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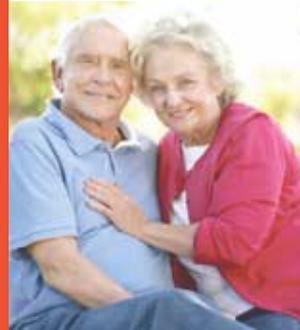
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Making a sacrifice

While Christmas is the time we celebrate God dwelling among creation, I would argue Easter is the ultimate expression of Emmanuel—God with us.

I attended the Let Them Stay protest at Lady Cilento Children’s Hospital in February. That night it wasn’t clear if the immigration department would forcibly remove baby Asha from the hospital, and the demonstration was the largest it had been since it began ten days earlier. Although it turned out to be unnecessary, most of the protesters were willing to risk arrest and blockade the hospital to prevent the child’s removal.

Although I felt strongly about the cause, I wasn’t so sure if I was prepared to be arrested that night (I had a deadline to make for this magazine after all!)

Most people are in favour of helping others, at least in principle, but it’s a different story once it becomes clear that it will cost us something. Fortunately for us, God does not have the same reservations and came to our aid through an act of radical sacrifice at Easter.

This month we have a special report about the growing number of churches grabbing headlines and risking prosecution by offering themselves as a place of sanctuary for the 267 asylum seekers facing deportation to detention on Nauru, including baby Asha (page seven). The Uniting Church is among the denominations calling for a more constructive and compassionate asylum seeker policy.

Finally, I have some sad news: This is my last edition of *Journey*. I have handed in my notice to go backpacking in Europe and the United States. It has been a privilege to serve the Uniting Church over these three years as editor of *Journey*, and I want to thank you for reading. I’m looking forward to all the ways *Journey* will continue to inspire, provoke and engage the church in the future.

Farewell, and happy Easter.

Rohan Salmond
Cross-platform editor

Contents



7 Sanctuary



10 Making sense of Easter



14 The gospel in film

4 Moderator’s message

5 Close the Gap

6 Juggling for wells

11 One in Christ

12 Profile: Lisa Meo

16 Invite someone to church

17 Review: The Anonymous Leader

18 Moderator’s medals

19 Letters and fast news

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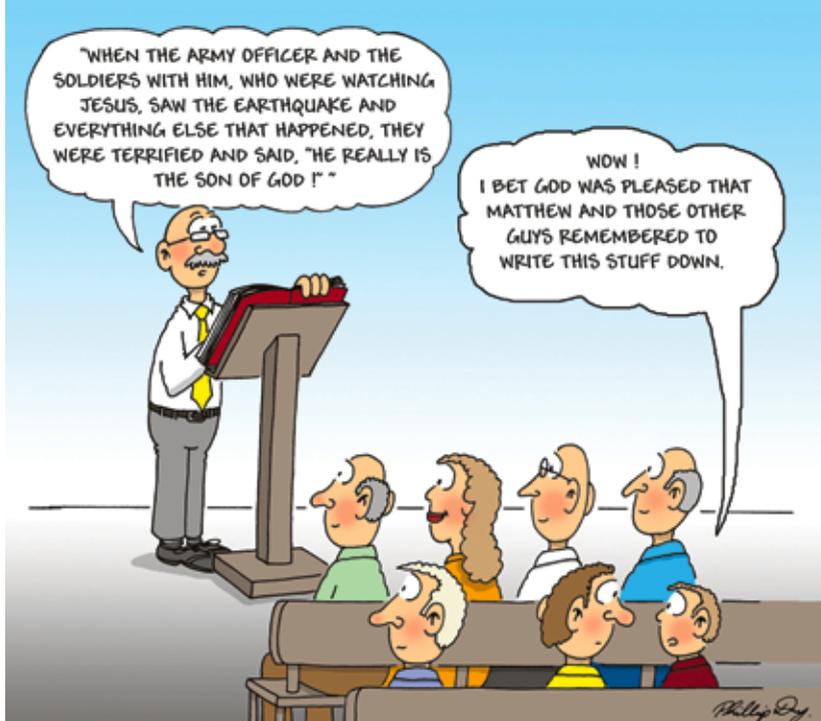
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Closing date for editorial and advertising for April *Journey* is Monday 14 March. The next issue of *Journey* will be available on Sunday 3 April.



Solidarity forever

**“But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died.”
1 Corinthians 15:20**

If there’s one word that encapsulates the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, it is, for me, the word “solidarity”.

The seasons of this time in the Christian year emphasise solidarity: Christmas, the season of “Emmanuel”—God with us; Epiphany, where Jesus identifies with us in taking John’s baptism of repentance; and Lent, which starts with Jesus being tempted as we are, where he stands with the great prophets of the Old Testament and takes us on a journey of God’s deep compassion for us in the midst of our estrangement from God.

The story of Jesus so far all looks pretty good and encouraging, even if it was totally strange, at least to the pagan traditions in the Roman Empire.

Solidarity’s a dangerous thing, however. How far do we go in solidarity with others? In our solidarity could we not be in danger of getting lost in the needs of others, and losing ourselves?

Well, the journey of Easter answers that with a clear “Yes”, for then comes the scandalous, dangerous depths of God’s solidarity—the Son stands with us even in our death. He takes the journey of the rejected and despised of the earth.

This solidarity is vindicated by the Father, who raises Jesus from death, who becomes, as Paul puts it, “the first fruits of those who have died”.

Jesus’ resurrection speaks not only of life beyond death, it speaks also of how life is called to be lived here and now. Jesus’ resurrection changed the face of ancient society, and as the church delved its meaning, the whole understanding of what it is to be human underwent a radical transformation that still reverberates today.

“Whatever else Christianity brought into the late antique world, the principal gift it offered to pagan culture was a liberation from spiritual anxiety, from the desperation born of a hopeless longing to escape ... from a morbid terror of the body, and from the fear that the cosmic powers might prevent the spirit from reaching its heavenly home” (David Bentley Hart, in *Atheist Delusions: The Christian Revolution and its Fashionable Enemies*).

To be human is not to be on an individual journey of self-fulfilment, to look after oneself and one’s tribe, to be anxious for oneself. To be human is to live in the confidence that nothing can separate us from the love of God, therefore we can follow Jesus in his solidarity with the despised and rejected, and in doing so, create something new on the earth.

Rev David Baker
Moderator, Queensland Synod

Monday Midday Prayer

As Christians come together to celebrate Easter, may we bear witness to a unity of faith and life in Christ.

Amen

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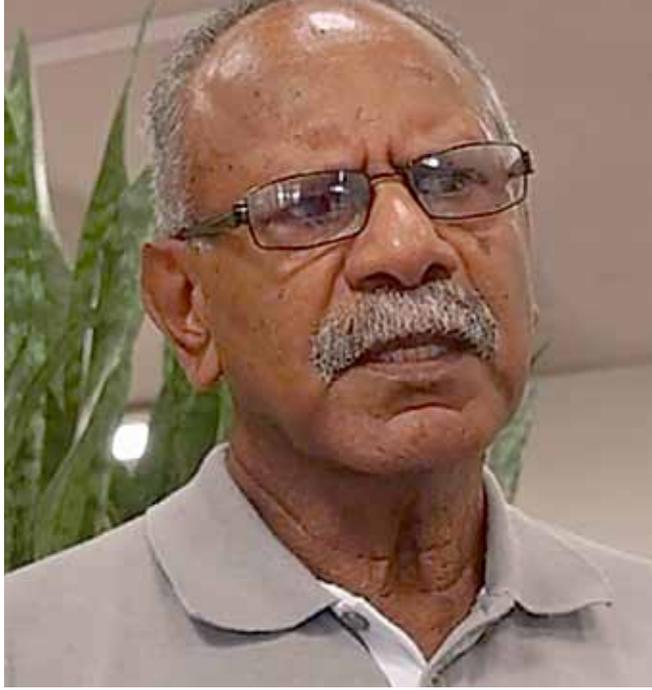
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Rev Dennis Corowa.
Photo: Rohan Salmond

Closing the great divide

Ten years after the Close the Gap campaign began, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians still die younger and are less educated than non-Indigenous Australians. **Mardi Lumsden** reports.

The eighth annual Close the Gap report (released 9 February) shows only two out of seven health, education and employment targets are on track. While halving child mortality by 2018 and better Indigenous year 12 attainment are on track, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians still have an average ten year gap in life expectancy.

In his parliamentary address the prime minister, Malcolm Turnbull said his government would intensify its efforts to engage with Indigenous Australians.

On the eve of National Close the Gap Day (19 March) Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) and Calvary Presbytery chairperson Rev Dennis Corowa says Aboriginal disadvantage “could be worse now than when our people weren’t citizens, didn’t have the right to vote or freedom of movement.

“We are at a period where Aboriginal people have seen a change take place where [legally] they have the same rights and privileges as all other Australians, but don’t have the same access to these rights and privileges as other Australians,” he says.

“Post-colonial life for Australian Aboriginal people touches every part of our life: politically, socially, economically and religiously.

“Congress has the Uniting Church and is at a huge advantage for the process of reconciliation in that it has a covenant between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people right across the nation.”

Uniting Church president Stuart McMillan commends the Close the Gap report’s highlighting of the need to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and the non-partisan support for closing the gap.

“We mustn’t play politics with First Australian communities,” he says. “We need to be together in addressing those issues that the report highlights and the strategies that have been outlined.”

In both his Survival Day message (26 January) and Easter message Stuart calls for a national conversation about sovereignty.

“Within the church we have to embrace what that conversation means for us; to honour First People as sovereign, but for us as a nation it is a really important conversation to have.

“I think many of the reasons for the gaps in health, education and other areas come back to some really fundamental things and one of them is that First Australians have never been honoured in the way, for example, our trans-Tasman Maori friends were through the Waitangi Treaty,” he says.

“I think that is an important thing the church can champion. We need to be having our own conversations within the church but we need also to be standing in solidarity with the UAICC in their aspirations beyond the conversations we have within the church.”

*For more information on Close the Gap Day visit oxfam.org.au
To read the Close the Gap report visit humanrights.gov.au*



Post-colonial life for Australian Aboriginal people touches every part of our life: politically, socially, economically and religiously

Rev Dennis Corowa



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The Lakes College student and Uniting Church member Conor Kikkert. Photo: Ashley Thompson



Juggling for wells

Redcliffe Uniting Church's Conor Kikkert can juggle in one hand while solving a Rubik's Cube in the other; but it's not this talent alone that has garnered him national media attention. **Ashley Thompson** writes.

“ Kids like Conor give everyone a huge buzz ”
Cath Taylor

You may have been surprised last November to find Conor, a conscientious and unassuming 12-year-old, busking at the Redcliffe markets and outside his school, The Lakes College to raise money for UnitingWorld's water filtration projects in Zimbabwe.

Machetes, fire batons, rings and regular old juggling balls —Conor's unique juggling habits have stopped the heart of his mum and national media alike, seeing him featured in *The North Lakes Times*, on Seven News and even national news-current affairs show *The Project*.

It was his altruistic intentions that made him stand out from a crowd of YouTubers with similar skills.

“I think everyone can make a difference in their own way,” says Conor, “I had been busking for myself before and I guess I wanted to give some away.”

“With everyone else's help and the website I raised around \$3400.”

Originally a religious education (RE) project centred on the biblical theme “Faith without deeds is dead”, Conor knew what he wanted to do after learning infant mortality statistics in science class regarding water-related sicknesses. Water.org says that a child dies every 10 seconds due to such diseases.

“Because of Conor's efforts, that threat will be vastly reduced for the families of Muzarabani, Zimbabwe,” says UnitingWorld spokeswoman Cath Taylor.

“For the first time they can safely drink water that won't put them at risk of serious illness like cholera, typhoid and diarrhoea. That's a huge burden to have lifted!”

According to Cath, “Muzarabani is one of the driest parts of Zimbabwe and Conor's efforts mean the building of deep wells with winches, buckets and lids so that they're not contaminated by animal droppings or other nasties”.

“Kids like Conor give everyone a huge buzz,” she says.

“We're reminded that this is a generation who are connected and compassionate, willing to take on the vast challenges of the world with the kind of creativity we desperately need.”

Everyone's talents are a welcome tool for mission: from busking, concerts, street stalls, muffin stands to art shows and photography competitions.

“It's not charity,” Cath explains. “It's not sending them something from our own culture we think they might need. It's sharing something valuable of ourselves so they'll have the resources to build something truly valuable for themselves—long term.”

Watch Conor juggle: tinyurl.com/jugglingconor
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Let them stay with us

Churches across the country grabbed headlines around the world last month by offering sanctuary to 267 asylum seekers threatened with deportation to Nauru. What does it mean, and why did they do it? **Rohan Salmond** reports.

Baby Asha had no idea the problem she was causing the Australian government.

Asha was a healthy one-year-old baby—fully recovered from burns accidentally sustained in detention on Nauru—but her doctors at Lady Cilento Children’s Hospital, fearing for her health if she returned to Nauru, refused to discharge her. And so Asha stayed in the hospital just beyond the grasp of the immigration department, unaware of the federal police cars circling the building outside.

Days before, the High Court ruled that the laws which make possible Australia’s offshore detention centres in foreign countries are legally and constitutionally valid. As a result of the decision, baby Asha was among 267 asylum seekers facing imminent deportation to Nauru.

There was community outcry. Lawyers, comedians, artists, trade unions, doctors and religious leaders spoke out against deporting the asylum seeker families. A rash of churches across the country flung open their doors declaring themselves to be places of sanctuary to the 267 people at risk of return to Nauru.

More than 80 congregations across the Anglican, Baptist, Pentecostal, Salvation Army, Quaker, Unitarian and Uniting churches, plus two orders of Catholic nuns and one mosque have registered as places of sanctuary—all adamant the families must stay. It’s the kind of coordinated religious civil disobedience Australia hasn’t seen since the Vietnam War. How did we get here?

We will protect you

In medieval Europe, if a person ran afoul of the government, they could flee to a church and claim sanctuary. It was recognition that there were some places secular authority could not reach.

Rev Elenie Poulos is national director of UnitingJustice, the advocacy and social justice unit of the Uniting Church Assembly.

“Sanctuary is a really longstanding tradition that is connected to places of faith and worship,” she says.

Continued >>>



Let them stay with us

“
It’s sadly
not always
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the laws of
the land are
just laws

Rev Elenie Poulos

“More recently churches in the US and in Canada have drawn on the concept of sanctuary, particularly around illegal immigrants but also in the US around the time of the Vietnam War where churches gave sanctuary to people who were resisting conscription because they were contentious objectors.”

There’s one problem: The concept of religious sanctuary was abolished from English law in 1623 and has no legal foundation in Australia. Anyone providing sanctuary to an asylum seeker risks ten years prison.

“An offer of sanctuary to people who are subject to deportation is a crime according to the Migration Act,” says Elenie. “It is a very serious act of civil disobedience and it relies on federal statutes, so it’s a federal crime.

“Christian churches have a long history of civil disobedience. It’s sadly not always the case that the laws of the land are just laws.”

Civil disobedience

One person running the risk of prosecution is Rev Yvonne McRostie, minister with Stafford Uniting Church—the first Uniting Church in Queensland to register as a place of sanctuary.

“We did it out of a sense of frustration with the bipartisan support from both Labor and Liberal federal parties, the major parties, to do offshore detention,” she says.

“It is the right thing to do. We have a gospel imperative to stand so people are treated justly. The doctors and nurses and United Nations officials are starting to say something and if we’re not standing up and saying something too, then we’re just as bad as everyone else. So we need to do this.”

Offering sanctuary is a risk, and Elenie says there’s no way to tell if the government would actually press

charges. In Canada, the Canadian Sanctuary Network reports that in 30 years the Canadian government has never prosecuted a church for harbouring a refugee. Elenie says the international attention drawn to these 267 asylum seekers through offering sanctuary is putting pressure on the government.

“One of the amazing things about what’s happened recently is the whole world is watching us, it has grabbed headlines around the world,” says Elenie. “This is a chance to show the world we’re better than this.”

Mandatory and indefinite

Immigration is a thorny policy area. It comprises a nest of moral quandaries, complicated even further by diplomatic tensions and the pressure of the electoral cycle. No single political party can lay claim to Australia’s current asylum seeker policy. It was the Keating Government which introduced mandatory, potentially indefinite detention into Australian law in 1992. In 2001, in response to asylum seekers drowning at sea, the policy was expanded, with Labor’s support, by the Howard Government with the implementation of the Pacific Solution—sending all maritime arrivals for processing on Christmas Island, Nauru and Manus Island in Papua New Guinea.

Under the current policy, Operation Sovereign Borders, there is a “zero tolerance” approach towards illegal boat arrivals. The Abbott Government followed through with Kevin Rudd’s commitment that nobody arriving in Australia by boat without a visa would be resettled in the country, even if they are found to be a genuine refugee. This has left some refugees stranded in Nauru and PNG, unable to return home, yet unable to be resettled in Australia. New Zealand has offered to take refugees from Australian offshore detention centres but it’s an offer the government has so far refused.

Uniting Church president Sutart McMillan at the rally outside Lady Cilento hospital, South Brisbane.
Photo: Holly Jewell

The Uniting Church has been a longtime critic of the Australian Government's offshore detention policy.

"What we have both on Manus and Nauru is the arbitrary and indefinite detention of people," says Elenie.

"We have people who have not done anything illegal imprisoned without hope of release. They have engaged their right to seek protection, to seek asylum, they've fled situations of persecution and violence in fear for their lives and they have a right to do that."

Do the ends justify the means?

Both Labor and the Coalition insist the policy, while harsh, is necessary to prevent vulnerable people from taking the risky sea journey to Australia. People smugglers, they argue, are taking advantage of asylum seekers, leading to deaths at sea. The only way to protect people is to deter them from making the journey in the first place.

Yvonne acknowledges the complexity of the issue. "There aren't any easy answers," she says.

"I just feel we could have done something different before resorting to offshore processing and we can be processing people a lot quicker.

"We're punishing innocent people for the crimes of other people. It seems wrong."

Elenie flatly rejects the idea that mandatory offshore detention protects asylum seekers.

"It's a ludicrous claim to say that these people, including babies and children, have to continue to suffer and give up their lives in order to deter the boats," she says.

"When this group of people includes women who have been raped and young children, children of primary school age who are so desperate that they have tried to commit suicide, it's not acceptable."

She says while boat turnbacks have curbed the number of asylum seekers arriving in Australian waters, there's no guarantee this measure protects people either.

"The boats haven't stopped. The boats are still coming, they're just not getting to Australia, and in fact we don't know if people have stopped drowning.

"We've got 37 babies that have been born in this country but we won't give them Australian citizenship, but we will send them back to Nauru which we know, and even the government's own reports have shown, is a completely unsuitable place for people. The conditions there cause a great deal of harm to people's wellbeing."

First, do no harm

Lobbying in parliament continues, but there seems to be no appetite for change in Canberra.

"The church has been engaging in the public space and with successive governments on this matter for a very, very long time and we've seen no willingness to substantially change the policy," says Elenie.

Stafford Uniting Church's offer of sanctuary has come after a lengthy process of lobbying Wayne Swan, the local member of parliament. Yvonne feels they have no other option but to potentially break the law.

"It's not something you do lightly but it's something that you have to sometimes do when you just don't have a choice. We feel like there's no other choice," she says.

It's unclear if any of the 267 asylum seekers will accept the offer of sanctuary. Some may be concerned that accepting the offer will have a negative impact on their applications for refugee status.

In a pastoral statement, Uniting Church president Stuart McMillan says the church is working with the Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce to ensure that offering sanctuary will not cause harm.

"Our first priority is to ensure that nothing we do has harmful consequences for those people seeking asylum. We are also working to gain clarity about the legal issues involved in offering sanctuary and will keep in close contact with the congregations most likely to have the offer accepted," he says.

Elenie is proud to support the congregations offering sanctuary, and continues to advocate for a positive regional solution for refugees and people seeking asylum.

"I think the church response to the sanctuary movement has just been a wonderful witness to the love of God in our world. The church believes that every person is precious and valuable and government policies shouldn't cause harm.

"The solution that the Australian government needs to be putting time and energy into is to work constructively in the region to develop frameworks that allows people to feel safe where they are: a genuine regional system of refugee protection where people's claims can be processed quickly and where they know there is a future for them somewhere."

art.com.au/sanctuary-for-asylum-seekers

If your congregation is thinking of offering sanctuary (now or in the future) please contact David Munro, Queensland Synod risk and insurance manager, on 3377 9777 for more information.

“

We're punishing innocent people for the crimes of other people. It seems wrong.

Rev Yvonne McRostie



Making sense of Easter

Conveying the meaning of Easter to people unfamiliar with the story is a job for all Christians, but it can be a challenge. **Rev Matt O'Donoghue** explores.

“
So how does
the good
news that
we celebrate
at Easter
make sense
outside of our
church walls

Easter is my favourite part of the church calendar. It's just so rich in ways to express ourselves in worship.

Everything from a sombre Tenebrae service on Maundy Thursday through to joyous messy church celebrations on Resurrection Sunday; Easter offers us so much for engaging with our faith. We do all this because Easter is the time for us to celebrate the good news of Jesus Christ.

How we understand Easter and the good news is a major part in how we understand who God is. When we look at the ministry that takes Jesus to the cross, we are exposed to just how much our creator desires a relationship with us. As Jesus travels from Galilee to Gethsemane every story reveals to us a little bit more about who God is, until at the end while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

It's in this image of self-sacrifice to the greatest extreme that we realise just who God is. A God of love so powerful that he would go to any length to find us. But while we in the church celebrate this richness of faith, for the outside world Easter is all about chocolate eggs and hot cross buns.

So how does the good news that we celebrate at Easter make sense outside of our church walls?

Some try to reclaim Easter by reclaiming the meaning of a hot cross bun. They believe that if we can make something the public likes mean something, then that will help them to understand Easter. Others go the other way, and bring chocolate eggs and treats into their church, trying to show that we're not different from other people and they can find a place with us.

But perhaps nothing says “good news” like how churches across Australia have rallied to offer sanctuary to asylum seekers.

The thing about Easter is it's how God entered into our world, about how he came looking for us. That means the good news we're celebrating is about bridging gaps and overcoming differences. The good news is for the world beyond the church. It's for the outsider and the stranger. For the unfamiliar.

The good news of Easter should be found, shared, and celebrated with those who are not like us. At Easter we look for the face of Jesus in those who are suffering, and bring them some good news, that they are not alone.

Matt is minister with St David's Coopers Plains Uniting Church.

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Uniting Church schools supplement 2016



5 questions to ask when choosing a Uniting Church school

The Uniting Church in Queensland has ten schools under its banner. These schools represent a vast variety of histories, offerings, specialisations, geographic locations and cost structures. Here are five questions to ask yourself when deciding which school is right for your child or grandchild.

1. Do I support the ethos?

Though schools may come under the Uniting Church banner, each school will adopt an ethos reflective of its own community. This ethos underpins the decision-making process and can be best seen in school policies and expectations. It is important to talk through the school's ethos and values with the principal or registrar at the interview. There should be a good alignment between the values of home and school.

2. Does the school have a focus or specialisation?

Not only do schools differ in terms of their ethos but also in terms of where they choose to focus their time and efforts. Some schools have proud sporting traditions while others have a particular educational philosophy. Schools expect students to participate in the full life of the school. As such, it is important that families understand if the school is emphasising certain offerings and if these are in keeping with your child's gifts, aptitudes or interests.

3. Can we afford the school?

It is imperative that parents calculate the full cost of sending a child to the school of their choice. Parents need to ask themselves if they can afford the school over the entirety of their child's schooling. School fees will usually increase as a student reaches Year 12. It is also important to ask the school about the percentage increase in fees from year to year. Additionally, parents should know all of the additional costs to determine affordability.

4. Does this feel right for us?

Choosing a school is on par with choosing a home. Similar to both are the intangible elements which need to be considered. A house may look excellent on paper but only a visit to the property will determine whether it makes it to the shortlist or offer stage: so too for a school. Within minutes of walking through a school and meeting the staff, it will be easy to determine

whether the school will be a good fit for your child and family.

5. Do I want to be a part of this community?

Uniting Church schools do not just provide an educational service but are, at their heart, places of community. The basis of all communities is participation and mutual support. The success of a family in the school is often based on the effort they put into making relationships with other families; being willing to support school events as well as learning the traditions, history and culture of the school. As with all things, you will get as much out of a community as you are willing to put in!

Daniel Pampuch

Executive officer, Schools Commission

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— “ —

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— ” —

Somerville House sets strong foundations for lifelong learners

Established as a school for exceptional scholarship, Somerville House retains the strength and wisdom of the past while preparing students for success in our changing world.

Established in 1899, Somerville House provides a co-educational Pre-Prep program, classes for girls from Prep to Year 12 across Junior, Middle and Senior sub-schools and boarding from Year 6.

While the School is rich in heritage and tradition, rightly valuing what the past has given us, Somerville House is an exciting and innovative centre of learning with the School consistently performing amongst the top schools in Australia.

The School’s highly qualified teachers aim to educate students to become confident and independent citizens, conscious of their strengths, responsive to the call of God in their lives, and capable and willing to contribute to the greater good of society.

According to Principal, Mrs Florence Kearney, the Somerville House curriculum provides a range

of opportunities for students to nurture spiritual enquiry, develop academic rigour and foster independent learning and critical thinking.

“Somerville House offers programs that are challenging academically, varied recreationally, stimulating socially, and rich spiritually. Our experienced staff encourage students to balance their academic, spiritual, pastoral and co-curricular pursuits, and it is through this balance that the holistic development of each student can be achieved and they can reach their potential,” Mrs Kearney said.

“Our School is well resourced and maintains its academic excellence through a rigorous academic program taught by highly qualified teachers and structured to encourage motivated learners. Our Early Learning Centre and Junior School programs aim to instil a love and curiosity of learning in our youngest students which is fostered throughout the Middle and Senior School,” she said.

Somerville House is a school of the Presbyterian and Methodist Schools Association (PMSA) and with Christian values at its core, the School curriculum ensures each student is provided with opportunities for critical, creative thinking and independent learning within an environment that fosters a sense of belonging, stability and happiness.

Students of Somerville House have the opportunity to participate in Christian Fellowship Groups, Supaclub for Junior School students and Somercircle for Middle and Senior students. Each group meets regularly and is supported by an Old Girl of the School and our School Chaplains who facilitate activities designed to enhance the spiritual life of students as well as guide times of prayer, encouragement and reflection. Throughout the year, members of our Somerville House Christian Fellowship groups enjoy Inter-School Christian Fellowship activities and camps with other PMSA schools.

Somerville House is a Prep to Year 12 day school for girls, with boarding available from Year 6 to Year 12 and a co-educational Pre-Prep program. The School offers a safe and supportive environment with renowned academic, cultural and sporting programs and modern boarding facilities.

Take a glimpse at what makes a landmark school by visiting our website to view our online presentation, *A Day in the Life of Somerville House*.

For more information or to book a tour of the School campus, contact our Admissions Office on 07 3248 9202 or visit www.somerville.qld.edu.au.

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A school of the Presbyterian and Methodist Schools Association. The PMSA is a mission of the Presbyterian and Uniting Churches. CRICOS Provider Code: 00522G

Let the adventure begin

Starting high school represents a monumental milestone in a child's life; it marks the start of a period of great growth and increased independence. For Year 7 students at Brisbane Boys' College (BBC) in Toowong, it presents an opportunity to retreat to the great outdoors.

For two years now, the College has run a unique Orient and Connect Retreat program for those starting high school; designed to help boys build resilience, alleviate any anxieties associated with the transition and foster genuine connection.

Just weeks into the first term, a noticeable sense of camaraderie and energy can be seen in the schoolyard.

According to BBC's Outdoor Education Coordinator Virginia Mitchell, the program—run over four days in the first week of school—has received an overwhelmingly positive response from parents, teachers and boys alike.

"The whole experience is built around connection. Whether boys are completely new to the College or are transitioning from our Junior School in Year 6, we want them to know that they are not only joining a community but belong within it," says Virginia.

"We want boys to feel accepted and valued for who they are from the very first day, which is why the experience runs in the first week of school. It's a crazy time to do it from a logistical perspective, not to mention the heightened sense of nervousness experienced by boys and parents alike during this period. But for us, ensuring a strong start to the year takes precedence."

In her address to parents, Virginia highlighted the power of relationships as the foundation for learning and growth.

"It is our role at BBC—and specifically through Outdoor Education—to inspire your son, encourage him to dream, take control of his life and create his own bright future.

"Challenge is not comfortable; your son will not have loved every moment or every meal. He will however, have tried, he will have persevered; he may have had to ask a mate for help, he may have even failed. It is through this process he will have learnt: About himself, about the support around him and what it is to try.

"We have high expectations of our boys but we believe your son is brave and we believe in the power of human connection and the joy it brings."



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Clayfield College is a vibrant learning community encouraging students to achieve personal excellence in a supportive environment. It is a place where all individuals are valued for their unique qualities and talents.



Clayfield College is one of Queensland's leading schools, providing a tradition of quality education.

Founded in 1931, the College has a proud history of offering a Christian learning environment in which students are encouraged, nurtured and inspired to achieve their personal best. We welcome students from all over Australia and the world, catering for girls from Pre-Prep to Year 12 and boys from Pre-Prep to Year 6.

Our aim at Clayfield College is to challenge our students academically through enquiry and engagement whilst nurturing an intellectual curiosity of the world around them. We offer a stimulating academic curriculum, and comprehensive co-curricular opportunities for our students to pursue their interest in sport, the arts and service leadership.

"The College has a strong academic emphasis where our students are encouraged to set and achieve personal academic goals. Through our extension learning programs, we offer a broad range of activities that foster essential enquiry skills, such as problem solving, creative thinking, flexibility and tenacity. Small class sizes also ensure that more attention is given to each individual student." said Mrs Bishop, Principal (Acting) at Clayfield College. "But more importantly, learning is

for life, not just for school. Our Pastoral Care Program focuses on a holistic approach which encourages our students to develop commitment, self-discipline, self-motivation and a sense of social responsibility. We encourage our students to be happy, laugh often, work hard and give back to the community."

As a Christian learning community, students attend regular Chapel services, as well as being involved in weekly Christian Education classes, we celebrate the diversity of our community and welcome students from all backgrounds.

Clayfield College is also a boarding school for girls from Year 5 to Year 12, on a daily, casual, weekly or term basis. We have developed a proud tradition of boarding for more than 75 years, enriching the lives of generations of young girls and affording them the opportunity to develop lifelong friendships. The Clayfield College Boarding House is a stand-alone and fully self-contained facility. Our girls enjoy safe, secure and comfortable surroundings where they can learn, grow and become independent young women.

We invite you to see for yourself what makes Clayfield College such a special place at our Open Morning on Wednesday 16 March, 8:45am – 10.30am.

Please visit our website to register at www.clayfield.qld.edu.au, or contact our Enrolments Manager to organise your own personal tour of the College on 07 3262 0220.

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♥ GIRLS: PRE-PREP – YEAR 12

♥ GIRLS BOARDING: YEARS 5 – 12

♥ BOYS: PRE-PREP – YEAR 6



The moderator's prayer wall.
Photo: Holly Jewell

Whose face is on your prayer wall?

As part of the Queensland Synod's commitment to being a prayerful listening church, a new program has been launched to encourage intercessory prayer among Christians. **Rohan Salmund** reports.

One of the first things you notice upon visiting the Queensland Synod moderator's office are the dozens of photographs scattered on the wall. Religious and political leaders are depicted as reminders to pray, something Rev David Baker does every day.

"I set up the wall really because I'm not a very good pray-er," says David. "Being a visual person, having my eyes open helps me to pray, so I set up the prayer wall and put some faces up there of people I believe I'm called to pray for in this role.

"Particularly one of the groups is other Christian leaders in the state. They're the men and women that are on my heart as I'm called to pray and bear witness to the oneness of our life in Christ."

Praying for one's Christian counterparts is something David wants to see more of across the Queensland Synod. Together with the Synod Ecumenical Relationships Committee (SERC) he launched One in Christ, an organised system of ecumenical prayer in October last year.

Ecumenism is the beating heart of the Uniting Church. The *Basis of Union* articulates the Uniting Church's desire to "give expression, however partially, to that unity in faith and mission" with other churches.

It continues, "It [the Uniting Church] believes that Christians in Australia are called to bear witness to a unity of faith and life in Christ which transcends cultural and economic, national and racial boundaries, and to this end the Uniting Church commits itself to seek special relationships with Churches in Asia and the Pacific."

Trinity Wellington Point Uniting Church has prayed for local church leaders for a long time, and is one of the first congregations to commit to pray as part of the One in Christ program. Rev Linda Hamill explains that intercessory prayer has been an integral part of the congregation for years.

"There is a small group of people that meet every Monday night to pray. Some of these prayers are brought forward as intercessory prayers each Sunday.

"Our counterparts in other denominations know they are prayed for because we participate in a group called Pray Redlands City. One in Christ will be an extension to this."

Congregations are encouraged to devote time during their Sunday services for intercessory prayer for other Christian leaders in their local area and create their own prayer walls in their local church. As the program continues to expand, it is hoped other denominations will reciprocate and join the covenant of intercession.

One in Christ resources can be found at ucaqld.com.au/oneinchrist

“
It [the Uniting Church] believes that Christians in Australia are called to bear witness to a unity of faith and life in Christ

Basis of Union

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when everything
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From the kitchen to the pulpit

Pacific Island women are challenging a culture which excludes them from leadership in church and society. **Dianne Jensen** talks to education advocate Lisa Meo.

“
Pacific Island societies are relatively patriarchal, and this has been encouraged and strengthened through Christianity

Fijian-Australian Lisa Meo has been knocking on the doors of the male-dominated Pacific Island churches for a long time. The retired educator and academic has been a leading voice in challenging the theological and cultural institutions which have barred women from leadership and left them vulnerable to poverty and abuse.

She knows first-hand that many women living in traditional societies are uneducated, bear children too young and are unaware of their importance in society.

“Our task is to encourage and support them to go further—from the kitchen to the pulpit!” says Lisa, the former coordinator for women at the Pacific Theological College in Suva.

Her own background is impressive. Lisa is a founding member of the Weavers advocacy network, a pioneering women’s program of the South Pacific Association of Theological Schools, and holds postgraduate qualifications including Masters in both Christian Education and Theology.

Now living in Brisbane with her husband Rev Dr Jovili Meo, Lisa’s career has taken her from one end of the Pacific to another, and across the world—a long road for the young girl who had to move from her small island village to access secondary school.

Asking questions

Her path was at first fairly traditional.

“I went as far as grade 10 and joined a Fiji Methodist Bible School and graduated with a Certificate in Bible Studies. I spent four years as a Bible teacher and married my husband and started a family,” recalls Lisa.

The Meo family moved to the theological college in Suva to enable Jovili to study, and Lisa became involved with women’s programs. She was elected as president of the Methodist Women’s Fellowship in Fiji, one of the youngest to hold the position.

As she travelled across the towns and villages, listening to stories, Lisa began to see the way in which church structure and teaching colluded with traditional mores to exclude women from power. Was this a true reflection of the gospel values she had learned and taught?

“The work took me to different areas in Fiji and overseas, where I contributed to a number of ecumenical conferences. When my husband was appointed to different postings in the church as a theological educator, I began to be interested to further my own theological education,” says Lisa. “That interest took me to study for a Diploma in Theology organised by the Melbourne Divinity School in Australia.”

It was during a trip to Japan for a conference that Lisa realised that theology could be explored through her own cultural roots.

“I became enlightened to the fact that if the Japanese can make cars using their language, and the Russians can go to space using Russian, I also can learn theology by using my Fijian language rather than English. I learnt that understanding concepts and ideas can be achieved in any language.”

Lisa was offered a six month diploma course at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey in Geneva, and went on to complete her first Masters in the United States. When the family returned to Pacific Theological College in Suva, Jovili began lecturing (later becoming principal) and Lisa became coordinator for women.

A new voice

With the World Council of Churches Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women (1988 to 1998) underway, the timing was right to turn the spotlight on the systemic exclusion of women from leadership roles in the church. The Pacific Council of Churches—with the support of the Pacific Theological College and the South Pacific Association of Theological Schools—agreed to establish the Weavers group from churches across the region to provide a voice for women.

“The name [Weavers] was chosen because weaving is a craft well-known to all women in different islands of the Pacific,” says Lisa. “Its advocacy role is a way or a methodology of weaving our theology together from different aspects of life and also raising the question, ‘Where is God in women’s daily struggles, in women’s experiences of subordination and oppression?’”

Whether they come from a matrilineal or patrilineal society, Pacific Islander women have always existed within a servant culture, she adds. A feminist vision therefore needs to differentiate cultural practices—including those in the Bible—from the will of God.

“Early missionaries proclaimed the liberating power of the gospel of Jesus Christ to different islands of the Pacific, and that brought changes and elevated women’s status to some degree. Women’s education was encouraged by those missionaries, and most abusive practices against women were abolished and their lives transformed.

“However Pacific Island societies are relatively patriarchal, and this has been encouraged and strengthened through Christianity. Women are regarded as second class citizens and almost passive listeners to any decisions of the community.”

The path from the kitchen to the pulpit must be navigated via the communal principles which underpin Pacific Islander communities, adds Lisa.

“Feminist militant and aggressive approaches have negative connotations in the Pacific communities because it appears contrary to the Pacific way of dialogue ... So, doing theology is reflecting about God’s reconciling love through Jesus Christ, which empowers as it destroys barriers between men and women, or the oppressor and the oppressed.”

Opening doors

The Weavers group focused on gaining access for women to theological education as a key step in changing the status quo.

“In most of the Pacific Islands churches, theological education was meant only for ordained ministry, meaning for males exclusively, and for that reason the laity and especially women were not included,” says Lisa.

“Theological education is a means of empowering the people of God. To educate people to know more about the God they worship, and to know how to study God’s Word and to apply this to their everyday life is paramount. This is very important for women as a means of empowering them for full participation in all decision-making bodies of church and society.”

Lisa began travelling to different areas of the Pacific and meeting with church leaders and theological school principals to convince them to open their doors to women.

“The job I was doing was not easy,” she recalls. “I trusted in the power of prayers and I knew that the Lord was with me. When I returned to Fiji, I told the committee that I never pray so much in my life like what I did in all the trips I covered. Some responded positively and a few responded negatively. From what I gathered recently, almost all member schools of the South Pacific Association of Theological Schools now have women students as well as lecturers, just a few left.”

Supporting Fijians in Australia

The Meos moved to Australia in 2002 through the invitation of the Uniting Church to establish a Fijian ministry in Melbourne and to support Jovili’s health. They taught at the United Faculty of Theology for six years before spending five more years in Sydney lecturing at the Allan Walker College and supporting the Fijian church there.

Now in Brisbane, the Meos assist the Fijian Uniting Church in Annerley, Brisbane.

Lisa and Jovili returned to Fiji in March last year to attend the Pacific Theological College’s 50 year anniversary, where they saw the increasing numbers of younger and older female students attending the college.

“It was indeed a positive and an encouraging sign of growth to us,” says Lisa. “Thanks be to God who opens doors for women to be empowered through theological education.”

“
Theological
education ... is
very important
for women as
a means of
empowering
them for full
participation
in all decision-
making bodies
of church
and society



Graphic: Holly Jewell

When script

Blatantly biblical or subtly current—Easter themes of sacrificial love, redemption and resurrection are being told and retold in modern cinema. **Ashley Thompson** explores.

“
It’s very
tricky—how do
Christians retell
these stories
and reach an
audience without
participating
in and through
mechanisms of
power and money

Dr Janice McRandal

Undertones, analogies and parables—not all Biblical retellings of the Easter story are as obvious as *The Passion of the Christ* (2004) or *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (2005).

In fact, if evangelism is the goal, producers of the ten-hour miniseries *The Bible* (2013), evangelical box office hit *Son of God* (2014) and recent release *Risen* (2016) may be shooting themselves in the foot.

Trinity College Queensland systematic theology lecturer, Dr Janice McRandal explains:

“Two years ago faith-based production company, Provident Films released *Saving Christmas* (2014), a film about the real meaning of Christmas—which is that it’s not about money. This is what the whole film was about and yet it’s a blockbuster evangelical film ... that’s making millions of dollars at the box office.

“It’s very tricky—how do Christians retell these stories and reach an audience without participating in and through mechanisms of power and money?”

Crucially, how do they manage to convey Christian imagery or ideas without alienating non-Christian viewers?

Superhero symbolism

Film enthusiast and lay education officer for the Anglican Church’s St Francis Theological College, Jonathan Sargeant admits that he is “much more interested” in Easter retellings that head into metaphor, analogy and what he likes to call “echoes”.

“There are two films that really stand out to me amongst a big crowd that includes everything from *The Green Mile* (2000) to *Babette’s Feast* (1987) to the more recent *The Dark Knight trilogy* (2005–2012) and even *Gallipoli* (2015),” says Jonathan.

“The first is *Superman Returns* (2006) and the second *Spider-Man 2* (2004) which—it really surprises me—not a lot of people talk about.”

Jonathan recounts scenes from both films that echo Easter story themes of sacrifice, redemption and resurrection, drawing particular attention to crucifix poses made by both Superman and Spider-Man in the act of sacrifice.

“One of the reasons people didn’t like *Superman Returns*—and generally speaking it is not remembered well—is because of the Christian symbolism. For me personally however, that’s actually one of the reasons I really like it,” he says.

While citing the draw of the analogies present in *Star Wars* (1977–2019), *The Matrix* (1999–2003) and even *Alien 3* (1993) Jonathan says what stands out in *Spider-Man 2* is how the witnesses of Spider-Man’s sacrifice become “inspired to carry on his mission”—a metaphor for the Great Commission often not seen in direct parallel to an echo of the Easter story.

Subvert your thinking

Dr Janice McRandal however, finds issue with retellings of “this pure white salvific figure” as it “continues to participate in an order that Jesus actually rebukes.”

“Jesus dies because he will not participate,” argues Janice.

She believes heroic retellings “nearly always of a man who lays down his life” are problematic as they “lead to the celebration of acts of heroism that are themselves embedded in acts of violence and patriarchy.”

“The Easter story isn’t some violent uprising,” she explains. “It’s a resistance to participate in the production and power of evil in the world.”



Tobey Maguire stars in *Spider-Man 2* (2004) M.
Photo: Sony Pictures



Brandon Routh stars in *Superman Returns* (2006) M.
Photo: Warner Bros. Pictures

meets scripture

Janice’s two favourite Easter-inspired films, *Snowpiercer* (2014) and *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015), subvert the ubiquitous “masculine, heroic, salvific figure” to bring the viewer a “more nuanced reading of life’s situations that is not always black and white”—something she is aware does not sit comfortably with “conservative evangelical Americans”.

These films carry out “not necessarily the theme of death and resurrection explicitly but themes of liberation”.

“I believe this is what the gospel and the Easter story are about: liberating the current world order from the oppression of the systems of power. I think the most powerful retelling of this kind of liberative message is when filmmakers refuse to participate in that.”

So who is the audience for biblical retellings of the Easter story?

Blatantly biblical

“Whether you’re satisfied with straight Biblical depictions in film depends on the same issues that plague every movie that tries to adapt a text—you read it in a certain way and the film doesn’t match up to how you imagined it,” says Jonathan Sargeant.

“But there are problems with our imagination, there are problems with the culture that we live in, there are problems with our own individual spirituality—what we require most from the Easter story—and we interpret stories through this lens.”

According to Jonathan, a Hollywood filmmaker’s fascination with retelling the Easter story is an artistic expression of “wrestling with who they are and what gives them meaning”.

Janice asserts that straight depictions are also retold for more pragmatic purposes.

“I think there is a formula for making conservative evangelical Christians happy,” she says, acknowledging their box office pull, “and that formula is based on having very clear boundaries on good and bad.”

“But this is not the Easter story. Jesus says the whole world is the fallen bad guy, and there’s nobody who comes out of the Easter story and the gospels unscathed.”

“So I think these more nuanced movies that show you that life is complicated and characters are complicated—and good and bad isn’t always clear—are far more realistic retellings of the message of Jesus.”

Janice believes that superhero and “chosen one” stories such as *Harry Potter* (2010–2011), *Star Wars* and *The Matrix*, while rich with sacrificial symbolism, “trade off a really imperialistic notion of victory”.

“This is a skewed reading of the gospel—it misses the radical edge where this was never in any way a worldly victory. Jesus just died, you know, and then he came back to life. There was no material gain in that moment. There was no instant material liberation for people in that moment.”

“That exact thing that we see in all these movies is the one thing that Jesus wouldn’t do because it wouldn’t liberate creation,” she says.

“It’s so unsatisfying and we don’t know how to tell this story.”

Subtly current

Jonathan runs workshops at the Anglican St Francis Theological College to help people recognise God moments and scriptural themes that are present in their everyday lives.

“I look to an ideal world where people of faith can not only enjoy films but also see the way in which they can share parts of their Christian story with others,” he says.

Janice reiterates that while the Easter story themes “aren’t unique or the exclusive purview of a Christian story”, the radical edge of the gospel is a liberation of mankind that brings about a new world order, for everybody. And that is certainly worth sharing.

Explore the retelling of biblical themes in film by joining Trinity Theological Library’s 8 March lunch box session at the Uniting Church Centre in Auchenflower, Brisbane from 12.30 pm.

For more information visit library.trinity.qld.edu.au or look for Trinity Theological Library on Facebook.

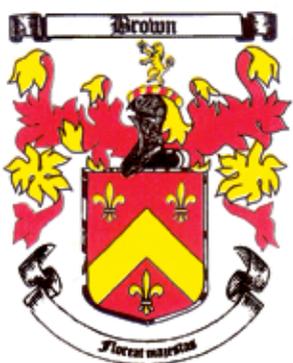


5 ways to invite someone to church

While our primary focus should be to take the gospel message outside of these four walls, Easter presents an opportunity to welcome newcomers to church. We asked a Uniting Church teenager for some suggestions about how to invite someone to be part of the church.

- 1 Show them hospitality**
What's the adult equivalent of a sleepover? Do that! Invite your friend or acquaintance out for coffee, over for dinner or up the coast for the weekend. Maybe they're new to Australia and could use a friend to show them around. Be that friend; show them hospitality.
- 2 Take them to a protest**
A core value of the Uniting Church is a commitment to working for justice. Perhaps you have a Facebook friend outspoken about political injustice? Take them to a protest, attended by church members, to witness faith in action.
- 3 Bring them along to a working bee**
Does your church have an op shop, sew blankets for the homeless or clean up the yards of the elderly on the weekend? Compassion and selflessness show that Christians are prepared to roll up their sleeves, and getting together for a good cause can be loads of fun. Look for ways to connect people who care about others.
- 4 Include them in fellowship**
Invite your co-worker, friend or gym buddy to a fun event such as "youth group" socials which can include anything from theme park outings to bowling and movie nights. Keep them in the loop about camps, conferences and activities such as Easter Madness, day camp or family camp.
- 5 Invite them to an Easter service**
Easter services should be seeker-friendly and both Christians and non-Christians will recognise Easter Sunday as a key date on the calendar. On this morning you can be guaranteed an atmosphere of jubilation, plenty of other visitors and the straight-up gospel message—rather than those awkward topics which always seems to crop up when you bring first-timers.

Join the conversation about ways to invite people to church by writing in to journey@ucaqld.com.au or commenting on this article at journeyonline.com.au
Download an Easter invite at ucaqld.com.au/easter2016



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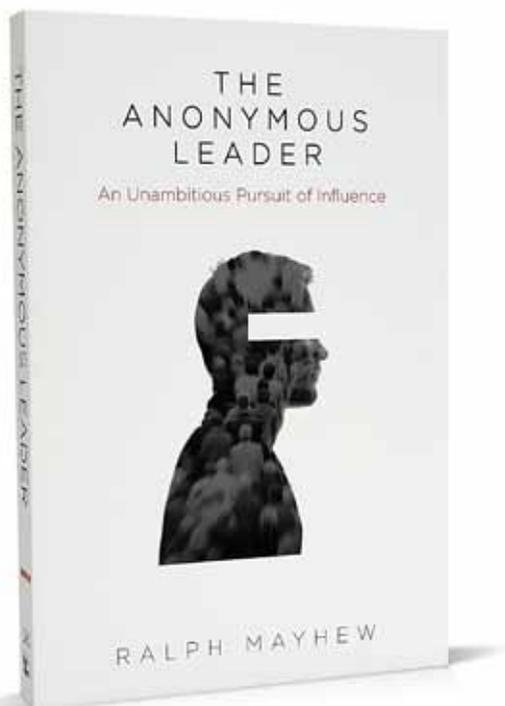


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Power without glory

Leadership, it seems, is the new black. Whether in politics, sport, culture or the church, one need not scratch very deep to find a view that leadership is either the cause or the solution to whatever challenge faces the particular organisation.

There are many writers on the topic, and many theories about how leadership works, what it looks like, and how to become the quintessential great leader.

Into this minefield Ralph Mayhew gently steps (as befits the title of the book) with his offering: *The Anonymous Leader*.

Essentially Mayhew argues that many who pursue leadership do so from a perspective of personal ambition—seeking influence for the opportunity to grow one's own position and power—rather than by pointing to something, or someone greater.

Writing from an Australian and Christian (in fact Uniting Church) perspective, Ralph states his case in even the opening sentences: the anonymous leader is one who points to Christ, who fades into the background so that what is seen and experienced is something akin to the kingdom of God.

Digging into the lives of biblical characters such as John the Baptist, Peter and Joseph, Mayhew works to illustrate his view that leadership is founded on wisdom, integrity, humility, security and resilience, and that the truly anonymous leader moves towards these characteristics by pursuing a life of discipleship.

There is a lot to dig into in *The Anonymous Leader*. At times the ideas and metaphors tumble forth so densely packed that it's necessary to stop and wait, listening carefully for the message embedded within or even to re-read a passage again and again. Mayhew's writing is regularly, visibly punctuated with the thoughts he wants to emphasise, again inviting the reader to pause.

The challenge to the reader is to come to this book with palms open and an attitude of prayer and humility. It's a book worth reading with an open notebook and pencil alongside.

Who am I when the going gets tough? If I express leadership in my work, my church or my community, to whom do I point? Whose vision do I embrace? What do I truly desire for those with whom I work? What's my own unspoken motivation?

These are the kinds of questions that *The Anonymous Leader* raises. It's not always an easy read, but it is the kind of book that if you're willing to actively engage, might just push you to critical self-reflection rather than a head-nodding easy agreement.

And in the genre of leadership writing, that's not necessarily common.

Scott Guyatt
Project officer – mission engagement
at the Uniting Church Queensland Synod

theanonymousleader.com

***The Anonymous Leader:
An Unambitious Pursuit
of Influence***

Ralph Mayhew
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Uniting Church in Queensland moderator David Baker, UnitingCare Queensland CEO Anne Cross, 2014 Moderator's Community Service Medal recipient Shirley Wyatt and Maria Maloney, Wesley Hospital volunteer manager.
Photo: Holly Jewell

Moderator's Community Service Medal

The search is on

UnitingCare Queensland is on the lookout for outstanding volunteers who reflect the UnitingCare Queensland mission. **Emily Murray** writes.

The search is on for nominations for the 2016 Moderator's Community Service Medal. Successful nominees will have the opportunity to be presented with their medal during the Uniting Church in Queensland's 32nd Synod meeting at Alexandra Park Conference Centre 20-24 May.



The Moderator's Medal is a wonderful opportunity to acknowledge dedicated volunteers who do great work in the community

Anne Cross

UnitingCare Queensland CEO Anne Cross says a Moderator's Medal is a great way to recognise the invaluable work of volunteers.

"The Moderator's Medal is a wonderful opportunity to acknowledge dedicated volunteers who do great work in the community," she says.

Wesley Hospital volunteer Shirley Wyatt was presented with a Moderator's Medal in 2014.

She was nominated by Maria Maloney, then volunteer manager at the Wesley Hospital, who said Shirley's uplifting spirit had brought many patients and families joy over the years.

"Shirley and her late husband Daryl developed a deep connection with nursing staff at the Wesley Hospital in the months leading to Daryl passing away. This inspired Shirley to join the Wesley Volunteer Department and over the last six years, she has volunteered two or three full days every week to support people at the hospital.

"From delivering newspapers and flowers, to getting dressed up as the 'Think Pink Fairy' to raise vital funds

for Kim Walters Choices Program, Shirley reflects unlimited kind-heartedness and is a role model and mentor for others," Maria says.

Shirley was one of the 12 selected from the 39 nominations received from across the state.

This year judges are looking for nominations that truly reflect the UnitingCare Queensland mission:

"As part of the Uniting Church, the mission of UnitingCare Queensland is to improve the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities as we reach out to people in need, speak out for fairness and justice, care with compassion, innovation and wisdom."

To be considered for the medal, nominees must be a volunteer, past or present and have exhibited outstanding service over a number of years. They need to have been involved in community service work other than congregational work (for example, with Blue Care, UnitingCare Community, UnitingCare Health hospitals, Wesley Mission Brisbane or community service agencies outside the Uniting Church) and must not be in paid employment connected to their volunteer work.

Nominations can be made via the UnitingCare Queensland website unitingcareqld.com.au/moderators-medal.

Detailed information about the nominee and their outstanding contribution to the community should be included to assist the judging panel.

Please feel free to re-submit nominations from previous years if a medal was not awarded.



Calvary Presbytery, Uniting Church in Australia

Seeking Expressions of Interest

The Calvary Presbytery is seeking expressions of interest from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous ministers and pastors who have a desire to minister in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and congregations in Queensland.

Calvary Presbytery is the regional organisation of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) in Queensland. It has oversight of the remote congregations of Mornington Island, Aurukun, Napranum, and Mapoon, as well as urban ones in Gordonvale, Townsville and Zillmere in Brisbane.

We currently have vacancies at Aurukun and Napranum.

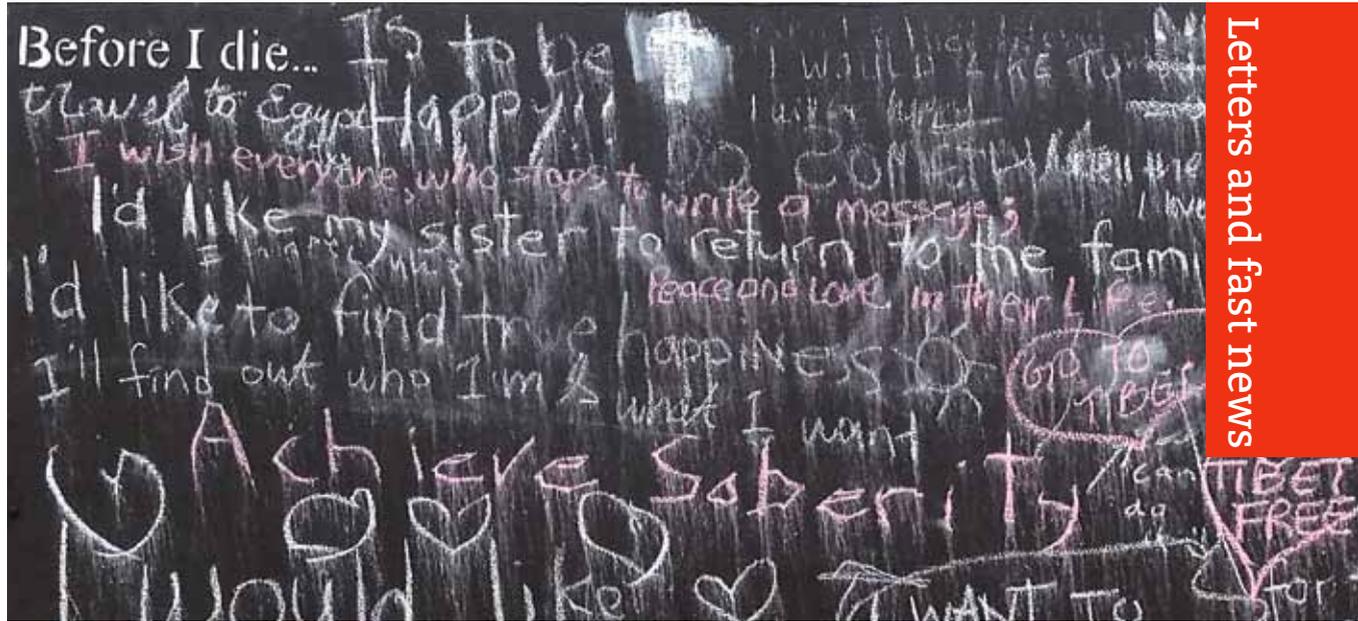
If you are motivated to be involved in this kind of ministry, please contact Rev John Adams at the presbytery office in Townsville.

Contact details:

Office Tel: 07 4723 1805 Fax: 07 4723 2058

John Adams Mob: 0457 707 103

email: john@calvarypresbytery.com.au



Merthyr Road Uniting Church's "Before I die" board.
Photo: Supplied

To the editor

Super exemption call self-serving

I was interested to read about Uniting Church ministers wanting to be exempt from the government's changes to superannuation ("Not so super: Retirement incomes slashed", February 2016, page five). What makes them think that they are alone in this? Many of us will be affected by the changes. Let's all be exempt!

This change is a measure that will bring in little revenue and seriously affects the lives and wellbeing of many. It is not only the lifestyle of Uniting Church ministers that needs to be protected.

It is very self-serving to request an exemption for one relatively small group.

Heather Jukes
Coorparoo

All letters must directly address articles and letters from the previous month's edition of Journey. Opinions expressed are only indicative of the individual writer, not their entire congregation. While direct responses to letters are acceptable, ongoing discussions about an article more than two months old will not be published. Letters should be no longer than 150 words. Full submission guidelines for letters to the editor can be found at journeyonline.com.au/submit

Before I die I would like to ...

Merthyr Road Uniting Church has erected a "Before I die" chalkboard on their front fence, on which members of their community can write their dreams.

Some of the messages written on the board include, "Travel to Egypt", "Find true happiness", "See the jacarandas flower again next year" and "Achieve sobriety".

Inspired by a TED talk in which Candy Chang described how she turned the wall of a disused house into a giant chalkboard with the words, "Before I die ..." on it. She found it was a way people could reflect on what they really want out of life, and helped them understand their neighbourhood and connect with others.

Within 24 hours of the board going up outside the church, the board was full of messages from people expressing their dreams, and encouragement from others to reach for them.

"We have cleaned the board about six times since it went up. The community really care about what's written on there; people write encouraging messages to people who are doubting their worth or ability. It's been very affirming," says church member Desley Garnett.

Fiji emergency appeal

UnitingWorld has launched an emergency appeal to support the people of Fiji following Cyclone Winton.

Twenty-one people are confirmed dead, four missing and more than 8100 people are sheltering in evacuation centres. Whole villages have been destroyed, particularly on the island of Koro where a relief and assessment ship is being deployed.

"The destruction has been widespread and very bad. The Lau group of islands, Koro Island, villages on Vanua Levu and their township Savusavu have been hit very badly. Hundreds of homes have been lost, infrastructure damaged, farms, vegetable gardens, livelihoods destroyed. Water and power supply to many areas are still down," says Rev Dr Cliff Bird, who is in Suva.

All funds raised through this appeal will be used to support the Methodist Church in Fiji's relief efforts, including re-establishing healthcare and schools, replanting crops and building cyclone-resistant shelters to safeguard communities in the future.

Make a donation by calling UnitingWorld on 1800 998 122 or go to unitingworld.org.au/unitingworld-launches-emergency-appeal and follow the link to donate online to the Emergency Contingency Fund.

Classifieds

CALOUNDRA, beachside units, from \$400/wk. ph 0427 990 161.

London B&B. Lovely home, reasonable rates. ph 0011442086946538. rachelallen1234@gmail.com

Boulder Creek Holiday Centre 281 Hill Rd, Mothar Mountain, via Gympie—the ideal place for your next Church or Family group camp. Catered accommodation for up to 100 persons. Self-cater available for small groups. Check www.boulder creek.com.au for more information or ph 5483 5221.

JEWELLERY REPAIRS. Five day turn around. Brisbane area. Call Jack at Forest Lake m. 0401 584 879

Pastoral statement on providing sanctuary

Uniting Church Assembly president, Stuart McMillan has released a pastoral statement about providing sanctuary for the asylum seekers at the centre of the Let Them Stay campaign.

"A growing number of Uniting Church congregations are now offering their churches as a place of sanctuary to people who are at risk of return to Nauru. These decisions are not being taken lightly. The potential legal ramification for individuals involved is uncertain. We cannot know what the government will do if people choose to seek sanctuary in our churches," he says.

The statement can be found at assembly.uca.org.au/news/item/1795-pastoral-statement-providing-sanctuary



Easter

Who will you invite?

ucaqld.com.au/easter2016

