



MEDIA RELEASE

Synod of New South Wales and the ACT

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Uniting Church Moderator's 2010 Easter message

Ancient message planted in the form of a cross

Easter is the time for us to be bearers of hope and life for the world, says the Rev. Niall Reid, Moderator of the Uniting Church Synod of New South Wales and the ACT. The cross, a brutal instrument of death, is also the tree which offers life — a way of life that stands with the poor and vulnerable against unjust power.

Why has *Avatar* been such a box office success? Surely not just because it's in 3D?

Avatar gives expression to a desire for something more, for another dimension, a way of life that connects created beings to the earth, the power of the cosmos; seeing human life as more than just an unconnected, meaningless accident.

In the film, trees are the means for connecting with that deeper source of life from which insight and power can be drawn. Others, in their desire for a different sort of power and wealth, want to destroy those trees and to do so they manipulate the truth, stir fear of the other, resort to the use of force and destroy life to achieve their ambitions.

The Christian events surrounding what we now call Easter is an ancient message planted in the soil of this earth in the form of a cross: an instrument of death on which Jesus was crucified — ugly, nasty, brutal.

Yet this is the tree which offers life: insight into the God of the Universe; a way of life that can save the world; a way of life that doesn't look for solutions in vengeance and violence but is about seeking justice through peaceful action; a way of life that recognises that sacrifices are necessary for us to build relationships, enabling us to live together in peace; a way of life that acknowledges reconciliation is only achievable where there is forgiveness.

Jesus stood for this way of life in Jerusalem, the seat of religious, military and secular power. He was a threat to all of these and he did not shy away from proclaiming his message in their midst.

When we fail to proclaim that message, to stand in the way of unjust power, it is invariably the poor and the vulnerable who suffer.

Over the past ten years I have led groups to build houses for the poor in Tijuana, Mexico — a city where in recent times horrendous atrocities and violence have

escalated due to the lure of power and wealth that the drug trade offers; where corruption flourishes, the law is laughed at and ordinary people live in fear.

Do we take another group in 2011? Will we find 48 people prepared to come? In recent times the poor of Tijuana have been abandoned because many who have gone in the past are no longer prepared to risk what might happen to them.

At Easter, Jesus went to Jerusalem in the face of grave danger as a sign that he would not abandon his people, be frightened off or fail to proclaim his message. This man without physical power — the healer, the peacemaker, friend to the poor, critic of the rich and powerful — was seen as a threat. For this he was killed but the life he offered would not die.

The question Easter asks us is, “Are we prepared to allow evil to have its way or will we stand in its way, with all the risks that involves, that we might be bearers of hope and life for the world we live in?”