

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

 Synod of New South Wales and the ACT, Uniting Church in Australia

Welcome to *Community Connections*.

To keep *Community Connections* of interest to the widest possible readership, we welcome for consideration news and information about initiatives, events and activities from all parts of the Synod. Regional contributions, and stories of how your congregation supports Living is Giving, are especially welcome. Send your material (maximum 150 words) to lyndali@nsw.uca.org.au.

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NEWS AND INITIATIVES

Message from the Moderator: We are well placed to connect with community

At the end of last year, in the course of a conversation at the presentation evening at Margaret Jurd Learning Centre, I was asked the question: "In your experience as Moderator, do you think that the Uniting Church is a church in decline?" [READ ON](#)

Mele Vi'Akau: faithful colleague, sadly missed

Very sadly, our dedicated Living is Giving Administrator Mele Vi'Akau passed away on February 4. Mele had been a faithful member of the Board of Mission staff for over seven years and will be greatly missed by her colleagues. Mele is survived by her husband Richard and their two sons, John and Joshua. Please remember them and her mother, Toakase Ve'a, in your prayers at this time. At the time of writing funeral arrangements are yet to be confirmed. Please address any correspondence usually handled by Mele to: The Living is Giving Administrator, PO Box A2178, Sydney South NSW 1235.

Farewell to Emma Halgren

Synod Mission Promotions Officer, Emma Halgren, in mid January left her position promoting Living is Giving to take up a youth internship with the World Council of Churches in Geneva.

Emma flew out in the first week of February to commence a 12-month term working on a project that will aim to help members of the Uniting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Christian Congress and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Christian Alliance (a new, national ecumenical indigenous group) share their stories.

She said that the appointment was a humbling, exciting and meaningful opportunity.

"To have been chosen out of so many people internationally is an honour and a big responsibility," she said.

"I want to make the very best of it and represent the Uniting Church and Australia well.

"This internship brings together so many of my areas of interest into the one role: the German language, the work I've done with the Communications Unit and the Board of Mission, and my interest in the wider ecumenical movement," she said.

Communications Unit Manager, Marjorie Lewis-Jones said Emma had increased the giving to Living is Giving and otherwise done a fine job of being the Synod's Mission Promotions Officer for the last two years.

"She will be greatly missed for her skills and abiding commitment to the Uniting Church."

Synod Communications Unit Journalist, Lyndal Irons, is Acting Mission Promotions Officer while a new staff member is being recruited. Contact Lyndal on 8267 4306 or lyndali@nsw.uca.org.au

Are you our new Mission Promotions Officer?

Your focus in this full-time (or substantial part-time) role will be the development of the Uniting Church's financial support for core mission and service activities, including a regular giving program (Living is Giving). The first round of interviews for this position have already been held, but if you think you are a candidate worth considering please contact us immediately. [READ ON](#)

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Let's honour our volunteer heroes

People in the Uniting Church in this Synod give thousands of voluntary hours each week in community service, social justice and welfare activities — with an amazing 37 per cent involved in church-based service activities.

In order to honour some of these wonderful people in an upcoming feature, *Insights* wants to hear about the church's volunteer heroes — male and female.

We know the heroes themselves may be shy about the good work they do. So it's up to you to tell us about their vital contribution. Go to www.insights.uca.org.au to fill in our online form. Or post 150 words, a clear photo of the person, your congregation name and contact details to *Insights'* Volunteer Heroes, PO Box A2178, Sydney South 1235. The most outstanding Volunteer Hero stories will feature in *Insights* magazine. And all the Volunteer Heroes will have their names listed on the *Insights* website.

Rural Chaplains' Adventure blog

Keep up to date with the whereabouts of Julie Greig and Kel Hodge. Visit, subscribe, and leave comments or encouragement:

"You must be used to dealing with dried up farmers", was a statement made to me at Murrumbidgee last Friday evening. While I have met many farmers that are affected by the on going drought in south eastern Australia I had never heard it expressed in this manner ... [READ ON](#)

Calling All Family and Children's Workers

The newly appointed Children and Families Ministry Consultant Judyth Roberts is updating the contact list of people who work with children and families to enable networking and sharing of information. To ensure someone from your congregation is included please contact [Judyth Roberts](#) on 02 8267 4289, or [Rowena Tagaloa](#) on 02 8267 4295.

Date change to *Insights* advertising deadline schedule

There has been a minor change to one of the dates in the *Insights* advertising. To make sure your advertisement gets in on time, download a fresh copy of the schedule [here](#). *Insights* magazine and on the *Insights* website is the best way to reach Uniting Church members in New South Wales and the ACT. For more information about recruitment ads and contract bookings, contact Adrian Drayton, adriand@nsw.uca.org.au.

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About FACE 09 applications now open

About FACE 09 is a national activity of the Uniting Church in Australia. It is a Faith And Cultural Exchange for young adults between 18 and 30 years, and will take place this year from June 28- July 19, 2009. Participants will be able to elect to spend two weeks in a placement with either an Aboriginal community in Australia, or with the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, one of our Partner Churches in Asia.

The About FACE [website](#) allows you to download application forms, an information sheet for applicants, and hear about some of the experiences of past participants. Applications close on Friday February 13, 2009.

Don't forget the Synod website

The website of the Synod of New South Wales and the ACT is updated daily with news from across the globe — stories about faith, evangelism, society, philosophy, justice issues, and more.

Check it regularly to find interesting, thought-provoking pieces and to find out about upcoming events in the life of our Uniting Church.

Visit <http://www.nsw.uca.org.au/>.

Project Green Church DVD

A new 18 minute documentary DVD on the Project Green Church story is now available. This is a fantastic resource for churches and other groups that want to take action on environmental issues, and are looking for some practical ideas on how to make a start.

[Contact](#) Project Green Church to request a free copy. You can also watch it online [here](#).

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EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Art exhibition, Chapel by the Sea, February 6- March 5

Ruby's Place/Chapel by the Sea will be the venue for the opening of a new exhibition by two local Bondi artists, Lesley Dimmick and Danielle Golding, Friday February 6 at 7 pm. The gallery is upstairs in the Chapel by the Sea, 95 Roscoe St, Bondi Beach. For more information call 9130 3445.

UTC Opening Service, North Parramatta, February 16

All are invited to attend a service to celebrate the commencement of the Academic Year 2009 featuring guest preacher the Rev. Professor James Haire. The opening service commences at 4.30 pm at the Uniting Church Centre for Ministry, 16 Masons Drive, North Parramatta (please assemble at the Aboriginal Cross located within the carpark before continuing to the Chapel of St Andrew). For further information or to make a dinner reservation, please contact either [David Roper](#) (8838 8927) or [Renee Kelly](#) (8838 8917). A donation of \$10.00 will be gratefully accepted and is payable on or before the date.

UnitingCare Pancake Day, Tuesday February 24

On Pancake Day (February 24, 2009) thousands of individuals, school, community, church and business groups nation-wide cook and sell pancakes to raise funds for UnitingCare's work with Australians in need.

To register for Pancake Day 2009 please contact Tricia Brown, Event Coordinator UnitingCare NSW.ACT on 1800 060 543 or email pancakeday@nsw.uca.org.au.

Seminar: "Bridging the Gap between Theism and Atheism", Curtin, February 19

A seminar sponsored by the Centre for Progressive Religious Thought, presented by well-known psychologist, social researcher and author Hugh Mackay.

Begins 7.45 pm at St James Church Centre, 40 Gillies Street, Curtin. To book a place, [email](mailto:) the Rev. Rex Hunt or phone 6281 7419.

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LIVING IS GIVING: PRAYER POINTS AND RESOURCES

Living is Giving survey results

The polls have closed, and the results of the Living is Giving survey are now in. Thanks goes out to the many people who took the time to respond and provide valuable feedback that will ensure that communication about Living is Giving is effective, and is meeting the expectations of congregations and faith communities. Congratulations to our DVD winners: Janette Wickham, Pamela Ward, Amelia Koh-Butler, Conrad Parsons, Bob & Pam Lorsch, Judy Redman, Susan Campbell, Maurine Redenbach, Madeline Parish, Don Costello, Carolyn Sharp, Jim Mein, Robert Key, Paul Bisson, Graham Want, Ann Fuller, Tracey Pallas and John Loxton.

Living is Giving 2008-09 Handbook coming soon

In March *Insights*, you'll receive the Living is Giving Handbook for the coming financial year. It contains information on the 15 mission focus areas your congregation can choose to support, as well as fundraising ideas, tips for encouraging stewardship in your congregation, and more.

You can also give personally to the Living is Giving mission focus areas that reflect your own convictions and passions. You can do this as a one-off gift, or regularly throughout the year. Click [here](#) for more information on individual giving, or call 8267 4393.

Prayer and praise points

Pray and give thanks for:

- The life and work of Mele Vi'Akau, who served the church tremendously through her dedication to the Living is Giving program and her commitment to the Ashfield Tongan Parish. Pray for her mother Toakase Ve'a, husband Richard, and their two sons John and Joshua as they move through a very difficult time.

- Living is Giving in 2009. This is the primary means by which church members contribute to the running of the denomination and all its mission, service and administration. More money means more resources to make a difference. Pray that congregations and individuals will give generously in the year ahead so that our church's important ministries can flourish.
- Pray for all who work in our Synod to bring God's love, grace and hope to the communities around us, through ministry in schools and universities; hospital, prison and mental health chaplaincy; remote area ministry; and in so many other ways.

For more information on Living is Giving, and stories of how your giving is making a difference, visit www.livingisgiving.nsw.uca.org.au/missionfocusareas.

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Studying journalism, graphic design or communications and would like to offer your skills to *Insights*? Go to <http://nsw.uca.org.au/cu/internships.htm> to learn how. Don't forget about the [Moderator's Drought Appeal](#). Your donation will help provide counselling, chaplaincy services and emergency relief to drought-affected people.

CONTACT US: cu@nsw.uca.org.au

RECOMMEND US TO A FRIEND: Recommend *Community Connections* to a friend. Forward it on, or direct them to <http://nsw.uca.org.au/e-news>.

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