

Welcome to ER Direct

Editorial

This edition of ER Direct includes articles by Gordon Macdonald and Clive Pearson who challenge us to appreciate ordained ministry and grow disciples and leaders who will take the church into the future.



The 2006 census gives a general indicator of how congregations perceive the efforts of our ordained ministry agents and ministry teams.

In the answers to the questions which match the ministry leadership responsibilities closest in the census for the NSW & ACT Synod averages:

- ◆ **An Alive & Growing Faith** through local church 27%
- ◆ **Vital & Nurturing worship** Inspiration in worship 18%
- ◆ **Strong and Growing Belonging** 51%
- ◆ **Inspiring & Empowering Leadership** at local church 25%
- ◆ **Faith Sharing** involved in outreach or evangelistic activity 21%

Leadership and Faith Sharing declined slightly from 2001-2006. *Growth in faith, Worship and Belonging* grew slightly between 2001-2006. The only aspects of our church life that looks healthy is our sense of belonging. It is also significant that there is very little difference in the results as an indication of effectiveness amongst all the other mainstream denominations, with the occasional exception of the Pentecostal church.

The poor results of all these areas indicate the serious need for the church to change. If what we have been focusing on with our training and equipping is not working very well, then, as Clive suggests, we really need to have some serious discussions about where we are going and what we are doing.

You can see how important the NCLS participation is for the church to have information to benchmark against. Even if you feel your local figures have not been helpful in the past, the aggregate Synod averages can be the best yardsticks we can have to evaluate many aspects of the whole church. Have your congregation indicated that they will participate? See the NCLS notice on page 4 for more details and register.

I hope some of the ideas and articles in this edition can help you see some signs of hope for the church.

Ross Neville

Is your church too tidy for children?

This is a question many churches are beginning to ask ... There are many families searching for time and space where they can explore spiritual issues in an accepting environment, where their noisy children won't be frowned upon. Families are also searching for genuine hospitality, no strings attached. A place where they can be welcomed as a whole family and not separated out by age to do different things. A place in their community where they can belong and contribute. Is your church this sort of place?

Messy Church is for those at the 'messy edges' of your church community. They might be someone's grandchildren, someone's neighbours, they might come to playgroup or be part of a Scripture class at school. These are usually families who will not feel comfortable in a traditional church on a Sunday morning, where children are expected to sit quietly. These are often families who rarely sit down to a meal together, who are busy, stressed and aware they should spend more time together as a family.

Messy Church is ideally a once a month commitment, held on a day other than Sunday. It provides time to experience creative, messy, all-age worship and to share a meal together. Not finger food, standing around a hall balancing a paper plate, but seated at tables, talking and enjoying home cooked, lovingly prepared food. The time of fun together, the time of worship together and the time eating together are all important parts of the whole. The generous hospitality and service of the church hosts is also an important witness.



Messy Church was begun in the UK in 2004 and has become a Fresh Expressions phenomenon there, spreading to Canada, Ireland, Scandinavia, New Zealand and Australia. Churches of all denominations are creating messy communities which are breathing new life into their communities.

Why not check out Messy Church ? (the books and the website www.messychurch.org.uk)

It might be just the mess you've been looking for!

There is a Messy Ministry Context In-service in August in Sydney (p.6) - see the ELM website for details.

Judyth Roberts

Uniting Mission and Education

Children & Family Ministry Consultant

<http://childrensministry.org.au>

A Good Deal An Alliance In Regional NSW

For those people not yet acquainted with the idea of an alliance and what alliances may do I will offer a brief explanation and then try and convince you about the possibilities for regional areas of NSW.

Over the past four years or so an initiative called the Sydney Alliance has been building in our states capital. The alliance is a group of civil organisations that have come together out of mutual interest to build strength in their own organisations and as a coalition.

The alliance consists of religious organisations, trade unions and community based groups. Organisations from the market place such as public or private companies and government organisations are not able to be members. It is through a coalition of civil organisations that it is hoped our combined strength will allow us to influence governments and the market place to act in the best interest of the wider community.

Some have commented that this is a lobby group of sorts which is partly true. However, the alliance we are hoping to build in regional NSW, which is about to be launched in Sydney, is much more than a lobby group. At the core of the alliance ethos is the idea of rebuilding individual organisations through relational skills both externally and internally. The relational aspect of alliances is a skill that is developed to equip members with the ability to convey clearly to themselves and others their convictions about why they are members of their particular organisations. For example, as a Uniting Church member I would learn how to share the story about why I am member of the Uniting Church and what I am passionate about in regard to my faith. This may seem a rudimentary skill, however, I have heard many people say how difficult it is for them to speak about their faith connection easily and effectively. It is interesting to know that other organisations have found this skill extremely beneficial to their members.

When a group of people from varied backgrounds and world views start sharing their stories, passions and experiences a wealth of ideas and possibilities emerge. The other interesting phenomenon is that there is a great deal of common ground that we share and is available for us to act upon.

The structure of an alliance depends upon what is practical for the organisation involved. Generally, the leaders of the organisations feed into a meeting what they have discerned through listening to their grass roots membership. Through negotiation core issues are arrived at and then an action plan evolves to put pressure on the government and market place. There have been concerns expressed about controversial issues that may conflict with the core values of particular organisations. It must be expressed clearly that without consensus from all member organisations no action will be taken on any one issue.

Work has already begun in the region of Lithgow, Bathurst, Orange, Mudgee and some of the smaller centers within this area. The Presbytery of the Macquarie-Darling and other groups are exploring the possibility of a viable alliance in these places. I suspect that issues such as health care, the impacts of mining, the availability of educational opportunities,

environmental issues and many other issues will be on the agenda.

Why I believe that this is a “good deal” for the Uniting Church in this region to be members of an alliance:-

An alliance will equip our membership with relational skills to know and share their faith.

An alliance will allow our membership a wider range of community involvement and contacts.

An alliance will give our congregations a powerful voice in influencing government and the market place on issues that affect their respective communities.

An alliance is able to broaden our world view and give us a wider perspective.

So it is that I recommend heartily to your congregations wherever they may be to investigate the possibilities of joining an alliance.

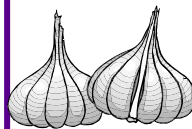
Kel Hodge NSW Rural Chaplain

Waste Not Want Not Project



Cooperation between the Uniting Church, the NSW Department of Primary Industries, the Carrathool Shire Council and local farmers has led to the launch of *Waste Not Want Not* — a unique project that will deliver otherwise wasted produce from the district to the tables of hungry families throughout New South Wales and the ACT.

Unfortunately, perfectly sound food that does not meet the very narrow specifications for commercially acceptable product — it could be too small or have blemishes on its skin — is going to waste. One grower last year ploughed in 3,000 tons of pumpkins.



With the help of *Waste Not Want Not*, fresh fruit and vegetables will now be saved and distributed through Foodbank in Sydney to charities throughout New South Wales and the ACT.

Foodbank is the largest hunger relief organisation in Australia, and acts as a warehouse for charities to source food from. Parramatta Mission and other Uniting Church charities are some of their clients.

200 tonnes of produce has been promised, which is the equivalent of 441,000 meals, and there are plans to organise livestock and grain donations as well. Already pumpkins, potatoes and oranges have been delivered to Sydney and with the potato and orange harvests just beginning many bins will be finding their way to Foodbank in the next few months.



One of the most extraordinary aspects of the project has been the overwhelming support from the community of Hillston. Everyone is talking about the project and volunteering to help. At a day picking up pumpkins recently the CWA catered and the school provided a bus and student and teachers to help. It has really become a community project.

As this has all happened since March all I can say is that when God blesses a project He REALLY blesses it!

Julie Greig NSW Rural Chaplain



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



1 Going Deep Gordon Macdonald Leadership Journal Spring 2011

Cultivating people of spiritual depth is a pastor's top priority

Churches need to be cultivating 'deep people' and pastors should be making this their highest priority. Looking at what Jesus did to deepen disciples Gordon Macdonald emphasises Jesus' 'Rabbi' role. Is our aim simply to attract a crowd to church or to develop people who will carry on the work of Jesus? Laying the foundation for a strong and enduring ministry is vital and pastors have a responsibility to identify and grow deep people who will take the church into the future.

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

2 The Five Marks of Mission Andrew Williams Out & About No 23 February 11

Andrew Williams reflects on the 'Five Marks of Mission' which have developed since their emergence in the 1990's. They do not provide the complete picture of mission but set the scene. Various ways of expressing our understanding of mission are explored. The Uniting Church sees mission as the task of the whole church and should be set within the context of the whole creation. Emphasis is placed on the life of the congregation as being a sign of mission. We are encouraged to seek clearer understanding of mission, making it our bedrock and enabling it to make us into the people of God. Churches will express their mission through a diversity of models with the *Five Marks* stressing the doing of mission.



To view this article online go to:
<http://www.utc.edu.au/utc-publications/out-and-about-magazine>

Edition 23 can be downloaded in its entirety and this article starts on page 6.

3 Spiritual Practice: A Way of Life Jane E Vennard Eremos No. 114 Feb 2011 Exploring Spirituality in Australia

Jane Vennard was teaching about spiritual practices. She noticed people found the topics interesting but they didn't seem to be taking the information into their everyday lives. Jane brainstormed with a group of students what ordinary activities could be spiritual practices. Anything can be a spiritual practice but not everything is a practice. 'We need both *Intention and Attention*.' Other faiths teach us: we need time 'On the cushion and Off the cushion'. Also, Jane says 'We need silence and we need to care for our bodies.' Each of these areas are elaborated on in this article. If you are teaching people about how to make the presence of God a part of everyday life this article will be helpful.

Reverend Jane Vennard is ordained to the special ministry of teaching and spiritual direction in the United Church of Christ (USA) and is Senior Adjunct Faculty in the Iliff School of Theology, Denver, Colorado. She is a recognised presenter and writer in the areas of prayer and spiritual practice, and visited Australia in March 2011.

4 Worship in Small Congregations Sophy Morley Liturgy News 41/4 March 2011

This topic of worship in small congregations was the main theme of the biennial conference of the Australian Academy of Liturgy held in Melbourne this year. Ross Neville highlighted the experiences of rural congregations in NSW who despite a lack of resources manage to express a sense of community spirit. A lack of residential clergy has led to re-thinking of traditional methods of worship. Ross' role has been to understand the communities through listening to their stories and enabling them to identify where God is present. The resilience of such communities is evident as they seek to connect and integrate Christian faith with everyday life. The Uniting Church Board of Mission produces a wide range of resources for small congregations. Project Reconnect aims to empower small congregations in their worship and in the unique expression of their faith by providing resource packs and music. Larger congregations may consider how they can support rural congregations as they seek to be church in their communities.

A copy of Ross' report of the Academy of Liturgy Conference will be provided with this article.

Resources Direct



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Email to: bomrural@bigpond.net.au



5 A 'Gift of God to The Church' Clive Pearson Out & About No 24 May 11



As we see a movement away from ordained ministry we may question why this calling is still considered a 'gift of God to the church'. A high calling indeed, taken on by 'earthly vessels'. Clive Pearson provides a theological perspective for the retention of ordained ministry. The Uniting Church considers ministry as belonging to all believers. Is the 'gift' of ordination for the church or for the ministry of the word? It is more than a functional 'job', it is about 'being', carrying the Christian faith and allowing the gospel to form you. If we see this as **God's** initiative then can we afford **not** to have an ordained minister?

6 Send Your Church Out on a Mission Whitney Hopley Crosswalk.com

The church's work should go far beyond the walls of a sanctuary. Is your church missing out on the powerful ways God want to use it in the world? This article provides practical ideas on how to make your church missional. 'Be' the church and develop key skills. Most of all, start shifting - from an internal to an external focus; from program development to people development; from church-based to kingdom-based leadership.

<http://www.crosswalk.com/church/pastors-or-leadership/send-your-church-out-on-a-mission-11602809.html?p=2>

7 The Church and Family Life in Australia Stephen Reid Pointers Vol 21 No 2 June 2011

Delivered by Stephen Reid at the 6th International Lausanne Researchers Conference April 2011

Outlining changes in family life in Australia over the last few decades, this report provides a vast array of interesting data. When asked what two issues were most critical for human societies today, 46% of respondents saw family life as important, 36% identified social justice, 31% environment and just 2% chose spirituality. Marriage is still considered relevant, although fewer are marrying. Roles in society are changing and increasingly people are living alone, not always out of choice. How do churches contribute to family life? Read this article to find out more.

8 Offering Hospitality A Cross Cultural Perspective Robin Yang Australian Leadership

Robin Yang offers a personal reflection on the challenges of offering hospitality within a culturally diverse community. He believes that through hospitality churches can provide an authentic and functional biblical community, one that places God at its heart. By encouraging his congregation to have an outward focus, be welcoming and developing life groups the church is moving towards becoming an authentic biblical community.

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).

2011 NCLS Invitation for Local Churches

You are invited to take part in the 2011 National Church Life Survey (Sep to Nov) which will help your congregation:

- Find strengths already in your church
- Provide NEW tools to reach your community
- Plan for the future with solid research

For more information see their website

<http://www.2011.ncls.org.au> and follow the link for 'Local Churches' - invitation to churches.

Activities of the e-team of Uniting Mission and Education



The ER Direct Team
Editor: Ross Neville

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

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Mission Focus Area No.7 and direct donations.*

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BOOK REVIEW

The Practice of Spiritual Direction

William A Barry & William Connolly (*Harper Collins*)

What is Spiritual Direction? Do you know?

This book will help and clarify your understanding.

Spiritual Direction is concerned with a persons' actual experience and relationship with God. Spiritual Direction has an additional dimension to counseling because it is one believer helping another to pay attention to God's personal communication with that person. It then helps that person grow in that intimacy and live out the consequences of that relationship. Ross Neville has found the learning and practices enabling and exciting!

Backyard Theology Andrew Dutney Conversation starters on faith, life and leadership

Andrew Dutney is a theologian who tells a good story and loves a good conversation. He is passionate about stories and conversations that enable people to notice and name their encounters with God and with their own spiritual selves. Together with his skill at explaining Christian faith and theology in the light of current public issues, this passion has made him a favourite guest speaker at church and community events throughout Australia and a trusted sounding board and interview subject with journalist in all media. *Backyard Theology* brings together some of Andrew's short articles, columns and addresses that have already proven themselves to be effective conversation starters on faith, life and leadership.

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Paperback, 104 pages

Product code MC692 \$14.95 plus p&p

www.mediacom.org.au



www.godlyplay.org.au

Godly Play can be a way of freshening and deepening faith and spiritual practice. It promotes Biblical knowledge and religious literacy through exploring sacred stories, symbols and rites and through encountering the language associated with worship within the context of our faith tradition. Check out this website for great ideas.

<http://childrensministry.org.au>

Check out Judyth Roberts's website for ideas on celebrating the Uniting Church which could be used any time if congregations want to have some creative fun and educate the children (and adults) about the formation of the UC and the meaning of the logo.

Feed my people Community Garden



Moree and District Congregation have established the '**Feed My People**' Community Garden. The church embarked on the project as a way of reaching out to its local community and trying to meet some of their needs. The church has a particular heart for the marginalised, and hopes to establish relationships between families, farmers, retirees (there are many retired farmers in the town who have no opportunity to grow food), the elderly, the aboriginal community, and needy individuals who face food insecurity. The church also sees the garden as an opportunity to exercise good stewardship of God's creation and to practise sustainable living. For more information about this project and tips on how to start your own community garden go to:

<http://www.unitingearthweb.org.au/explore/moree-uniting-churchs-feed-my-people-community-vegetable-garden>

Useful Websites



<http://thielen.wjkbooks.com>

'What's the Least I Can Believe and Still Be a Christian?'

This is a seven week, easily implemented, worship and Sunday-School based, congregation-wide initiative for mainline churches. It has a free Leader's Guide that can be downloaded.

<http://www.crosswalk.com>

Crosswalk covers all areas of Christian living - faith, family, daily devotions, Bible Study, marriage, parenting, music and more.

Thinking Missionally

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hg628SZItfw&feature=mfu_in_order&list=UL

These utube clips give an interesting perspective of the missional church.

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

Men transforming men is all about people and their journey. It's all in a bid to see more Australian men— and their families, business and communities— transformed.

'**What are the 'Rites of Passage' for Men?'** A 5 day deeply prayerful and soulful experience.

Starts on 23rd August. Venue; Camp Somerset, via Esk, Queensland. See website for more details.

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 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 (03) 9251 5295

National Rural Ministry & NSW RMU Conference August 11-14 2011 Dubbo, NSW

Theme: Church 2011

Conference cost \$330 Day visitors \$40 Half day \$20

RSVP by August 1st

Registration forms available online at:

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

Or from the Rural Office. Tel 02 6361 4224.

Barnabas Ministry Training Programs

- Conducting training programs in retreat leadership, notably the **Retreat Leaders Formation Program**, a two-year part time course that has been operating in New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia since 1995
- Leading seminars on **MENTORING** for Christian leaders
- Conducting one-week **INTENSIVES IN SPIRITUAL FORMATION** for leaders
- Leading **RETREATS FOR CONGREGATIONS** over a weekend
- Negotiating/mediating **CONFLICT RESOLUTION FOR CLERGY AND CONGREGATIONS**

Retailing BOOKS AND CASSETTES/CD'S for Christian leaders

Sue Dunbar will become the new Director of Barnabas Ministries in July 2011.

For more information see their website

<http://members.ozemail.com.au/~barnabasmin/>

Or Phone: (02) 6295 6766

EMAIL: barnabasmin@ozemail.com.au



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Training in Pastoral Care**

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NOW TAKING APPLICATIONS

STORY WHISPERING PASTORAL CARE

www.pastoralcounselling.org

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



ELM Courses for 2011

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

'Messy Ministry!' a residential in-service for those who work with children, family, youth ministry, **Monday 15 to Friday 19 August** at the Centre for ministry

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

MESSY MINISTRY CONTEXT

with keynote UK Gest **Lucy Moore!**

Includes:

- ◆ the NSW/ACT Synod Annual Lay Pastor's In-service
- ◆ Formation for the Ministry of Pastor
- ◆ Skills sessions for Ministry with children, Families & Young People
- ◆ Youth Ministry In-service

Centre for Ministry, North Parramatta **August 15-19**

<http://www.elm.org.au/lay-ministry-is-desc/>

CONTACT US

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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>