

Welcome to ER Direct

Editorial

Did your church community get involved in the **Jesus all about life** program? Was it worthwhile or successful? I have heard mixed reviews from different communities and believe we have a few things to learn from this campaign.

Can we compete with or join commercial marketing to promote the gospel?

The article in *Australian Leadership 'Christmas Radio Advertising'* by Bruce Cole addresses some of these issues. Coles says 'Commercials and ads are aimed at raising awareness and recall of a product name. It takes saturation coverage over a significant time to have an impact.' Is this what we should be doing with the gospel?

I don't believe we raised awareness significantly or increased people's recall of the name or person of Jesus.

The material presented in the advert certainly raised questions, however...the resources given didn't directly help people provide appropriate methods to answer those questions. The approach of giving people a book of the bible to answer their questions is not in my opinion the best strategy for our time.

In the five different communities where I preached in during November, my emphasis was that personal witness is an essential component of relating the relevance of Jesus to today's life. Personal witness that relates to each of the issues alluded to in the advert should be a normal part of conversation with anyone. It took me quite a bit of preparation to be able to work on personal life experience stories about each of the issues. In preparing for this event it did not appear that people were encouraged to talk about their own life experience of these issues. If Jesus is all about life, surely our people should be able to talk about how Jesus has guided or influenced their lives.

Dawn Darwin Weaks in this Nov/Dec issue of *Australian Leadership* addresses this same issue in an interesting article called '**Keeping Holy Conversations Going**'. She says '*I sought out something to offer someone who has an enquiry that offers them a small simple book that will cause them to think further about drawing closer to Christ.*' She says '*I couldn't find anything.*' Peter Hopkins emailed a request for something similar and I couldn't think of or find anything appropriate. Dawn's solution was to write something herself that was 'hospitality' friendly rather than studious or theologically heavy. She wrote '*Before You Go*'. We know hospitality, relationships and belonging are integral parts to the appropriate packaging of the gospel today. So if your Jesus all about Life program started some relationships then it has been worthwhile. But there is a long way to go yet for people to become disciples.

I have been encouraged to read the latest NSW Ecumenical Council magazine. They identify three C's for **the God priorities for the churches in NSW** for the next few years.

The three concerns are:

- **Communicating and Relating the Gospel in our Contemporary Context**
- **Cross Cultural Relationships**
- **Caring for Creation**

The Jesus All about Life program was an attempt, ecumenically, to begin to do the first C *communicate to our culture*, but I don't believe we did it well. Our theological issues got in the way in some communities and we didn't properly prepare our church people to answer people's queries. However, I believe God uses all our efforts and I know the Holy Spirit has touched, reached and taught a significant number of people and brought them into a closer relationship with Jesus.

Every Christmas we have an opportunity to be welcoming and to share the difference Christ has made to the world, to **your** world, your family and your life. You can witness to the hangers on or the loyal ex-church family members who come to church with mixed motives. Christmas is actually a wonderful follow up opportunity to add to the message *Jesus is all about life*. It is possibly the largest evangelical opportunity event in most churches in the whole year. How well are you prepared to help people understand and see the relevance of the incarnation to our 2009 Australian society? It is not just up to the sermon or the singing but up to every Christian member over the Christmas season.

God Bless and have a happy and peaceful Christmas!

Ross Neville

New! - List of DVD conversations - now available



We have produced a list of the conversations with a short description to help you plan your

Bible Study. The DVD may be used to accompany the studies or it can be used independently as a resource for leading devotions or stimulating discussion. There is also an amendment to the **Introduction** which explains that the studies were written by different teams of people and were not designed particularly be used consecutively. You will re-visit some Bible stories more than once, studying them from different perspectives. The **DVD** that accompanies the study has 38 local persons talking about their 'Jesus experience'. The amendment provides a list of how the DVD may be used with each study.

These additions can be obtained from the Rural Office or by downloading from the Rural Evangelism & Mission web page.

<http://nsw.uca.org.au/bom/ruralmission/resources.htm>

TWINNING UPDATE



Pymble Uniting Church has a partnership with Enngonia. One of their projects is to put together sets of books to send to book groups in the bush. Pymble's idea is to collect 2nd hand books and use these to send out to groups in small rural communities at no cost to the people on the receiving end. Once the books have been read and discussed they will be returned to Pymble for the next group. They have collected many books already but are looking for more to finish off the sets. If you have any of the titles below and would be happy to donate them for this project you can drop them off to the Pymble Uniting Church, 1 Livingston Ave, Pymble 2073 or send them to Margaret Lowder at the same address.

Mao's Last Dancer, Li Cunxin
The Red Tent, Anita Diamant
The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society, Mary Ann Shaffer & Annie Barrows
The Hospital by the River, Catherine Hamlin
The Book Thief, Markus Zusak
The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time, Mark Haddon
Nine Parts of Desire, Geraldine Brooks
Infidel, Aayan Hirsi Ali
Journey of a Thousand Miles, Lang Lang & David Ritz
The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo, Stieg Larsson
The Time Traveler's Wife, Audrey Niffenegger

continued

We are all journeying people, travellers not settlers. As human beings we are caught in inevitable change. We're on the move and one day our earthly journey will end. What then? For the true Christian believer, our real and permanent home is God himself. Psalm 90 affirms 'Lord, you have been our dwelling-place throughout all generations... from everlasting to everlasting, you are God'. Is he your God too, your dwelling-place, your "home" wherever you happen to live on earth?

God's blessing hovers over us every day. He longs to do so much for us in our need. But though some general blessings come to all men in his providence, for which we should be grateful, His best blessings, the most personal ones, do not come unsought. *It's your move now. God has made his!*

This is one of a number of articles and sermons written by Rev Perry Smith of Belmont, NSW. If you would like any of the following titles please contact the Rural Office.

- *What Does 'Amen' Mean?*
- *Life's Stumbling-Blocks or Stepping Stones?*
- *God's Welcome*
- *Facing Life's Setbacks*
- *Coping With Grief*

IT'S YOUR MOVE NEXT!

by the Rev Perry Smith of Belmont, NSW

Life is a journey of changing scenes, indeed a pilgrimage. John Bunyan classic allegory of life entitled 'Pilgrim's Progress' ended in heaven. Where will your journey end? We cannot be just sentimental about that. We need a passport to heaven, and for that purpose, Jesus left heaven for Bethlehem's manger and later the Cross where He died for us on that first Good Friday.



When playing draughts or chess a player staring at the board may be jolted out of his musing on hearing 'It's your move next!' Someone said that God is the best chess player; he is always a move ahead. He also says: "It's your move next!" Archbishop William Temple of Canterbury many years ago quite rightly said, that the Gospel is not merely 'God loved the world', but 'God so loved the world that He gave His Son'. Love acting... love reaching... love searching... love stooping - all for us!

God has moved in Christ, to bring us peace with Him, forgiveness, and eternal life with Him in heaven. But it's not automatic. It's our move next. He doesn't burgle the human heart. He doesn't twist our arm. In amazing condescension the great Creator, the Father who loves us personally, waits for our response to his own move in the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus. What's your response to a love like that?

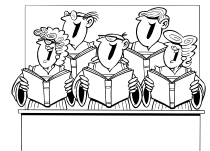
Continued above

Project Reconnect Conference

28-30 May 2010 (TBC)
Parkes Uniting Church**

This conference is for congregations who are involved in *Project Reconnect* and those who are interested in using this resource. There will be an opportunity to share experiences, learn more about technology and develop future ideas for worship materials. For more details contact Kingsley Murphy 02 68855778 kingsley.murphy@bigpond.com **Date of conference to be confirmed
www.projectreconnect.com.au

NEED HELP WITH CHURCH MUSIC?



South Ballarat UC have produced CD's titled '*United In Song*'. They are made for congregations with no musicians and cost \$20.00 each from UniChurch Books, 130 Lt. Collins Street Melbourne, VIC. 3000 (which is the Vic/Tas Synod office building)
Phone: 03 92515291 Fax: 03 9650 7019
Website: <http://unichurch.victas.uca.org.au/>
Email: unichurch@victas.uca.org.au

There are 3 CD's; *United in Song*; *United in Song 2*; *United in Song 3*. There are mainly based on hymn book **Together In Song**.

Resources Direct



To request copies of any article, Phone (02) 6361 4224 or
Email to: bomrural@bigpond.net.au



1 The Kingdom of God is Like a Seed of Wheat Ross Neville



Ross has produced a trial series of 'rural' devotional studies that bring a 21st century parable perspective. These may be used as discussion starters, sermon background material or for a small group Bible Study. The first in the series is related to Jesus' teaching about 'Cropping' and consists of 14 short story explanations. The second series called 'Garden Parables' has 8 short story explanations. These studies reflect Ross' farming background and his belief that God still teaches through normal life situations. They give an understanding of the rural material from the perspective of the rural people of our time. There are a lot of spiritual parallels in farming and nature that any rural person would understand see or appreciate.

The Bible Studies, in their trial form, can be downloaded from the following web page:

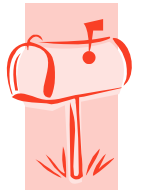
<http://nsw.uca.org.au/bom/ruralmission/resources.htm>

If you do not have internet access you may request a copy from the BOM Rural Office.

3 Doing Theology by Postcodes Clive Pearson Out & About No.19, June 09 March/April 2009 www.utc.edu.au

Does where we live, work or study alter the dynamics of our Christ-talk? How we talk about Jesus is often in relation to me and people like me. There is a place for this kind of conversation but we also need to think about who Christ is for 'us'. What is it about the human condition as it is lived out by a particular people and a particular place that requires healing, wholeness and compassion? How we answers the question will depend on our locations and the postcodes we inhabit. Clive Pearson has devised a day-long study for groups on how to consider who Christ is for your public neighbourhoods.

For more details contact Clive on 02 8838 9826 cpearman@optusnet.com.au



4 Denominational Leadership in Post Denominational Times Andrew Dutney Australian Leadership Vol 2 Issue 4 Nov/Dec 2009

Our society today has people practising unauthorised, unsupervised spirituality. We have moved away from organised religion to disorganised religion. People choose what parts they will adopt or reject and what they think of any leaders pronouncements. Leaders of most protestant denominations have ministerial candidates with a call from God from a multitude of denominational backgrounds. Andrew claims the Basis of Unions' premise that we are a pilgrim people means we are very well placed to adjust to the post denominational times we are in.

You can subscribe to Australian Leadership by contacting MediaCom Education Inc by phoning toll free on 1800 811 311 or ordering online at www.mediacom.org.au for an annual fee of \$68.00 (print copy) or \$47.50 (electronic copy).

2 Something Old, Something New Jonny Baker Leadership Winter 2009 www.LeadershipJournal.net

Improvising with tradition had proved to be successful in attracting non-Christians. Communities practising rituals, lighting candles and using liturgy around communion has become central to many gatherings. Christian tradition v traditionalism. Reforming tradition helps to keep it vital. 'Faithful improvisation' involves the participants immersing themselves in the truths which involves taking risks and making mistakes. Traditional and contemporary worship can be blended as in the *Alternative Worship* being practised in some parts of the UK. This approach to worship includes turning toward tradition and it's treasures. In an attempt to make worship relevant to young people popular music forms part of the service, alongside traditional rituals. Balancing tradition and improvisation appears to be the key to this 'move' into the future.



Articles for ER Direct

Read any good articles lately?

ER Direct welcomes articles, poems, web sites, books you have read, reviews of articles and pictures of any form relating to evangelism from its' readers. Anyone who has an article or review should send a copy to Rural Evangelism and Mission Office, we'd love to hear from you.

Resources Direct



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Email to: bomrural@bigpond.net.au



5 What Comes Next? Is there life After Growth? Geoffrey Mitchell Australian Leadership Vol 2 Issue 3 Sept/Oct 2009

Geoffrey Mitchell prayed for growth and God increased their church numbers. This article follows the experience of a church as it discovers what it takes to create an environment of spiritual growth for new and re-newed believers. It reflects on their failures and victories as they attempted to encourage spiritual growth. *Faith 101* included the basic teachings of the Christian faith, the vision and mission of their congregation, and the values of the Christian Church. *Mission 101 and Prayer 101* taught the practises of prayer and outreach. Their experience showed that frequent and intentional community events were essential in developing an environment for relating. A challenging thought is that one of the main definers of church growth is the spiritual health of it's leader.

6 Survival Skills James Emery White Leadership Journal Summer 2009

What you need to minister with your spirit intact

Nothing can prepare you for how ministry can drain you emotionally. How can we survive the hits and hurts? How do we avoid comparisons with other churches that drain us of energy and motivation? Dealing with staff, financial difficulties, criticism of your ministry and the pressure of people who want to redefine the vision can all sap your energy. It is essential that we restore our soul with a variety of activities including 'study breaks', 'emotionally replenishing experiences' and 'real time with God'. All ministers need to protect themselves from burnout and try to remain healthy, whole and sane.

7 A Reflection on Re-imagination through Practise Miriam Pepper

Cyclists will empathise with Miriam's feeling that cycling helps us to become more attuned to our physical environment. This everyday practice of cycling has changed her and we all encounter similar experiences in our lives. Our view of God and the 'world' we live in is reflected in our daily lives. It is through re-imagination and daily disciplines that our understanding is shaped. The results of this are seen in our churches and communities. Changed disciplines can lead to fresh understanding and new initiatives.

Miriam Pepper is a member of the Marouba Junction Uniting Church. This article can be viewed on the **Earthweb** website and originally appeared in *Eremos Magazine*, November 2009.

8 Your Walls Talk Paul Louis Metzger Leadership Journal Fall 2009



Bricks and Mortar say a lot about the gospel a church proclaims. This whole volume is dedicated to discussing property. If you are especially interested in this issue look up www.LeadershipJournal.net or ask Gillian to loan you the Board of Mission copy bomrural@bigpond.net.au

There are five very interesting articles: *Walls do Talk* (location and structures mean something); *Sacred Space, Shared Space* (let us restore sacred space to the public square); *The Sprawling Missional Campus* (we may have to provide missing facilities to practice faith); *Space Frontiers* (the story of 3 churches); *The Community Coffeehouse Serving our Neighbourhood* (church virtuality, the internet is challenging our assumptions about ministry.)



The ER Direct Team
Editor: Ross Neville
Co-ordinator: Gillian Blowes

**Activities of the e-team of
The Board of Mission**

Jesus Conversations Network
Evangelism Resources
ER Direct
In a State of Prayer

*This work is funded by Living is Giving
Mission Focus Area No.7 and direct donations.*

Rural Chaplains Roundup



Julie Greig and Kel Hodge now have their own blog! Go to www.ruralchaplains.blogspot.com

Their Newsletter can be viewed on the website at: <http://www.ruralchaplains.blogspot.com/>
(follow this link)

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THE REAL CHRISTMAS



What did the angel really say? Whatever was the reason?
The 'good news of great joy' explained the reason for the season.

'A Saviour has been born to you' and 'he is Christ the Lord'.
He's 'ever to be worshipped', to be 'trusted and adored'.

The angel choir then praised the Lord, and sang of 'peace on earth',
But that hope seems in vain without response to Jesus' birth.

Our 'peace with God' is found through him; for that we need to pray,
Then there is hope for human peace when Jesus is 'The Way'.

This is a short an excerpt from one of Rev Perry Smith's poems. It is one of 15 poems and hymns on various themes such as 'Mother's Day', 'A Vision for your Church', 'Living for Jesus Today', 'Abiding in Christ', 'What is Really Precious' and 'The 'I Am' of Jesus'.

Please contact the Rural Office for full copies of these resources.

Tel 02 6361 4224 or email bomrural@bigpond.net.au

BOOK REVIEW

'THE SHACK' BY WILLIAM P. YOUNG



There are books that take you on a life changing journey – 'The Shack' falls into this category. Once you start reading it you will want to read the whole book in one sitting. It has been described as a modern day Pilgrims Progress. It challenges your 'man-made' ideas and takes you to a place where everything is viewed through the eyes of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is inspiring and freeing. I hope the 'vision' it brings continues to lighten my life. It is definitely one of those books that causes you to look again at the priorities in your life and why you hold them dear, the things that so easily 'enslave' us in this life. Some people have been put off by the image of 'God' portrayed in this book but it is an intriguing story that certainly makes you think outside the square. You will want to encourage others to read it just to see what their reaction is.

Useful Websites



- ⇒ **Kentigern** has an Online Store. You can access the store directly, search for your resources, place an order, make re0orders easily and add books to your wish list. Go to: <http://store.kentigern.com>
- ⇒ **engage.mail** This monthly newsletter offers a sample of Evangelical Alliance's work and shares resources and insight across the Australian Evangelical community through printed and web resources and events and seminars. As well as on their web site, **engage.mail** is also available as a pdf. You may like to submit an article on reflective, culturally engaged Christianity. To do so email Ian Packer on ian@ea.org.au.
- ⇒ **Camden Theological Library** have an interactive website that provides access to the Library catalogue, feature books, reviews, up-to-the-minute news through a live Twitter feed and event coverage. www.library.nsw.uca.org.au Also available through this site is **e-Theo** which is written for people in ministry positions, highlighting useful texts for both enhancing ministry and nurturing personal spiritual life.
- ⇒ **Uniting Earthweb Bulletin** has a new Bible Study available for download called **Caring for the Creation** It is a series of three Bible studies written by Nola Stewart, member of Castlecrag Uniting Church and St Thomas' Anglican Church North Sydney. In Study 1, participants remember that 'The Earth is the Lord's' and look at ways to practise giving God the glory for the whole of His Creation. Study 2 affirms our need to become more closely acquainted with Jesus, in order to renew our attitudes towards God's good Creation. In Study 3, participants learn dependence on God's Holy Spirit to enable us who are part of Christ's Church to set right any wrongs done in the past to God's amazing world.

<http://www.unitingearthweb.org.au/files/>

CONTACT US

If you would like copies of any articles covered in this edition of ER Direct please contact us :

Post PO Box 70 ORANGE NSW 2800

Phone 02 6361 4224

Fax 02 6362 5328

Email bomrural@bigpond.net.au

Check out our web page on the Board of Mission site for more resources and information about events.

<http://nsw.uca.org.au/bom/Rural.html>

Forthcoming Events

From the School of Continuing Education (SCE)

Fundamentals of Transitional Ministry (FTM)

FTM is a three-day program providing ways of understanding, and skills for ministering with, congregations going through times of transition. The program is scheduled to be offered four times in 2010, and is available in NSW/ACT rural areas on request:

Tuesday 4 – Thursday 6 May: Uniting College for Leadership & Theology (Adelaide)

Tuesday 18 – Thursday 20 May: Centre for Ministry (North Parramatta)

Tuesday 22 – Thursday 24 June: The Hunter Presbytery (venue tba)

Monday 28 – Wednesday 30 June: Centre for Ministry (North Parramatta)

Early-bird rates: \$160; Less than 3 weeks prior to course: \$180. (Includes refreshments, lunch and work-book).

Program enquiries: Rob McFarlane:

robertm@nsw.uca.org.au or 02 8838 8935

Bookings: Sue Bowra sueb@nsw.uca.org.au or 02 8838 8936

For brochures go to <http://nsw.uca.org.au/boe/sce/> & click on the link.

FTM is the prerequisite for both the Resource Ministry Training Course and the Intentional Interim Ministry.

Resource Ministry Training Course (RMTCC)

Resource Ministry represents a renewed way of looking at the nature of the church and ministry. People who embody resource ministry enable congregations to form disciples, equip people for ministry, and engage in God's mission.

The course includes input in a wide range of areas, such as leading teams, spiritual direction, and educational skills.

Pre-requisite: FTM

Dates: Monday 16 to Friday 20 August, 2010

Venue: Centre for Ministry (North Parramatta)

Early-bird rates (closes 31 July): \$450 live-in, \$170 live-out

Full rates (from 1 August): \$480 live-in (if places available), \$190 live-out

Program enquiries: Chris Lockley: chrisl@nsw.uca.org.au or 02 8838 8908

Bookings: Sue Bowra at the School of Continuing Education (SCE): sueb@nsw.uca.org.au or 02 8838 8936

For brochures go to <http://nsw.uca.org.au/boe/sce/> & click on the link.

Resource Ministry In-Service Programs

The gathering provides opportunity for Resource Ministers and others (lay and ordained) interested in Resource Ministry to:

- Learn new skills and resources for discipleship formation;
 - Share our experiences of resourcing congregations; Explore future directions together
- Sessions include:

- Developing Faith Practices in Congregations
- Preaching Resources
- Decision-Making Processes for Congregations
- Forums with Resource Ministers

Congregational Community Engagement (north coast program only)

Dates & venues:

Mon 22 to Wed 24 March, 2010: Galong (Riverina)

Tues 21 to Thurs 23 September, 2010: North Coast – venue tba

Costs for Galong (with North Coast expected to be similar):

Early-bird rates (closes 28 Feb): \$260 en-suite bathroom, \$240 shared

Full rates: \$280 en-suite bathroom, \$260 shared

Program enquiries: Chris Lockley: chrisl@nsw.uca.org.au or 02 8838 8908

Bookings: Sue Bowra at the School of Continuing Education (SCE): sueb@nsw.uca.org.au or 02 8838 8936

For brochures go to <http://nsw.uca.org.au/boe/sce/> & click on the link.

Intentional Interim Ministry (IIM)

Intentional Interim Ministry (IIM) training is a specialist program for people who are called to minister in a focused way in situations after betrayal of trust, lack of direction, congregational trauma or conflict.

Pre-requisites: FTM; confidential references from your presbytery or agency.

Contact: Rob McFarlane robertm@nsw.uca.org.au or 02 8838 8935

Dates:

Extensive 9am—5pm each day at the Centre for Ministry (Nth Parramatta)

Mondays: 19 July, 26 July, 2 August, 9 August and 23 August, 2010.

Early-Bird Rate (Before 30/6/10): \$400. Normal Rate: \$450

OR

Residential (South Australia – venue tba)

Monday 30 August – Friday 3 September

Early-Bird Rates (Paid before 31/7/10): \$650 live-in (highly recommended) or \$400 live-out. Normal Rates: \$700 live-in, \$450 live-out

For brochures go to <http://nsw.uca.org.au/boe/sce/> & click on the link.

Transitional Ministry & IIM Conferences:

Annual Conference of the Interim Ministry Network (IMN): 5-7 June, 2010, in St Louis, Missouri (USA)

Go to <http://www.imnedu.org/index.htm> and click on the “annual conferences” tab on the left for ongoing updates on program. Registrations are open.

The IMN is our partner in FTM & IIM training.

Trans-Tasman Transitional Ministry Biennial Conference: 12-14 October, 2010, at Vaughan Park (near Auckland, NZ)

Program details and costs have yet to be finalised, but note the dates.

Co-convened by the School of Continuing Education & the Anglican Archdiocese of Auckland.

‘Strengthening Christian Leaders’

Barnabas Ministries Inc

Oasis Retreats for Christian Leaders - 2009

These retreats are provided to give leaders a breathing-space for prayer away from the ongoing pressures of ministry. All you need to do is decide how many days (2-5) then phone to arrange the dates. Cost: \$130 per person per day (\$180 per couple) plus accommodation.