Evangelism & Renewal

Evangelism Resources DIRECT

Spring 2011

Welcome to ER Direct

Editorial

My increasing conviction has been that our sharing of the Christian gospel and the reality of the kingdom has been sidetracked by, as Jesus called it, the traditions of men and away from the commands of God. The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were very sincere, honourable people with considerable theological training but Jesus was pointing out to them *'You've got it a bit wrong fellas.' See Mark 7:1-23*

In a similar way we have been sidetracked, emphasizing that people must talk about and live according to doctrinal denominational and religious faith differences. I'm not sure that God distinguishes between Christ's love shown by a Baptist, Anglican or a Uniting Church/ACC or Non-ACCC who is visiting and caring for someone who is lonely and afraid. Jesus did say *'Whoever is not against us is for us' Mark 9:34*

A report from the Barna Group in the USA indicates that adults today make moral choices based on what *'feels comfortable'* or *'what avoids conflict'*. **Only 50% of people make moral choices on what they believe in and only 5% make choices based on a biblical world view.** I would expect the % would even be less in Australia. I feel that nowadays the media and Hollywood are teaching and modeling moral values and practices more significantly than the Christian churches. Recently, we witnessed the moral dilemma facing society in the destructive stealing rampages in the UK.

One of the questions that people in our churches struggle with is: *'How can we witness to people without sounding judgemental, exclusive or holier than thou?'* One helpful way of doing this was presented to us by Duncan Macleod at the Messy Church In-service. Duncan highlighted that church people don't know how to explain or model what the gospel means in today's terms. An example of this is: ***'What does the gospel of being a forgiving person or church people look like for your neighbours?*** What would make you stand out as being different in your church service if you lived as a forgiving congregation?

Look at Duncan's list on page 2 and work out what each aspect of the gospel means for your congregation in the way you respond to others. I believe our church members are trying to live out their faith in their work and in their community involvement. See the list of community activities on the New Congregations website: http://nsw.uca.org.au/bom/new/index.htm

Many people do not have the knowledge or teaching background to explain their own lifestyle model or their moral choices. How many choices are based on a biblical world view? Are we all really clear about what we actually believe in? In *Mark 13:9, 23* Jesus warns us to *'Be on your guard'.* Know what is right to believe and what Jesus' teachings were actually about. If our people aren't equipped to actually understand 'What' and 'Why' they believe in what they do, how can they witness to a gospel when we know society will just tell them 'That's your opinion based on what you believe but its not for me'

Ross Neville

Community Gardening as a Mission Activity

By Miriam Pepper

It seems to me that the rapid growth in church-based community gardening represents a reinvigoration of the mission of local churches. Specifically, as I illustrate below, that:

- Churches are finding new and relevant ways to embody and proclaim the gospel in context of the particular needs and interests in their broader communities
- Community gardening draws together several spheres of mission, including an ecological sphere, and can enable increased ecological awareness among church congregations and an appreciation of God's all-encompassing love for creation
- Churches are themselves transformed through community gardening
- Community gardening is fertile ground for dialogue across confessional difference

Community gardening is about mission:
Churches fundamentally understand their involvement in community gardening as about connecting with their communities, as a holistic mission activity that extends beyond narrow notions of evangelism to expressing love and concern for the whole person and for the whole community. This idea of community connection was repeatedly picked up by participants in the three community garden tours. As one participant put it:

"I found it very challenging and quite humbling to see the way people are really 'out there' trying to connect with their communities and bringing Christ to the world in very engaging, creative ways."

Participant in inner-Sydney tour of church-based community gardens, 28/5/11

Gospel Questions for Gospel People

What is this good news?
How do we see it in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus?
Stories and images – from Scripture, Church history, your shared experience
Who is it good news for?
Responsive Prayers?
Responsive Actions?
Responsive Songs?
Communication clues – what do we need to pay attention to?
Distortion Warnings?

Gospel of Forgiveness
New beginnings
Forgiven and Forgiving Community

Gospel of Welcome, Belonging, Adoption, New Family
Welcomed and Welcoming Community

Gospel of Calling and Service
Building, sowing, sewing, washing…
Served and Serving in Community

Gospel of Servant Leadership
Socially responsible, proactive, future-focused
Led and Leading Community

Gospel of Reconciliation
Removing walls of prejudice, fear and enmity
Reconciled and Reconciling Community

Gospel of Solidarity in Suffering
Supported and supporting those who suffer in Community

Gospel of Healing
Wholeness for body, soul, mind, community
Healed and Healing Community

Gospel of Courage
Capacity to stand for justice, against injustice
Empowered, encouraged and empowering Community

Gospel of Liberation
Freedom and release for the captives
Liberated and liberating Community

Gospel of Transformation
Change in priorities for people, communities, societies, systems
Transformed and Transforming Community

Gospel of Creation
God's pleasure in God's handiwork
Created and Creating/Nurturing Community

Gospel of Insight
Knowledge, wisdom, truth that guides and opens
Learning and wisdom-sharing Community

*Written by **Rev Duncan Macleod***
Presbytery Minister
Canberra Region Presbytery
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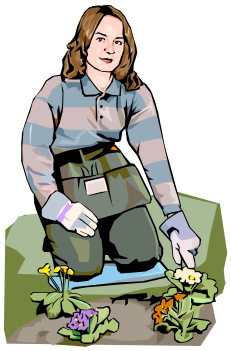
Mission Stories - Mediacom and www.faithstories.org.au
John Driver - Understanding The Atonement for the Mission of the Church

Continued from page 1

The tour participants remarked on aspects such as the involvement of marginalised groups, non-threatening contact between churches and the broader community, cross-cultural understanding, community ownership, and churches as servants making land available and partnering with others for the betterment of community.



Many wonderful examples of community building are apparent, such as the ministry of the Garden of Eden Community Garden, a ten year mission project at St George's Uniting Church Eden which started in 2006. Among the people involved have been schools, artists, musicians, the Koori community, local farmers (the garden hosts a monthly local produce market), and people out of work who come for work placements organised in conjunction with Mission Australia. Community development is central to this project, and the groups are involved in the visioning, development and maintenance of the garden. Through the heritage walk collaborative project, the congregation is working with people from four other gardens in Eden. And the church has even hosted a visit from Watoto Ugandan Children's Choir, who got in contact because they heard about the garden. In a town with no other community centre, the church is becoming a hub for community life.

*This is an excerpt from **'Church-Based Community Gardening: Where Mission Meets Ecology in Local Contexts'** by Miriam Pepper. This paper is a reflection on the growing grass-roots mission activity that is church-based community gardening, drawing on what Miriam learned through the "Growing Mission with Community Food" project.*

You can request a copy of this paper from the Rural Office
bomrural@bigpond.net.au

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

1 The Price is Right

Catherine Newhouse
Christianity Today
August 2011

A different approach to providing meals for the disadvantaged is being developed in America. A number of churches have become involved in this project which aims to provide basic meals on a 'pay as you can' basis. Customers are given the option of earning meals by helping with washing up or other volunteer work. There is always a free dish of vegetables and pasta available too. This provides food and opportunities to gain job skills to people of all income levels. As one patron commented: *"I was very vulnerable and could have fallen on my face. But there was this safety net and they were very supportive."*

Instead of giving handouts this project asks how we can help people feed themselves. It's sitting down at a table and talking to people. It's dignity as well as assistance.

2 Anchors for Adolescent Mission

Conrad Parsons
Equip
Issue 9 June 2011

Helping young people with the hard questions of life can be a challenge. Youth leaders passionately evangelise and disciple young people and parents share this role. However, we sometimes forget that God is the initiator of mission as well as the responder and helper. What do our lives communicate about the Gospel? What kind of living example of 'Christ' are we providing for our young people? Youth for Christ (YFC) seek to help teenagers share their faith, making space for their story and God's story to intermingle. They meet regularly with teenagers to discuss the challenges they are facing, to develop self management and to encourage them to steer away from damaging activities.

Conrad Parsons is CEO/National Director of Youth for Christ Australia. Conrad formerly served 20 years as a Church Army Evangelist.

3 Spirited Generosity

Carolyn Kitto
Australian Leadership
Vol 4 Issue 2 August 2011

When we experience God's exuberant generosity we are inspired to give to others in the same way. How can we model this exuberant giving in our churches and in our communities? Mission should involve a growing culture of generosity. The focus should be on being part of God's purpose for creation rather than managing our part of the world. Imaginative mission, will provide an outlet for people's passions which will spill over into our communities. Providing opportunities for generous giving can grow the breadth of generosity for mission. In a culture where we are told that we do not have enough, we need to remind ourselves that God has promised to give us more than we can imagine.

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).

4 Back to the Garden

Tony Carnes
Christianity Today
July 2011

'*Back to the Garden*' is a new way of doing church that adds a missional seed to traditional gardening. In America congregations are planting sweet corn in their church grounds, mobilising gardening networks for the needy, and '*rediscovering the value of low-tech, high-touch community.*' The idea is that community gardens create public space for believers to grow and non-believers to begin to develop spiritually. It also provides a genuine alternative to the internet and an opportunity to enrich personal relationships. For many people it provides connection and is an antidote for the problems of isolation. For those in danger of becoming too busy or self indulgent gardening can provide a remedy. The increasing popularity of community gardens has also been mirrored in a number of NSW Uniting Church communities.

For other articles from Christianity Today & Leadership Journal see their website:
http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/

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5 Irresistible Hospitality

Kay Bailey
Australian Leadership
Vol 4 Issue 2 August 2011

People come to church for different reasons but why do some choose to come back? What makes a church welcoming? How as a church do you offer compelling hospitality to those outside the church?

This article aims to answer some of these questions by challenging us to consider the first impressions we give to newcomers and how we invite people to church. Connecting with unchurched people involves making church less like a 'club' and more like a 'home'. This might mean stepping out of our comfort zone to meet the needs of those around us. Churches should be places of irresistible hospitality.

6 Food and Spirituality

Paula Gonzalez, Sc
Radical Grace
Summer 2011

In our time very few people seem to be aware of being '*part of nature'.* The indigenous peoples' of the world, who live close to the land, may hold the key to important wisdom for humanity. An over-consuming society is demanding greater connections and meaning to life. How different would our lives be if we saw our world as *'humanity's holy place'*? As Christians we should be treating the earth as our home rather than a hotel and leaving it as a place fit for future generations. Paula Gonzalez provides a Christian Biologists' outlook on living in a Eucharistic universe.

7 The Church Of No Lost Causes

Ed Spivey Jr
Sojourners
June 2011

'Rising Hope' describe itself as '*a small church with a big mission'* as it seeks to provide for the dynamic needs of it's members, two thirds of whom are homeless. The churches' ministry includes a 25-bed hypothermia shelter and a kitchen that serves 18,000 hot meals a year. Their pastor meets with local business men to reshape the region into a more compassionate place for the needy. The church provides a place of sanctuary and gives people a hope for a future far different from their past - a living witness to the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

8 Ending the Hunger Season

Fred Bahnson
Sojourners
August 2011

Educational Concerns for Hunger Organization (ECHO) are modelling methods of agricultural that are providing '*tiny arks to which people will turn when the waters of trouble - climate change, fossil fuel depletion and the resulting food shortages - start to rise.'* By making marginal land more productive in a sustainable way ECHO is making a positive effort to reduce world hunger. Recent research has highlighted the need to consider nature's abundance as a way of dealing with the challenges of local agriculture. In a world where abundance is the norm there should be no room for perpetual hunger.

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 Uniting Mission and Education site for more resources and information about events.
http://nsw.uca.org.au/bom/Rural.html

Activities of the e-team of Uniting Mission and Education

Evangelism & Renewal

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

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

Resources Direct

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'How to' guides for Community Activities

On the Fresh Expressions web page of UME you will find guides to help you start community groups such as **Men's Sheds** and **Community Gardens**. We will be adding to this as we continue to make contact with Uniting Church groups that have already been through the process of starting similar activities.

On the web page there is also a database of groups that is being continually updated. We are able to put you in contact with key people in these groups so that you can share their experience.

You will find comprehensive guides on the following topics:

- Men's Sheds
- Community Gardens

The areas we are still researching are:

- Markets
- Op Shops
- Feeding the needy
- Cafes
- Craft Groups
- Fitness & health
- Messy Church

If you have any information that may help people who are seeking to develop these kinds of activity groups please let us know.

'Key'

'Key' includes a short DVD film which encourages us to look afresh at the why, the where, the when, the what and the how of discipleship, outreach and evangelism. It forms part of Key Direction One of the Uniting Church SA's 2007-2012 Strategic Plan.

This four week program for congregations and faith communities provides sermon outlines and small group studies which aim to 'spark new movements and encourage ongoing ones, which can be explored uniquely in each congregation.'

You can view the DVD and download the introduction to 'Key', the Studies, Sermon Notes and liturgies on Suffering and Lament from: *http://mrn.sa.uca.org.au/fresh-expressions/keyresource.html*

BOOK REVIEW

Decision Making & Spiritual Discernment
By Nancy L Bieber

The sacred Art of Finding your Way
Nancy is a Spiritual Director and psychologist. This book is very practical with exercises to work through at the end of each chapter. Nancy leads you through the three essential aspects of spirit-led decision making: Willingness; Attentiveness; Responsiveness.
She helps you recognise truths you already know… which may be hidden in life.

Useful Websites

http://www.iofc.org/home
'**Initiative of Change'** is focused around the interaction of people, whether few or many, in homes, small or large groups, personal encounters, training courses, and local or international conferences. For over 70 years IofC has brought people of diverse backgrounds and faiths together. It has provided a rallying point for individuals and teams to work for justice, healing and human development, based on personal change starting in their own lives. This includes an article by Howard Grace on '*The UK Riots - where do we go from here?'*

http://www.farmersdialogue.org/home
The Farmers' Dialogue has grown out of the commitment of working farmers in many countries on all continents who have found a new purpose through Initiatives of Change. They have been wrestling with the problems facing our planet. This is resulting in them being involved in many of the issues of their day, be it the European Union, developing the Dairy Industry in Asia, farming in Africa or developments in Eastern Europe.

http://www.christianfarmers.org.au/
Christian Farmers Conferences - information about the five weekend conferences held each year in different locations in Australia.

http://www.mensheds.com.au/
Mensheds Australia Ltd has all the information you need about starting a Men's shed in your area.

http://www.abc.net.au/rn/spiritofthings/stories/2011/3272862.htm
A podcast of an interview on Radio National 'Spirit of Things' show entitled 'Play it Again God' about **Godly Play.**

Forthcoming Events

Pre Synod meeting:

'Faith on Earth'

Friday 23rd Hunter Wetlands Centre Newcastle 10-5pm

What are our Christian responses to the issues facing us today? Mining Fracking: water allocation, climate change….

An opportunity for you to discuss these important issues before the main Synod meeting

Some thoughts for you to consider:
Scripture indicates that a creator God and Christ delights in what has been created. We should look and listen to creation to understand God better. *Genesis 1:20-29, 2:15, Job 12:7-10 Colossians 1:14-23* The Bible indicates that God put humankind into this world to take care of creation.

Scriptures such as *Psalm 8:1-9* would seem to indicate that farming is a Godly profession with a community responsibility. Associated with the role to care for the environment is the role that Jesus encouraged us to practice: to provide food and clothing for the poor, the widow and the unemployed.

There is a creative tension between producing food and maintaining the environment and our government is trying to legislate and find a balance between these at the moment in Australia.

The increasingly urbanized societies of the world are demanding cheap, quality food with little regard to the problems this might create. Many of today's consumer practices and demands are inhibiting sustainable food production or food justice between countries or farmers.
Scripture indicates that God expects proper dominion, ownership and stewardship of the land. If this doesn't happen there are possible apparent consequences for both the people and the land. *Leviticus 25:2-7, Leviticus 26:31*

Scripture also warns us about muddying the waters downstream for the neighbour or is it for the next generation? *See Ezekiel 34:18,19* The two parables Jesus used provide warnings about building home and businesses on sand or not counting all the possible consequences. *Luke 6:46-49 and Luke 14:28-30*

There are guidelines for our opinions about legislation and practices that Christians need to be informed about and have an opportunity to discuss. As a pre-read you may like to obtain a copy of ***'Stewardship of the Rural Environment: Care, Use, Enjoy and Rest!'*** *by Ross MacMillan which was published in August ACCatalyst.*

GODLY PLAY

Come and experience **Godly Play** in Sydney:
8 October 2-4pm
5 November 2-4pm
6 December 3-5pm

Venue: Centre for Ministry
16 Mason's drive,
Nrth Parramatta

Contact Judyth Roberts 02 8267 4289

National RMU / NSW RMU Conference

Summaries of the following talks can be found in the September issue of "Ruminations':

- 'Discipleship Vs Institutions' Rev Bronwyn Murphy & Rev Lindsay Cullen
- 'Church Regulations - Servants, not Masters' Rev Niall Reid
- 'Joining in with God's Mission' Rev Dr Andrew Williams
- 'Ministry Call Without Ordination' Ross Neville

Ruminations is the quarterly journal of the Uniting Church NSW Rural Ministry Unit. You can subscribe by contacting Mr Bruce Irvine on 02 9519 9822
email: brucei@nsw.uca.org.au

Date for the diary:

Trans Tasman Conference - Atherton Tablelands, Queensland – July 2-6 2012

Cre8 Business Conference

October 27 & 28 2011
The Hills Centre, Sydney

Your workplace, His Mission

This conference provides focused teaching and resources for Christian business leaders.

For more information see their website:
http://www.cre8conference.org/en/

Pastoral Counselling Institute – Training in Pastoral Care
www.pastoralcounselling.org
NOW TAKING APPLICATIONS

Pastoral Training courses:

Taree Saturday 15th October - Contact 6552 3850

Port Macquarie 22nd October - Contact 6581 2414

Coffs Harbour 29th October - Contact 6652 7044

Or Call the Pastoral Counselling Institute on 9683 3664