



The Uniting Church in Australia
QUEENSLAND SYNOD

Journey

December 2016



Chaplains

Delivering hope this Christmas

Searching for
the real shalom

Nyaluak Leth
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Editor's note

As 2015 drew to a close if someone had told me that during the next 12 months I should brace myself for the United Kingdom voting to leave the European Union, Donald Trump winning the presidential election and, most shockingly, Leicester City taking out the English Premier League trophy in football, I would have checked to see whether it was actually the first day of April.

But here we are, so who knows what 2017 has in store for us all?

If you're feeling the world is currently only offering instability and unpredictability, what we can offer as a small gesture of certainty and consistency is that *Journey* will continue to inspire, provoke and engage you with stories across the Uniting Church community and grapple with the wider issues affecting Australian society and abroad, as we all venture into the unknown.

But let's keep a spirit of positivity and optimism as we move into the holiday season, and our December edition contains multiple stories which draw upon our Christmas campaign theme, *Hope has a name*.

Chiefly, our feature story (page 10) interviewing chaplains who are bringing hope to others during often very tough times, is a timely reminder of the power of Christ to be that guiding light when darkness descends. From cyclones to homesick soldiers, traumatised police to critically ill patients, there are numerous hardships each chaplain faces in their role but their tales of how faith and compassion bring hope to others in need should serve as an enriching example of hope for all this Christmas.

Meanwhile Dianne Jensen meets Nyaluak Leth (page 12) for our "Humans of UCA" profile and discusses Nyaluak's work to raise awareness around domestic violence and help young South Sudanese Christians re-connect with their faith. It's a fascinating read and a clear example of how a young generation in this church is inspiring hope and forcing change for the better.

Finally, you may have seen recent news regarding Shalom Christian College and its participation in a Royal Commission public hearing. Mardi Lumsden explores the school behind the headlines (page 6) and meets with those who share the Shalom vision.

Merry Christmas and a happy new year!

Ben Rogers
Cross-platform editor

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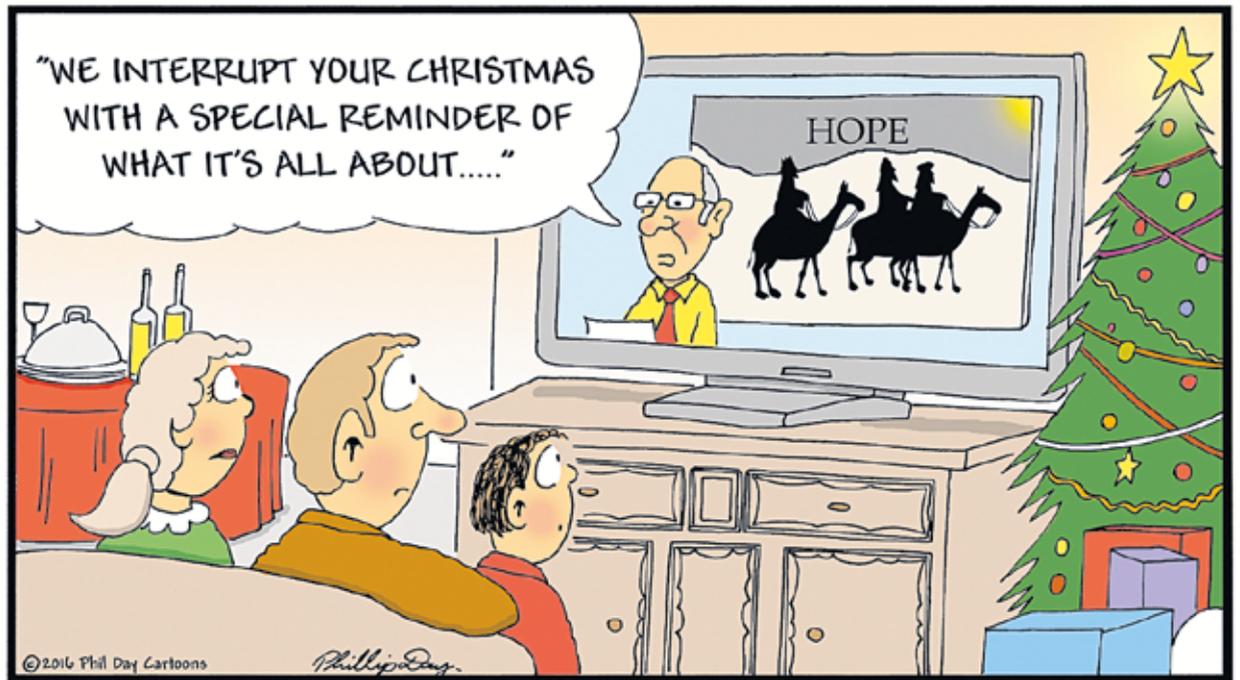
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Closing date for editorial and advertising for February 2017 *Journey* is Monday 16 January. The next issue of *Journey* will be available on Sunday 5 February.



Celebrating hopeful disruptions

Monday Midday Prayer

*God with us,
open our hearts and
minds to appreciate the
hope and wonder of your
presence with us in Jesus.*

Amen

At Christmas, we celebrate an interruption to our ordinary existence and to what we had planned for life. The birth of Jesus was a disruption for Mary and Joseph: a challenging one that threatened their relationship and their standing in their community.

Yet it was a disruption that gave them purpose, hope and fulfilment like they had not known, nor probably thought possible.

The early church balanced this theme of great disruption by identifying the life of Jesus as a fulfilment of the hope of Israel. The Apostle Paul, the Gospel writers, and other writers of the New Testament all point to the birth, life, and ministry of Jesus as being completely in line with the revelation of God in the Old Testament and the hope of Israel.

As Jesus' life panned out, we encountered God amongst us, the child became a man, and his life became a gift for us all, a gift that still gives life and hope to the world today.

How will our celebrating bear witness to our conviction that hope has a name and that name is Jesus? Will there be space at the family table for others? Will we commit to giving time and effort to enable others to experience the source of our hope?

One of the ways our family will be sharing our hope is by giving gifts that bless others.

Give the gift of faith to young people in regional, rural and remote Queensland; or the gift of hope to asylum seekers in Queensland or the gift of love to Indigenous children in Uniting Church schools. Every gift will take us closer to our mission to enrich the lives of those around us.

Christmas celebrates the new journeys—sometimes profoundly challenging yet always hopeful—our lives take when they are interrupted by God's purposes.

My prayer is that we will be in a place where God can break through, where new journeys of faith can happen for us. If you hang around a Uniting Church, you'll give God the best opportunity to bring you to the place of experiencing hope and it will be a hope for all creation. That hope will probably mess with your plans somewhat. That's been my experience!

But sometimes, like Mary, we see clearly only later, after much reflection. Yet in the life of Jesus, we know that hope is present amongst us, and that this hope has a name.

Rev David Baker
Moderator, Queensland Synod

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Rev Avril Hannah-Jones sees the Christmas Bowl appeal as a great way to give something back to others in need.
Photo: Supplied

Filling the Christmas bowl with generosity

For over 67 years, the Christmas Bowl has been a way for compassionate Christians to express the love of Christ to those in great need around the globe, with this year's appeal focused on drought-stricken Zimbabwean farmers. **Jess Xavier** reports.

Giving is such an important part of Christian living and last year generous Uniting Church members in Queensland raised over \$110 000 for the Christmas Bowl appeal.

Generous donations helped bring clean water, soap and toilets to South Sudanese refugees living in Ethiopia's Gambella region and helped other people suffering around the world.

Rev Avril Hannah-Jones, Williamstown Uniting Church, Victoria minister, says, "I feel extremely grateful that I have the chance to support the Christmas Bowl appeal. This reminds me of how incredibly lucky I am to live in a country with an abundance of food.

"Given that I am so privileged, I am grateful that I am given a chance to give something back."

The Christmas Bowl's humble beginnings can be traced to Christmas Day 1949, when the Rev Frank Byatt placed an empty bowl on the dinner table and asked his guests to give a gift to bring relief and hope to refugees who had fled the horrors of World War II.

Frank could never have known that his simple act would grow into the incredible outpouring of love and compassion it has become today. As well as being a much loved ecumenical tradition, the Christmas Bowl appeal is a demonstration of unity for Christians in Australia, and brings more than 1800 churches from 19 denominations to act together in love and solidarity to help those in need.

With unprecedented numbers of people displaced around the world and millions more suffering from severe hunger, the Christmas Bowl is a vital beacon of light and hope which is sadly needed now more than ever.

By supporting the 2016 appeal Zimbabwean farming families who are struggling to feed their children after suffering the worst drought in 35 years will be provided vital assistance.

While Act for Peace has already taught hundreds of farmers new conservation farming techniques such as digging individual pits for each maize plant or covering soil with mulch, there are so many in need of help and your generosity will assist in ensuring more farmers are empowered to make a difference and grow sustainable farming operations that support themselves and their community.

For Jessina, a Zimbabwean farmer, the new farming techniques have transformed her barely fertile wasteland into a thriving farm and she can now use extra money from selling crops to buy animals.

"I'm now in my third year and I have many goats, turkeys, guinea fowl and chickens," Jessina says. "I hope my children will learn from me what I have learnt so that they have an improved life."

To make a Christmas Bowl donation visit actforpeace.org.au/christmasbowl or call 1800 025 101

“

I feel extremely grateful that I have the chance to support the Christmas Bowl appeal. This reminds me of how incredibly lucky I am to live in a country with an abundance of food.

Rev Avril Hannah-Jones



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Searching for the real Shalom



Uniting Church school Shalom Christian College has been in the news lately after participating in a recent Royal Commission public hearing. **Mardi Lumsden** discovers the school behind the headlines.

Shalom Christian College is a prep to Year 12 co-ed day and boarding school in Townsville, opened in 1992 by the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress. Its vision is to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, to achieve positive futures through providing high quality education and real pathway opportunities.

“

Given the very remote communities that students may come from, there is not always good access to many of these health services in young people's home communities, so having access whilst at Shalom is very important
Sandy Hindmarsh

In 2012 the then governing body, Congress Community Development and Education Unit (CCDEU), went into voluntary administration and requested the Queensland Synod to assume responsibility of the school to continue their vision.

While the primary school consistently has around 115 local students attending, around 70 per cent of the 190-odd senior school students are boarders. The number of senior students constantly fluctuates due to transport issues and responsibilities within community.

Shalom board chairperson (and former Synod Schools and Residential Colleges executive officer) Elaine Rae says Shalom is funded by a federal government recurrent grant based on the number of students and Abstudy, with additional funding from the state government and special programs.

Royal Commission

In November, Shalom and the Queensland Synod were involved in the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse public hearings looking at responses to children with problematic or harmful sexual behaviours in schools. The Commission heard about the school's response to the sexual assault of a student by other students in 2006.

The Commission also held a panel specifically talking about the challenges facing students and boarding environments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. These discussions were eye-opening for many of those listening, but for the staff at Shalom it was a day in the life of their community.

The Royal Commission heard that a number of students arrive at the school with sexually transmitted infections (STIs) as well as having experienced past abuse.

Elaine says the board has been focused on improving the boarding experience and training staff.

“The board has been working closely with the principal and the Synod to see if there are shortcomings that need to be addressed.”

She also says that the school would implement the Commission's recommendations should any shortcomings be identified.

The school behind the headlines

The school's motto—“Many cultures, one faith”—refers to the many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures that make up the school.

Students at Shalom represent around 30 different language groups and come from as far away as Kintore, 500 kilometres west of Alice Springs. For 80 to 90 per cent of the boarding population English is not their first language; some students even speak up to four languages before English.

Around 30 per cent of the staff also identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

This diversity is probably Shalom's greatest strength, but also presents a number of challenges.

Chris England has been Shalom's principal since 2013 and sees students who attend the whole way through senior school learn good coping mechanisms and an understanding of different cultures.

“If we have students from Year Seven right through to Year 12, most of them turn out fine young men and women and they go on to do other things, to get jobs, further study, traineeships and some of them to university. If we have a student that comes in in Year 10 or 11 we don't have time to do that.

“Out of 20 students, maybe two or three would go to university, four or five who would go on to other study,

(L-R) Rev Dennis Corowa, Dr Daniel Pampuch and Rev David Baker at this years Naidoc celebration
Photo: Supplied

four or five who would go back to their own communities, two or three who would do other things and four or five who would be unemployed.”

Unique challenges for students

Like others *Journey* spoke to, Chris says he hasn't seen anything at Shalom that he hasn't seen at other schools over a 30-year career—he just sees them more often.

“The quantity of needs of each of our students is the largest thing,” he says. “We have boarders who come with no toothbrushes, we have students who come with infections and skin irritations that need to be attended to. There are health needs but also emotional needs.

“Twenty-five per cent of our students are in the care of the State because they have suffered trauma in the past. That trauma has formed their personalities and as a response their social skills at times can be considerably in need.

“Their educational needs are significant, particularly if they have come from community,” he says. “A student who is in Year Seven may well have a curriculum level of Year Two or Three.”

Consequently, the students at Shalom have individualised programs.

Chris says in spite of many pressures staff turnover is quite low.

“You are here because you want to be here,” he says. “You are not here for a high-flying career in education. You are here because you want to change the lives of people.

After nearly four years registrar Jodi McLean remains full of ideas and passion for the school, its students and their communities.

“I wish everyone just loved the place as much as I do,” she says.

“These students are coming from remote communities where it's not normal for them to go to school every day for six and a half hours.”

Jodi also mentioned the amount of school that gets missed due to funerals and cultural ceremonies.

“If the elders aren't passing it on to the generation of today then eventually their culture will die out.”

Health and Wellbeing

The Health and Wellbeing Centre plays a major part in the holistic care of students. Here deputy principal Sandy Hindmarsh leads a multi-disciplinary team that includes visiting medical and allied health specialists including GPs, a paediatrician, sexual health clinic staff, immunisation clinic staff, pathology and other visiting services.

The school also has chaplain Rev Richard Cassady to assist students.

On any given day Sandy could be assisting a student in emergency need, organising counselling after a fight or managing the ongoing care of high needs students.

Sandy says at-school access to these services means that students' health needs can be addressed in timely and supportive ways.

“There is a particular focus on ensuring the practices are culturally safe and that the students and their families are involved in decision making.

“Given the very remote communities that students may come from, there is not always good access to many of these health services in young people's home communities, so having access whilst at Shalom is very important.”

Messages for the church

There is no doubt that the past four years have been challenging for staff at Shalom and those who support them. Chris thanks the church community for its continued support, prayer, finance “and its love for these children”.

“Shalom is an outreach of the Uniting Church and we would hope that the church continues to pray for that outreach—for staff, students, the communities—as the church reaches into the poorest and most needy sections of the Australian community.”

As board chairperson Elaine has a vision for the church's relationship with this school.

“My vision is that our church would see Shalom as an opportunity to express our covenantal relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It is a real situation where we can walk alongside and share a vision but also invest in the next generation.”

Shalomcollege.qld.edu.au

For an expanded version of this article visit journeyonline.com.au

(L-R) Shalom principal Chris England, deputy principal Sandy Hindmarsh, students Dyontae, Kiarna, Djuvaan and registrar Jodi McLean.
Photo: David Oxenburgh





Council rezone forces future planning

Inset: (L-R) Rev Bob Harriman and Peter Cranna.

Photo: Holly Jewell

Background: The outdoor chapel at Alexandra Park Conference Centre.

Photo: Supplied

Alexandra Park Conference Centre is located on what could be considered one of the most prestigious pieces of land owned by the Synod, but council rezoning is forcing the Synod to consider its future. **Jane Moad** reports.

Located in the heart of the Sunshine Coast, thousands of people have visited the almost ten hectare site for Synod in Session meetings, youth events and school camps.

But recent rezoning of the area by the Sunshine Coast Regional Council from medium density to community purposes has been the catalyst for significant questions to be raised about the future use of the Alex Park site.

“The impact of rezoning to the value of the property—in the region of a \$5–7 million loss—was significant enough for the Finance, Investment and Property (FIP) board to consider its options to protect the value of the property,” explains Peter Cranna, director of Finance and Property Services for the Queensland Synod.

“We engaged with town planners and discovered there was a mechanism to lodge a code assessable development application under the old town plan.”

The FIP board approved an application that was submitted in November 2015 to build 318 units on the site, which Peter notes would reflect a positive \$10–15 million differential in the value of the site.

Approval for the development application is not expected until January 2017 but Peter stresses that this is only one potential option for future use of the site. “There are a number of opportunities, and not all of them have been explored yet. Selling it will be considered but that is the least preferred at this stage.”

Rezoning of the site and discussion around its future use has sparked a range of reactions from the local community, media and church members.

Ian Edgar, manager of Alexandra Park Conference Centre, says a conversation has been needed around its intended purpose. “This site has great mission potential for the church, through what we’re currently doing and through other opportunities that we’re looking at in the future.”

The Mary Burnett Presbytery has been consulting with Ian, Sunshine Coast ministers, church members and members of the Synod Standing Committee and is now developing a proposal for consideration at the March 2017 Standing Committee meeting.

“We’re developing a mission plan which has four elements to it,” says Mary Burnett Presbytery minister Rev Bob Harriman.

“We want to continue to develop the ministry and mission of the camping and conference centre alongside a neo-monastic community, a reinvigorated Order of St Stephen.”

The presbytery’s concept would over time include establishing a regional church on the site with a focus on families and a possible partnership with UnitingCare to provide education and training to support people in crisis.

Peter hopes that the various options will be brought together in 2017.

“This is a significant property of the Synod—in value and memories—and we should exercise considerable prayer over the mission because we don’t want to mess it up.”

“
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Peter Cranna



How good is your gift?

While there's seemingly no escape from the onslaught of consumerism during the Christmas season, Cath Taylor unwraps the act of giving in a theological context.

Australians give a lot of gifts—about \$8.9 billion worth last year, apparently. But how good were they? A jaw-dropping \$500 million worth ended up back on eBay within a month and quite a few of them are probably nestled somewhere in landfill.

As Christians, giving and generosity is central to our identity. We are not only good at donating but at reliably providing mince-based meals in a crisis and giving our time for the school fete.

I have a hunch, though, that the early church saw giving as being about much more than “one off” acts of charity. In Acts 2:42, “Everyone was together and shared everything in common, so that no one would have need.”

This was not about giving “spare cash” or “something for the less fortunate”. This was about choosing to live beside others as brothers and sisters, fully invested in their lives and wellbeing.

Nor was this something new cooked up by Jesus' followers. The Torah had always taken the approach that community resources were to be shared with dignity. The “poverty trap” was to be avoided by keeping back part of the crop to be harvested by those in need; all debt was cancelled and land redistributed every seven years so that families didn't fall into a cycle of either spiralling poverty or wealth.

Life in Christ is not just about good giving. It's about building long-term relationships that care for people.

The Uniting Church in Australia has partnerships with church communities in Asia, Africa and the Pacific that stretch back over a hundred years. We pray for their leaders, we visit their homes and they visit ours.

At Christmas, UnitingWorld's “Everything in Common” gifts support communities which are cared for by people who will not simply hand out a food parcel, a goat or a chicken and move on: our church partners provide God's love and hope alongside tools to overcome poverty and live with dignity. These gifts are part of what it means to be God's community.

As you make choices about giving this Christmas, think about the depth of the investment you're making in the lives of others. Take the opportunity to pray for, visit and learn from our global brothers and sisters, or provide ongoing sponsorship for Christian leaders through UnitingWorld.

Our identity as followers of Jesus is about more than a quick and emotional gift to “the poor”. It's about being part of long-term relationships that allow every person to live life to the full.

Cath Taylor

Cath Taylor has a BMin, BA, Grad Dip Ed, one husband, two daughters, three cats and a job she loves, working for the Uniting Church in Australia through UnitingWorld.
unitingworld.org.au

“

Life in Christ is not just about good giving. It's about building long-term relationships that care for people

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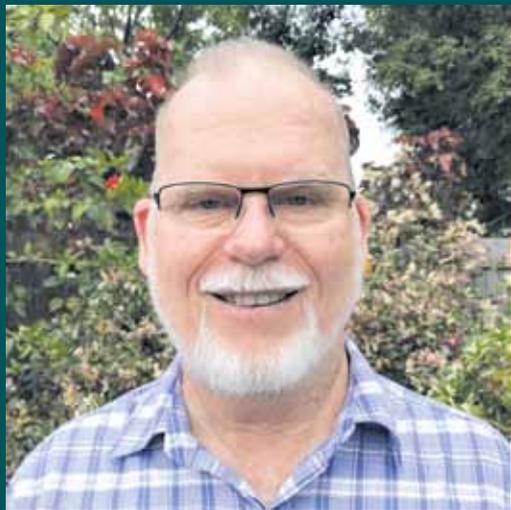
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Chaplaincy: Delivering hope during Christmas

Three chaplains working in the police force, the defence force and health care talk to *Journey* about bringing hope to others during the Christmas season and their own hopes for 2017.

“
Christmas reminds us that God has a unique calling and life journey for each of us
Rev Doug Foster



Rev Doug Foster



Rev Tanya Richards

Rev Doug Foster is a police chaplain for the Far North Police District incorporating north of Cardwell, Cairns, Cape York and the Torres Straits.

Journey: What does “hope” mean to you personally over this Christmas period?

Doug: For me the hope of Christmas is that people do not have to be defined by the outcome of their life’s circumstances. Christmas reminds us that God has a unique calling and life journey for each of us. And my hope is that there are some people who discover that unique calling this Christmas.

Journey: Could you please provide an example where you personally have been able to bring hope to others during the Christmas period as a police chaplain?

Doug: Several years ago, just prior to Christmas, our community experienced the tragic death of eight young people. It was horrendous for all the emergency services involved. It was so sad for them especially at that “family” time of the year.

Hopefully the time given to listening to them, and allowing them to talk about many other topics as well, meant they were able to relax and enjoy their own families. I must say it is often these officers who bring hope to their colleagues through the compassionate and professional way they work through tragedy.

Journey: Have you seen seemingly hopeless situations where the spirit of the Lord has been able to provide hope and change?

Doug: I would say the two large cyclones that have struck North Queensland over the last decade. As they were coming I know many people were praying across our nation and probably the world. On both occasions, I had numerous officers ask me to pray for an intervention to ensure life was not lost.

With the miracle of that occurring, a number of them came back and said that God had obviously been involved. I can’t say they experienced a “conversion” but they certainly expressed a belief that God turned a hopeless situation into one where people could recover.

Journey: What signs of hope do you see over the Christmas season as a police chaplain?

Doug: Sadly, Christmas creates financial and personal/family pressures on many in our society. The police are called to deal with this pressure when it erupts into violence/aggression/suicide. What I see is amazing men and women using their skills and powers to reduce the impact of these circumstances. And when it ends tragically, they show kindness and care for those who have suffered.

Journey: What are you hopeful for in 2017?

Doug: I am hopeful that in 2017 we will experience an outpouring of God’s graciousness that will result in us being a less judgmental and aggressive society.

Rev Tanya Richards is the Pastoral Care Coordinator for the Metro North Hospital and Health Service, Brisbane.

Journey: What does “hope” mean to you personally over this Christmas period?

Tanya: For me hope is the expectation of new things. I believe hope offers us the chance to dream and imagine a way out of the suffering we encounter. In the context of a public hospital, sometimes the only thing people have left is hope, a hope that is life-changing and life-giving, but also a peaceful hope, at the end of life.

Hope reassures people that they are loved and held in the arms of God, in the midst of great pain, wonder and sorrow.

Journey: Have you seen seemingly hopeless situations where the spirit of the Lord has been able to provide hope and change?

Tanya: Recently in our intensive care unit (ICU), we had a young patient who went for surgery at another hospital. The surgery did not go well and the patient had been transferred to Prince Charles. This patient is dangerously ill and has been in an induced coma for over a month.

The family reached out to pastoral care and we have been supporting them. Over the weeks the patient has improved and has been transferred to a less critical bed in ICU, and is now on a new road to recovery. As chaplains we offer support that brings to life the love of God for his people, helping the family with their struggle and the doubts of an unknown future. We offer the peace and comfort that is from the Spirit.

Journey: What attracted you to serving the church in a health care context?

Tanya: I first trained as a youth worker, and it was on my last practical placement that I travelled to Indonesia. It was this experience that opened my eyes and understanding to the struggles of people.

I returned to Australia knowing that I was being called to more than just youth ministry, so I went through the discerning process again and became a deacon in the Uniting Church. I have a deep passion and call to work with people from all backgrounds, and help them to see and know the love of God in their lives. Through my counselling training I’m able to match my ministry and counselling skills, to meet people at moments of crisis, joy, hope, struggle, pain, doubt and fear. In those moments I have the opportunity to represent Christ and his love and just be with people.

Journey: What signs of hope do you see over the Christmas season?

Tanya: As I walk around the hospital at Christmas time and see the effort staff have made to decorate their work space, I believe this brings hope and a sense of community and family for those who are absent from their own families at Christmas.

Journey: What are you hopeful for in 2017?

Tanya: My hope is that the chaplaincy team at the Prince Charles Hospital continues to grow and expand and to be an integral part of the life of the hospital.



Rev Rob Packer

Rev Rob Packer is the chaplain for the 2/14 Light Horse Regiment (Queensland Mounted Infantry). Last year he was deployed to Iraq for seven months.

Journey: What does “hope” mean to you personally over this Christmas period?

Rob: Hope points beyond the moment and past the quick-fix attitude of many to the deeper realities of faith-shaped living. It is not about escaping pain, and often means enduring, and hopefully growing, through the inevitable struggles of life.

Journey: Could you please provide an example where you personally have been able to bring hope to others during the Christmas period as a defence chaplain?

Rob: One soldier came to me very distressed that a relative about his age had died unexpectedly. Over the next few weeks he really struggled as it opened up a whole lot of issues that shook him to the core.

We talked quite a few times as he dared peer into the unfamiliar and painful depths of his struggles. I told him regularly that I was praying for him. As Christmas approaches he is laughing again and looking forward to celebrating with his family.

Journey: What are the key challenges for you as a chaplain in the defence force?

Rob: Knowing when to listen, when to challenge, when to advocate for soldiers and when to offer some suggestions for seeing and doing things differently.

Although I filter out the swearing so that it doesn’t become a barrier, I want to hear the heart, not just the words people speak. And remembering names: there are over 400 people in my unit and it seems that every week there are new people marching in to the unit.

Journey: Have you seen seemingly hopeless situations where the spirit of the Lord has been able to provide hope and change?

Rob: I have seen soldiers come to me at their wits’ end about all kinds of situations—family issues, health concerns, financial problems. Mostly they do not come seeking a solution, but someone to listen.

Confidentiality is crucial, and they know that talking with a chaplain means those issues will not be shared with others. There is often the sense that the chaplain has “something extra”, and many will say something along those lines. I offer to pray with most and regularly see people walk away with a new sense of hope. Tears have turned to laughter. I know it’s not me that has brought the change.

Journey: What are you hopeful for in 2017?

Rob: I know it sounds like the “world peace” response of a beauty pageant, but I hope for more stability in the world despite how things are looking. More stability means less likelihood of our young men and women being put in harm’s way.

I am hopeful, as I prepare to post to a new unit, that I can inspire hope and faith in some of the people I meet and care for.



Read more at The Scoop. Our online-exclusive expanded interviews with Doug, Tanya and Rob explore how they’ll be celebrating Christmas and what they love about the Uniting Church. Visit journeyonline.com.au/scoop/expanded-chaplains

Give peace a chance

A young South Sudanese Aussie works for change

Nyaluak Leth talks to **Dianne Jensen** about the hopes and challenges facing the new generation of South Sudanese Christians growing up in Australia.

“
It’s the elephant
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Nyaluak Leth remembers holding her father’s hand as they walked to the train station on their way to St David’s Uniting Church, Coopers Plains in Brisbane. The 19-year-old student was only five when she arrived from Egypt in 2003 with her parents and nine siblings after fleeing South Sudan.

“We didn’t have any mode of transport—my dad couldn’t drive, my mum couldn’t drive—so we would catch the train to church every Friday, Saturday and Sunday. My father took me to Girls Brigade on Friday, language classes on Saturday, and then Sunday we would have our worship services. Church was, and still is, my second home,” she recalls.

Living in peace

Nyaluak is a poet, fashion model, Griffith University student studying public relations and communications, and a youth leader at the South Sudanese Nuer Christian Faith Community based at St David’s. Her father, Pastor Moses Leth, is the church pastor.

She’s one of the new generation of Australian-educated teenagers from refugee backgrounds straddling the gap between western culture and the conservative values of their elders.

“I grew here but I know my roots are back in South Sudan. It’s like a plant—I was just plucked and planted here and I thrived and everything’s great here. I see myself as an Australian but I know and have seen all the trials and tribulations my parents had to go through ... You have to be careful of what ground you are treading on sometimes,” she says.

“War, massacre and genocide of innocent women, children and men in South Sudan has had its toll not only

for the people stuck in refugee camps. It’s also had an effect on the family members of those in camps and in the war zone who live here in Australia and elsewhere. The politicians of South Sudan have done more than let their people down—they have traumatised a whole generation.”

Growing up in a place where different cultures and nationalities co-exist has challenged the tribal loyalties which have fractured her homeland, says Nyaluak. But even more important is growing up in peace.

“Surviving has become living, which makes room for other things like education and dream-chasing, which have made the youth want to be a part of something more than just a member of a ‘tribe’—to be part of something bigger that uplifts humanity so tragedies like civil war no longer exist.”

Elephant in the room

Like many of her peers, Nyaluak is a natural communicator and digital native who is ready to speak out on confronting issues.

She has been writing and performing poetry ever since discovering Shakespeare in Year 11. At the Uniting Church 2016 National Young Adult Leaders Conference (NYALC) she read from another poet on the subject of domestic violence and religion.

“It’s the elephant in the room in South Sudanese communities—in our community we have had two people who have died within this one year because of domestic violence. It’s tragic and it’s happening to young women,” she says.

“These are young men doing this, and you’d think since they grew up here they’d adapt to the culture but no—they see it from their father and they see it from their



Nyaluak Leth.
Photo: Holly Jewell

mother—how they treat each other—and they think, okay, if this is how a woman is supposed to act then this is how I am supposed to act.”

Earlier this year Nyaluak and a friend hosted a domestic violence fundraiser at the Goodna Salvation Army Centre.

“We were targeting mostly young men and women, those who have had a chance to grow up here in Australia and experience the culture, in hopes to emphasise the dangers and the mental, physical and emotional effects on the victim and those around them. The turnout was not as large as we had hoped, but the presence of the older members of the community meant a great deal to us.”

The closeness of the migrant community and its strong family networks mean that people are not encouraged to seek help from outside the community, she adds.

“Back home the church was the community; it was like a courthouse, church, community centre, everything ... but coming here, where religion and culture are different things. It can really mess with your head!

“People need to understand the difference between culture and religion. You know that your religion says this is not right. But your culture says it’s okay—who you going to choose? I wanted them to have that thought—that it’s okay to choose.”

The model of her own parents showed Nyaluak that change was possible.

“My mum worked as a housewife for a long time until she decided—you know what, I’m trying to adapt into this culture, let me go get my licence, let me go find a job, because that’s how it works here. She realised that in this

country women are able to have a sense of power, a sense of position in society and so she took that up and she began running the household.”

Her father’s response was inspiring. “It’s amazing to see the change, he’s always been a humble man but now that his wife is doing the running of the family he has learnt to have a high level of respect for her.”

Let’s build a bridge

Nyaluak was motivated by her experiences at NYALC to help her generation of South Sudanese Christians re-connect with faith.

“There was like a massive divide between the elders and the kids, a gap of understanding and communication. I thought, let’s build that bridge, let’s do this! So I came back and I made a proposal to the pastor, my dad—I want to start a young group, can we do that? He said, ‘I’ve been waiting for you to ask!’”

The young people loved the idea of having their own social space and being able to talk about the real world challenges of growing up in Australia, says Nyaluak. The new group is called FIFTH (Freedom in faith, truth and harmony) and began in October.

“I tell them, we live in a different society now and things are completely different to how they were back home for your parents. Our first rule is, ‘Having faith in myself makes me incredible but having faith in my Lord God makes me indestructible’.

“I want them to get that and digest that and to understand that God is your number one—but who are you to believe in God if you don’t believe in yourself?”

Visit [facebook.com/unitingchurch.queensland](https://www.facebook.com/unitingchurch.queensland) for a Christmas video message from Nyaluak

for wo
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life

YET MORE breakdowns in marriage,
 in our already divorce-prone com-
 munity, are predicted by the director
 of the Kalparrin Family Welfare
 Centre (the
 He sees the
 modern life as
 a society, as
 marital



Kalparrin: a legacy of hope

It's been nearly 50 years since the Fortitude Valley Presbyterian Church in Brisbane established the Kalparrin Family Welfare Centre, a pioneering project in congregational outreach and community care. **Marion McConaghy**, daughter of founder and director Rev James McConaghy, looks back at how one man's vision galvanised a community.

“
 The fundamental
 purpose of
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 encouragement,
 support and
 counsel to
 families and
 individuals in
 personal, social
 and economic
 difficulties

Rev Jim McConaghy

When Rev Jim McConaghy began ministry at the Fortitude Valley Presbyterian Church in Brisbane in the 1960s, the needs of the growing number of disadvantaged inner-city residents were immediately apparent.

Jim realised that if at-risk people were going to find their way towards independence, they needed targeted counselling sessions from professionals such as social workers, psychiatrists, doctors and solicitors. How could the church help?

The Kalparrin Family Welfare Centre was born, a place of hope and healing for individuals and families. Its name was based on an Aboriginal word meaning “to bear another person's load”.

“The fundamental purpose of the centre was to provide encouragement, support and counsel to families and individuals in personal, social and economic difficulties so that they could develop strength, confidence and resources to manage their own affairs independently,” wrote Jim in a letter to the Honourable S.D. Tooth in 1968.

The centre was opened in February 1969, financed by the church with the assistance of a \$5000 grant from the state government. Jim collaborated with the University of Queensland to establish a Social Studies Training Unit in the centre. Professional legal, psychiatric, financial and marriage guidance facilities were operational.

Clients were drawn from across the inner-city suburbs, including people referred from hospitals and other agencies. Within a short time Kalparrin had undertaken more than 700 interviews and was carrying a capacity case load of 40 people.

Kalparrin continued to grow and when Rev Richard Diffin and his wife Wendy began their ministry at the church in 1971, they added a community legal service and women's refuge.

“To finance this, five thrift shops were opened and many stalls were held along with progressive dinners, fashion parades, dinners with guest speakers etc.,” says Wendy, who recalls that there were nearly 100 volunteers involved at the time.

“The Fortitude Valley Rotary Club donated a truck to pick up donations of furniture and clothes ... the club also donated a 12 seater bus to pick up women and children escaping from domestic violence.”

In 1980 Kalparrin was placed under the control of the Queensland Synod of the newly formed Uniting Church. Fortitude Valley Presbyterian Church later closed and was sold to a private concern.

Marion McConaghy is a member of St Andrew's Uniting Church, Brisbane and convener of the Vera Wade Gallery. She is currently compiling information about Kalparrin. To share your story contact marion.mcconaghy@bigpond.com



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Great books for the summer season

As the summer season heats up and you're relaxing at the beach, poolside or the park, a great book is as essential as sunglasses, a cold drink, sunscreen (SPF 50+ please!) and a hat. Queensland Synod staff recommend their top reads.

1 *My Grandmother Sends Her Regards and Apologies* by **Fredrik Backman**
Heartbreaking and hilarious in equal measure, the best-selling author of *A Man Called Ove* now focuses on the story of Elsa and her eccentric, chaotic granny. The titular granny has a very vivid imagination and creates wondrous lands with colourful stories for Elsa and herself, and you sense at some point that fantasy and reality will collide. Although my grannies weren't like the one in the story it does evoke memories, smells and stories we shared when I too was young.

Kellie Broderick
Executive officer corporate
Synod Support Services

2 *The Anchoress* by **Robyn Cadwallader**
The story of 17-year-old Sarah's choice to become an anchoress, a holy woman, for the 12th century village in which she was raised, is a compelling read. Keen to find God and flee grief and the temptations of the world, Sarah is locked in a cell, forcing her to face issues of faith, desire, and the need for human connection. Cadwallader's vivid descriptions draw the reader into Sarah's journey and confronts us to consider the patriarchal role of the church in that time.

Lyndelle Gunton
Trinity Theological Library manager
Trinity College Queensland

3 *The Five Love Languages* by **Gary Chapman**
Just another self-help book? No, in my opinion this is quite a thought-provoking read that has you evaluating not just how

your relationship with your spouse works but how you could utilise this information to enhance the relationships of your family, friends and work colleagues. It also opens your eyes to yourself and helps you to understand why you are like you are and need what you need to enjoy the life you lead.

Sharon Knol
Reception/admin assistant
Synod Support Services

4 *Small Great Things* by **Jodi Picoult**
This exciting and riveting novel is also very challenging, forcing us to confront our own prejudices and attitudes toward race, privilege and justice. The author is brave in her exploration of these universal and important themes. The characters are very real as they are forced to face up to their own biases and assumptions. These are issues we need to have open and honest conversations about in our homes and communities.

Sue Hutchinson
Research officer, Uniting Communications

5 *Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail* by **Cheryl Strayed**
When 26-year-old Cheryl Strayed woke up one morning trying to make sense of her seemingly broken life, she decided to hike over a thousand miles on the Pacific Crest Trail through California, Oregon and Washington State. *Wild* is her story of adrenaline, danger, rookie mistakes, and ultimately of self-discovery. It's an enjoyable and lightly provocative summer read.

Scott Guyatt
Project officer, mission engagement



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(L-R) Wesley Mission Queensland NILS staff Anna Hickey, senior community services accountant and Diane Hart, microfinance officer.
Photo: Supplied

Debt has no more dominion

Dianne Jensen finds out about the Wesley Mission Queensland No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS) providing low income people with funds for essential goods and services—and how your congregation can participate.

“
For many people on low incomes, paying for essential goods and services is a struggle, and the effects of going without can be huge

Anna Hickey

When the fridge broke down, the single parent of two boys thought she would have to rent a new one. Instead, thanks to a no-interest loan through the Wesley Mission Queensland (WMQ) NILS program, the young mother was able to buy a new fridge.

“I have saved a lot of money that I couldn’t afford in the first place,” she says. “I compared renting to buying and have saved over \$700 in rent/interest/fees and will pay back the loan in half the time!”

Another client, a pensioner, moved into a rental property without a fridge. She was using an esky until NILS lent her money to buy a fridge.

These are just two of the people assisted since WMQ became accredited providers for the NILS program in 2010. NILS is coordinated nationally through Good Shepherd Microfinance with capital provided by the National Australia Bank.

It works on a circular community credit model, providing amounts between \$300 and \$1200 to those on low incomes for the purchase of essential goods and services. Repayments are used to fund more loans.

Anna Hickey, WMQ senior community services accountant, takes up the story.

“NILS was first offered to clients alongside our emergency relief office in Brisbane. Seeing the potential to benefit more people, we have been expanding our service delivery. We currently deliver in four locations—Carole Park, Fortitude Valley, Chermside and Robina.”

While the amounts vary, even a little help can go a long way, says Anna.

“For many people on low incomes, paying for essential goods and services is a struggle, and the effects of going without can be huge. Without a fridge you can’t store fresh food, without a computer kids can be left behind at school and if you can’t afford the cost of a training course, education can stall before it even begins.”

Anna says that providing loans—rather than handouts—and helping people to budget their repayments are important parts of the scheme. More than 90 per cent of loans are repaid.

“By offering a loan, we are empowering people to make their own choices, providing them with an opportunity to move towards greater self-sufficiency.”

WMQ is looking for volunteers from congregations across Queensland to expand the reach of the NILS scheme. Volunteers will receive training and support to assist clients filling in application packs. All loan assessment and management is handled by WMQ.

To find out more contact nils@wmq.org.au or call 07 3621 4384.



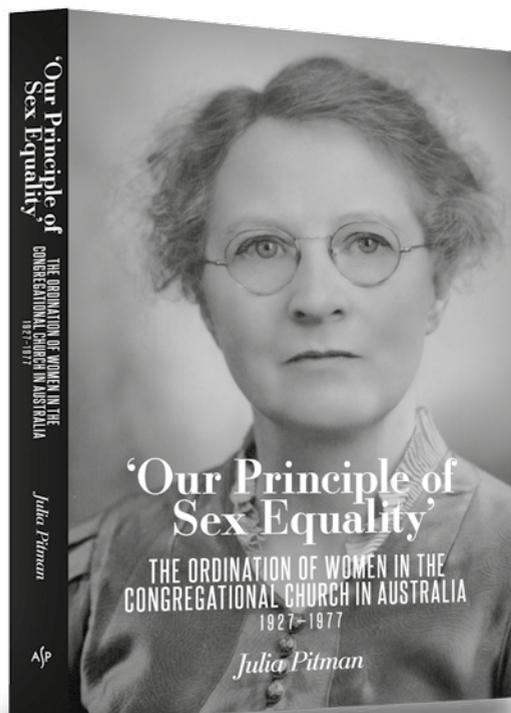
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Female focus on the Congregational Church

Julia Pitman's new book *Our Principle of Sex Equality* explores 15 female ministers in the context of the establishment of Congregationalism in Australia. **Rev Jim Pearson** reviews.

I enthusiastically opened Julia Pitman's *Our Principle of Sex Equality* for two reasons. Firstly, as a Presbyterian minister who became a Minister of the Word in the Uniting Church in 2008, I wanted to explore the roots of the deeply held equality the Uniting Church affords women at all levels.

And secondly, my wife is related to one of the 15 pioneering Congregational Church women who were ordained prior to union in 1977. What had the author unearthed about her?

On both points Pitman has delivered. The book traces the history of the ordination of women in the Congregational Church from the earliest days, both overseas and in Australia.

It does so with rigour and thoroughness, and the abundance of references (over 650 footnotes) is testimony to the author's research and scholarship. Those seeking a book that is polemical and partisan will be disappointed: as Rev Prof Alan Sell notes in the introduction, "There is no hint of the 'all men are bad' school of feminism which was in vogue a few decades ago."

Pitman has made extensive use of primary sources in her research—always a good sign—and has not shirked from documenting the views of those pioneering female ordinands, even when those views are not views we may embrace today.

The book has necessarily focused on Winifred Kiek, the first and perhaps most influential of those 15 Congregational Church women ordained in Australia prior to 1977. She pioneered the way for women, and not just in her own denomination. She and other women with her charted a course into the peace movement, child and maternal welfare, missions, ecumenism and church union. Pitman's detail about Kiek and those causes was revelatory.

The history of the progression to ordination of women in the Congregational Church and the life stories of the women who were so ordained necessarily overlap.

There were times the book struggled to know if it was biography or history. That said, this is a work that maps a seminal advance in the life of women in an enlightened denomination and hints at the ramifications of that advance for the wider cause of women's liberation generally. Whether read as history or biography it is a work that has made good a deficit in a field of Australian church history.

As to the question of what the author unearthed about my wife's relative: I did learn more about my wife's first cousin once removed, Rev Lillian Hayman. The Pearson (nee Counsell) family tree is now more complete than it was.

Rev Jim Pearson

Rev Jim Pearson is minister with Emerald Uniting Church.

For an online-exclusive interview with Rev Dr Julia Pitman exploring her book and Congregationalism visit journeyonline.com.au/scoop/pitmanbookinterview

Our Principle of Sex Equality is available at Trinity Theological Library. To purchase a copy visit scholarly.info/book/483

Our Principle of Sex Equality

Author: Julia Pitman

Publisher: Australian Scholarly Publishing
2016



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Six reasons why cricket is the game played in heaven

It's not easy being an Australian cricket fan, especially of the classic five-day Test format. Non-believers scoff at the faithful—those who hold fast in the face of constant disappointment to the belief that we will prevail. **Dianne Jensen** pushes the boundary with six reasons why Test cricket will be the game played in heaven.

Film review: *Elle*

Paul Verhoeven has brought his fair share of risky (and often risqué) material to the big screen but his latest drama *Elle* might just be his most controversial film yet, and has a great deal of fascinating Christian elements to consider. **Ben Rogers** reviews.

Film review: *I, Daniel Blake*

With more than five decades in the film and television industry, Ken Loach's name has become a synonym for filmmaking with its finger on the pulse of socio-economic issues impacting the vulnerable and oppressed. **Sue Hutchinson** reviews his latest, *I, Daniel Blake*.

What if every church ...

In his latest exclusive column for *The Scoop*, **Scott Guyatt** contemplates the benefits to churches if they rethink their approach to hospitality in the spirit of Jesus' practices.

Film review: *Hacksaw Ridge*

Mel Gibson's personal transgressions are easily forgotten when witnessing his extraordinary ability to communicate the Christian faith in *Hacksaw Ridge*. **Ashley Thompson** reviews.

To the Editor

More memories at the Crossroads

Just to add to Rodney Boyce's plea ("To the editor", November 2016 edition) for a future reference to Crossroads in *Journey*.

In January 1978 I left as minister of a country parish in Queensland (we were refugees from Bjelke) to take up the position of "Christian Education Officer" for the (then) Uniting Church in Australia Synod of Tasmania. Within a year or so, at a national Joint Board Conference for Christian Educators, I met Ed Smith, the great mover and shaker of Crossroads Queensland.

One night after a very long day he ear-bashed me from 10 pm until the wee hours, about Crossroads. I was convinced.

Soon he visited Tasmania to set up our first branch and from there we had vigorous branches in the three main population areas of the state. After my retirement in 1990, one of the original Crossroaders has always sent me the annual report of Crossroads Tasmania.

I just mention a few facts from recent reports to illustrate how much Crossroads is an integral part of the life of the (now) Uniting Church Presbytery of Tasmania. The 2014 report mentions that Crossroads Tasmania now has approximately 250 members in six branches. Some branches are over 30 years old and still vigorous. I have wondered how this great movement is going in Queensland now.

Rev Alan Renton
Magnetic Island

Reflecting on reflections

Thank you Ashley Thompson for your respectful and timely article, "Reflections on the unborn" (November 2016 edition). Through four stories you raised the complex issues women face when dealing with an unexpected pregnancy.

I liked Sandy's words, "I would never judge another woman's decision ... until you're in the spot you don't know." I am pleased Rev David Baker confirmed that the Uniting Church does not hold one position on abortion yet pointed out to the inquiry that both the foetus and the mother have rights and that changes to Queensland laws need to recognise these competing rights.

I believe our responses to women and couples who face such issues need to be deeply pastoral and offer unconditional love and support no matter what the outcomes are.

Rev Lorna Skilton
Toowoomba

All letters must directly address articles and letters from the previous month's edition of Journey and be accompanied by the writer's name and the name of their congregation or suburb of residence. Opinions expressed are only indicative of the individual writer, not their entire congregation. Letters are published at the discretion of the editor, but do not necessarily represent the views of the editor or that of official Uniting Church policy. Letters may be edited for clarity or space, at the discretion of the editor. Letters should be no longer than 150 words. Full submission guidelines for letters to the editor can be found at journeyonline.com.au/submit

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Appealing outcome for Fiji recovery

Gratitude has poured in from Rakiraki, Fiji as communities rebuild their lives after Cyclone Winston—thanks to goods donated by various groups within the Queensland Uniting Church.

After Cyclone Winston hit Fiji in full force on 20 February, various members of the Queensland community banded together to appeal for donated goods for families in Rakiraki—one of the most affected areas.

The transportation costs of the goods donated were then covered by North Queensland Presbytery, St George Uniting Church and Calvary Presbytery.

When the goods arrived in Fiji at the beginning of August, Rev Saimoni Davui's wife, Duri Davui, flew across to work with local village leaders to coordinate the distribution of the goods which included unpacking and sorting.

Read more at journeyonline.com.au/scoop/cyclonewinstonrecovery/



Read more about the Cyclone Winston recovery effort in *The Scoop*.
Photo: Supplied

Human Rights Day

On 10 December 1948 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and since 1950 the date has been observed every year to commemorate the milestone. This year the United Nations is urging everyone to stand up for someone's rights, given the ongoing disrespect for basic human rights seen around the world.

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon says, "On Human Rights Day, let us recommit to guaranteeing the fundamental freedoms and protecting the human rights of all."

Get involved on social media by discussing human rights issues impacting this country and overseas by using the #HumanRightsDay hashtag.

The Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland (ADCQ) will also be running a Human Rights month campaign (10 November–10 December) focusing on mentally healthy workplaces and flexibility at work.

To register as a ADCQ workplace champion or to find more information on their campaign visit adcq.qld.gov.au/resources/fair-and-inclusive-workplaces

International Day of People with Disability

Designed to help break down disability barriers and celebrate ability, the International Day of People with Disability (3 December) is a great way to acknowledge people with disability positively in your community.

This year's theme is *Achieving 17 Goals for the Future We Want* and references the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals to create a more inclusive and equitable world for everyone.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics almost one in five Australians reported living with disability in 2015, with the majority (78.5 per cent) of people with disability citing a physical condition.

You can get involved by organising an event at your school, church or workplace which raises awareness about disability issues and promotes the human rights of all people or host a community activity which puts the focus on inclusive participation.

For more information or to register your event visit idpwd.com.au

Update on Queensland youth detention laws

The Queensland government has recently passed legislation to State Parliament to end the practice of placing 17 year-old offenders into adult prisons, with a vote on the matter passed by the state Labor government and three crossbench MPs.

Queensland was the only state in Australia where 17 year-olds were treated as adults in the criminal justice system, and the Queensland Synod has consistently spoken against the practice, a breach of Australia's international obligations under the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk stated at the time of introducing the legislation, "We can continue to ensure community safety for Queenslanders, while meeting the needs of vulnerable young people through the sort of programs and services that can only be delivered through the youth justice system."

"For too long it's been in the too-hard basket. Not anymore."

To read the *Youth Justice and Other Legislation (Inclusion of 17-year-old Persons) Amendment Bill 2016* visit parliament.qld.gov.au/Documents/TableOffice/TabledPapers/2016/5516T1548.pdf



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