South Wales and Queensland prisons.

This is an ex-prisoner telling people what it was like to be on the inside. Within the first five pages, I found myself siding with the prisoners rather than the people who held them there.

*Intractable* tells how the routine abuse and brutality continues to transform prisoners convicted of non-violent crimes (e.g. fraud) into violent criminals on return to society.

Matthews began writing to relieve his mind from the boredom of a windowless 2.5m by 3.5m cell in the "electronic zoo", Katingal, a NSW correctional services experiment into sensory deprivation.

One psychologist said six months or more in Katingal would leave inmates with "irreparable psychological and psychiatric problems". Matthews survived there for two years and eight months, almost the entire time it was open.

As editor of the Parramatta Prison magazine, Matthews began honing his writing and interview skills. He came to the realisation that the outside world did not believe anything an inmate said

or wrote so he began to work at changing that.

This is the story of a broken man whose buddies were some of the most feared crims in the country at the time.

Matthews shows them for who they are: people. Some tough, some evil, some broken, some innocent, but all human beings.

I'm not sure how Matthews survived the physical and mental horrors of maximum security prisons, but I'm glad he did because this is a story that needed to be told.

Mardi Lumsden is Associate Editor of *Journey*

## Jindabyne

Directed by Ray Lawrence  
Rated M

*Jindabyne* is another brilliantly gripping film from director Ray Lawrence (*Bliss* and *Lantana*).

Based on a short story by Raymond Carver, every detail of this film was crafted with precision and poise.

Set in small town New South Wales, *Jindabyne* follows four friends on their annual men's fishing weekend. On their first day, they find the naked and battered body of a young Indigenous woman floating in the river. With the sun setting, they decide it is too late to hike back to their car and alert police, so they spend the next day fishing and return home with their catch as well as some bad news for the local authorities.

Their actions reverberate around the small town and rattle the foundations of their relationships with their families, partners and each other. Still unsure they have done anything wrong, the men each deal with the situation and their guilt differently, as do their wives and girlfriends.

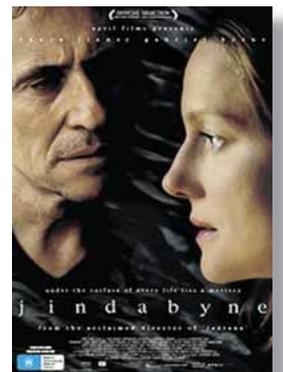
Though a universal story, Lawrence has brilliantly placed it in an Australian landscape and reinforced Australian issues.

Each character was stunningly acted (including the two children) and the aches of genuine people and families were portrayed in truthful ways. The magical landscape was a perfect backdrop for a story that goes much further than a murder mystery.

It delves into the deep seed of emotion in times of ultimate stress and the result is unforgettable.

*Jindabyne* is perhaps the best Australian film of the year.

Mardi Lumsden is Associate Editor of *Journey*



## Surviving Solo: a Guide to Getting Life Back on Course after a Relationship Breakdown

By Meredith Cameron  
Wrightbooks  
RRP: \$24.95

As the title suggests, this book aims to help people experiencing separation, to sort through the overwhelming number of issues facing them, then get their lives back.

*Surviving Solo* is a good source of information and assistance, guiding the reader or "helping family and friends" with practical, sensible advice about issues from telling people, through to the possibility of re-partnering and everything in-between.

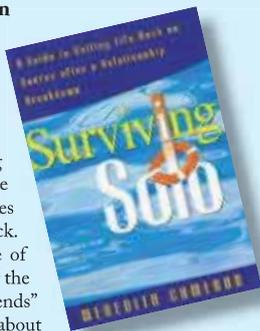
It is also Australian, so information is relevant to our context.

Cameron deals with the issues surrounding separation in a holistic way: legal and financial concerns are considered alongside grief, self-care and, critically, issues surrounding children and grandparents.

While the book is primarily a guide for those who have separated, it does not assume that the relationship is over. Nor does it ignore those people whose relationships have ended through death of a partner.

Many people, including the author, have been through and survived the incredible pain of separation. Many experience significant personal growth. But the journey is usually incredibly hard — books such as this can help with ideas and essential information. I wish it had been available for me!

Karyl Davison is Associate Director Registrar and Administration with the ELM Lay Education Centre in NSW



# PRAYER DIARY

1 October:  
Taroom/Wandoan

We would like to give thanks for the wonderful ministry we have been enjoying over the past 18 months in cooperation with SWQ Lutheran Parish Wandoan Ministry Area.

Our services have been taken by the Lutheran Pastor (who also ministers to other distant areas), Lutheran lay readers, Uniting lay persons and some very welcome Uniting Church Ministers.

However our Pastor has been transferred to Buderim on compassionate grounds, so we are without a Minister.

We would appreciate prayer support for the current situation and that a suitable person responds to the needs of our area.

We would also dearly appreciate the oversight of an ordained Minister to visit us on a regular basis as our folk feel a great desire to maintain their identity with the Uniting Church.

Pray that this will also continue to complement the links that we have with the Lutheran folks.

Prayers are also requested for:

- Our mission outreach, the Rural Playgroup as it connects isolated mothers and children in fellowship.
- Our Lay Ministry Team as they seek to serve our communities, that we have an awareness of the people's needs and are given the wisdom to deal with these.
- Finally, we would like prayers for meaningful rainfall as very little has fallen since February.

15 October:  
Vision for Mission

Vision for Mission Advocate Rev Duncan Macleod works with a

Facilitation Team to support and resource the development of fresh mission initiatives for the Uniting Church in Queensland.

The team meets each month to consider proposals, develop strategies for mission and to pray together.

Please pray for these missional communities:

- The Dodgeball community in Redlands where Nat Tickle and team host 16 dodgeball teams for a Thursday night competition each week.

Please pray for the development of their Monday night study group.

- Comunidad de la Gracia and Beatriz Skippen and the team as they grow their connections with the Spanish community in Brisbane.

Give thanks for new families joining the Community and pray for emerging leaders.

- The Christian community developing around Unity College, a Catholic/Uniting Church school in Bellvista near Caloundra.

- Ministry with families in the Rainworth Bardonia area.

- Ministry with Thai students and immigrants in Kangaroo Point.

Please pray for the team preparing to train for Thai language radio ministry.

- Give thanks for Calvary Presbytery and the development of a church of young people in Mapoon and new expressions of church in the Torres Strait islands.

29 October:  
The Synod Team

The Synod office staff work consistently to support and resource the ministry of 243 congregations and eight presbyteries in

Queensland in mission, finance, property, staffing and training.

A dedicated team of lay and ordained people with specialist skills are available to church leaders and congregation members across the state.

With responsibility for an area of 1,727,000 square kilometres and a Uniting Church population of more than 20,000 people across the most decentralised state in Australia Synod staff travel many kilometres and deal with thousands of people each month.

From librarians to accountants and camp centre cooks to mission consultants and the Synod staff, each work with dedication to their calling and tasks.

- Give thanks for the Synod team asking God to bless and refresh them for the work they do on behalf of the church.

- Please pray for the current review of the Synod Office as they assist the Synod to arrange its staffing and resources to best serve the needs of the church.

- Give thanks for the new staff who have recently joined the team in most areas of work including the new multicultural ministry consultant.

- Pray for those who will be responsible for further staffing changes in the near future and ask that God will call appropriately gifted and motivated people to join the Synod team.

- Pray for the Theological Education Task Group as they guide the Synod in determining the future of theological education in the Uniting Church in Queensland.

- Please pray that the leadership offered by Synod staff might support the work of congregations and presbyteries and bless the ministry of the church in every part of the state.

- Particularly pray for the Moderator Rev Dr David Pitman, the General Secretary Rev Jenny Tymms, the Director for Financial and Property Services Mr Bruce Binnie and UnitingCare Director Ms Anne Cross in the key roles they play in leading the Synod team.

# FAST NEWS

## Weighty matter: Is religion making us fat?

The *Chicago Sun-Times* reported on Christians and obesity. "America is becoming known as a nation of gluttony and obesity, and churches are a feeding ground for this problem," says Ken Ferraro, a Purdue sociology professor who studied more than 2,500 adults over a span of eight years looking at the correlation between their religious behavior and their body mass index. Ferraro's most recent study, published in the June issue of the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, is a follow-up to a study he published in 1998, where he found there were more obese people in states with larger populations of folks claiming a religious affiliation than elsewhere. [www.suntimes.com](http://www.suntimes.com)

## Washing Our Sins Away -- Literally?

*ABC News* (USA) reported that germs may not be the only things you're washing away at the sink. Washing one's hands may also give the feeling of washing away your sins or cleansing a dirty conscience, reveals a new report in the journal *Science*. Scientists have finally put that concept to the test and have found that physical and moral purity are indeed psychologically intertwined, and sometimes even interchangeable. "Showering, a simple everyday activity, is linked to morality in a way we never knew," said study co-author Katie Liljenquist of Northwestern University. [www.abcnews.go.com](http://www.abcnews.go.com)

## Punch is served at vicar's tea party

*Timesonline* reported that when the Rev Ann Douglas retired as vicar of St John the Evangelist, her parishioners organised a farewell tea party. Sadly the event did not proceed in the spiritual and genteel manner one might expect: it came to an abrupt end when a senior vicar of the diocese was punched in the face and had a soft drink poured over his head. A guest said: "It was such a shock, you don't expect that at a vicar's tea party. After the reverend was hit all hell broke loose." [www.timesonline.co.uk](http://www.timesonline.co.uk)

## Volunteers needed for Nightclub coffee van

Wesley Mission wants to establish two nightclub support teams that will work in partnership with the new Salvation Army Night Club Van to support young adults in crisis. Volunteers need to be at least 18 years old and will be rostered one Friday or Saturday night per month nights from 10pm till 4am in the city and Fortitude Valley. For further information call, Rev Tim Hodgson, Wesley Mission on 0407 035 443 or email at [t.hodgson@wmb.org.au](mailto:t.hodgson@wmb.org.au)

## 1982 Popemobile sold

The *Catholic News Service* reported that an armor-plated popemobile used by Pope John Paul II during his 1982 visit to Great Britain has been sold at an auction for 37,000 pounds (US\$70,000). The converted bulletproof British Leyland vehicle had just 11,000 miles on the clock. A spokeswoman for the auction house Thomson Roddick & Medcalf told reporters that interest had been "overwhelming", with inquiries coming from around the world. [www.catholicnews.com](http://www.catholicnews.com)

## Wanted: musicians and singers

Musicians and singers are wanted for new contemporary worship service on Sunday evenings at Merthyr Uniting Church. This is a new Church plant aimed as an outreach worship service for the 18-30 which is a modern, non-liturgical format that features up beat worship and inspirational Jesus-centred, teaching and preaching. If you would love to help Merthyr Uniting Church build God's church in New Farm, or can volunteer once a month or more please call Pastor John Gill on 3358 6945 or 4042 198 632.

## CLASSIFIEDS

### ACCOMMODATION

**London B & B.** Easy city access; lge double room, ensuite, self-catering. Reas rates. [rachel@brockleybandb.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:rachel@brockleybandb.fsnet.co.uk) Ph/Fax: 001144.2086946538.

**Holiday unit,** modern, pool. 100m from Kings Beach Caloundra from \$300/wk. Ph Ray 0427 990 161.

**Fantastic location** for beachfront holiday in charming cottage at Currumbin Beach, Qld. Vacancies available 2006. Phone 3376 4247.

**Bribie Island Holiday Unit.** Welsby Court No. 4, overlooking Bribie passage, 2 b'rm, LUG, reasonable rates. Frank & Elva Dixon Ph 07 3264 8080.

### Coolum Beach Qld Holiday

Renovated 3 bedroom brick house, walk to patrolled beach & shops. Church members discount. Book on-line: <http://users.tpg.com.au/coolumb> or call 0418 889657.

### Older style country cottage for rent.

Previous manse on same grounds as church. Shared entry. 20mins to Ipswich. ph 54672244 / 54672322.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Passover & Easter next year in Jerusalem.** Join Rev Dr Geoff & Mrs Lorraine Pankhurst on pilgrimage to Israel, Greece & Turkey, including Gallipoli & Churches of Revelation. Details ph 4698 7824.

Email your classified advertisements to  
[mardi.lumsden@ucentre.ucaqld.com.au](mailto:mardi.lumsden@ucentre.ucaqld.com.au)  
or fax 07 3377 9796

## WANTED FOR PURCHASE



**Emmanuel College** is seeking to purchase timber pews to match those existing in its Chapel.

Alternatively, the College is interested in purchasing 22 good quality timber pews, approximately 2800mm in length.

Enquires can be made to the Chaplain

Phone: 5561 4034

Email: [tking@emmanuel.qld.edu.au](mailto:tking@emmanuel.qld.edu.au)

# LETTERS

## Call for unity in doctrine

Thanks to Bruce Gulley for drawing our attention to John Wesley and his call to unity in the sermon "On A Catholic Spirit".

Bruce reminds us that, in our movement forward following the recent Assembly, the Uniting Church must not fall into the trap of choosing a shallow form of unity at the cost of true doctrine.

That is always a temptation and we need to be constantly alert to the danger.

But it seems to me that we are missing the point if we see unity and doctrine in opposition to each other.

Surely the unity that we seek is a matter of doctrine. Certainly John Wesley saw it that way and there is no doubt that St Paul saw it that way.

Not only is true unity a matter of doctrine but it is perhaps the central doctrine, arising out of our understanding of the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Paul asserts that Christ has brought together what had been torn apart, that his ministry was essentially one of reconciliation and that we are called to continue in that ministry.

This is not an invitation to cosy togetherness but to Christ and to all that Christ stands for.

I was impressed by our President's answer to a journalist at the time of the Assembly who had asked if he was fearful of a schism over the matter of sexuality.

Gregor Henderson answered that he was not fearful, "because we are a Uniting Church. This is who we are. This is what we do".

That is strong doctrine and the basis of true unity.

Bill Adams  
Jindalee

## Discerning God's Will

In the September *Journey* I read with interest Rev Bruce Johnson's article *Discerning God's Will in the Uniting Church*.

I can accept what he is saying but find the logical conclusion alarming – a substantial majority of those who have chosen to walk with God under the banner of the Uniting Church are not attuned to the Will of God.

Hopefully, I can embrace those who are struggling with their faith and various issues including sexuality but I am yet to be convinced that a lot of things happening in the world are God's will.

Glen Keefer  
Cootee Bay

## No messy middle

I refer to *Journey* August edition to a letter entitled *Messy Middle*.

May I point out for the record, that on the matter of homosexual acts, a report was in fact presented to the 1970 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia.

However, what is of great significance is the minuted decision of that Assembly, rather than the content of the report which may or may not have been accepted in all of its entirety by members of the Assembly.

That Assembly, in Minute 120 clause 6, before it made any comment in relation to legislation, declared that the Assembly does not condone any mutual homosexual acts.

It then went on to make a further declaration of the Assembly's belief that such behaviour between consenting adults in private should not attract the sanctions of the law.

I believe this does clarify the fact that the Assembly in 1970 made a declaration of moral principle based on Scripture and only made comment regarding the legal obligation of the law after that declaration had been established.

Rev Ron Clark  
Clerk of Assembly  
Presbyterian Church of Australia

## UCA mission for Christ

I have contemplated with deep sorrow the shattering of the Uniting Church over the issue of the acceptance of those of a different sexual orientation into the ministry.

Our church must have a special mission for Christ, when the forces of evil are so determined to destroy its unity and fellowship.

I have been reminded of the relationship between the early church and the religion of Israel.

The Christian gospel represented a breaking down of long-held traditions. The leaders of Israel were greatly threatened and their reaction was to condemn and, if possible, annihilate.

When disciples were brought before the Sanhedrin, as recorded in Acts chapter 5, this attitude

was most evident, until the highly respected Gamaliel made a plea for a different approach: "If this is not of God it will perish as other movements have done, if it is of God, we do not want to be found fighting against God".

The Sanhedrin listened and set the disciples free, but attitudes were not changed and persecution was soon resumed.

If Israel had accepted the challenge to include the new movement, to give up those long-held traditions, the course of history would have been vastly different.

Could it be that the advice of Gamaliel is relevant to us today?

We must not allow this issue to destroy the Uniting Church.

Instead, let us get on with the task of mission, serving Christ and the world. We can safely leave the judgement to God.

Rev Aubrey Baker  
Toowoomba

## Letters in brief

Len Notenboom (September *Journey*) wrote about science, truth and worship. Jesus says, "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth".

Which truth would Len have us worship him in? Either God made the universe and everything in it

or he did not. Either we humans are made in his loving and perfect image or we are not. Either death came into the world by Adam or it did not.

If the Bible is rubbery on our origins then it must surely be suspect on matters of salvation.

Greg Cooney  
Murgon

In September *Journey* Rev Lowry stated "I want to say emphatically that prayer does not change things."

If Rev Lowry has never seen or experienced God at work in answer to prayer, my heart aches for him.

The word of God says, "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."

H Mulville  
Townsville

My plea to Christians: Could you not omit in future what might be termed "the seasoning with judgemental passages" that so often detracts from the value of letters to the press?

If as Christian we accept that we must not judge, then we know our message will get through to the reader without the use of cynicism

Audrey Dawkins  
Buderim

## Kawana captures community

KAWANA Waters Uniting Church has had a busy year putting the grant they received from the UC Foundation to good use.

After carrying out research into the social and spiritual needs of their community, Kawana Waters Uniting Church have responded by providing opportunities for the community to meet with the church through special events during the year such as Christmas,

Easter, Australia Day and Anzac Day.

Kawana Waters member Ann Huth said the church felt it was important to connect with people in the community particularly on these occasions.

"By attaching our activities to community days, like the Home Show or Mother's and Father's Day, we have been able to meet and identify with the local people at significant times of the year."

Events also spanned generations. Beachfest Family Festival was an Easter Saturday event run collectively with the local churches with funding by the Shire Council and combined games and activities with live bands.

Christmas and Easter letterbox drops also reminded the local community of the church's presence. Events are low cost or no cost and encourage families to have fun together with no expectation of attending worship.

The congregation believes by being a continued presence they can assist in restoring community confidence in the church.

Mardi Lumsden



Kawana Waters Christmas festival

## Aged care for the learned

THE AGED Care Ministry (Residential and Community) Course is available for people interested in Pastoral Care and Chaplaincy in Aged Care Facilities and in the Community (in a person's home, respite centre etc) and for people interested in the care of ageing persons generally.

The course may be covered in one year, and integrates theory and practice. Each participant is provided with a comprehensive Learning Guide for each Unit of Competency.

Group or individual meetings are held each month, to provide discussion and information as is necessary. Teleconferences are also possible.

This course has been offered in Brisbane and beyond during 2005 and 2006.

Contact Course coordinator Rev Jan Chalmers on 0415 487 825 or email [j.chalmers@bluecare.org.au](mailto:j.chalmers@bluecare.org.au).

## Historically Speaking



### FROM PADDLEWHEELERS TO THE CITY CATS

Today, sleek, fast City Cats, with aboriginal names associated with areas of the Brisbane River, dart to and fro, up and down the river, while many continue to mourn the loss of the city's cross-river ferries.

One special cross-river ferry was the steam-driven paddlewheeler vehicular vessel, the Hetherington, which saw more than 40 years service on the river. Named after a Brisbane City Council alderman, the Hetherington initially linked Kangaroo Point to Charlotte Street in the city in a service which operated from 1913 to 1921.

From 1925, this slow, but stable lady of the river moved downstream to the Bulimba reach, linking Oxford Street, Bulimba to Commercial Road, Teneriffe. Her original passengers were intended to be horse-drawn vehicles but her latter years coincided with the arrival of the car in numbers and the construction of the Story Bridge, which, ultimately, contributed to her demise in 1953.

### Alex Gow Funerals

A Brisbane-owned family business, established in 1840.

Phone 3852 1501

# JOURNEY asks...

*Tell us how you survived the death of your spouse.*

**Brian Lee**

On a 10 day tour last year I agreed to share a room with a stranger. "I'm Harry; I'm over 70, twice widowed and now I live alone".

"I'm Brian; I'm over 70, twice widowed and now I live alone." After that introduction we got along well and had much to share.

Ministers get used to dealing with death but I can assure you it is different when the one who is the most important person in your life dies.

When Lorraine, my wife for 43 years, died 15 months after cancer was diagnosed, I found that "bereavement" does not wait for death to occur.

Those close to Lorraine, travelling with her through months of treatment and palliative care, knew that painful sense of loss many times.

What can you feel when the Palliative Care nurse, listening to her mixed up words a few days before she died, says to you, "Well, you've already had your last conversation with your wife"?

Of course, there were so many things I had wanted to say, I should have said, and had not.



When her early death seemed inevitable, Lorraine told me I should not retreat from the world because she was leaving it. I was to "get on with living".

She even suggested I would probably marry again and offered to draw up a "short list" – but didn't.

She taught me you don't have to lose your sense of humour just because you are dying!

I learnt too that preparation for death does not ease that feeling of abandonment when death comes.

I did marry again. Claire brought infectious energy, enthusiasm and joy into our life together.

It was a bitter blow to us both when four years later, Claire, too, was diagnosed with a cancer from which she died a year later.

After that second death I had less control over my emotions and must have embarrassed many friends with my easy tearfulness. It certainly embarrassed me.

How did I survive these two deaths?

Both times through months of illness, and when death came, my immediate family, some travelling long distances, made sure I was supported.

Like their mother, my daughters are practical people and helped me fulfil her wish that I "get on with living".

I am deeply grateful for the immediate and continuing loving support of friends from my home Church. Since they, too, had come to love both Lorraine and Claire, these were losses we shared in Christian fellowship.

My trust in God's love through Jesus Christ, in this life and the next, has not deserted me and I thank God for that.

**Brian Lee is a retired minister and member of The Gap Uniting Church congregation**

**Betty McNicol**

The Bible says we are to live three score year and ten. Some people do and some people don't. My husband Fred Green had 51 years and one month.

I thought I was able to cope with anything and I would be able to handle his death. I wasn't. I blamed him for dying and leaving me. I knew God had called him home but selfishly I wanted him here with me. I did not blame God, just Fred. "Why could he go and leave me alone?" That wasn't right. We were supposed to have three score years and ten at the very least.

I decided that I did not want to be here on earth anymore. I was going to walk under a large truck, that way I could be

with the love of my life.

How selfish was I, not thinking of anyone but myself.

God decided to step in and not one truck appeared. This is almost unbelievable in a town where 24 hours a day trucks are on the roads.

Even being a Christian was not enough at that time to ask God or others for help. I was grieving and had lost sight of the fact that my four children were also grieving for a father they loved.

Little did I know what God had in store for me - a new husband, a new family and a stronger renewal of my faith.

A few years later, I was to be widowed



again but without the trials and tribulations of before.

Bob died at 62 after six and a half years of marriage.

My grieving process was different this time. I never lost faith. I cried – which I had never done before. I wasn't angry like when Fred died. I somehow accepted Bob's death more easily.

Today I have a new man in my life; my faith is a lot stronger. I'm more at peace with myself and the whole world and I find great fulfilment with my family (all nine grandchildren and three great grandchildren), my church and all that I do.

**Betty McNicol is a member of Mount Louisa House of Praise, a congregation of the Uniting Church in Townsville**

**Gary Adsett**

Lois and I were married 1998. Like all newly married couples we imagined a long marriage full of joy, wonder and above all an ever increasing love for one another. This was in spite of the fact that Lois was living with cancer.

The cancer diagnosis was a turning point in our relationship. Lois naturally was fearful and apprehensive, but she chose not to let living with cancer overwhelm her. She acknowledged it, but still looked forward expectantly to the life ahead of her.

Her spirit, her vulnerability, her willingness to trust in her Godly faith was breath taking.

For approximately four months after our wedding Lois was free of any symptoms. Already a lover of life, her desire to live to the fullest increased; smelling the roses, watching sunsets, playing music, just being and reflecting, became even more important.

Sadly the symptoms reappeared and Lois' dependence upon me increased. I gave up work and became her carer little knowing

I would learn so much and ironically experience a quality of life which at times was quite extraordinary.

Even as the presence of the cancer loomed large Lois' capacity to find energy and enjoyment from the small treasures that came into her life gave me courage. This in turn, as she reported to me, gave her courage. Combined it inspired others to support us and the cycle of support continued.

Lois died at home on 14 February 1999.

A huge chasm was left in my life on Lois' death. I was sustained by my faith which had significantly matured from walking beside Lois on her journey. It was a gift amongst the sorrow.

The Spirit's comfort came in the form of family and friends.

I was also motivated to write my "thoughts on the journey" after reading a *Grief Observed* by CS Lewis.

This writing process helped enormously, both in moving through my grief and obtaining insight which I would not have



understood had I not recorded my thoughts and memories. I am happy to share these thoughts at <http://www.optusnet.com.au/~attheriver>

I learnt that the greatest treasures in life is your faith, friends and family. They are life giving, nurturing and uplifting both in the good and bad times. This learning has significantly influenced the choices I have made since.

I met Megan mid way through 2000. She is a sacrificial, unconditional, loving,

nurturing woman who made me a better person. Megan made me whole and brought more meaning to my life. She did this differently from Lois, but the effect was the same and the gift equally as precious.

We were married in 2001 and are now proud parents of another unparalleled gift – two beautiful girls.

**Gary Adsett is a member of West End Uniting Church congregation and serves as Resources and Planning Manager for the Queensland Synod**