

Welcome to ER Direct

Editorial



This is last edition of ER Direct that Gillian and I will be editing. I hope you have enjoyed receiving these newsletters from Gillian Blowes, Wendy White and myself for the last 10 years.

The task of reading almost 11 magazines to search for articles related to evangelism and mission has not been as demanding a chore as might be imagined. It has been apparent that, by the time we are ready to put the articles together, the Holy Spirit can be seen to be providing or teaching a theme across denominations and across the nations. When you are reading extensively like this, mostly skim reading articles, you quickly pick up an idea or theme and get enthusiastic or excited about what God is doing. It has to be God because it is happening in so many denominations of the western church.

Will ER Direct continue in the UME? That decision will be up to the new staff - so let them or us know if you would like it to continue and we will pass it on.

What are our plans for the future?

Gillian will be seeking alternative work around the Central West. Ross has learnt so much over these last ten years and is excited about what God is doing. Rebuilding new forms of church is so exciting that he wants to continue to help as long as he is able. He could retire! BUT God doesn't mention retirement in the Scriptures. We understand that retirement is a fairly recent trend of western culture that is starting to unravel in the 21st Century. All Christian 'working retirees' should be looking for ministry opportunities. What a potential for our church! Ross has accepted a team ministry position in the Upper Hunter with congregations that are wanting to grow and try new ways of doing ministry. All parties have felt a call and matching of purpose and ministries and so Ross will start in Scone, Muswellbrook and Merriwa in February 2012.

What do I prophecy about the future of the Uniting Church?

I see the church growing! Not with the existing organization of congregations, presbyteries and synods but growing in the number of faith communities, cell groups, home groups, networks, community groups and missional groups. How these smaller Christian cells will link and support each other has yet to be worked out. There will continue to be some strong regional congregations but there will be fewer of them. We need change because:

- The organization structure we currently have is so over organised with committees and meetings that we are wearing out members and taking people away from God's ministry.
- The younger generation, in society generally, do not support organizations the way they have been built up by the baby boomer generation.

The Synod in Newcastle indicated that they recognise the need to change our organization. Presbyteries and synod structures are going to be examined for more appropriate and relevant structures.

The interesting thing is that this reorganizing of the church is a worldwide Christian church phenomena. This is obviously a God movement in history. I believe the Uniting Church is one of the leading and most flexible church organizations in the world and the Christian churches everywhere are watching us. We will have to be discerning and prayerful as we seek new ways of being Christians in our 21st century world. The world is at a different place and we are being drawn closer together as common humanity in a way that has never happened before. God is giving us an opportunity to do things better.

Scary? Yes
Unsettling? Yes
Uncomfortable? Yes
Challenging? Yes
But that is the way God leads! Isn't it?

God Bless! Thank you for allowing Gillian and I to be part of your Christian Journey!

Ross Neville

Goodbye and thank you from the ER Direct Team



*Ross Neville
Rural Evangelism &
Mission Consultant
and
Editor of ER Direct
from 2000 to 2011*

**Ross Neville's Closure of Ministry will be at 10am
on Friday 18th November at Wesley Uniting
Church, Dubbo.**



*Gillian Blowes
Administrative
Assistant, based in
the Rural Office in
Orange, from 2007
to 2011*

Community Gardens - A personal experience

I was given a copy of Evangelism Resources last Sunday by a good friend, and realised that I found a wonderful example of God's work in my life. I am a public housing tenant in a small complex of eighteen units. Soon after I arrived here in April I dug up the grass in front of my unit and planted a cottage-style garden - vegies & flowers & herbs all in together - and have now done an area of four metres by four. The other tenants, mostly more mature, some with severe mental illness, have shown interest in the garden, and I've heard positive comments from some about how nice it is to see. I have shared the vegies I've (God's) produced with other tenants, and understood this to be a direct expression of my faith. I have also had freshly gathered vegetables and herbs with every evening meal for the last three months.

In the September the Housing NSW newsletter had a section about a scheme called Community Greening, in which a partnership between the department and the Botanical Gardens provides support for public housing tenants to establish community gardens, and provide resources such as seeds/seedlings, plants, etc. I contacted the coordinator, and she is to come up here to Newcastle in November. So far I have been able to get three other residents interested, including two who have had a feud going for about five years and are now talking to each other.

I have found that it's actually very easy to speak God's truth and talk about His part in my life, by speaking as I like to be spoken to, and as I believe Christ would speak - showing, not preaching. The other residents are all aware of my faith and its daily expression, and I say things like "Here are some peas from the garden. Isn't God wonderful to give us these?"

I agree that "Community gardening is about mission" - of **Belonging** ('Our garden'), of **Recognition**, of **Healing**, of **Transformation**, of **Creation**, of **Insight**, of showing people that they have worth in God's eyes and that this means taking control of their own lives.

Don't we have a wonderful God?

Joe Tirrell



What are the different views in the debate?
What truth does each position bring?
What are the stories/narratives underlying the debate?
What is God calling the church to do in the public sphere on this issue?

Could you gather some people from your community to discuss these issues? The following summaries were received from two of the groups. They were only small groups with a very limited time and the answers obviously could be further expanded. These current topics provide a wonderful opportunity to expand peoples' understanding and involve them in discussion of real issues. Would your congregation like a discussion paper on these issues?

COAL-SEAM GAS

What are the stories/narratives underlying the debate?

Progress and prosperity – technological advancement, generation of wealth, improving our way of life

Posterity – sustaining our way of life and capacity to produce food

Sustainability – but what is to be sustained? Integrity of ecosystems? Way of life (whose way of life e.g. farmers)? Mining profits? Stable climate?

Tensions between stories of who/what Australia is – an agricultural nation? A mining nation?

What is God calling the church to do in the public sphere on this issue?

How to share the benefits of the Earth's resources for all humankind.

Do we, as Christians, see our role to go beyond seeing resources as solely there for human use, to seeing ourselves as being just one part of creation? If we do, what might this look like in the context of coal seam gas extraction?

There is a need to proceed with caution. Short-term profits should not be put ahead of other values such as food production and clean water. There is a need for better understand of risks from fracking.

God calls also to support groups whose voices are marginalised in the debates and decision making, such as farmers who do not have the same power as mining companies.

Food policy and Australian sovereignty of food

What are the narratives underlying the debate?

- Older residents and migrants remember times of food shortage, (wars, disasters) and local production was the only survival strategy that coped with such world disruption.

- Younger generations have never experienced food shortages in their lifetime.

- Food purchases are a declining percentage of the average weekly expenditure and people don't want it to change because they regard the reduced expenditure as creating discretionary money for other lifestyle items.

- Maximising production volume is the driving force encouraged by research and educationalists. This has never included social and environmental issues because these are less able to be quantified and measured.

Faith on Earth - Pre-Synod event 2011 The Wetlands Centre, Newcastle

This meeting included an equal mix of people from across NSW - Rural, Coastal and Metropolitan. There were four areas of discussion :

- ◆ Murray Darling Basin Water use and allocation
- ◆ Climate change
- ◆ Coal seam gas extraction
- ◆ Food sovereignty and security

Each group discussed these issues and attempted to answer the following questions:

What are the issues? (*Do we need more information?*)

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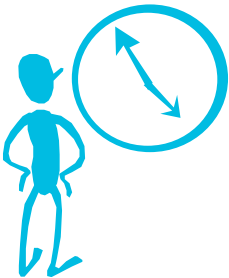


To request copies of any article, Phone (02) 6361 4224 or
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1 The Rhythm of life Stu Cameron Australian Leadership Vol 4, Issue 2, Sept/ Oct 2011

The church year creates a rhythmical life for churchgoers but this comforting predictability may cause us to fall into missional slumber. Intentional planning can help to ensure that churches move forward with confidence. Stu Cameron considers key questions that help us to address mission. He covers the important areas of staff and volunteers, finance, vision and goals and provides practical suggestions for a planning checklist. Discernment and frank evaluation of our goals allow us to keep on track, see where we have been and where we are going.



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 Sacred Space, Shared Space A Leadership interview with Mel McGowan Leadership Journal On-line article

Churches need to think about their facilities in new ways and Mel McGowan suggests how sacred space reinforces and transmits a congregation's values. Can functional and inspirational spaces be combined successfully? Can a building hinder community? Many congregations face the challenge of regaining a space in their community. In today's society the basis of suburban planning is isolationism. Churches need to find ways of facilitating vertical connection with our Creator and horizontal connections between people. For many people the church walls present the biggest barrier for mission so examining how the design and position of our buildings impacts our community is essential.

Find this article at: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/global/printer.html?le/2009/fall/sacredspacesharedspace.html>

For other articles from *Christianity Today & Leadership Journal* see their website:

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/>

3 What's the Difference? Tom Bandy Australian Leadership Vol 4, Issue 2, Sept/ Oct 2011

'Chutzpahair' is the name of a local hairdressing salon in Molong. It seems 'hair with attitude' was the inspiration for the name, derived from the Yiddish word 'Chutzpah'. Church leaders could do with some of this - audacious vision - compelling you to take on the world, driving you forward. Vision and mission are not the same thing but they are both essential for church life. Some churches put denominational identity in place of Chutzpah or they overload on frenzied activity. It is vital that church leaders identify the vision and drive the mission within their congregations. Also, resources need to align and gifts be identified so that we do not miss opportunities for blessing and make those vital connections which will bring the best result. A little understanding of Yiddish can go a long way.



4 Religion and Youth: World Perspectives Philip Hughes Pointers Vol 21, No 3, Sept 2011

What is happening in Western society? Why are we seeing riots in London?

Such questions are causing people to examine the structures of contemporary society and the decline of religious influence on behaviour. In northern and western Europe there is a loss of interest in institutional forms of religion and in England and Scotland the majority of young people are largely indifferent to the church. This article includes an interesting graph showing the proportions of people attending religious services, according to age groups. It also provides a detailed analysis of the reasons for the decline in religiosity based on current research. China provides a different picture as it faces an uncontrollable spiritual awakening. Immigrant young people face different challenges as they negotiate between family heritage and the culture of their new country. The vast array of data unearth some interesting observations relating to youth and religion.



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5 We Have Not Yet Begun to Love: Religion and Immigration Richard Rohr, OFM Radical Grace Fall 2011 Vol 24 No 4

Our love for God should affect how we engage in the issues of our time. Richard Rohr observes that all too often Christians echo the cultural prejudices and world view of the dominant group in their country with only a minority affecting changes in the status quo. Slavery, racism, classism, consumerism, immigration and health for the poor are all victims of this attitude. Christian history has been strongly provincial rather than universal. Exclusion has been the order of the day rather than inclusiveness. National boundaries mean nothing to God yet we allow our lives to be defined by our possessions and land. How much are we citizens of earth rather than heaven? Are our attitudes towards immigrants based on fact or fiction?

Continued from page 2

- Since the war, choice and availability have increased consumer demands regardless of season and are increasing with the growing multicultural tastes of the population.
- Centralised selling and purchasing was a strategy sought by small growers and retailers to be able to compete against larger growers and corporations. It was the only way Australian farmers could compete against overseas subsidised farm production.
- Large corporations have been dismantling such systems and vertically integrating production processing and retailing excluding the cost of negotiating with small producers and becoming better able to provide a standardised product demanded by consumers.
- There is an inequality in power between small and large retailers and producers that has grown with the need to become larger to survive.

What is God calling the church to do in the public sphere on this issue?

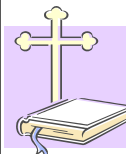
- ⇒ To be a prophetic voice and to speak out in defence of local food production; of the small producer and retailer; of the equitable distribution of our food overseas so as not to disenfranchise local nation farmers; to use people power to support local produced products.
- ⇒ To encourage and support farm producer groups and retailers that are counting the social and environmental cost of food production.
- ⇒ To become part of the Government discussion about an Australian food policy.

For more reports go to: <http://www.unitingearthweb.org.au/explore/faith-on-earth-across-the-synod>

6 Care, Use, Enjoy and Rest Ross MacMillan ACCatalyst Vol 5 No 4 August 2011

This article provided the stimulus for the Pre-Synod discussion topics. It focuses on the themes of care, use and enjoyment of the rural environment through the eyes of Scripture and the Australian experience. Lack of understanding of technical issues in land use contribute to the misuse of the environment. This has a direct affect on our enjoyment and ability to rest. Theological and technological discussion is needed if we are to obtain a faithful but practical understanding of these issues.

BOOK REVIEW



'Secular Lives Sacred Hearts'

The role of the church in a time of no religion

Author: Alan Billings 2004

This is an older book (UK Anglican) but it has an important message that we need to remind ourselves about as we seek to change and become more relevant to Australians today. Alan suggests that people in the UK and Australia are rejecting church but maintaining an identity with the Christian faith.

Why do people who don't come to church still request baptisms, weddings and funerals in church? Alan tries to provide an explanation by sharing some of the reasons that people in his parish give for continuing to come to church for some of these rights of passage.

We have an opportunity to help the church see itself as a spiritual resource for members and non-members and to see church membership as a particular vocation of some Christians for the sake of others. Sacred buildings have a significant role in sustaining the spiritual life of societies.

This should be a must read as we deal with societies demands of the church. It is an opportunity we must not miss.

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

'How to start' manuals for **Community Gardens** **Men's Sheds** and **Opportunity Shops** can be found on the UME website under 'Resources'

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

Thank you to those congregations who have supplied information regarding their community activity groups. This has been added to the database list which can be seen at:
<http://nsw.uca.org.au/bom/freshexpression/index.htm>

Resources Direct



To request copies of any article, Phone (02) 6361 4224 or
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MESSY CHURCH



Engadine Uniting Church was looking to engage more with 'church fringe' and baptism families. They were thinking about and exploring various options and decided that the 'Messy Church' model sounded do-able.

Judith Roberts, the Children and Family Ministry Consultant, presented a workshop on Messy Church and Godly

Play for the Presbytery and this provided a starting point. A group of interested people presented a proposal to the Church Council and now a Committee of four plan each Messy Church for a team of about 14 people.

At their first Messy Church there were 36 people, of which 15 [5 adults and 10 children] do not regularly attend worship at any church. As well as the craft sessions time was spent in the church thinking about the Messiness of the first Christmas. They said grace together, enjoyed a two course dinner, and closed with a blessing.

You can read more about Engadine's experience in the October issue of 'Insights'.

Moree Community Garden 'Feed My people'

It's twelve months since 'Feed My People' began and Moree Uniting Church now have a thriving project involving various community groups.

The community garden is seen as a place where people of different social, cultural and generational backgrounds can come together to share fellowship, produce and expertise in a non-threatening safe space. It is also an opportunity for people from the church to become more involved in their community and see that the church building is not central to being the body of Christ.

People in the church see this garden as a missional activity that provides fresh food for the needy, brings people together, enhances food security and is an example to other communities [Committees from Inverell and Goondiwindi have sought our advice in setting up similar gardens]. Our garden is a gathering place for meaningful social interaction.

The church has been interviewed on local regional radio and TV and in the local paper, they've held stalls and given away food at the local market days in the park and talked at local events. These things have also helped them have a profile so that three separate grants have been applied for and won. Further, where possible, they buy their materials and seedlings locally to support local businesses.



If you would like to know more about this project contact Rob Buchan Ph 02 6752 1170 or 0457 810 383 unitingnwrn@bigpond.com

Useful Websites

Messy Church Blog

Read the stories from various congregations, including Dapto Uniting Church, about their 'Messy Church' experiences.

<http://www.messychurch.org.uk/community/type:story/page:1>

Godly Play

To find out more about 'Godly Play' and see when events are being held check out this website <http://godlyplay.org.au/>

'Message Stick' on-line

You can now download 'Message Stick' from the *Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress website*.

<http://www.uaicc.org.au/index.php>



Activities of the e-team of Uniting Mission and Education



The ER Direct Team

Editor: Ross Neville

Co-ordinator: Gillian Blowes

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.*

Forthcoming Events

Come and experience **Godly Play** in Sydney:

Godly Play can help you see and do things differently
Timetable

- Saturday 8th October, 2 - 4pm
- Saturday 5th November, 2 - 4pm
- Tuesday 6th December, 3 - 5pm

Experience a free introductory session of Godly Play in the Godly Play Room at the Centre for Ministry 16 Masons Drive, North Parramatta. For more information contact Judyth Roberts Tel 02 8267 4295 judythr@nsw.org.au

UTC INTENSIVES First semester 2012

Study on site @ Parramatta

Exploring **Uniting Church Studies**

With **Rev Dr William Emilsen**

16 - 20 January

And

Sacramental Theology With **Dr Gerard Moore**

21 - 27 January

For more information contact Joanne Stokes

Tel 02 8838 8914 Email: joannes@nsw.uca.org.au

NCLS Survey 2011

Your congregation can participate in the 2011 survey which is a useful tool to serve your local church's mission and ministry. Your involvement will also benefit the wider church – dioceses, regions, territories, states and denominations – as they support building the Church across the nation.

A NCLS Survey will benefit your congregation as it enables you to:

- Survey your attenders (adults and children): capturing their discernments about vision, direction and areas for growth.
- Survey your leaders: inviting leaders to identify and grow their unique strengths, develop sustainable leadership practices and nurture their well being.
- Survey your community: listening to community members through the activities of your local church, canvassing their views on spirituality, their needs and hopes.



For more information Tel 02 9701 4479 or go to the NCLS website www.ncls.org.au

**UME invite you to spend time with
John & Olive Drane
at two special events**

Monday 14th November

Public Lecture 7.30pm

'Introduction to Mission Shaped Ministry'



Tuesday 15th November

All-Day Seminar 9am-5pm

'Discovering Fresh Expressions'

Venue: Centre for Ministry, Masons Drive
North Parramatta

For more information contact Uniting mission and
Education Ph: 02 8267 4295

Email: umeinfo@nsw.uca.org.au



**Pastoral Counselling Institute –
Training in Pastoral Care**

www.pastoralcounselling.org

**Spread the Word!!!.....
Taking Applications for 2012**

The Certificate IV in Pastoral Counselling Skills (91353NSW), is a part-time full year course offered Intensively in Sydney (starting March 2012 – dates on the website) and by arrangement in country areas – minimum 10 students. Subjects such as Introduction to counselling, communications skills, basic counselling skills integrated with theology **will teach you to integrate your faith and effective listening skills to provide a caring link between church and community, turning your compassion into practice.**

This course trains people to provide practical visitation in both parish and community settings, compile a referral kit and experience liturgies for specific pastoral care situations.

Comment from Graduate of the Cert IV course:

"It taught me to listen more closely to people as they discuss their problems and let them tell their story without interruption. This allows them to maintain their train of thought without much prompting and a fuller story is told."

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