


COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

 Synod of New South Wales and the ACT, Uniting Church in Australia

e-news February 2010

Welcome to *Community Connections*.

To keep *Community Connections* of interest to the widest possible readership, we welcome for consideration news and information about initiatives, events and activities from all parts of the Synod. Regional contributions, and stories of how your congregation supports Living is Giving, are especially welcome. Send your material (maximum 150 words) to kima@nsw.uca.org.au.

Click here for *Community Connections* in a PDF that you can print off and distribute, or email to others in your congregation and community (requires Adobe Acrobat reader — click [here](#) to download).

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NEWS AND INITIATIVES

Message from the moderator

I have an image of the Uniting Church being like a person who has spent a lot of time trying on a whole lot of clothes that just don't fit, aren't the right colour, just don't look good or don't seem to be the right style.

Think of David, putting on the King's armour and realising it was not going to work for him in his battle with Goliath. The traditional clothing of the church that has gone before doesn't fit the Uniting Church for who we are called to be as we witness to the presence and power of God active in the world today. [READ ON](#)

Australia mourns lives lost in wildfires one year on

Releasing butterflies to honor the dead, Australians marked the one-year anniversary of the country's worst-ever wildfires Sunday in big-city cathedrals and small towns still bearing burn scars. [READ ON](#) Bushfire tragedy recalled. [READ ON](#)

Greens feel ETS squeeze

Social justice groups are pressuring the Greens to abandon their opposition to the government's emissions trading scheme, arguing continued rejection of the contentious bill could set back climate change policy in Australia for years. [READ ON](#)

Theological education: what is it for?

A while back, Ben Myers was asked to write a few paragraphs on theological education for [Living is Giving](#). Benjamin Myers is a lecturer in systematic theology at United Theological College and hosts his own popular forum Faith and Theology, a blog canvassing topics as serious as theology to humorous accounts on popular culture. Here Benjamin gives his take on the important role theological education has to play in our lives. [READ ON](#)

Tuvalu church leader feels betrayed by Copenhagen

For the Rev. Tofiga Falani, president of the Christian Church of Tuvalu, the worry of his Pacific nation has been the risk of rising sea levels. Tuvalu is one of the most endangered nations on the planet, due to rising sea waters: the highest point is 4.5 meters above sea level, but most of the islands are no more than a metre above the ocean. [READ ON](#)

UnitingCare welcomes attention to ageing population

"UnitingCare Australia is encouraged that the needs of older Australians are a key priority for the Australian Government," said Lin Hatfield Dodds, National Director of UnitingCare Australia. [READ ON](#)

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An ethical dilemma

NSW's plan for ethics classes in schools fatally ignores religion's role in Western civilisation, says Shelley Gare. [READ ON](#)

WCC commends G7 relief of Haiti's debt, asks IMF to follow suit

The World Council of Churches (WCC) has welcomed the initiative by the seven most industrialized nations (G7), which pledged this past weekend to write Haiti's debts with them off. In a letter from the WCC general secretary, the Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, the WCC also asked for the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other international financial institutions to follow the G7 example and make sure financial support to Haiti is "grant-based and not debt-creating". [READ ON](#)

Christians pray for unity, remember 'unexpected' insights

Christians around the world are remembering the 1910 World Missionary Conference in the Scottish capital of Edinburgh as a key initiative that led to the ecumenical movement seeking the unity of the Church. [READ ON](#)

Teacher investigated, Christianity 'sidelined'?

Britain's Christian Legal Centre says it has hired a human rights lawyer to represent Olive Jones, a 54-year old maths teacher who is being investigated by the North Somerset Council after she offered to say prayers in front of a 14-year old student suffering from leukaemia. [READ ON](#)

Keith Garner: It's time to reassess our sense of worth

We must look beyond consumerism to find the value of the individual. We may not be out of the woods, as the Treasurer reminds us, but before we make our dash on to fields of green, what lessons have we learnt from the economic downturn and what can we take into the new year? [READ ON](#)

Mental health chaplain retires with pride

Better treatment of gay people and the mentally ill in the past 20 years is a source of pride for the Hunter's retiring mental health chaplain, the Rev. Christine Sheppard. [READ ON](#) To know more about UnitingCare NSW.ACT mental health chaplains click [here](#).

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EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

'Judaism and the Other,' February 14 -15

The Australian Association of Jewish Studies is holding their 22nd Annual Conference, titled 'Judaism and the Other.'

The conference will be held at Mandelbaum House, University of Sydney on February 14-15, 2010.

The program will include: Otherness in the Biblical Period, Otherness in Art and Art as "other", The Jewish People, Christians and Muslims: Understandings and Misunderstandings.

For more information see <http://www.aajs.org.au>.

UTC: Commencement of the Academic Year, February 22

On behalf of the MEB & Faculty of the United Theological College we wish to extend a warm invitation to attend and to celebrate the Commencement of the Academic Year 2010.

Guest Preacher: Rev Jane Fry

DATE: Monday 22 February 2010

TIME: Opening Service commencing at 9:30am

VENUE: Chapel of St Andrew Uniting Church Centre for Ministry 16 Masons Drive North Parramatta (Please assemble at the Aboriginal Cross located within the carpark. The Service will then precede to the Chapel of St Andrew).

Please note: Academic dress is not required.

The Service will be followed by Morning Tea commencing at 11:30am in the Auditorium, you are invited to attend the Inaugural Lecture for 2010 "Streams in the Desert: Being Church in the 21st Century". Presented by Katalina Tahaafe-Williams (Director, Communitas Program) 12:30pm a BBQ will be hosted by the Student Association (No charge – Gold Coin Donation gratefully accepted). **Please RSVP on or before the 15th February** for catering purposes by contacting the following:

David Roper: Phone (02) 8838 8927 or Email: davidr@nsw.uca.org.au Renee Kelly: Phone (02) 8838 8917 or Email to: reneek@nsw.uca.org.au

Song-Writing Competition, entries close February 26

“Songs that unite” is the title of the inaugural national song-writing competition of the Uniting Church in Australia. Song-writers are encouraged to write a piece of contemporary music for use in congregational singing in the following categories relating to aspects of a worship service: 1. Gathering the people; 2. Opening up to God; 3. Responding to God; 4. Sending.

Remember that entries close on 26 February 2010. The winners will be announced on March 31, 2010. There will be \$500 for the first prize and up to four \$150 highly commended prizes. The winning songs will be promoted across Australia. Further information about the competition, including conditions of entry, application forms and judging details, is available from the website www.assembly.uca.org.au.

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World Day of Prayer, March 5

Something special happens on the first Friday of March each year. It is the World Day of Prayer, a Christian prayer movement from a women’s perspective. The roots go back to the 19th century and since 1927 WDP has been celebrated in an ever increasing number of countries.

On Friday March 5, 2010 more than three million people worldwide will be worshipping together during an annual day of prayer. Like a Mexican wave of prayer the first service will begin at sunrise in Tonga and move around the world until the sun sets in neighbouring Western Samoa. By then the Day will have been celebrated in over 170 countries and throughout Australia, over 1300 services will have been held.

Each year the service is prepared by a different country. In 2010 the Christian women of Cameroon in Central Africa have chosen the theme “Let Everything That Has Breath Praise God”.

For information regarding holding a World Day of Prayer Service or the location of one near you go to our website www.worlddayofprayeraustralia.org.

Synod 2010, April 10-13

God’s generosity and people’s response to it is to be the focus of the meeting of the Synod of New South Wales and the ACT to be held at Canterbury Park Race Course from April 10-13, 2010.

Visit the Synod meeting website at <http://nsw.uca.org.au/synodmeeting/> for more information about the theme, when proposals are due, how to vote, what to do if you’re a first time member or a visitor, what the theme is and how it is hoped this Synod meeting will take a new shape so people feel even more included and encouraged in their faith and ministry.

Adult Fellowship National Celebration, April 21 – 25

The Adult Fellowship National Celebration will be held at Greenhills Centre, Canberra from April 21 – 25. Please contact Denise and Allan Secomb for more information on 02 4951 68855, or allananddenisesecomb@gmail.com.

Engaging the Basis: Theological Directions of the UCA, July 9-11

This conference sets out to explore the theological commitments and responsibilities of the Uniting Church of Australia. It is to be held at the Centre for Theology & Ministry, Melbourne on July 9-11, 2010. Please visit the conference website for more information www.engagingthebasis.ucaweb.com.au. Full details of the conference aims, its programme, and the various presenters are available there - together with a downloadable registration form.

NCYC11 Turns it up!

The National Christian Youth Convention (NCYC) is a national youth event held every two years by the Uniting Church. We're now less than 12 months away from nyc11, which will be held on Queensland's Gold Coast from 29 December 2010 – 4 January 2011.

NCYC11 encourages young people aged 16-25 to turn up their faith and tune into God with times of community, Bible study, worship, speakers, bands and electives. For the first time, nyc11 will also feature a massive New Year's celebration! Follow the latest news at nyc11.com.au, sign up for our enews, or follow us on facebook.com/nyc11 or twitter.com/nyc11.

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LIVING IS GIVING: PRAYER POINTS AND RESOURCES

Living is Giving 2010-11 Handbook - coming soon to a congregation near you

Soon will be the time to start planning for your Living is Giving journey with this year's Living is Giving Handbook 2010-2011, found in this March edition of *Insights* magazine.

Once again, this year's Handbook is filled with 15 wonderful and inspirational stories, most of which will also illuminate what the Uniting Church is all about. From advocating on social justice issues to promoting multiculturalism our ministry work is bringing messages of solidarity and love to the world. These are stories of how young lives are being nurtured and inspired by the work of the Youth Unit. Stories on how bold new initiatives are bringing the Gospel to new groups of people in dynamic and creative ways. Good news stories such as how the presence of a chaplain in hospitals and mental health wards are bringing measurable health benefits to patients. And stories of how the Synod's rural ministry workers are bringing hope and Christ's love to people in the outback.

Sadly, contributions to Living is Giving have fallen, which means a leaner Synod budget and an uncertain situation for many of the church's ministries in the coming year. If you believe these activities of the Uniting Church matter, as we sincerely do, make it your congregation's resolution to support the many ministries of the Uniting Church – all of which make our church so special.

If you have any queries about Living is Giving, or would like to host a free Living is Giving presentation with our guest speakers, please feel free to contact me on (02) 8267 4475 or kima@nsw.uca.org.au.

The year in review for Living is Giving

Last year was a great year for Living is Giving, allowing the Uniting Church to accomplish many wonderful things. Here is a quick glimpse into some of the key achievements made by our different mission focus areas in the last year including:

- UnitingCare Ageing gained approval under the National Rental Affordable Housing Scheme, to build 167 affordable dwellings, many of which will be made available to older Australians at risk of becoming homeless.
- The Cross Cultural Youth Praise and Worship saw a turn-out of around 400 young people from around 14 different backgrounds. The event provided our young people with the rare opportunity to showcase their talent, meet new people, to network, and express in their own way how they connect with God.
- The spiritual and economic regeneration of Tingha, a town once listed as the third most disadvantaged community in Australia.
- The timely appointment of a second rural chaplain for New South Wales, providing pastoral care to farmers facing drought, unemployment and mental health issues.

These activities and many more are sustained by the collective contributions of Uniting Church members through Living is Giving.

By supporting Living is Giving you contribute to the many ministries which make our church so special. Ministry areas like indigenous ministry, chaplaincy in schools and universities, speaking up for justice and peace, advocacy to build happy healthy families, and ministry in rural areas to name a few.

Living is Giving is not just like any other program, it's a way of life – the way the Uniting Church shares its love of Christ with the rest of the world.

Our heartfelt thanks goes out to our Living is Giving supporters whom over the years have made ministry work, both within and outside Australia, happen. Thank you and the best of luck choosing this year's mission focus areas.

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Host your own Living is Giving presentation in 2010

Start your new year's resolution by challenging your congregation to be more active in discipleship and stewardship. Living is Giving provides you and your congregation with the opportunity to share the Christian message of hope and love with your community within and beyond the Uniting Church. To find out how you can become part of the bigger picture and learn how your congregation can make a difference to the lives of others, we invite you to host a free Living is Giving presentation. Our passionate presenters are happy to come to worship service and speak about their work or Living is Giving in general. This is a great way to connect with the mission focus areas you support. For more information please call Kimberly Almarza on (02) 8267 4475.

Prayer point and praise points

Each year Living is Giving continues to advance the church's mission work in ways that have changed many lives for the better. The current year, 2010-11, already looks exciting, with new ventures and significant achievements. Contributions by congregations and individuals through Living is Giving have helped make these activities possible.

Give thanks for:

- A Hunter Presbytery initiative based in Newcastle - setting a new model for evangelism, one that's based on building relationships rather than increasing membership. Hosted by Hamilton/Broadmeadow Uniting Church since 2006, the Bridge is an open-for-all, non-traditional faith community set up for people who, in one way or another, are marginalised from society. Up to 25 people from the inner city of Newcastle meet and share in fellowship, explore spirituality, go on trips such as last July's outback trip, where members were able to engage with the Indigenous community and the spirituality of the land. For such important ministry work to continue both the Hunter Presbytery and the Synod have supported the Bridge financially and employed the work of the part-time coordinator and a pastoral/promotions worker.
- The presence of chaplains, Special Religious Education volunteers and religious education coordinators who work throughout Australian universities and schools. Their presence is vital for students who have a desire to grow

and build a more solid foundation for their individual faith journey. While university Christian organisations like UCATSA take care of developing young adults, Special Religious Education and school chaplains look after teaching the basics to a younger audience. In state schools there are around 300,000 children who receive religious education and approximately 800 volunteer scripture teachers.

- New and exciting ventures like Roseville's One Day Fun Day, where around 30 children took part in the day's festivities. Children as young as 4 to boisterous teens met and chatted with the local church kids and youth leaders. For some children in the local community, One Day Fun Day offered them a rare opportunity to visit the church, getting their first feel of what goes on behind church doors. One Day Fun Day is just one of the ways Roseville congregation has made the most of its new facilities, including a new hall and large sunny outdoor balcony. The Board of Mission's New Congregations Consultant, Glen Powell, has been working with congregations like Roseville to connect with the community and people who might find the idea of church daunting. This can mean looking for new ways of worship, organising events, resourcing congregations, facilitating workshops or, in the case of Roseville Uniting Church, effectively using new facilities and mobilising networks of people to help each other.

You can read more about these and other activities by clicking [here](#).

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For more on these mission focus areas please visit:

<http://www.livingisgiving.uca.org.au/missionfocusareas.htm>

To find out more about Living is Giving visit: <http://livingisgiving.nsw.uca.org.au>.

Studying journalism, graphic design or communications and would like to offer your skills to *Insights*? Go to <http://news.nsw.uca.org.au/employment/2009/graduates-students.htm> to learn how.

Don't forget about the [Moderator's Drought Appeal](#). Your donation will help provide counselling, chaplaincy services and emergency relief to drought-affected people.

CONTACT US: unitingcreative@nsw.uca.org.au

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