

## Welcome to ER Direct Editorial



The rate of change in society is increasing. Have you noticed how many political situations, areas of Australia and countries overseas are changing quite radically and suddenly? The changes are happening physically: earthquakes in NZ and Japan, floods in Europe, Pakistan and in every Australian state. Political changes in government are happening rapidly within the North African countries after long periods of stable dictatorships or monarchies - 40 years in Libya and now in NSW after 16 years of Labour government. In the church we have had significant changes with: the number of ministers of the word leading congregations declining; the decline in our worshipping congregations as we try and adjust them to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century practices; the reorganizing of the Board of Education and the Board of Mission to suit the new UCA after 30 years.

All changes can be frightening or stressful.

At the combined Board retreat at Mount Victoria we recently had Jenny Tymms from NT Presbytery as our guest speaker/leader. Jenny took us through a process of how to **'Navigate Personal Transitions'**. We were led through how to personally evaluate dealing with: The Endings, The In Betweens; The Beginnings of any change. For me personally it was very relevant because I am leaving a position in the Synod and/or facing retirement. Change!!!!

The principles we learnt during these few days are so appropriate to our every day life. I found the same ideas reinforced in a number of articles that I read in preparation for this edition of ER Direct. Jane Vennard in her article **'Spiritual Practice: A Way of Life'** (Eremos Feb 2011) gives a message that is very appropriate for all Christians in our time. Christian practices that help us walk with God everyday are being challenged by all the circumstances and changes around us. For me this is an appropriate, timely and insightful article.

The scripture that stuck out for me at the retreat in my reflection was *'You're blessed when you get your inside world put right, then you can see God'* (Message translation of Matt 5:8)

This scripture is reinforced by Andrew Dutney's article\* in Australian Leadership about Cyclone Yasi in Queensland.

\* article 3

Andrew in effect says we are blessed when we can see God in the lamenting and community response to many of our tragedies. When we have the time to get our inside turmoil sorted, we can see God in the events and circumstances, THEN we are blessed and we are able to share God's message of Hope.

Jesus said it is in our times of stress, change, tragedy and life crises that we can be blessed. His people will be able to turn a negative into a positive and be blessed. Then we will be a blessing to our community because we see and understand God's presence, grace and love in any difficulty or life circumstance.

Our church people need to be taught confidence to be able to talk naturally about how God deals with them in their everyday life. Orange Uniting Church has set an example with their book **'Powerful Moments'** WE can all be blessed!

All of our congregation community activities and relationships could become the church of tomorrow.

God Bless you!

**Ross Neville**

## Murray Darling Basin Enquiry

Over 100 people from Uniting Church groups responded to the discussion questions about the Murray Darling Basin Guide. The point of sending the discussion guide was to help people realise the Bible/church does give us principles that can help us make decisions about community and environmental matters. The number of responses was, in some ways, disappointing. Did this mean that people didn't think their faith had any influence on day to day world matters? Or did people feel that our understanding of God and the environment was not something that would guide government legislation?

Tony Windsor and the committee were very receptive and genuinely interested in the guiding recommendations and the Christian perspective that we were able to bring for their consideration. We are working on a follow up submission which will incorporate people's responses for the Government's consideration before they present their final Basin Plan.

## ER Direct online

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Simply email the office [bomrural@bigpond.net.au](mailto:bomrural@bigpond.net.au)



## National Rural Ministry & NSW RMU Conference 2011



**11-14 August**

This year the National group are combining with the NSW RMU for a Conference in Dubbo, NSW. The theme is 'Church 2011', focussing on the sustainability and effectiveness of the rural church in the future.

Speakers will include the current NSW Moderator, the NSW General Secretary and a number of Resource Ministers.

Clergy and lay people will describe their struggles with transition and ways they have identified new forms of ministry.

The NSW Rural Chaplains will share their experience of changing and developing relationships with their communities.

This team of speakers have experience and wisdom and are making the church of the future.

**Conference cost \$330** *This covers 3 nights accommodation in a shared room at the Quality Inn, two evening meals, 2 lunches, morning /afternoon teas, conference rooms and guest speakers travelling expenses.*

**Single room costs \$180 extra (\$510 total)**

**Day visitors \$40      Half day \$20**

Registration forms available online at:  
<http://nsw.uca.org.au/bom/ruralmission/events.htm>

Or from the Rural Office. Tel 02 6361 4224.

**RSVP by August 1st**

The weekend coincides with the 21st Dubbo Jazz Festival. See their website for more details:  
<http://www.dubbojazz.com.au>

Also, Lucy Moore, founder of Messy Church and author of "All-Age Worship" will be in Parramatta on 14<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> August for two fantastic training opportunities. You may be able to include this in your weekend. See <http://childrensministry.org.au/2011/03/messy-church-2/> for more details.

## Community Garden Visits

Over the last few months, Christians have had the opportunity to learn about the growing mission that is church involvement in community gardening. So far, 36 people have participated in two sets of ecumenical visits to ten gardens either at churches or set up by Christian groups, in south west Sydney, Canberra, Cooma, Eden and Bega. Participants – some from churches that already have community gardens, and others from churches that are considering it – enjoyed meeting others with a passion for community gardening and sharing the aspirations and experiences of their churches. A third tour is yet to come, on 28<sup>th</sup> May, to gardens at Anglican, Catholic and Uniting Churches in inner Sydney. See [www.unitingearthweb.org.au/explore/garden-visits](http://www.unitingearthweb.org.au/explore/garden-visits) for details (book early as we expect to fill the bus!). You can also access mission resources on community gardening and other community food projects at [www.unitingearthweb.org.au/explore/community-food](http://www.unitingearthweb.org.au/explore/community-food).

## Community Activities U Turn groups

Playjays is an initiative of St. John's Uniting Church, Wahroonga. The group, which has been running for two terms, has been making connections with new people. They have 15-25 children and their carers from the local community coming along each week. Members of the congregation are involved in helping each week. They recently had a celebration service at which about 25 kids and their families came along to our morning worship. The church has registered the group as a U Turn organisation so that they can access funds to improve facilities and further develop this community service. For more information about U Turn see:  
<http://nsw.uca.org.au/uturn/>



## Leadership Institute

Many of you will probably be familiar with the work of leadership capacity building and personal formation by Peter and Sue Kaldor as part of the Leadership Institute of the Board of Mission. What you may not be aware of is that they do similar work beyond the Uniting Church as part of New River, an evolving not for profit team working in other states, with other denominations, social care agencies, schools and community organizations.

In that context, New River has opportunities for new staff in roles such as a) providing overall co-ordination and development and b) to co-ordinate and develop further their work in schools.

If you would like further information, or know anyone who might be interested, please contact:

Naomi Nash: [naominash@bigpond.com](mailto:naominash@bigpond.com) or 0407908748  
Peter Pereira: [pereira200@hotmail.com](mailto:pereira200@hotmail.com) 0405976852

# Resources Direct



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Email to: [bomrural@bigpond.net.au](mailto:bomrural@bigpond.net.au)



## 1 **Teeming Diversity** Tim Stafford Christianity Today December 2010

**The Third Lausanne Congress demonstrated that global evangelicalism has been transformed**

This gathering was the first time evangelical Christians had met to attempt to accurately represent the reality of today's church leadership. The conference had an atmosphere of discovery as participants encountered the teeming diversity of global faith. *"It is a joy to see heaven begin here"* said Ugandan Anglican Archbishop Henry Orombi. The statement coming from the conference is a commitment organised around the theme of love instead of a statement of belief as in previous Lausanne covenants. A call to integrity and obedience paired with a corresponding note of repentance.

## 3 **Does God Hate Queensland?** Andrew Dutney Australian Leadership Vol 3 Issue 6 April 2011

**How do you make sense about the catastrophic events that have been happening?**

People have been justifying God for centuries. Andrew explains the two theodicy positions which are historically used to explain the suffering that is an expected and explicable part of life. Andrew suggest theodicy is an intellectual cop out. He then suggests two new approaches that are useful in today's society - the tradition of lament, where we understand grieving well is a source of healing and then making sense of suffering, which is something we do together as friends in community. These two approaches can give us stories of real hope we can share with others.

## 2 **Beyond Connecting With Families** Heidi Jane Harding Australian Leadership Vol 3 Issue 5 Jan/ Feb 2011

Why do families not make the transition to our worship services? Many are time poor and spiritually searching. How can we offer something valuable to their life that will not just add to their commitments? Heidi Jane Harding has found five ways that assist her to work with and listen better to congregations and playgroups. She has some practical ideas on how churches can build from the existing connections that have already been established through community gatherings.



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](http://www.mediacom.org.au) for an annual fee of \$68.00 (print copy) or

## 4 **NSW UCA Responses to the Guide to the Murray Darling Basin Plan** Ross Neville

Material for information and discussion about the Murray Darling Basin Plan was prepared by Ross Neville, Julie Greig and Kel Hodge from the Board of Mission.

The purpose of the material was to:

- Inform people about what has happened.
- Invite more people within the Uniting Church to comment about the issues.

This information is at:

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

A number of congregations discussed the issues and their responses were summarised into a report for the Federal Government.

We made 5 recommendations to the Government for processes to develop a final Basin Plan. The Christian Church has a holistic manner because God has asked us to care for the environment, care for each other and feed the world. Getting the balance right is the issue facing the Government.

If people would like copies of the original submission or the latest edition incorporating congregational responses contact the Rural Office. All the submissions can be viewed online at the House of Reps website. The Uniting Church submission is number 240 of the 625 submissions.

<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/ra/murraydarling/subs.htm>

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## 5 Powerful Moments in Australia's Colour City Orange uniting Church, NSW Special Edition Dec 2010

This booklet contains 26 stories of 'God Moments' from the people of Orange in their different UCA congregations. The aim of the book is to encourage people in their Christian faith by sharing the experiences of others in their walk with God. The books are given to a variety of people from newcomers at church events to Meals on Wheels clients, the local library and motels.

A brilliant idea and booklet for a gift. Any congregation could get ideas from this book  
Ask ER Direct for a copy!



## 7 How TEAR does Development Matthew Maury Changemakers Journal Advocacy 7 Action 2010

Development can have two approaches:

- 'A packaged solution that with the right amount of money can bring any country out of poverty'
- 'Every community is different and thus solutions need to be uniquely designed to cater for each unique setting'

TEAR adopts the latter approach. It includes: Partnership; Community as Visionaries and Owners; Participation; Holism; and Sustainability.

We can all learn from this practical report about how to help others.

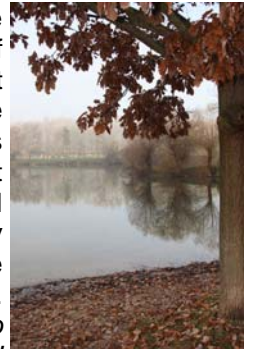
## 6 Wrestling with the New Chapter Robert Lowenthal The Alban Institute [www.alban.org](http://www.alban.org)

Whilst studying Jacob's story Robert Lowenthal discovered that it addressed many of the issues congregations face when considering the way forward. A number of areas have to be considered: Churches dealing with legacies of the past; Embracing change; Restoring a reputation; changing our pattern; Learning to be at ease with the tensions of real learning and living. *'Our congregations provide opportunity for a life fully lived and a mission worth wrestling with.'*

## 8 Don't Waste a Crisis John Ortberg Leadership Journal Winter 2011

### Crises, while unwanted, are windows of opportunity for the Cure of Souls.

Most people will tell you they have had their most significant periods of spiritual growth when they went through a time of suffering. We have to recognize this and use this opportunity because crises do not automatically produce spiritual growth. We have to think carefully and plan to be prepared for the intersection of crises and ministry. We are told to "mourn with those who mourn" but our response is often "I don't have time." There is such a thing as post traumatic growth. Crises can produce deeper roots or deeper love. In crises people are hungry for hope and our God is a God of Hope.



<http://www.christianitytoday.com/global/printer.html?/le/2011/winter/dontwastecrisis.html>

*Insights*, the monthly magazine of the Uniting Church's Synod of New South Wales and the ACT, has launched its new website. The new website's many features include highlights from the current issue of the print magazine and the latest Uniting Church and other religious news. Visit *Insights'* new website at [www.insights.uca.org.au](http://www.insights.uca.org.au)



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

The ER Direct Team  
Editor: Ross Neville

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.*

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### NO CHURCH IS TOO FAR AWAY:

The PCI Mobile office is available to come to your presbytery or congregation to offer training in pastoral care. We run programs to encourage members of your congregation to increase their skills in pastoral care.

Some funding is available from a grant to assist rural congregations. If you would like more information on any of the Pastoral Counselling Institute activities please call on 9683 3664 or email to [pciuca@ihug.com.au](mailto:pciuca@ihug.com.au)



## BOOK REVIEW

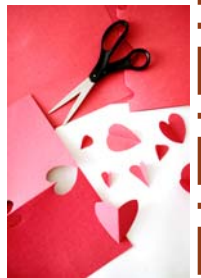
### Messy Church

Written by **Lucy Moore**

(Published by *The Bible reading Fellowship*)

#### Fresh ideas for building a Christ-centred community

Messy Church is an approach to organising family activities, focusing on a theme that culminates in worship. The aim is to become a worshipping community of all ages, centred on Christ, showing Christian hospitality and allowing people to express their God-given creativity. It tries to meet non church parents in a comfortable, non threatening environment. It can happen whenever parents want to meet, at whatever place and time they nominate. It involves all generations working together around a theme on different craft activities or projects. The first part of this book explains the background rationale and experiences of this phenomena in the UK. The last two thirds of the book is devoted to sharing some approaches and activities to go with a range of themes.



## Useful Website

<http://www.childrensministry.org.au/>

NSW and ACT Synod Children's Ministry website

Resources to help with ministry with families and children. How to create a safe place where children can discover faith in community.

<http://www.messychurch.org.au>

Ideas for drawing people of all ages together and inviting them to experience fun-filled Christian community outside Sunday worship.

<http://stteves10.libsyn.com/>

This is a new podcast site set up by Rev. Andrew Gillies of St Stephen's Toowoomba City Uniting Church.

It has sermons in advance with an introductory blurb and discussion questions. This may be useful for those in rural settings or lay ministry settings who may not always have a preacher.

<http://ausprayernet.org.au/>

The Australian Payer Network reaches over 6000 people. It is linked internationally to numerous national and international networks of prayer across the world. The Network regularly send newsletters via email to inform praying people around Australia and across the world of current prayer needs.



### Messy Church 2

Lucy Moore

#### Fresh ideas for building a Christ-centred community

Lucy evaluates some of the learned experiences over the previous two years and has another wealth of themed programme activities that could be used for mixed age people group meetings. Notice the change of the word 'Family' to 'People group' activities.

Available from MediaCom education [www.mediacon.org.au](http://www.mediacon.org.au)



### Messy Church in NSW

Terrigal Uniting Church was the first NSW church to be officially linked to the international *Messy Church* website. Engadine Uniting Church have formed a team and have plans for 2011. East Maitland had a great response with 60 people enjoying a 'Messy Christmas' experience.

## Forthcoming Events

'Ministry in a time of transition' will be the theme of another series of **National Ministers' Conferences'** convened by the President in 2011.

**Conference 1 Venue: Mele Presbyterian Church, Vanuatu**

Dates: Mon 9 May – Fri 13 May

Exposure trips: Sat 14 May – Wed 17 May

Contextual theme: Mission in a global church

**Conference 2 Venue: St Philip's College, Alice Springs**

Dates: Mon 11 July – Fri 15 July

Exposure trips: Sat 16 July – Wed 20 July

Contextual theme: Indigenous spirituality and theology

**Conference 3 Venue: The Monastery, Adelaide**

Dates: Mon 17 October – Fri 21 October

Contextual theme: Emerging mission and ministry

### Exposure Trips to Tanna and Santo

The President would like to encourage all ministers and church workers in placement to consider attending one of these conferences. For further information about the event itself, please contact: Michael Symons, PA to the President:

[michaels@nat.uca.org.au](mailto:michaels@nat.uca.org.au) (03) 9251 5295

## YOUTH MINISTRY: UNFILTERED

Unfiltered is a Youth Ministry Intensive being held over the weekend of **June 10-12 2011** aimed at stretching, supporting, educating and building up people in ministry with young people.



Supported by a number of churches in the NSW/ACT region the event aims to be an ecumenical venture where people from all denominations are invited to come together and learn together, share wisdom and be challenged by one of the most important current thinkers in Youth Ministry from the US.

If you are involved in the lives of young people, children or young adults, as a youth pastor, youth worker, minister, bible study leader, volunteer youth leader or parent **Unfiltered** is designed to help you discover the value of place-sharing in their lives.

For more information visit:

<http://ymunfiltered.wordpress.com/>

## Rediscovering Hope for Today....

### Exploring Hope for Tomorrow.

**A resource for Congregations seeking to share the hope of Christ through hospitality**

The resource kit includes an outline for planning 5 worship events based around meal settings which we suggest is the best way to have relaxed and open discussions. There are a choice of activities, songs and exercises that will fill up an approximate 2 hour slot. The material is aimed at being intergenerational, visual, hands on, friendly and interactive. The purpose of the material is to provide an informal, attractive, 'different to normal' church environment to which you can invite non-church people.



This opens up opportunities to have a chat about what we believe and what our Christian hope is, as we talk about our life. The package includes a booklet that has an outline plus photocopyable material and a CD with resources and additional material.

Cost of postage and packing per kit is \$25 and cheques should be made out to the 'Uniting Church Board of Mission.'

Order by email [bomrural@bigpond.net.au](mailto:bomrural@bigpond.net.au) or telephone 02 6361 4224

### ELM Courses for 2011 <http://www.elm.org.au>

May 14-15 **Music Leadership & Learning Songs** at Narromine.

June 7 **Playgroup Conference with Michael Frost** at Epping Baptist Church

August 13 -14, 15-19 **Messy Church Events** at various Sydney locations.

**Funeral Training** in 2011 - contact Geoff Wellington ([resource@hunter.uca.org.au](mailto:resource@hunter.uca.org.au)) or Bronwyn Murphy ([bron.murphy@bigpond.com](mailto:bron.murphy@bigpond.com))

### CONTACT US

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

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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>