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# Blessed are the Poor?

By Phil Smith

"GOD MUST love the poor," mused US President, Abraham Lincoln. "Why else would he have made so many of them?"

From our lounge chairs we think of "them" as being in the third world. Perhaps "the poor" live in big city slums, still too far away for personal involvement. Yet poverty is closer to home, a fact of life in all our communities, and it demands a local response.

Two thousand years ago Jesus forecast that the poor will always be with us.

Ten years ago a Rockhampton couple sensed God asking them what they were going to do about that.

Kathy Hill and her husband knew nothing about homelessness in general and certainly nothing about homelessness in their small city of 70 000.

"We asked, 'Why us?'"

"God's answer was for us to find out, look and learn then gather like-minded people," said Ms Hill.

In the parks of Australia's beef capital and by the banks of the Fitzroy River, the group that became Second Chance Ministries discovered young people and old, Indigenous and others, long-term locals and transients on their way north.

"We learned that serving homeless people is a long term commitment.

"These folk didn't get to their situation overnight and you can't turn it around overnight either."

The twenty member team that serves hot meals from their van six nights each week, includes nine regulars

from the South Rockhampton Uniting Church, who roster for Sunday and Monday nights.

"Through the Forty Days of Purpose and Community programs, our home group was challenged to look into the community and see what we could contribute," recalled church member Steven Bray.

"The Second Chance van was already operating and it gave us the benefit of working ecumenically."

Uniting Church members, Baptists, Catholics and Anglicans serve alongside people from the wider community with support from the local council.

South Rockhampton congregation has raised funds for 'Streetswags' to hand out to people sleeping outdoors.

Mr Bray said the Samford Uniting Church has supported the Rockhampton service by providing sleeping bags and blankets for distribution.

To improve tolerance and respect, the van cycles through different locations every three months.

This reduces any friction between street people and nearby house owners.

Sometimes pre-packed dinners are replaced by a barbecue.

"When we started in August 1999 there was a large proportion of young people under 21," recalled Ms Hill.

"Sometimes there's a sizeable Aboriginal clientele.

"Lately it's older people. There's no rhyme or reason to homelessness."

Not only are the homeless served. Single parents who don't have enough money to get them through to the end of the fortnight will bring their children to the van for dinner.

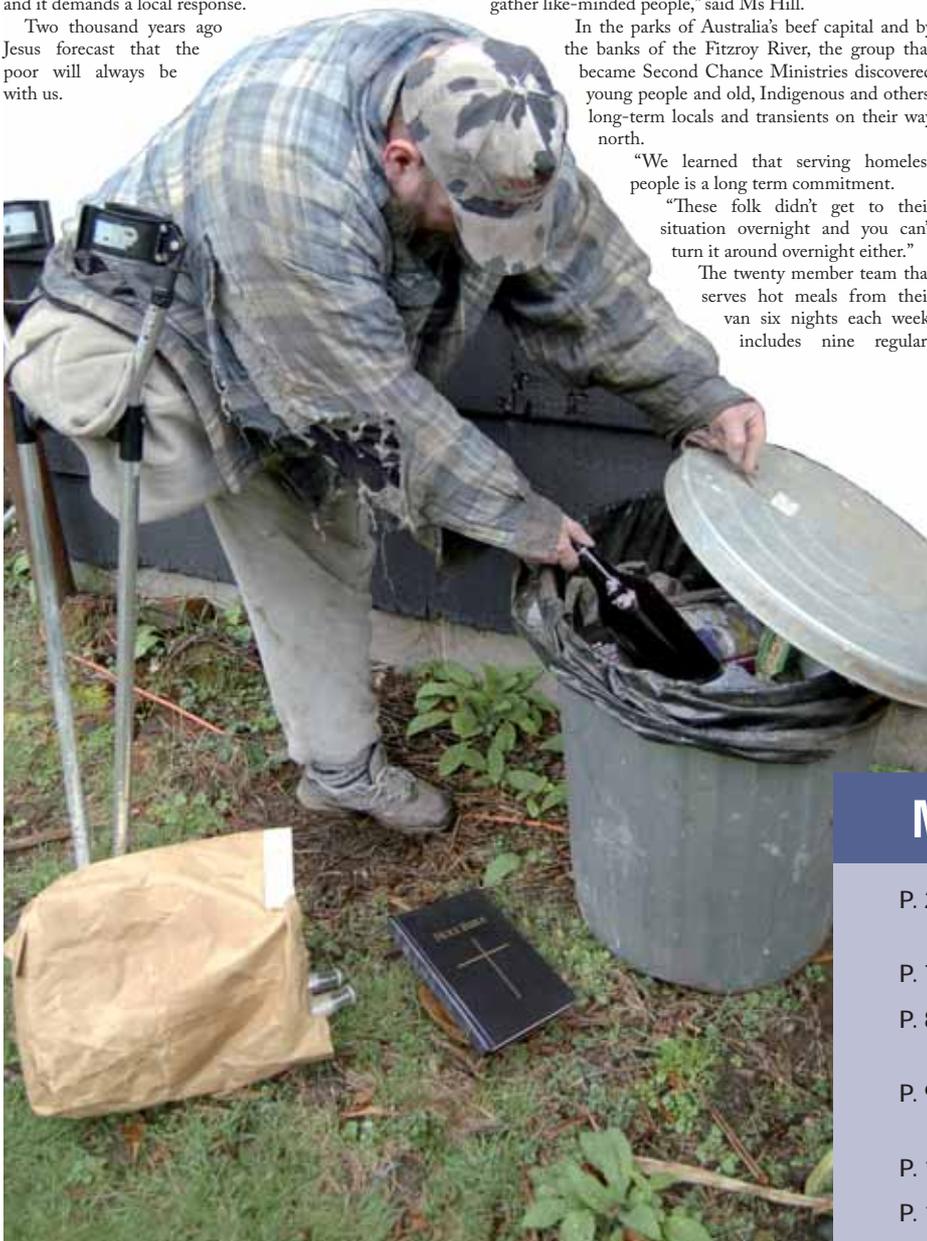
Critics see a problem that isn't being solved.

Ms Hill and her team recognise the truth of Jesus' words and see change taking place in their own lives as well as in those whom they serve.

"We have worked with one family who were broken by substance abuse and other matters for five years. I see how far they have come."

Second Chance Ministries may be a misnomer.

There are third, fourth and however many more chances while servants are on hand for those who need a hand.



## More about poverty

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# Good news for the poor?

IN PREPARATION for this article I came across the following insightful statement (source unknown):

"I used to think I was poor. Then they told me I wasn't poor, I was needy.

"Then they told me it was self-defeating to think of myself as needy. I was deprived.

"Then they told me that it was bad for my ego to think of myself as deprived, I was really underprivileged.

"Then they told me that underprivileged was overused. I was disadvantaged. I still don't have any money.

"But I have a great vocabulary."

There is an insidious and dangerous theology that is being promoted these days in some parts of the Christian Church, which encourages people to believe that wealth is a sign of God's blessing and favour.

While it is not usually said, the opposite reality is clearly inferred: if you are struggling financially it must be because you have displeased God in some way and are therefore being punished.

History does repeat itself it seems.

At the time Jesus was telling the story about the rich man and Lazarus (recorded in Luke:16), the same theology was popular.

The rich were being blessed.

The poor were being punished.

You can imagine therefore the kind of reception this story received as, yet again, Jesus confronted the demons that were so rampant in the society of his day.

There is nothing complicated about this story.

Jesus takes hold of a popular myth and explodes it in a few sentences.

The rich man ignores the plight of Lazarus in his own lifetime and pays the ultimate penalty.

He thought that his wealth and position were a gift from God, but discovered that his indifference and



## Message from the Moderator

Rev. Dr David Pitman

selfishness had separated him from God forever.

Lazarus the beggar lived his miserable life on the edge of starvation. His only companions the dogs who licked his sores, but he came to realise that he had a special place in the heart of God.

The story of the rich man and Lazarus anticipates a better world where those who have the capacity and the willingness offer support

**"Poverty stands in opposition to the Christian understanding of what it means to be human. "**

and hope to those whose lives are demeaned by prejudice, violence or unrelenting poverty.

God calls you and me to be active and committed participants in the transformation of our society.

At the inaugural Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia in 1977 we acknowledged that our response to the Christian gospel would require us to be involved in social and national affairs.

A Statement to the Nation was issued at that time which said in part:

*We pledge ourselves to seek the correction of injustices wherever they occur.*

*We will work for the eradication*

*of poverty and racism within our society and beyond.*

*We will challenge values which emphasise acquisitiveness and greed in disregard of the needs of others and which encourage a higher standard of living for the privileged in the face of the daily widening gap between the rich and poor.*

As individuals and as the Church we are called to stand in solidarity with people who are experiencing poverty, those who are marginalised or dislocated, or who are living on the fringes of our society.

Poverty stands in opposition to the Christian understanding of what it means to be human.

It violates human dignity and basic human rights.

The persistence of poverty in a country as wealthy as our own reflects poorly on our standing as a compassionate society.

Faithfulness to God expressed through justice for the poor, the social outcasts, the widows and orphans, and the refugees was the primary message of the Old Testament prophets.

We can so easily become preoccupied with ourselves and too readily indifferent to our calling in Christ to be a strong, prophetic presence and voice in our society.

Through learning, prayer and action we can deepen the Church's engagement with the poor and help reduce poverty, both within our own society and around the world.

## From the Editor

WHEN I was 18 years old I went on a family holiday to Papua New Guinea to visit my brother who was living in the Eastern Highlands.

My parents had lived in PNG during the 1960s and 1970s and both my brother and sister were born there.

We had grown up hearing about the beauty of the place, the kindness of the people and the wealth we appreciate in Australia.

At that time I thought I was a fairly socially-aware teenager, door knocking to raise money for Lifeline, selling Amnesty International T-shirts at my high-school, but nothing quite prepared me for seeing first hand just how wealthy I was.

We arrived in Port Moresby to be met by an old friend of my mother's.

They had not seen each other for 20 years. Mum had helped her get a job thirty years earlier and she wanted to show my mother what a wonderful life she had made.

We jumped in the back of a ute and drove through the city to a shanty town built over the water.

I will never forget the proud smile on her face when she pointed out which house was hers.

She had made something of her life. She had worked hard, raised a family, owned her own home and even had access to a car.

Later that day Dad said the Army had told him that under no circumstances was he to go to that particular area.

One person's shanty town is another's home.

In this edition of *Journey* we look at poverty.

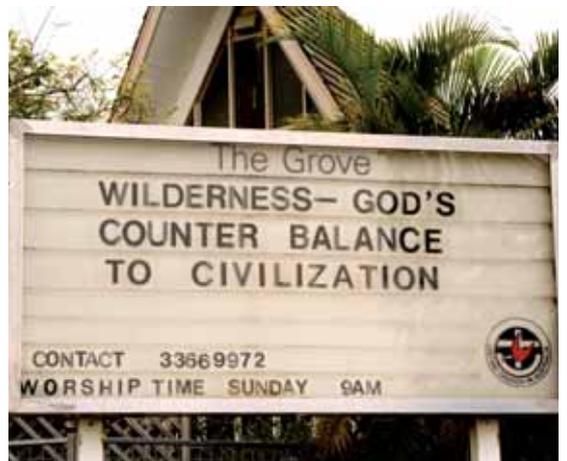
We are particularly focusing on poverty in our own backyard because poverty is not something that affects only Africa or India.

Throughout October there are many events highlighting poverty including Anti-Poverty Week and the Stand Up for Poverty campaign.

The Journey team would like to challenge our readers (and ourselves) to not only explore the meaning of poverty in our own communities, but "be the change we want to see in the world".

Mardi Lumsden

## Sign of the Times



THIS MESSAGE from The Grove Uniting Church in Ashgrove reminds us that church notice boards can make a poignant and perhaps humorous statement in six, well chosen words. Email your Signs of the Times church signs to [journey@ucaqld.com.au](mailto:journey@ucaqld.com.au).

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# Landmark surgery in Brisbane

ST ANDREW'S War Memorial Hospital has successfully completed the first ever Deep Brain Stimulation operation in Australia on a patient with Tourette Syndrome, giving Queensland teenager Bianca Saez the chance of a normal life.

The Sunshine Coast 16-year-old had one of the worst cases of this debilitating disease ever seen.

She wore a crash helmet because she constantly head butted things and needed constant psychiatric nursing.

Her parents had given up all hope of their daughter ever living a normal life and had placed her in a nursing home to protect her from a condition that leads to self-harm and violent tics.

However in September leading neurosurgeon Dr Terry Coyne and neurologist Dr Peter Silburn at St Andrew's agreed to try Deep Brain Stimulation as a means of giving Ms Saez some quality of life.

The operation was a resounding success and Ms Saez now has some chance of returning home with her parents and living a more normal existence.

Dr Silburn and Dr Coyne are world authorities in DBS and have performed other landmark operations on patients with Parkinson's disease with incredible results.



St Andrew's surgeon Dr Terry Coyne and Assistant neurosurgeon Michael Harte operate on Bianca Saez – the first operation of its kind in Australia. Photo courtesy of 60 Minutes and the Nine Network

## Drivers rally to Frontier Services

FRONTIER SERVICES has continued rallying to assist outback families.

In September they were a charity sponsor of the Red Centre to Gold Coast car rally.

In a unique new venture for the organisation, Frontier Services used the opportunity to stage a number of community events in towns and cities along the route to raise awareness of Frontier Services.

A replica of the original Dodge buckboard car used by John Flynn led off the rally cars at many of their stopovers.

The Red Centre to Gold Coast rally is made up of competitive rally sections on closed public roads or private farm tracks.

More than 100 vehicles from all over Australia competed, starting in Alice Springs on 8 September and finishing on the Gold Coast on 20 September.

Frontier Services' logo appeared on all the rally vehicles and event advertising.

Frontier Services National Development Manager David Sullivan said the rally was an ideal 'fit' for the organisation.

"It covered a lot of territory where Flynn worked and where Frontier Services is still working."

He said the theme for their promotional events was 'In the footsteps of Flynn'.

Among the events Frontier Services organised en route were school walkathons, community breakfasts and a community camp oven dinner in Longreach.

The highlight for many people was a country music concert in Townsville that featured Troy Cassar-Daly and The Songbirds.

"This was an entirely new exercise for Frontier Services but one which we think has great potential for raising awareness and donations towards our work," said Mr Sullivan.

For more information visit [www.redcentretogoldcoasttrial.com.au](http://www.redcentretogoldcoasttrial.com.au)



Behind the wheel is Patrol Minister, John Boundy and Frontier Services National Director, Rosemary Young. The vehicle which is a replica of the 1920s Dodge driven by John Flynn led off the Red Centre to Gold Coast Car Rally from Alice Springs on September 10. Photo courtesy of Greta Howard and Frontier Services

*A future of faith for Aspley Uniting Church*

Aspley Uniting Church recently celebrated the opening of the Aspley Early Childhood Education Centre after recognising the need to connect with the growing number of young families in the community.

"The centre services a need and gives us the opportunity to talk to others about Jesus Christ," Centre Director Ms Glenda Donaldson said.

"Building relationships is the foundation of what we're doing—we want to meaningfully get to know parents so they are a part of this journey with us."

Read the full story in the Spring edition of *energy* at [www.ucis.com.au](http://www.ucis.com.au).

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Celebrations at Queen Salote College in Nuku'alofa, Tonga. Photo courtesy of Angela Lester

## Pacific women make a difference

QUEENSLAND WOMEN made up two thirds of the Australian delegation to the South Pacific area forum of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women in Tonga in late September.

Seven nations were represented as 400 delegates focused on the United Nations' Millennium Goals.

They particularly considered how women make a difference in achieving those goals.

Uniting Church Adult Fellowship Vice-President

Angela Lester of Warwick was impressed with the level of enthusiasm that flowed through UCAF.

"The adult fellowship facilitated the promotion," said Mrs Lester, "but it flowed much wider.

"32 delegates went from Australia. New Zealand sent almost 50."

Hosted by Queen Salote College in Nuku'alofa, the forum began with worship during which Tonga's Queen Mother preached.

## Painting unveiled

By Kaye Ronalds

BLACKWATER UNITING Church could be a great example for congregations looking for ministry opportunities to connect with the wider community.

The ministerial placement has not been filled for many years and Blackwater had part-time support from the Emerald clergy until about 2002.

The mining town congregation doesn't have a children's ministry but jumped at the opportunity when the Duaringa Shire Council needed somewhere to hold a workshop for Indigenous children.

Local Ghungulu painter Una Kanji was able to work with a group of youngsters when the church made a room available. That paved the way for more opportunities.

After the workshop was complete, the church was also used for a craft workshop for a disabled group in the town.



Beth Baker and painter Una Kanji with the artwork for Blackwater Uniting Church. Photo by Lisa Hodge

The Indigenous women met for a short while in the supper room too.

The congregation has now been presented with a painting.

The artwork is bordered by a series of handprints, signed by each of the children who attended the workshop.

As with many small rural congregations, Blackwater has seen tough times.

The faithful five gather for worship once a month, according to congregational leader Beth Baker.

"When something like this comes out of the blue it is such a beautiful thing," she said.

When there is a need for somewhere safe for the local Indigenous people to speak to government workers about their concern for Blackwater they meet at the church.

## On a wing and a prayer

YOU MAY know Rev Tim Hodgson as the minister working with the homeless in inner city Brisbane with Wesley Mission but he is also a chaplain with the Royal Australian Air Force.

Currently Flight Lieutenant Hodgson is deployed on Operation Catalyst which is the Australian Defence Force (ADF) contribution to the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Iraq.

The ADF's role is to work with the Iraqi Government and contribute to Multi-National Force efforts to develop a secure and stable environment in Iraq.

Flt Lt Hodgson's role is to look after the spiritual and welfare needs of ADF personnel.

"It's exciting to minister to such a group of young Australians.

"Being in a war environment, many have realised how important



Rev Tim Hodgson with son Alexander prior to deployment. Photo courtesy of Sue Page

God is to their lives, and how God sustains them in such a time of uncertainty."

But ministering in Iraq is not the only thing on his mind. Like many others, Flt Lt Hodgson has a young family waiting for him back home in Brisbane.

"It is difficult to be away from family and many of us miss our loved ones very much," he said.

One of the ways for a military chaplain to keep up the morale of the troops is to hand out lollies.

According to Flt Lt Hodgson the troops love them.

Donate a packet of lollies to the Padre, who will hand them out to the troops on your congregation's behalf.

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# Kairos – in God’s time

UNITING CHURCH members including Zillmere congregation’s worship band, Warriors for Christ, joined an ecumenical service to celebrate the Kairos prison ministry.

As an interdenominational Christian ministry, Kairos team volunteers come from the Catholic and Anglican Cursillo and the Emmaus communities.

Members of the Uniting Church have long been associated with the Emmaus movement and through Emmaus many have become involved in Kairos as leaders, team members and supporters.

Rev Gregor Henderson, President of the Uniting Church in Australia, is joint national patron of Kairos Prison Ministry Australia.

The international Christian ministry has been operational in New South Wales prisons since 1995.

“Kairos prison ministry is on the cusp of entering correctional centres in Queensland”, said Col Stiller, Chairman of Kairos Queensland.

Kairos Queensland has received approval from the Department of Corrective Services and endorsement from the State Chaplaincy Board to run a six-month pilot program.

“All that we need now is a correctional centre that is prepared to facilitate the pilot program”, Mr Siller said.

To update the Cursillo and Emmaus communities, Kairos



Tony Ghee and the Zillmere Warriors for Christ from Zillmere Uniting Church lead praise and worship at the recent Kairos celebration service at Rochedale. Photo courtesy of Zillmere Uniting Church

representatives held an information and celebration evening at Rochedale.

“Kairos Outside (KO) is a

special ministry to women who have, or have had, a family member incarcerated,” said chair of Kairos Outside in Queensland, Rev Judy Gordon.

“KO has been functioning very successfully in South East Queensland for the past 8 years.”

By the end of this year Kairos in Australia will have run more

than 200 Kairos Inside courses in 14 correctional centres and more than 70 KO courses in the 10 areas currently established in 6 states and territories of Australia.

## Aspley hosts 96.5FM breakfast

ASPLEY UNITING Church’s ideas of an AM service changed recently.

It wasn’t Sunday morning and it was FM when they joined Brisbane radio station 96.5FM for a broadcast at the Aspley East State School.

There was plenty of service as congregation members helped with breakfast, inflated balloons and coloured-in with children during the *The Family Show* broadcast.

When the radio station called, Aspley Families Minister Rev Mel Perkins saw the outside broadcast

as a great opportunity to build on the church’s child care ministry.

“Our centre cares for children and offers a ministry to the whole family, caring for parents, grandparents and siblings,” said Ms Perkins.

“We’d like to offer parenting programs in the long run and build a new worshipping community. Who knows what shape that might take?”

96.5FM Mission and Partnership Coordinator Billy Diehm recognised the community connection Aspley Uniting has through its children’s ministry.

“For a long time churches have tried to build bridges to the community for people to come across,” said Mr Diehm.

“This type of partnership involving a community activity and broadcast is more like a stepping stone that brings a church and the wider community a little closer together.”



Aspley Uniting Church member Margaret Maxim hands out balloons at the 96.5FM live broadcast. Photo by David Oates

### There are some big shoes to fill in the Outback

In Australia’s Outback, the need for Ministry is as great as the vast and varied landscapes.

Frontier Services would like to hear from Ministers and Deacons who might be interested in becoming a Patrol Minister. Our 22 Ministers travel thousands of kilometres each year acting as friends and spiritual guides to people on remote properties, mine sites and Aboriginal communities.

Vacancies occur regularly as Ministers move on and our service expands.

Right now we have a vacancy for a Patrol Minister in WA’s East Kimberley region based out of Kununurra.

To find out more about Patrol Ministry, or about the current vacancy, contact the Rev David Thiem on (02) 8270 1322 or [david.t@frontierservices.org](mailto:david.t@frontierservices.org).

**Frontier Services**  
*Serving Outback Australia*

# Mt Louisa praises school chaplains

WHAT DO a local Uniting Church, successful entrepreneurs, a school principal and P&C committees have in common?

Whether it's for the sake of the kingdom, potential employees, education or general well being, they all have a stake in caring for students at their local state high school.

Townsville's Mount Louisa House of Praise pastor Anne Harley put it this way: "When we see mission as partnership, we can achieve so much more for the Kingdom of God."

Many Uniting Church members attended the dinner, helping make this year's event the most successful in its six year history, according to Scripture Union's Scott Douglas.

Ms Harley was among almost 300 very generous diners at Townsville's annual Anchor Dinner, in support of approximately 20 state school chaplains.

"For many years now Mt Louisa House of Praise has generously financially supported our local high school chaplain and in so doing we have seen ourselves as having a youth worker in our local school," explained Ms Harley.

"We meet with the chaplain each week to pray and engage in mission by taking the kids from

the school on fishing days.

"Each year on National Day of Thanksgiving and at Christmas we send chocolates to the teachers telling them we appreciate them.

"We feel this is our school! For many years we pursued this, not looking for kids to come to Mt Louisa but believing we were building the Kingdom of God.

"We have a youth ministry - 800 kids at Heatley Secondary School."

School Chaplain Adam Ginn worships at Mt Louisa House of Praise and many of the congregation's youth go to Heatley School.

The congregation also has partnerships with the University Chaplain, the local Christian Radio Station and a number of missionaries.

"God has brought this together as we have faithfully given," said Ms Harley.

"We have several businessmen and individuals who have this vision and give tens of thousands of dollars per year to extend the Kingdom of God through organisations such as Scripture Union School Chaplaincy, Live FM, and Stable on the Strand.

"They also give extremely generously to their local Church."



A group enjoys dinner together at the Bremer Brisbane Boost. Photo by Ken Acworth

## Giving Bremer a Boost

HISTORY WAS made by Oxley Uniting Church in August as it hosted the first ever Bremer Brisbane Boost combined youth and young adults worship service.

The service brought together youth and young adults from across the Presbytery to worship together, have fun and develop a sense of community.

Over 70 people attended.

The evening commenced with dinner in the hall and ended with supper at McDonalds.

In the middle was a fantastic worship service put together and led by the young people of Oxley congregation.

The theme of the service was 'party', which explored the way in which young Christians can have fun whilst remaining tangible witnesses to the transformation that Jesus Christ makes in our lives.

The service was well received by all who attended.

Tom Kerr, YACMU's Bremer

Brisbane representative, had this to say: "The Oxley team put in a great effort and have made their mark in Bremer Brisbane history!"

"The event had a really positive feel to it and I was thrilled with the number of churches that came along and supported it."

Presbytery Minister Rev Dave Baker supported this and affirmed that Oxley had set a high standard for other churches to follow.

Similar services are planned for each quarter and will be rotated throughout the Presbytery.

The next Bremer Brisbane Boost will be at Indooroopilly Uniting Church on 30 November



Heatley Secondary School chaplain Adam Ginn (back right) and friends at Mount Louisa House of Praise. Photo courtesy of Anne Harley

## Imam and the Pastor visit

IN A WORLD where the media regularly portrays acts of aggression and terror when it comes to Muslim and Christian relations, often creating a siege mentality amongst its adherents, here is a story of reconciliation and peace.

In Nigeria, where thousands have lost their lives in sectarian violence, this story of peace building was begun by two formerly bitter enemies.

Their story resulted in the film *The Imam and the Pastor* and in November these two men will be in Australia to share their story and will host forums in Indooroopilly and Toowoomba.

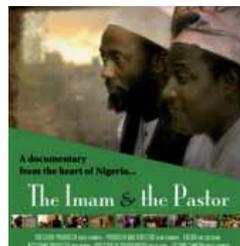
Brian Lightowler of Initiatives of Change said, "These meetings will not only provide an opportunity to hear Ashafa and Wuye tell their story, but also help in building partnerships across faiths."

Muhammad Ashafa followed a long line of conservative Muslim clerics in becoming an Imam.

He was active in fanatical groups committed to 'Islamising' the north and ridding the region of non-Muslims.

He became secretary general of the Muslim Youth Council. Pastor James Wuye, a Christian Pastor, became active in militant Christian groups and so began a counter youth organisation, the Youth Christian Association of Nigeria.

He said his "hatred for Muslims had no limits".



After a chance meeting in 1995 and months of soul-searching, both were convinced that the founders of their respective religions would want them to embrace forgiveness and reconciliation.

They knew they should lead the way by example and decided to lay down their arms and work together.

Their work in conflict resolution and peace building began in 1997 and they have since taken their strategies to every corner of the globe.

The DVD that tells their story was shown at the United Nations and the House of Commons.

*The Imam and the Pastor* seminars will be held on 8 November at Riverglenn Conference Centre, Indooroopilly and 4 November in Toowoomba.

For more information contact Brian Lightowler on 3378 0357 or [lightow@bigpond.net.au](mailto:lightow@bigpond.net.au)

For more information on the film *The Imam and the Pastor* visit [www.ftfilms.org.uk](http://www.ftfilms.org.uk)

## Will Graham heads to Oz

IN THE lead up to next year's 50th anniversary of the Billy Graham Crusades in Australia, the evangelist's grandson Will Graham is visiting Australia this month thanks to the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association of Australia (BGEA) in partnership with Queensland Baptists.

BGEA Australia Executive Director Leigh Brown said Will Graham would launch the Association's latest initiatives and meet Australians brought to Christ during his grandfather's crusades.

"The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association of Australia would like as many people as possible to celebrate the amazing impact of the Crusades by attending one of our afternoon teas with Will," he said.

"BGEA is also keen to record the stories of people whose lives were changed at any of Billy Graham's rallies.

"Will is looking forward to hearing our experiences... and hopes to reignite the flame of evangelism and discipleship that burns within all of us."

Mr Brown said many who gave their lives to Christ are continuing to spread God's message as pastors, Christian leaders and disciples in their own communities.

Register to attend an afternoon tea with Will Graham in Sydney, Melbourne or Brisbane this October. Places are limited so to avoid disappointment call now on 1300 799 727

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# Leave your nets and follow

By Rob Bos

IN HIS version of the gospel Matthew assured us the poor 'in spirit' are blessed.

Luke said, "Blessed are the poor".

Luke made that assertion within the context of Jesus' call to his disciples.

Jesus has just convinced Peter, exhausted after a night of fishing without luck, to let down his nets.

They came up full to bursting, leaving Peter both amazed and terrified.

"Lord don't come near me, I'm a sinner."

"Don't be afraid," says Jesus. "From now on you'll be catching men."

They return to shore and Jesus tells them to leave everything and follow him.

Unlike Matthew or Mark, Luke inserts a Greek word, *panta* (meaning 'everything').

"When they had brought their boats to the shore, they left *panta* (everything) and followed him.

Is 'everything' just shorthand for their boats, their nets, and poor old abandoned Zebedee?

I think not.

In Luke's gospel, when Levi rises from his desk where he is collecting taxes to follow Jesus, he "left (everything) *panta* and rose and followed him".

Luke tells the story of the rich ruler. Jesus there commands "sell *panta* (all) that you have."

For Luke, the call to discipleship is total and complete.

We are either committed to witnessing to the reign of God as God's concern and provision for the poor, or we are not.

Therefore we find in Luke the call to surrender one's possessions. The reign of God cannot be about comfort, security and possessions.

In Luke's Beatitudes blessed are "you who are poor", "you who are hungry now", "you who weep now", and "you when people hate you".

Luke drives the point home

relentlessly by adding a series of woes to those who are rich and full now, those who laugh now.

Blessed are you when people hate you, but woe to you when people speak well of you.

It is only the poor and suffering and marginalised ones who are blessed.

The rich are cursed.

Is this some kind of asceticism, which sees wealth and possessions as inherently evil?

No. But surely it is utterly impractical?

Is Luke telling us to be beggars?

Is he asking us to pool our resources into some kind of common fund, as he has the Christian community do in Acts?

Luke climaxes his constant teaching about wealth and poverty in the story of Zacchaeus.

He is the chief tax collector of

selfishness, from his bondage to possessions, from ignoring the needs of those at his door.

A huge burden was lifted from Zacchaeus.

Luke tells us that following Jesus entails a radically new attitude to possessions.

What we do with possessions is a demonstration of the quality of our discipleship.

Can we be saved?

Can the Uniting Church with all its property wealth be saved?

Leaving everything is easy for the poor; they don't have much, if anything, to leave!

Zacchaeus is a role model for rich Christians.

The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.

The Son of Man came to save us, the rich Christians of Australia in the twenty-first century.

Can he say, "Today salvation has come to this house?"

All the research tells us that people in society are inspired by Jesus, but have little time for the church.

In the gospel and Acts, Luke structures his story as the triumph of the good news.

From the commencement of Jesus' ministry, to the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost, to Paul preaching in the heart of the Empire, there is a linear and irresistible growth.

This sounds strangely discordant to us when we see the church in decline and we so often actively plan for down-sizing.

Luke challenges us and calls into question our assumptions.

Have we glossed over the fact that Christ asks us to leave everything and lost sight of the fact that it is God's mission and not ours?

Luke has a lot to say about prayer and hearing the challenging and life-changing word of God.

Do we need to recover Luke's conviction of the power of God's Spirit?

“Is Luke telling us to be beggars?”

Jericho – a town through which the caravans to the east passed.

Just so that we do not miss the obvious, Luke tells us that Zacchaeus is rich.

Luke does not record that Jesus says anything to Zacchaeus, except to say he is coming to his house.

No reprimand. No challenge. Not even a call to discipleship.

Freely, voluntarily, joyfully, Zacchaeus announces, "Half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much."

Zacchaeus had learnt to let go.

He understands that the needs of the poor and the demands of justice come first.

What does Jesus say? "Today salvation has come to this house."

Here finally, is a rich man who is saved from his greed, from



Photo by Croatian photographer Gordana Matijasic

How can we forge Christian communities where all social barriers are thrown aside so that there is genuine equality, of just sharing according to need, where forgiveness and healing are normal parts of our communal life?

Luke tells us that we can catch so many fish that our nets begin to tear.

If we let him, God might just

amaze us with what he can do – to the point where we, too, collapse at the feet of Jesus and wail with fear and awe at God's power, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am sinful and unworthy".

It is then that Jesus says, "Do not be afraid. Do not be afraid. Do not be afraid."

"From now on you will be catching people."

## Where to from here?

**Micah Challenge**  
Offering of Letters Kit  
[www.micahchallenge.org.au/resource/Offeringofletters.pdf](http://www.micahchallenge.org.au/resource/Offeringofletters.pdf)

**Make Indigenous Poverty History CD-ROM**  
[www.ncca.org.au/natsiec/indigenous\\_poverty](http://www.ncca.org.au/natsiec/indigenous_poverty)

**Making Waves Kit**  
[www.socialissues.ucaweb.com.au](http://www.socialissues.ucaweb.com.au)

**Lent Event**  
Resources for all ages  
[www.lentevent.com](http://www.lentevent.com)

**Not Enough: Combating Poverty: local action makes the difference**  
Edited by Lin Hatfield Dodds  
[www.unitingcare.org.au](http://www.unitingcare.org.au)

Here are some useful resources, organisations and documents on poverty.



**No Vagrancy Report**  
By Dr Tamara Walsh

**Scan of Disadvantage in Queensland**  
By Centre for Social Justice  
[www.ucareqld.com.au/SocialJustice](http://www.ucareqld.com.au/SocialJustice)

**Faces of Poverty: Social Justice Sunday 2008.** [www.ncca.org.au](http://www.ncca.org.au)

### JOURNEYS OF TRANSFORMATION: Wisdom from the Desert Mothers and Fathers.

Ruth Fowler, co-founder of the Christian Meditation community in Australia, will lead a retreat based on the spiritual wisdom of the Desert Mothers and Fathers, to inspire us on our meditation journey.

**9:30-3:00, Saturday November 8th** at St Peter Chanel hall, 41 Chaprowe Road, The Gap.  
Cost: \$25. Bookings essential  
Morning tea provided. BYO lunch.

**Enquiries/registrations:**  
Gabby Nelson 3711 4227, email [toga@bigpond.net.au](mailto:toga@bigpond.net.au)



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# Making the world go round

By Phil Smith

A COMMUNITY group from Brisbane's West End has seen the first fruits of an unusual and ambitious project to assist refugees on the brink of a new life in Australia, who do not have enough money, to make the final journey.

Under the auspices of TEAR Australia, the West End Migrant and Refugee Support Group has established the Refugee Airfare Loans Scheme (RALS).

The scheme provides Humanitarian Entrants, who would not otherwise be able to pay for their airfare, access to a loan for that airfare.

RALS does this without charging interest and with a repayment plan tailored to suit the applicants' financial circumstances.

The loan must be used only for the cost of the initial voyage from the country of refuge to Australia.

"RALS is not simply a credit facility for airfares," said management committee member Ewen Heathdale.

"It is a community-based initiative to assist refugees to settle in Australia.

"The purpose of having a revolving loan scheme is to maximise the capital available to assist people. This gives recipients an opportunity to assist the next generation of people in need."

Peter Khamis and Abisai Bausumo were the first beneficiaries of the loans scheme, arriving in Brisbane from Africa and settling with their families after their loan applicant Daniel Zingifuaboro worked through the process with the Migrant and Refugee Support Group.

Applicants such as Mr Zingifuaboro must meet eligibility criteria including financial and residential requirements. They may then apply for a RALS loan to bring a person to Australia.

The refugee must fulfill visa and financial requirements.

The person travelling must have their humanitarian entrant status (202 Visa) or have their migration visa and be a relative of a person



Stock image by ALIJA, [www.orbonalija.com](http://www.orbonalija.com)

who arrived in Australia as a refugee or humanitarian entrant.

He or she must also be unable to afford their airfare because their passage is not paid for by the Department of Immigration, neither they nor their sponsor has enough money themselves, or they cannot get a loan from the International Organisation for Migration or their local bank.

The Loan Scheme gives priority to people with a disability, frail aged

people, unaccompanied minors and families with young children.

"This scheme doesn't assess people in terms of what Australia can get out of their skills or qualifications," said refugee advocate, Dave Andrews.

"The purpose is to assist humanitarian entrants to reunite with their families, who would not otherwise be reasonably able to pay for their airfare from their country of refuge."



Students at Calvary Christian College in Brisbane during their Stand Up for Poverty event last year. Photo courtesy of Calvary Christian College and Dominic McInerney of World Vision Australia

## Stand up

AUSTRALIAN CHURCHES can stand against poverty

Make Poverty History has called on Australian churches to lead participation in Stand Up, a global event that aims to build momentum and solidarity in the fight against poverty.

Last year more than 107 000 Australians participated in events at their schools, workplaces, sports clubs and churches.

Come together at your community centre or church on 17-19 October and join millions of people around the globe who will Stand Up and take action.

In 2000, leaders of 189 countries signed up to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a global plan to halve poverty by 2015.

The Stand Up campaign strives to remind governments and policy makers of their promise. Stand Up will raise awareness of the MDGs and publicly demonstrate the growing global support for their achievement.

Churches can participate in Stand Up during or after the service on Sunday 19 October or hold their own Stand Up event in the community.

Learn more or register your event at [www.makepovertyhistory.com.au/standup](http://www.makepovertyhistory.com.au/standup)

## Are you poor?

By Phil Smith

LAST CHRISTMAS this writer met a new neighbour.

Our lakeside suburb isn't a particularly chatty place, but Paul stood out from our four-bedroom-brick-home set.

He parked right on the shoreline, and lived in his car.

Paul would wait for the rangers to knock off before washing in the lake near the 'No Swimming' sign and using the new barbecue shelter and toilet facility.

What to say was tricky. 'G'Day,' seemed a good start.

In our conversations I didn't learn much except that he was a friendly bloke, glad of a nice place to live until he was moved on.

What to do? I asked our church for a Christmas hamper from the emergency relief supplies.

The team pointed out useful things for someone without electricity, refrigeration or storage space.

Paul really liked the novel and appreciated the ring-pull cans and a couple of sweet treats. He had been living in his station wagon pretty well squared away.

What would that be like? This is life for thousands of Queenslanders every day, and it's far from trivial.

Here is a quiz from the UnitingCare publication, *Not Enough*.

Could you survive in poverty?

1. I know the best op shops.
2. I know how to physically defend myself.
3. I know places to sleep when I'm homeless.
4. I know how to entertain a group of friends with good stories.
5. I know how to manage when I don't have money to pay bills.
6. I know how to apply for centrelink payments
7. I know where the bulk billing doctors are?
8. I know the agencies where they give out emergency money.
9. I know how to live really rough.



## Anti-Poverty Week 2008

ANTI-POVERTY WEEK in 2008 starts on Sunday 12 October and ends on Saturday 18 October.

The UN's International Anti-Poverty Day is Friday 17 October.

Anti-Poverty Week was established in Australia as an expansion of the UN's annual International Anti-Poverty Day.

The main aims of Anti-Poverty Week are to strengthen public understanding of the causes and consequences of poverty and hardship around the world and in Australia; and to encourage research, discussion and action to address these problems, including action by individuals, communities, organisations and governments.

Anyone interested in helping to reduce poverty and hardship here or overseas is encouraged to organise their own activities during the Week or join in some being organised by other people.

The activities can be large or small and events at the local level are especially welcome.

Queensland facilitators are UnitingCare Centre for Social Justice director Greg Mackay and Mission Australia State Director Tony Stevenson.

For more information or to become involved in Anti-Poverty Week visit [www.antipovertyweek.org.au](http://www.antipovertyweek.org.au)

# Making Indigenous poverty history

By Mardi Lumsden

ON A GLOBAL scale the United Nations figure is that one in six people live on less than US\$1 a day.

When faced with this statistic it is possible to forget the extent of poverty on our own doorstep.

According to the Australian Human Rights Commission life expectancy for Indigenous Australians is almost twenty years less than it is for non-Indigenous Australians.

One of the major contributing factors towards reduced life expectancy is poverty.

There are a number of campaigns focusing on Indigenous poverty in Australia.

The Close the Gap campaign aims at decreasing the disparity in life expectancy.

At the launch of the Close the Gap campaign in April 2007, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice and Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commissioner Tom Calma commented on the general lack of energy and enthusiasm to deal with Indigenous poverty and health issues.

"As a nation we pride ourselves on being the 'lucky country' and on giving everyone a fair go," Mr Calma said during his call to action.

"Yet we remain largely unconcerned that the basic facilities

for good health do not exist for many Indigenous peoples."

Mr Calma said he did not want the Close the Gap campaign to simply talk about the crisis, but address the issues and work for a solution, a solution that he says is completely achievable.

"We will continue to work together and are determined that this issue be treated as a national priority.

"This means putting it on the top of the agenda of the Council of Australian Governments – something that is currently not the case.

"Our message and our goal is to champion hope and to focus on solutions. This crisis is not insurmountable. We can triumph.

"We are making steps but they are too slow and not broadly focused enough."

The Australian community has accepted the challenge to work towards the UN Millennium Development Goals, but Mr Calma implored Australians to also realise and acknowledge the disadvantage of Indigenous Australians.

"Why should we believe we can halve poverty in Africa by 2015 – as the Millennium Development Goals promise to do – and yet we are not bold enough to commit to action for Indigenous health within Australia?" he asked.



Olympic gold medallists Catherine Freeman and Ian Thorpe helped launch the Close the Gap Indigenous health campaign, which seeks to achieve health equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders within a generation. Photo by Michael Myers/OxfamAUS

"We implore governments to be true to their words in addressing this critical issue and we beseech all members of the Australian community to join with us, to show us your support and let governments know in no uncertain terms that the time for action and progress has arrived to address this crisis."

When commenting on the Make Indigenous Poverty History resources, Uniting Church minister Rev Mawunydjil Garawirrtja of the

Northern Synod said the best way to help indigenous people is to stop and listen to their needs.

"If you really wanted to help we should come together and you should listen to my concerns, my feelings, my thoughts," he said.

Mr Garawirrtja is also the Deputy Chair of the Aboriginal Resource and Development Services.

This is an incorporated body that aims to build capacity in the areas of health, economic, legal, social and

governance systems in north-east Arnhem Land.

He said working together was the key to reducing Indigenous poverty.

"The non-Indigenous people are looking at us on the outside part, not the inside part, what we want.

"They say they can do this and do that but sometimes they are wrong. They can work with, not for, the Indigenous people. Give them more of a chance so they can work themselves."

## The Australian dream

By Mardi Lumsden

THERE IT is, the Australian dream.

Your very own McMansion on a ¼ acre block with two nice 4 wheel drives in the garage, flat screen TV, maxed out credit cards and two pay cheques away from losing it all.

According to *Home Truths - What happened to the Great Australian Dream*, a paper by Housing Industry Association National President Bob Day, in Adelaide, Melbourne and Brisbane in 2006 the median house price was more than six times the median household income.

This is much more than the traditional understanding that the median house price should be around three times the median household income.

Mr Day's solution to restoring housing affordability seems to be suburban sprawl but his facts are interesting nonetheless.

Lifeline Community Care has responded to current debt fears and housing unaffordability by offering a new financial counselling service.

Gold Coast Lifeline Financial Counsellor Maureen Connolly said she has noticed an increased number of people not meeting their financial obligations.

"I think it is because of the

economic circumstances now, with the increased interest rate and people not being able to handle the rent, plus their credit cards getting out of hand, often they have got four, five or six credit cards."

Ms Connolly is particularly concerned about senior citizens living in poverty.

"It is a very low pension," she said.

"I've got a client who is nearly 80 and her husband died suddenly and her income went down to one pension of course.

"They had also lost all their money in an investment scam. That left her with nothing to live on.

"After the rent, she ends up with only about \$56 per week for her food and to live on.

"At some stage before the year is out I would say she will be looking at homelessness because the rent is going to go up."

In this case the client has no family to assist her.

Lifeline Gold Coast has been able to assist by waiving her debts, but that is only a temporary measure.

Ms Connolly said a lot of the problem comes from people never learning how to budget.

"I even see people in their 50s, who may have had a good income coming in and didn't budget.

"They just spent it because it was always there and they had a good reliable job and suddenly they have become unemployed.

"They have this multitude of debts and have had to cash in their superannuation to pay the debts."

According to Ms Connolly, the key to budgeting is working out how much things actually cost.

"Go back and look at your past bills, add them all up for a year and then divide that by the number of fortnights, then you can see how much you need to be putting away per fortnight just to cover that.

"Even add 10 per cent to allow for any increases," she said.

Alternatives to small luxuries like eating out could save an average family more than they realise.

"It is amazing.

"People never think twice about eating out.

"I know one couple who were spending \$150 a month eating out with their children.

"You just don't do that. That is \$150 you could be putting on your mortgage.

"Take the kids to the beach, pack a picnic lunch.

"We have got so used to entertainment, doing all these luxury things, but it is like they have put the cart before the horse.



Lifeline Gold Coast financial counsellor Maureen Connolly assists a client. Photo by Soraya Gonano

"Another young couple had a boat, a horse, a mortgage, a new super-duper car and a motorbike and then they wondered why they were in debt.

"I said, 'You really have your priorities around the wrong way. You are living as you would way down the track when your family has grown up'."

Companies offering credit cards in the mail have a lot to answer for according to Ms Connolly.

"People say, 'I can pay that credit card bill with this credit card now', but the banks don't check.

"The person may have become unemployed since the last time or

be on a disability pension.

"There is no way in the world that they can service those debts.

"It is a big temptation and a lot of people can't say no."

Ms Connolly said on the Gold Coast there is either the very wealthy or the very poor.

Contact Lifeline Community Care to make a free financial counselling appointment.

As this is a new service it may not be offered everywhere.

Ms Connolly said that at the Gold Coast there is sometimes a two or three week wait so people need to book a time in advance.

[www.lifelinebrisbane.com.au](http://www.lifelinebrisbane.com.au)

# Holding all things in common

By Phil Smith

A FEW years ago the Jerusalem City Christian Church didn't have its own building.

They used another denomination's facility, and shared everything they had, selling their property and possessions to give the money to the poor.

They broke bread in their homes, praising God each day.

Today the River Gum Ridge View Estate Uniting Church (*Journey's* hypothetical church) is an average suburban congregation.

One member owns a trailer he's glad to lend and three retired couples operate a relief pantry with groceries for poor families.

But most of the time, most members are focused on their three bedroom brick homes, mortgaged to the hilt, with enough left over for a flat screen TV or a coffee machine.

RGRVE Uniting Church has a data projector and instant coffee.

The community sees a brick building where the offerings pay off the building loan. Can church life too closely mirror the comfortable,

materialistic, real estate-based spirit of the age?

In Queensland there have been various attempts to discover what a suburban church could look like without a building.

The Emmanuel Community began in February 1975 as four families, living in close proximity, committed to sharing a lifestyle including a daily commitment to fellowship, teaching and prayer, and the breaking of bread.

Others came quickly from around Australia and within months there were 300 members.

Today Emmanuel is a recognised part of the Roman Catholic archdiocese of Brisbane.

Community elder Mike Humphrys recalled the long term intention of the community.

"I think they were hoping that this was something that would have an impact, renew and change the church," he said.

"I think earlier expressions of life were probably more radical in terms of witness.

"I think some of us would think we've retreated or even been evangelised by the world in that sense.

"The early experience was of households of people and the close sharing of life and the development of what we called clusters. People consciously chose to sell houses and move closer together, to come together for prayer, meals and sharing of goods.

"To be frank I'd have to say some of that first fervour has been lost."

At one stage, it grew to about 800 people.

Emmanuel Community is now much smaller with some of the original people in their fifties and sixties.

A few are in their eighties.

"So life is probably not as radical a witness of that Acts Two vision," said Mr Humphrys.

"But there's still enormous generosity that outpours from that commitment to that ministry.

"We have a ministry to Uganda and a range of initiatives, in the last few years, to youth. In some ways I think there's a challenge to us to regain some of that original fervour,

particularly with the young people we have an outreach to."

On the Sunshine Coast, a church known as Joshua Tree cannot meet every week because its members are spread from one end of the coast to the other.

The members are committed to prayer and devotion and keeping each other to account.

When this congregation does congregate the service might be a council creek clean-up rather than a 'church service'.

"We have a mission in the local community," said Steve Turner of the Forge Mission Training Network.

"God's grace is for all people and what we do should be a kingdom exercise in goodness because goodness is a sign of God's presence."

Mr Turner said many congregations try to squeeze themselves in to some other faith community's model of church.

"The keys might be getting to know the rest of the community, in which your community belongs, and developing some spiritual disciplines that say, 'No' to things that don't matter and 'Yes' to time with God."

Time and place are perhaps the most obvious considerations for congregations trying to establish a church without real estate.

Central is a group that meets in a pub near Brisbane's Central Station on Tuesday evenings.

More than a year ago Stewart Harris asked how to put church in the way of city office workers who would rather spend Sunday with their children or on a golf course.

"The commuters finish work at five and stream into Central Railway Station for the next two hours," noted Mr Harris.

"So why not stop at the pub for a drink and a yarn about God for forty minutes or so?"

Central isn't a songs and sermon session.

It's about finding and following Jesus within workplace water cooler conversations.

Newcomers meet Christians and swap stories of life.

For Christians who worship regularly in a suburban congregation there is an opportunity to gather in the weekday world.

Scholars from G.K. Chesterton to Michael Frost agree that since Christianity became the official state religion under Emperor Constantine, the Church has drifted toward the status quo, often taking on the material trappings of the secular world.

Perhaps more important than buildings is the value we place on our church's possessions and wealth.

How do we measure our effectiveness in the world, or does the world have our measure?

As for the Jerusalem City Christian Church – God added to their number every day, those who were being saved.



The Bible Society's Steve Davies tells his story in the pub church at Central. Photo by Phil Smith

## Indian violence directed at Christians

By Bruce Mullan

THE DEATH and destruction in an outbreak of violence against Christians in the North-East Indian state of Orissa has far exceed official figures according to reports by a Bishop of the Church of North India.

Bishop of the Diocese of Amritsar Rev Pradeep Kumar Samantaroy said the people of Orissa have not forgotten how their loved ones were axed, beheaded, torched and then blown up with gas cylinders.

"Those who survived claim that hundreds of bodies are still rotting in the forest because no search operations were conducted," the Bishop said.

"These killings are not mentioned in official figures because there was no proof of these murders."

One of the survivors, Chiranjay Digal, said, "How can we offer proof when we couldn't even go back to collect the ashes?"

His brother Akbar Digal, a pastor, was allegedly beheaded because he refused to become a Hindu.

Reports suggest at least eight other pastors were killed.

The current tensions in Orissa were sparked by killing of Hindu leader Swami Laxmanananda Saraswati.

Although left wing Maoist guerrillas claimed to have been behind the murder, violence from Hindu fundamentalist groups has been directed at Christians.

Bishop Samantaroy said several churches and prayer halls were torched, police outposts were attacked, about 100 vehicles damaged, more than 150 churches ransacked and more than 1000 houses have been burnt.

The Evangelical Fellowship of India (EFI) reports around 13 000 Christians are in relief camps while others are taking refuge in jungles or their whereabouts are not yet known.

The EFI claims 35 Christian denominations have been affected by violence, 11 schools attacked and 42 people confirmed dead.

Church of North India leaders have met with the Governor of Orissa and the Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh who

has described the violence as a "national disgrace".

Church sources claim police numbers have been inadequate to deal with the situation and have called on the central government to deploy the Army to prevent further violence.

The Church of North India has asked that those responsible for the damage to people and properties should be severely dealt with and Government officials should be punished for their gross negligence and inaction which the church says amounts to "connivance with the perpetrators".

Bishop Samantaroy said Christian victims are exhibiting extraordinary courage.

"Many of them were able to say, 'Kill us if you want but we will not change our religion.'"

The Church of North India which is a partner church of the Uniting Church in Australia has called for prayer support for Christians in Orissa and asked Australians to write to the Prime Minister of India to register their protest.

**For protest letters:**  
Dr Manmohan Singh  
Prime Minister of India  
Room No. 152 South Block  
New Delhi 110001 India  
Fax: +91 11 2301 6857



Even this woman was not spared. She was beaten and thrown in a drain. Photo by Bishop Pradeep Kumar Samantaroy

# Climate change from the water's edge

*Tuvalu is drowning. It is due to climate change. This nation, the world's smallest, is made up of nine low-lying islands north of Fiji. Kim Cain spent time in Tuvalu to get a 'water's edge' perspective of life on the front line of tidal destruction.*

THE WORLD'S smallest nation has a big problem. Slowly, surely, it is 'going under' the relentless waves of the Pacific.

Tuvaluans know it, but they don't accept that sinking is their ultimate fate.

Leaders of Government, opposition, church and town council all want the world to join them in saving their nation and, in doing so, save the world itself from the worst effects of climate change.

"Don't give up on us" is the simple plea to the world by the head of the largest non-governmental organisation in the country, Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu (the Christian Church of Tuvalu) EKT

The Rev Tofina Falani the church's president says his country is "on the frontline of climate change, and the evidence is before our eyes.

"We may be small - a peanut to a rich nation - but I am so thankful to God who gave us these small islands to call our home.

"Words can't explain it, but I am so thankful to God for this twenty-six square miles and I don't want to be forced by another power to leave this place."

But Falani acknowledges the problems his country has.

He says the people see the evidence before their eyes: big tides, coastal erosion, salty pools and ponds and "swimming holes that were once clear waters where you could see the bottom but are now made up of low, dark water and salty."

This is the personal evidence that humanises what the scientific data says is showing: rising tides due to the accumulation of greenhouse gasses due to human activity.

According to Tuvalu's Minister for the Environment Mr Tavau Teii his nation and the world thought they had fifty years to save Tuvalu, but "recent research from the University of the South Pacific now informs us that we now only have thirty."

The situation is dire.

Walk along the northern reaches of Funafuti Island - the main atoll in the Tuvalu group, and the evidence is clear: once large coconut trees have been washed into the lagoon - not by waves but by tides. A stand of a dozen more trees await their fate.

The problems are like a very sick patient; one health problem causing distress on other parts of the body.

Tuvalu has a rising salt water table due to rising tides. This causes sanitation problems, which in turn affects sewage, and has led to



Children play in the water off their island home Tuvalu. Photo by Kim Cain

spoliation of the reef around which the whole lagoon exists.

Rev Dr Kitonia Tausi, General Secretary of EKT says the time for discussion about climate change has passed.

"Enough talking. We all know the sea is rising. It is time to reclaim Tuvalu.

"What's the use of more talking... if we don't do anything we may as well leave now."

But Dr Kitonia is far from convinced that leaving is necessary.

"Why can't we raise Tuvalu up?" he asks. "It is only 26 square miles in size. And that is counting all the islands!

"With international help, we could raise Tuvalu, build sea walls to protect us from the tidal surges and embark on increasing the prosperity of our people."

He cites the example of Japan building a whole airport on an artificial island.

Other Tuvalu leaders are not limiting their hope on the world coming to their rescue. Leader of the Opposition and former Prime Minister, Mr Matia Toafu, says Tuvalu can offer to contribute to a solution by helping in carbon emissions trading schemes.

Even though Tuvalu hardly contributes to greenhouse gas emissions he says his country should examine parts of 'their own backyard' (the Pacific) for carbon storage.

"The ocean or the sea bed" could be good places for carbon to be stored, he says.

In the end the whole strategy from all island leaders is to convince the world that Tuvalu is worth

saving; they will play their part, even though they have not caused the problems in the first place.

In their view they are certainly not going anywhere just yet.

Mr Kelesoma Saloa, the Prime Minister's secretary, said, "We are putting before the world the question: 'Is it still possible for Tuvalu to exist on the face of the earth?'"

"We are asking the global community to give us that chance."

Mr Saloa outlines how his government is pursuing its goals to save the nation through international forums - especially at the United Nations and working in regional councils with powers like Australia.

However, his nation can only leverage its smallness against the global powers to save itself. But, he says, with the bigger picture in sight: "We still feel as though we have a chance to save the world by saving Tuvalu."

Or in the words of EKT president Rev Tofina Falani: "This is our land, we call it 'fenuua' - our home.

"We love Tuvalu. While I can eat Tuvaluan food in another country, speak the Tuvaluan language somewhere else, see my Tuvaluan friends and family elsewhere, I want to be in Tuvalu. Not someone else's land, but in these little atolls - the land God gave us."

*Kim Cain is the Communications Director in the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania and a member of the World Council of Churches. This story was first printed in Crosslight*

## Climate Change: the evidence

TALK TO the people of Tuvalu and they have no doubt that new terms such as 'climate change', 'global warming', 'green house gasses' and 'king tides' are a reality.

It seems all the scientific evidence of climate change presented at international conferences on the topic has been seen first hand by Tuvaluans over many years.

What have they seen with their own eyes?

• **Loss of ground water:** "All the ponds and land water have become salty - there is no freshwater anymore, except in our tanks." (President, EKT church);

• **Rising tides:** "There are higher tides - they come over the runway, now. We hear now of a new term: 'king tides'." (Minister for Environment);

• **Coastal erosion:** "There has been loss of sand and beaches. Our islands are being taken away, and large coconut trees are falling into the ocean. One small islet has disappeared all together." (Tuvaluan citizen, accountant);

• **Rising water table:** "The salinity level of the underground water has risen. The space between the water table and the ground water is getting smaller." (Leader of the Opposition)

• **Sanitation backup:** "The changing water level has affected our sanitation system and now sewage is leaching onto the reef and we see spoliation of the reef." (President of the Funafuti town council);

• **Changing weather patterns:** "Our older people say they have seen more cyclones in the last ten years than ever before." (General Secretary, EKT)

## INSPIRING MINISTRY

### CHALLENGE IN QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA



**Expressions of interest** are invited for the fulltime position of Senior Minister at the Aspley Uniting Church in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia.

**Aspley Uniting** is a congregation of the Uniting Church in Australia.

**Aspley's major ministry areas include:**

- significant pastoral ministry in retirement and aged care facilities
- a new youth and children's ministry through our recently established Early Childhood Education Centre
- active leadership in interfaith dialogue in our region of the city

**The Senior Minister will provide strategic leadership for:**

- the next phase of growth in the mission of our congregation
- new avenues of public worship
- our ministry team which comprises Families Minister, Pastoral Care Assistant, Director of the Childhood Education Centre and Youth Worker.

Prior experience in a similar position of leadership will be an advantage.

You are invited to read our Congregational Profile and Senior Minister Position Description by contacting **Rev Garth Read** at [garthread@ecn.net.au](mailto:garthread@ecn.net.au) who will be pleased to discuss any aspect of this challenging position with you.

# WHAT'S ON

**October 4, 7pm. Christmas Bowl 60th Anniversary dinner** at Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Woolloongabba. \$70/\$50 BYO. Guest speaker Prof Kevin Clements. For more information contact Jela on 3369 6792 or [admin@gtc.org.au](mailto:admin@gtc.org.au).

**October 9, 6pm. Contemporary Art and Worship Lecture.** Rev Dr Tom Elich will offer a free illustrated lecture at the Francis Rush Centre next to the Cathedral of St Stephen in Elizabeth Street Brisbane. For more information contact Molly Moore on [mollyjon@tpg.com.au](mailto:mollyjon@tpg.com.au).

**October 12-18. Anti-Poverty Week.** For more information visit [www.anti-povertyweek.org.au](http://www.anti-povertyweek.org.au).

**October 12, 2pm. Cymanfa Ganu – Welsh Hymn Singing Festival** at Holy Trinity Anglican Church Fortitude Valley. To help with the society's costs a donation will be collected during the festival. Afternoon tea at the conclusion. For more information contact Kay Mathie on 3375 3626.

**October 12, 7.00pm. Interfaith Café** at Aspley Uniting Church, 748 Robinson Road, Aspley, co-sponsored by Aspley Uniting Church and the North Brisbane Interfaith Group. It will focus on the Scriptures of the three Abrahamic Faiths- Torah, Bible and Qur'an. For more information contact Garth Read 3263 8068 or [gartbread@ecn.net.au](mailto:gartbread@ecn.net.au).

**October 17-19. Stand up for Poverty weekend.** For more information visit [www.standagainstopoverty.org](http://www.standagainstopoverty.org).

**October 18, 6.30pm. Dinner and Auction** at Sunnybank Bowls Club, Turton and Gager Sts, Sunnybank. You're invited to an evening of fun and fellowship at a dinner and auction to benefit St David's Neighbourhood Centre Coopers Plains relocation project. Tickets \$25 adults, \$22 concession, \$180 table of eight. Donations for auction appreciated. For more information contact Laraine Bence on 32743401 or [solomonr@tpg.com.au](mailto:solomonr@tpg.com.au).

**October 19, 10am. Bald Hills Uniting Church 135th Anniversary Service** at 2131 Gympie Rd, Bald Hills. Former minister Rev John Cox will be the guest preacher. Service followed by a light lunch. Contact D Whisson on 3261 7891 or [dgwibisson@optusnet.com.au](mailto:dgwibisson@optusnet.com.au).

**October 21, 9.30am. International Mission Support Group meeting** at St Andrew's Church Hall, Ann Street, Brisbane. The speaker will be Rob Lutton, UIM Community Relationship Manager. Contact Judith Finau 3711-4622 and [ljinu@covenantq.net.au](mailto:ljinu@covenantq.net.au).

**October 25, 9.30am. Men's Ministry leaders training** at Pine Rivers Uniting Church Narangba Rd Kallangur. Workshop and discussion with David Murrow, founder of [www.churchformen.com](http://www.churchformen.com). David is in Australia for one week and this is his only leader's session. The author of *Why Men Hate Going to Church* has globally proven ideas to help local churches engage their men in the life of worship and service. For more information contact Brett Kennedy on 3285 1050 or [brett.kennedy@pruc.org.au](mailto:brett.kennedy@pruc.org.au).

**October 25, 2.30-8.30pm. Queensland Synod Lay Preachers' Association meeting.** Includes workshops on using PowerPoint and visual aids. Dinner, sharing time and AGM. \$10. For more information contact Grahame Tainton on 3279 0185 or [grutandus@bigpond.net.au](mailto:grutandus@bigpond.net.au).

**October 25, 5.30pm. 1000 Men Barbecue** at Northside Christian College, Flockton St Everton Park. A BBQ and a night of fun for 1000 blokes. Book your men's group in now to hook up with men's fellowships from other churches. Special guest David Murrow, author of *Why Men Hate Going to Church*. \$10, includes gourmet BBQ. Send numbers to Phil Smith 3882 3490 or [phil.smith@ucaqld.com.au](mailto:phil.smith@ucaqld.com.au).

**November 4. The Imam and the Pastor seminar** in Toowoomba, details tba. For more information contact Brian Lightowler on 3378 0357 or [lightow@bigpond.net.au](mailto:lightow@bigpond.net.au).

**November 8, 8.45am-12pm. The Imam and the Pastor seminar** at Riverglenn Conference Centre, Kate Street, Indooroopilly. A donation of \$10 per person is encouraged to cover costs. RSVP by 31 October. For more information read story on page 6. To RSVP contact Brian Lightowler on 3378 0357 or [lightow@bigpond.net.au](mailto:lightow@bigpond.net.au).

Want to promote an event?  
Go to [www.journeyonline.com.au](http://www.journeyonline.com.au) and click on 'What's On'

## Emerald says thanks

THE TREASURER of the Emerald congregation, Mrs Carolyn Jacobson, has advised that a massive \$11 694 has been donated to assist Emerald Uniting Church with its stipend payments.

Emerald usually has a fund raising target of round \$12 000 but felt that it was not appropriate to seek to raise funds in the community after the devastation of the flood this year.

Rev Russell Reynoldson, Central Queensland Presbytery Minister Rev Kaye Ronalds and the congregation of Emerald and the members of the Presbytery of Central Queensland thank donors for the generous support given to enable mission and ministry in the community of Emerald.

## Study on the last Congregationalists

DR GWYNITH Young is beginning a research project in which she will make a written record of the church memories of former Congregationalists who still hold spiritual beliefs. If you would like to share your memories of Congregationalism with her, please contact her on (03) 9815 1938 or [gryou2@netspace.net.au](mailto:gryou2@netspace.net.au).

She is based in Victoria but participants may take part either by sending short, specific pieces of writing about their Congregational memories or by answering a set of questions designed to trigger responses about areas of Congregational experience.

## United Nations Australian youth representative applications open

APPLICATIONS ARE currently sought from young people aged 15-24 years to be the 2009 Australian Youth Representative to the United Nations.

The successful applicant will spend eight weeks as a fully accredited member of the Australian delegation to the UN General Assembly in New York.

This is a wonderful opportunity for young people to experience the breadth of the UN's work, to participate in the decision-making process and to represent the views and interests of Australian young people to the United Nations.

The UN website ([www.unya.asn.au/youthrep09](http://www.unya.asn.au/youthrep09)) has further information including the application forms and process.

Applications close 31 October.  
Contact National Faith Development Consultant Rev Sandy Boyce on [sandyb@nat.uca.org.au](mailto:sandyb@nat.uca.org.au) or 0409 283 004.

## WHY DO MEN HATE GOING TO CHURCH?

### 1000 MEN BBQ 25 OCTOBER

If you're building a church where men are glad to invite their work mates, come and get a few clues from the founder of [www.churchformen.com](http://www.churchformen.com)

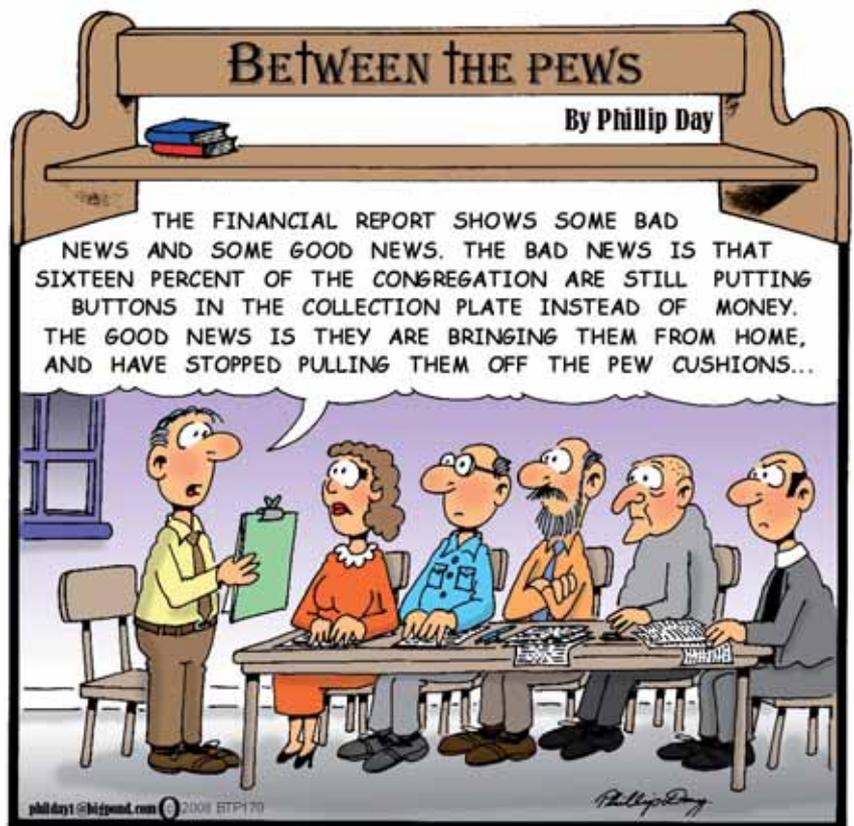
The bestselling author of *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, David Murrow will be in Brisbane on October 25th for two events only.

Don't settle for men's group once a month. Build up enthusiastic, energetic, worshipful men involved in the life of your congregation.

**Saturday 25 October 9.30am** at Pine Rivers Uniting Church: This session is for leaders and will end with a yarn over lunch. Contact Brett Kennedy - [brett.kennedy@pruc.org.au](mailto:brett.kennedy@pruc.org.au) PRUC, Narangba Rd, Kallangur.

**Saturday 25 October 5.30pm** at Northside Christian College: A barbecue and get together for 1000 men. Contact Phil Smith - [spunyarn@bigpond.net.au](mailto:spunyarn@bigpond.net.au) NCC, Flockton St, Everton Park

Call us now with numbers... we're buying lots of steak  
Phil Smith 3882 3490



## Louder than Words

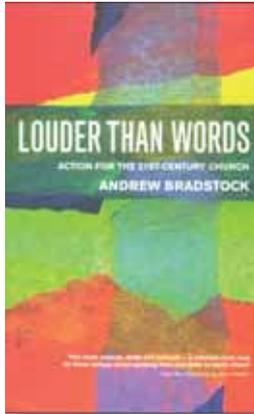
By Andrew Bradstock  
Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd  
(2007)  
RRP \$32.95

*Louder than Words* challenges the reader to do more than read.

The description in the foreword by Ann Pettifor, "a practical route map for those serious about applying their principles to world affairs" is consistent with Bradstock's assertion that "this book is about the way that churches are working to create a more just and peaceful world".

Mr Bradstock, who comes to this topic with very strong credentials, attempts to articulate for us specific ways in which Christians have and can make a difference with respect to serious social and justice issues faced today.

I believe he succeeds admirably. *Louder than Words* addresses issues such as war and terror,



climate change, poverty and multi-cultural misunderstandings.

For each of these issues he provides background information about the contexts and then gives examples of what is currently being achieved.

Although many of these are

# REVIEWS

based in the UK, they have global relevance and applicability.

This book is not simply idealistic dreaming about what we might like to do but it communicates clearly what is achievable and how to make a start.

The range of specific activities cited varies from the very concrete such as having environmental purchasing policies to high level political advocacy.

Mr Bradstock is not shy of giving the reader a personal challenge.

For example, in discussing climate change, he says "In the face of a culture which knows the issues around climate change and what needs to be done but cannot make the shift to do it, we must be among those unafraid both to speak out and act, underpinning our words

and actions by a lifestyle consistent with the changes we demand."

Although *Louder than Words* is well-written, it is not a quick read simply because the content is so challenging to those of us living in a well developed society.

I would put it in the category of essential reading for individuals and congregations of all ages who are committed to living out the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Reviewed by Elaine Ray,  
Queensland Synod Schools  
Commission

As you have no doubt perceived by now, I am excited about this book and recommend it highly.

It is a blessing for any Christian particularly Sunday School teachers, Lay Preachers and leaders.

Reviewed by Barb Bailey, a retired minister in Caloundra

## Cliff Richard the Bachelor Boy

By Steve Turner  
Carlton Books Limited (2008)  
RRP \$49.95

Don't let the title fool you. This is more than just a book about Cliff's unmarried state.

It is his life story, taking us from 1940 when he was born to 2007 when he celebrated fifty years in show business.

Having been a fan of Cliff Richard for most of those fifty years, I thought I knew just about everything there was to know about him.

How wrong I was!

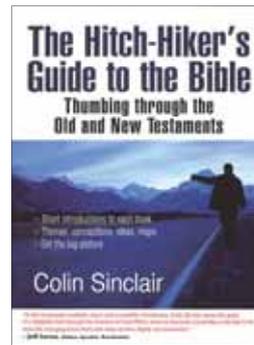
*Cliff Richard the Bachelor Boy* has nine chapters, each covering a few years in Cliff's life.

They start with a brief description of what happened during those years and then give a number of anecdotes from people who have been close to Cliff, a format that to start with I found quite difficult to read.

However, by the third chapter it was just like reading a novel and I couldn't wait to see what the relative, friend, band member etc was going to reveal next.

It was fascinating to hear the same story from two or three different sources. Some I thought I already knew about, but that in places had so many contradictions it was a bit like Chinese Whispers.

By the end of the last chapter I was reading about a man who had experienced and accomplished



## The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Bible

By Colin Sinclair  
Monarch Books, USA (2008)  
RRP \$16.95

How long have we waited for such a readable, unique tool to help us get an overview of the most life-changing book ever written!

Colin Sinclair has created a book to help us get our bearings on the biblical journey.

This guide, subtitled "Thumbing through the Old and New Testaments", has short introductions to each book of the Bible together with themes connecting ideas and maps.

As we hike through God's Word, we do so in stages: the Pentateuch, the History, Wisdom Literature, the Prophets, Between the Testaments, the Gospels and Acts, the Letters and Revelation.

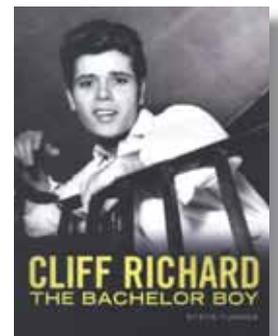
In his introduction, Mr Sinclair makes the point that although the Bible is the best selling book for many Christians it is the least read book of all.

This guide can change all that.

Written in an easy and warm style with only 191 pages this publication will open a whole new vista to any literate person.

*The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Bible* is the big picture mapped out, a book you can have beside you as you engage in your devotions, a book that can be your companion together with your Bible for a lifetime.

The way Mr Sinclair guides us on this journey makes the variety and presentation of the diverse material of Scripture come together in a unified manner.



much of what he had set out in life to do.

I was reading about a man who has touched the lives of so many people and yet not allowed their lives to change or affect him to any great extent.

My lasting impression of the book will be of a rather solitary character, who loves the Lord, is generous with his wealth and is at peace with himself.

This is very much a book for Cliff Richard fans.

Reviewed by Astrid Hill, Trinity Theological College librarian and Cliff Richard fan



Anna Hicks, Naomi Matheson and Craig Gunton on stage in *The Call*. Photo by Kenneth Aberdeen

## The Call

Musical  
Written and directed by  
Tony Pitman  
(2008)

Not all readers will be familiar with the Indooroopilly Uniting Church congregation's reputation for staging original musicals.

The tradition dates back decades, at least as far as *Noah, Build a Boat!*

*The Call* is the latest production, written and directed by Tony Pitman.

The musical director was Rev David MacGregor who wrote the songs along with Naomi Matheson, Scott McClement and Eric Woodrow with Cathy Gunton doing the choreography.

Set in a Lifeline-style call centre where staff make

a particular point of listening and never giving any advice, *The Call* delves into the nature of communication and relationship.

The Third Monkey (speak no evil) Call Centre develops a market niche but faces budget cuts and reduced resources.

So the staff decide callers won't know if no one is actually listening, because they've never said anything in reply, anyway.

Eventually the callers meet each other and go to the call centre to confront the staff and disconnection is overcome.

Mr Pitman speaks in general terms of listening to one another with justice and love.

To describe this musical as ambitious would be an understatement.

It is either vague or multi-layered depending on one's confidence in interpretation.

This reviewer was left wondering

about the nature of Christians who boast about listening in order to understand the world, but actually have nothing to say.

There were questions about prayer that never expects an answer.

If the call centre in any way reflected the church I was quite challenged by the removalists stripping away the resources.

The initial response of the staff was to rejoice in newfound freedom.

*The Call* was not a family musical.

Perfectly designed for performance in the round, it deserves to be staged at La Boite or a similar theatre where the 19 cast members could do justice to their gymnastic choreography and a large audience could delve into *The Call*.

Reviewed by Phil Smith,  
guest writer for *Journey*

12 October:  
Proserpine-Whitsunday  
Uniting Church

Proserpine-Whitsunday Uniting Church has been very busy with their annual Flower Show last month and the two major events taking place there in October.

One is a membership celebration on the 19th, when we will be welcoming over twenty people to membership of the congregation.

This celebration will take place in both of our worship centres.

The other major event is the annual Harvest Thanksgiving which we host for the community.

This is a service of worship in the Proserpine Entertainment Centre incorporating a celebration of the cane harvest and a remembrance for those in the community who have passed away in the last year.

We have also recently reshaped our evening worship into a youth oriented event.

With our developing musicians, multimedia, sharing and down-to-earth message, we are seeking to create an environment in which young people will give God a fair hearing. It is a young enterprise.

Please pray for our success.

We are in the preparatory stages of extending our worship centre in Proserpine, to double its capacity and establish a permanent office.

It would appear that God is presenting the necessary resources, convincing us that this is indeed the right time for this much needed work.

But as many readers would know a lot of things can happen in a congregation with finances and with a building project itself all capable of causing mischief.

Please pray that the project will be completed without consuming all of our attention, derailing our ministry, or dividing our people.

Thank you for praying for us, that in all these things we might bring glory to God. And may your efforts do the same.

19 October:  
Logan Central  
Multicultural Uniting  
Church

Logan City is one of the fast growing cities of migrants with most people being multi-faith worshippers within this area.

People who live here have come from all over the world.

They have come with hopes and aspirations, with challenges and opportunities.

## PRAYER DIARY

Within our multicultural church we have people from over twenty different nationalities and cultures.

We also have a high number of multicultural intermarried couples.

There are also many young people within our congregation.

There are six language specific congregations worshipping within our church: Samoan, Tongan, Burmese, Papua New Guinean, Thai and English.

Yet we are all one in Christ.

We focus on interacting in harmony with each other and have that unity in Christ.

It is a joy and a privilege to be part of this pilgrim journey with this multi and cross-cultural community.

Please pray for:

- Our combined Second Generation and Young Adult Service which is vibrant, fun and heart hitting. The first service was held in August with over eighty people attending, and the second was held in September.

- Our Community Life Service where food is given, and friendship extended to our community as a combined effort with other churches in our area. May they see the kindness of God through the generosity of the volunteers.

- Our work with Refugees in our area, Burmese, Sudanese and others with ACCESS (where our Minister is on the management committee), to empower these people so they and their families can feel a sense of belonging to this great country.

Pray also for all the Lay Preachers CALD, through Pilgrim Learning that 15 of our Leaders and Elders may experience the joy of growing in grace and in the knowledge of Christ.

Pray that they will become the Pastors of their particular language groups within our church and congregation.

26 October:  
Burleigh Heads Uniting  
Church

The Church on the Hill – Creating a Caring Community in Christ.

The average age of the membership of the Burleigh Heads Congregation is reportedly the highest of any congregation of similar size.

But we thank God for this.

There is a continuously renewing resource – it is called retirees!

So we give thanks for the steady stream of people coming in to our congregation, bringing with them years of experience and service in other congregations, even in other denominations.

This broadens our vision of reaching out to the community and the world with faith, hope and love.

Please pray for:

- The Adult Fellowship with monthly meetings, fund raising and aid distribution throughout the world, and a welcome to all.

- Weekly Indoor Bowls – active outreach into the community as well as for Church members.

- Our continuing support of congregations and Sunday Schools of the United Church of Papua New Guinea at Alotau (Milne Bay) and Misima.

- Our weekly provision of facilities to such groups as AA and Narcotics Anon, and the caring relationship extended by Church members.

- The Children's Day Care groups meeting at the Church with 'senior' members of the congregation taking the role of 'Grandmothers'.

- Members providing visitation and support for our four Retirement Homes including Talleyhaven.

- Hospital visitation at all Gold Coast hospitals.

- The team teaching RE in our schools.

- The fundraising and fellowship of the Pre-loved Fashion Shop.

- The Art Ark, learning to paint activity, reaching into the community.

- Our inspiring choir, the conductor, pianist and our Minister.

Thank God for so many opportunities and visitors from down South and other countries around the world, enriching our worship and activities.

Please pray with us, as we do in song each Sunday (TIS 768):

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow.*

*Praise God all creatures here below.*

*Praise God above, you heavenly host.*

*Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.*



Uniting Church Public Hospital Chaplaincy sector co-ordinator  
Rev Helen Prior. Photo by Osker Lau

## Chaplains search in public

PATIENTS IN public hospitals can sometimes slip through the system and miss out on the care provided by Chaplaincy services.

Uniting Church Public Hospital Chaplaincy sector co-ordinator Rev Helen Prior said there were some simple steps church members could take when they were admitted to hospital, to help ensure they had access to spiritual care.

"The easiest way for the hospital chaplains to find you is if you are on their list," Ms Prior said.

"When you are admitted to a public hospital you will be asked if you want to see a chaplain and if so, what religion and/or denomination you are.

"If you answer 'yes' to wanting to see a chaplain, and 'Uniting Church' to the religion question, you should be put on the Uniting Church chaplains' patient list.

"If you say you are 'Christian' the Uniting Church chaplains won't be advised you are in the hospital."

She said when patients were admitted in emergencies, unconscious, or even on inter-hospital transfers, sometimes the questions about chaplaincy might not be asked.

In these cases and in the cases of patients who had nominated

themselves as 'Uniting Church' but have been in hospital two or three days without seeing a chaplain, it could be necessary to ask a nurse to contact the chaplains directly.

"We aim to see a patient for the first time within two to three working days of their admission to hospital.

"If a patient has been in longer than that without being visited it is quite possible the chaplain hasn't been advised the patient is there," Ms Prior said.

"Never be afraid to ask for a chaplain's visit," she said.

"You're not being a burden or interrupting us. This is why we're here.

"Usually we will visit you in normal business hours but if there's a life-and-death crisis we are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week."

Ms Prior said some patients had also found it disconcerting to find that Bibles are no longer kept in the bedside cupboard in some public hospitals.

"There are many reasons for this, and some of those reasons change from one hospital to another" she said.

"In some hospitals, it is so we can get the right Bible for the patient.

"When you ask for a Bible in hospital feel free to ask for a large print Bible, or one that is an easier to read translation, or a lightweight one if you have arthritis, whatever you need."

Ms Prior said not all hospitals had as many different kinds of Bibles and sometimes the choice was limited by what was in stock, but where possible the chaplains would supply the Bible that best suited the patient's needs.



## Group helps heal the mind

A MAN in his thirties sits in his unit smoking. Dirty dishes are stacked in the sink. Voices are taunting him – “People don’t want you around. You are useless. Do away with yourself.”

He is on medication for these voices, but in his case it doesn’t seem to be working.

In a house a couple of streets away lives a young girl in her mid twenties.

She is battling Anorexia Nervosa.

She too has no friends, no job and nothing to live for.

Just a little further down the street is a woman in her seventies, living with her loving family. She has dementia.

How do we respond to the many faces of mental illness in our community?

In 2000, Jan Hunter from the Cherside Kedron Community Church and John Fox from the Kedron Catholic parish decided something had to be done.

They believed that an organisation based on gospel values was the way to go. They formed Group 61.

Group 61 currently supports 60 people affected by mental health issues living in the community in the northern suburbs of Brisbane and beyond to Strathpine.

Sixty volunteers, recruited mainly from the churches, take these people on outings every week.

The objects of Group 61 are to support people affected by mental health issues living in the community, collaborate with people affected by mental health issues in their journey of recovery, promote spirituality as integral to sound mental health, and raise awareness of mental health issues in the community through training and education.

Volunteers provide support through friendship and bring understanding, empowerment and fullness of life.

For more information visit [www.group61.org](http://www.group61.org)



John Fox preparing a Group 61 BBQ. Photo courtesy of Group 61

## Paying the price

There is no doubt that the need to renegotiate the 2009 Synod Mission Budget has caused much pain to those who are most aware of the desperate situations which are reliant on that continuing and consistent support.

As I read the article in September Journey I could not help but wonder if this shortfall is one of the outcomes of decisions taken at the last two Assemblies of the UCA?

I am reminded that the decisions were taken even though a survey revealed that over 80 per cent of the total church membership was not in favour of those decisions being taken.

The resultant loss of church membership has obviously contributed to this situation and will continue to result in further decline in income as even the Assembly acknowledges that our ageing congregations, many of which are held together only because of the members’ long years of association with their local church family, move on in the natural process.

The decisions have also resulted in the birth of a reform movement within the church and as the rightness of that cause becomes more widely known and attracts new members this will possibly further reduce Synod and Assembly funds.

Is it too late to bring change to the UCA by breaking the hold that our liberal leadership has, by ensuring we have leaders who have a more conservative evangelical position?

Rev Gordon Moyes wrote an article which was printed in Melbourne’s *The Age*, entitled, ‘Poor Fellow my Church’ in July 2003 which is very relevant to our position.

I encourage the reading of it.

Email [ebutler7@bigpond.com](mailto:ebutler7@bigpond.com) and I will endeavour to forward you a copy.

Ted Butler  
Atherton

With regard to the recent announcement of cuts because of insufficient funds being available for the Mission and Service Fund, I notice that cuts are being made mainly to YACMU and Mission Consultants, which to me says that our church leaders seem to be concentrating on business matters and hoping somehow the spiritual development of the church people will still occur.

Surely, at least, we should be encouraging the young people who will become the church of the future.

Against this we have highly paid personnel in the Department of Finance doing tasks that were once voluntarily done at no cost to the church.

Perhaps, we need to rethink our strategies?

D K Rea  
Karana Downs

## Thompson against propitiation

Dr Geoff Thompson (September Journey) objects to singing the song, ‘In Christ Alone’.

Why? Because it makes this statement about Jesus’ death, “Till on that cross as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied”.

Dr Thompson’s objection is that “not once in the New Testament is it ever said that Jesus bore the wrath of God”.

Really? Romans 3:25 states of Jesus Christ in his redemptive death that He was the One “whom God put forward as propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith”.

This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.

Propitiation is not a common word in our language today but it means to appease the wrath of God.

Dr Thompson seems to be harking back to the debate which C.H. Dodd raised in 1935 with his preference for the translation of “expiation” for “propitiation” for the Greek word, “hilasterion”.

Australian theologian, the late Leon Morris, wrote extensively against this “expiation” view.

In his book *The Atonement: Its Meaning & Significance* he showed the critical importance of maintaining the teaching that Jesus’ death appeased the wrath of God (propitiation).

He wrote: “If we speak of expiation our meaning is that there is an impersonal process by which the effects of sin are nullified... But if we speak of propitiation we are thinking of a personal process.”

“We are saying that God is angry when people sin and that, if they are to be forgiven, something must be done about that anger.”

“We are saying further that the death of Christ is the means of removing the divine wrath from sinners.”

Morris added that his quarrel with almost all modern translations of the Bible is that they adopt a rendering of hilasterion that “glosses over the wrath of God.” Also see Morris’s chapter on “propitiation” in *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*.

Psalm 78:38 reminds us that God “restrained his anger often and did not stir up all his wrath”.

The argument in the early chapters of Romans is that God’s wrath is directed against sin and that Christ’s death as an hilasterion means that the divine wrath is removed.

Contrary to Dr Thompson, Romans does teach that Jesus’ death bore the wrath of God.

Theologian, Roger Nicole, rightly states, “God is actually appeased and he does not deal any further in terms of his righteous anger with those who are under the benefit of propitiation.”

Therefore, the words in the song, “In Christ Alone”, agree with the biblical emphasis.

Spencer Gear  
Hervey Bay

## LETTERS

### Solemn Delight

It is with solemn delight that I read the opinion piece of Geoff Thompson (September Journey).

Yes! Worship leaders need the words and settings that enable the gathered people to enter empathetically into those “core beliefs about Jesus Christ, the cross and the nature of God” from the canonical witness (the Bible).

A community that has Uniting in its title should be the most careful of its corporate responsibilities.

For instance, in one circumstance, Charles Wesley wrote:

“Even now we think and speak the same and cordially agree; concentrated all through Jesus’ name in perfect harmony.” (*TIS* 442)

Praise God when ‘perfect harmony’ happens, but the genius of ‘one Church’ is different.

It is when we disagree most strenuously that, through the grace of Christ, we treat others with love.

John Gillanders  
Bethania

With respect to the Rev Dr Geoff Thompson’s ‘Opinion’ (September Journey), although I wholeheartedly agree with his conclusion that we need to be mindful of the theology of the songs we sing in church, I found his arguments for the exclusion of ‘Shout to the Lord’ and ‘In Christ Alone’ to be poorly thought out and thoroughly misleading.

Firstly, Dr Thompson asserts that his problem with Shout to the Lord are the ‘my’ statements, in particular ‘My Jesus’.

He seems to suggest that this opening line is tantamount to a spoilt child’s decree of ownership over a toy.

However for me such a suggestion demonstrates ignorance of the main emphasis of this great song. Setting aside all the ‘my’ statements (of which there are only four), the remainder of the song is a beautiful and ardent call for ‘us’ and ‘all the earth’ to sing praise to our King.

In this light, to sing, ‘My Jesus, my Saviour,’ becomes a pledge of loyalty to the Lord, in other words, ‘It is You and You alone I praise, my Jesus.’

For certain we need to be communal and corporate in our worship but this song by no means destroys or prohibits that.

Secondly, in regards to ‘In Christ Alone’, Dr Thompson suggests that the Bible never states that “Jesus bore the wrath of God”.

This argument is most certainly false.

More than once Paul, John and other authors of the New Testament declare that Jesus’ death on the cross was a propitiation for our sins (e.g. Rom 3:25, Heb 2:17, 1 John 2:2 and 4:10).

The word ‘propitiation’ means to atone, to appease or to expiate, that is to say Jesus was our substitute,

that God placed the burden of our sin on Jesus on the cross.

Certainly the crucifixion was life-giving and restorative because now we do not have to face the price of our rebellion: the wrath of God.

Dr Thompson seems to play with semantics when he says that Paul, in 2 Corinthians 5:19, would have said God was being reconciled rather than reconciling the world if he meant God needed to be appeased.

Of course God was reconciling the world; we are the ones who rebelled and need to be restored, not God.

But why do we need to be restored?

For because of our rebellion the wrath of God is upon us (e.g. Rom 1:18, Eph 5:6, Col 3:6).

Certainly propitiation is only one aspect of the awesome grace God demonstrated through Christ’s death and resurrection but it is most definitely a significant aspect.

‘In Christ Alone’ wonderfully and inspiringly places it amongst other amazing theological truths (e.g. ‘fullness of God in helpless babe’, ‘sin’s curse has lost its grip on me’, ‘no power of hell or scheme of man can ever pluck me from His hand’) and thus creates a masterful song that declares the wonders of the awesome God we serve.

Please continue to sing these songs that praise the Lord and tell of his magnificence.

Be mindful of what you are singing and in so doing glorify God with your whole being: mind, body and spirit.

Nathan Barton  
Toowong



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# JOURNEY asks...

*How have you experienced poverty in your church or community?*

**Katrina Woodrow**

The dogs rush outside barking - the neighbourhood children are raiding the rubbish tip again.



The rubbish tip is an open hole in the ground where we throw our scraps and packaging and cover over with dirt when it is full.

It is a treasure trove of tin cans and other interesting things for children who have nothing else to play with.

Then we have the same argument about whether the dogs should be allowed to chase

the very people that we have come to work with. "Because it's rubbish and the pit is full of germs, they could get all kinds of disease if they scratch themselves in there."

So why don't we wash the cans out and keep them to give to the children? "Because it is rubbish. Children shouldn't be playing with rubbish..."

Later it is the same conversation with a different focus.

"That medicine isn't good enough - it has been donated by a western country because it is past its use by date and it may not be full strength."

The mother who has no medicine to treat her child's disease and can see that this medicine will provide some immunisation or clear up an infection doesn't notice the expiry date.

We're driving along the road now past a boy in school uniform walking through a field.

No, he isn't skipping school. He has one set of clothes that he wears to the garden and to his school that has no windows or seats, where he learns to read and write by rote.

The boy looks up, his face lit by an enormous white smile as he proudly wheels past his toy car made out of tin cans and scrap wire.

**Katrina Woodrow lived in Zambia for a short time twenty years ago and is still trying to work out the answer to these and other mysteries**

**Rob Sandilands**

Poverty can be living in an affluent developing area and spending more than 70% of your disposable income to keep a roof over your head.

It can be reflected in signing a six month rental contract on your accommodation because the landlord wants to be able to raise the rent regularly.

That can mean losing your circle of friends each time you have to move to more affordable areas where housing is available.

Poverty might involve a cycle of not being able to afford day care services for your children, so that you can work and improve your income, but only finding part-time, casual or seasonal work.

Growing children need clothes, but how do you choose between clothing them properly and affording adequate work clothing for yourself?

Imagine wanting to escape from an abusive domestic environment, but not being able to because of the costs.

The list of 'hidden' poverty goes on.

Our church's little Op Shop (itself struggling to break even) has given us the opportunity to meet a new range of people, some of whom float in and out of the usual definition of poverty.

Others are just very astute shoppers who aren't concerned about any stigma that some might feel about purchasing second-hand clothing and other items.

But it's also becoming a social meeting

place within the community, with people just dropping in to say 'hi', or to tell us about things in their lives and share some time.

'Bums on seats' on Sunday morning are nice ... but hands and hearts reaching out full-time are better.

**Rob Sandilands manages the Living Waters Uniting Church's Op Shop.**  
Photo by Duncan Macleod



**James Hughes**

Over the past 20 years or so I have worked for the church in Aboriginal communities around Australia and in housing commission areas of Sydney and I continue to cherish the experiences and the relationships gained in these places.

At times my ignorance was revealed and sometimes there has been physical danger, but through my friends in these places, God has helped me and taught me many things I would not otherwise have learnt.

Many of these communities are incredibly rich in Indigenous cultural knowledge and in relationships.

It is a cliché, but certainly true for me, that in these communities I was given much more than I felt I gave.

At the same time I do not want to make poverty seem attractive.

It is shameful to all of us in Australia that Indigenous kids still often don't have enough



to eat and in many cases can't access good health care.

I still remember being shocked when a little Jaru girl in Western Australia excitedly said to me at school one day "Mr James, we've got power now".

The family's electricity had been disconnected for about a month and yet she came to school every day and was one of the brightest kids in that class.

I pray that she has found success in her life, but I dread that poverty has ground her down.

I was born white, male, middle-class and healthy.

I was given many opportunities in my life.

I don't think I ever did anything that caused me to deserve these advantages in my life when other kids had none of these.

I am riveted to the verse in Luke 12: 48a which reads:

"From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked."

I feel lucky to have been mentored by other church people who have also felt this call.

My challenge to other similarly advantaged people is to hear God calling from the margins and to go and join the Holy Spirit there and help to make a difference in the lives of those whom Jesus also loves.

**James Hughes is the Ministry Development Worker in Mapoon, 70 kilometres north of Weipa and works with youth on the west coast of Cape York with the Calvary Presbytery**

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