

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 kima@nsw.uca.org.au.

Click [here](#) for *Community Connections* in a PDF that you can print off and distribute, or email to others in your congregation and community (requires Adobe Acrobat reader — click [here](#) to download).

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NEWS AND INITIATIVES

Message from the Moderator:

Niall Reid reflects on the bygone days when heavyweight evangelists like Billy Graham commanded not only the attention of the church but also drew some of the largest crowds this country has ever seen. Although some would pine for the days of Billy Graham, Niall Reid observes that such a phenomenon probably wouldn't work in today's Christian society. Instead he argues that "effective evangelism" must be undertaken at a grass roots level, in one-to-one relationships and in community activities. To read the Moderator's full message titled "Seek ways to love the world" click [HERE](#).

St Andrew's symbol destroyed in fire but business as usual

The St Andrew's Uniting Church hall at South Turramurra was packed when parishioners gathered to worship on Sunday. Nearby stood the charred remains of the church building. [READ ON](#)

Asylum seekers are not criminals

As the issue of asylum seekers in Australia has once again caused much heated debate in the media, the Uniting Church called on Australia's political leaders to stop using asylum seekers as political footballs. [READ ON](#)

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Synod 2010: have your say in what it is going to look like!

At its last meeting in 2008, Synod determined an alternative model for the gathering should be trialled in 2010, paying attention to the balance between important business matters, the Synod's financial and legal responsibilities, and inspiring its members. The Synod also recognised the potential for such a large gathering to include training and encouragement for people in their mission and engagement in the world. People interested in making that change have been exploring what a changed Synod meeting might look like. The group wants to gather a wider range of responses. Everybody who is interested in helping to make this change is encouraged to **complete an online survey** that explores what type of Synod gathering you might attend. The survey can be found on the Synod website: <http://nsw.uca.org.au/>.

If you would like to participate in the discussions about the changed Synod you can **sign up to the e group "A changed Synod Meeting"** at <http://groups.google.com/group/a-changed-synod-meeting> or participate in the online forums at <http://nswsynod.forumotion.net/>

For further information, contact the Rev. Simon Lee on info@cronulla.unitingchurch.org.au or on 02 9544 1144.

***Insights'* Volunteer Heroes – nominate yours!**

Do you know someone in your Uniting Church congregation or organisation who makes a significant voluntary contribution to community service, social justice or welfare activities for the good of others?

Fill in the online at <http://www.insights.uca.org.au/volunteerheroes.htm> telling us why this dedicated person should be honoured in *Insights* magazine (the monthly publication of the Uniting Church in New South Wales and the ACT) for their vital contribution. 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 and photos will feature in *Insights* magazine. And all the Volunteer Heroes will have their names listed on the *Insights* website.

In *Insights* this month: No Revolution

What kind of spiritual perspective are our world religious leaders offering on the global financial crisis? How might this spiritual perspective — and God's grace — help people to overcome greed and "moneytheism" that some blame for the crisis? In May *Insights*, Meera Atkinson explores these questions. [READ ON](#)

Religious leaders urge 'peaceful coexistence' to end war

As the bloody 26-year long civil war in Sri Lanka reaches a climax, religious leaders in the deeply divided island nation are calling for "peaceful co-existence".

A forum statement was signed by senior Buddhist monks, Hindu priests, Muslim clerics, as well three Roman Catholic bishops, including the secretary general of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Sri Lanka, Bishop Norbert M. Andradi of Anuradhapura. [READ ON](#)

Meanwhile in other news about the conflict, the World Council of Churches general secretary Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia has urged the government of Sri Lanka to immediately release from detention Santha Fernando, an ecumenical official who has been under arrest for nearly a month. [READ ON](#)

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Global warming strongly divides Christians

In the case of global warming, while most Christian ministers agree that human beings are to care for creation, they disagree on the finer details. A new survey reveals the split between mainline ministers, like Episcopalians and Methodists, and evangelicals like Southern Baptists. [READ ON](#)

Another recent US survey shows that while some believe there is solid evidence that the earth is warming, only one in three says human activity is the cause, according to a recent US survey. [READ ON](#)

Palestinian Christians refusing the cycle of hate

Former Mission Promotions Officer, now an intern with the World Council of Churches writes: "A land is nothing without people, and people are nothing without a land." That's the maxim followed by Palestinian farmer Daoud Nassar. And when he speaks of the intimate connection between people and their land, he is talking from hard-won experience. [READ ON](#)

But we are brothers, sisters in faith, say others

Christians in south-western Sydney should not fear an Islamic school and understand that Muslims share many Christian values, says a prominent religious leader. The Reverend Glenda Blakefield, the associate general secretary of the Uniting Church's national assembly, said Christians, Muslims and Jews were all "people of the book" who shared a common heritage descended from Abraham. Ms Blakefield said Christians did not have to compromise their faith to enjoy warm relations with other religions. [READ ON](#)

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What is the Lay Ministry of Pastor?

The Specified Lay Ministry of Pastor is a ministry of the Uniting Church which was instituted at the last General Assembly and replaces all lay ministries except for Lay Preacher and Elder from the 1st January 2009. Find out at the new [website](#)

For more religious news and commentary including...

United Methodist court rejects gay marriage resolution

The life of Pitt St Uniting Church's former minister, the Rev. Dorothy McRae-McMahon, changed dramatically when she came out as a lesbian, and Father Tim Hogan, who has cerebral palsy, faced enormous odds in his struggle to become a Catholic priest.

TV sends message that "Christians are nutters"

Frequent television portrayals of Christians as absurd make it more difficult for believers to defend themselves, a national journalist has said.

Clerical leaders urge Christians to "tweet" the good news

Why not 'tweet' a prayer every day, the head of the Catholic church in Ireland has asked. Twitter - the social messaging network - or text or email is a fine way to spread the gift of prayer, Cardinal Sean Brady said.

While in Germany, Christians are starting what they hope will be a record-breaking effort to use the new internet social-networking and micro-blogging service Twitter to try and "tweet" the Bible.

See news on the Insights [website](#)

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Talk: resilience and survival, May 12

Two outstanding church people talk about their battles against discrimination and prejudice. The Pitt St Uniting Church's Reverend Dorothy McRae-McMahon's life changed dramatically when she came out as a lesbian, and Father Tim Hogan, who has cerebral palsy, faced enormous odds in his struggle to become a Catholic priest.

The event is held at the Bald Faced Stag Hotel, 345 Parramatta Road, (Corner Balmain Rd), Leichhardt at 7:30pm-9:00pm May 12. The cost of the event is for a donation.

Please direct all inquiries to Newtown Spirituality in the Pub, www.catalyst-for-renewal.com.au (02) 95193595

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Wesley Milgate concert in the mountains, May 16 and 17

Professor Wesley Milgate, famous for his role in the making of *The Australian Hymn Book* and *Together in Song*, will be one of the people celebrated at the Centenary of the Leura Uniting Church on Saturday and Sunday May 16 and 17, 2009. While working as a Professor at Australian National University, Wes Milgate would travel in the 1970s every fortnight from Canberra to Leura to play the organ for church services. His high international reputation as a scholar of English Literature was matched by his love and devotion to church music, especially the hymn tradition. His achievement will be one focus of the Saturday afternoon concert along with the celebration of other Blue Mountains personalities.

The Centenary weekend includes a Saturday afternoon concert, dinner at night, and the 9am Sunday morning service with the Moderator, the Rev. Niall Reid. All are welcome. Please contact Peggy Goldsmith 02 4758 8104 or pwgold@bigpond.net.au or Stephen White 02 4784 2160 or whitesl@bigpond.net.au.

Inter-denominational event, May 26

On Tuesday May 26, 2009, to mark the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Christian City Church, Monash will host an inter-denominational event at their new church at 184 Clive Steele Ave, Monash.

The service begins at 7.30pm, and all churches and denominations are invited to join in, with prayer and worship led by pastors and priests from different churches in the area. Bishop Pat Power, the ACT Citizen of the Year, will be the guest speaker on the evening. This is a combined churches event, organised and sponsored by members of different churches in the area: Catholic, Anglican, Baptist, Uniting and Pentecostal Churches are involved. Please direct your enquiries to Pastor Steve Janes (6298 5900).

National Roundtable on Rural Church Life, June 18-19

This event is being sponsored by the Christian Research Association who have conducted research on rural church life through a variety of projects between 2006 and 2009 both through analysis of surveys and through visiting rural churches. It's held from June 18-19 at the Geelong Conference Centre, Adams Court, Eastern Park.

For more information phone 03 9878 3477 or book online at www.cra.org.au or email admin@cra.org.au

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Retreat Day – Spiritual Direction, June 20

This day is for those who want some time-out to reflect on their spiritual journey and gain some brief insights into the role spiritual direction can play in their spiritual life. This will be a creative and interactive day with time alone and in the group.

"Spiritual Direction" will be held at Hunter Presbytery Office, 7a Myall Road, Garden Suburb on Saturday June 20, 9.30 – 3.30pm. The cost of attending is \$30. Make sure to register on 4957 9712 or email: mdrake@tpgi.com.au by June 12, 2009.

Resource ministry training course, June 22-26

The School of Continuing Education is proud to present a resource ministry training course.

The course is held at the Alan Walker College, 6 Lincluden Place, Oatlands (North Parramatta) on June 22-26, 2009. Early bird rates are \$400 live-in and \$250 live-out. After June 8 the rates are \$450 live-in and \$300 live-out.

Tuition, workbook, accommodation (if live-in), refreshments and all meals included. For more information phone: 02 8838 8935 or visit <http://nsw.uca.org.au/boe/sce/>

All are precious in his sight: Photographic exhibition

When: October 8-18, 2009

Where: St Stephen's Uniting Church

There will be a \$300 prize for winner in each of the following sections: Senior Amateur, Junior Amateur, People's Choice.

For entry forms and competition rules contact: (02) 9221 1688, office@ssms.org.au, or collect from the front vestibule at St Stephen's Uniting Church, 197 Macquarie Street, Sydney.

Deadline for entries: September 11, 2009

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LIVING IS GIVING: PRAYER POINTS AND RESOURCES

Hope makes a difference: Living is Giving presentations

Hope springs from humble origins! Learn how your small or large congregation can make a difference to the lives of others by hosting a free Living is Giving presentation.

Speakers are available to visit your congregations to talk about Living is Giving and stewardship — whether at a Sunday service, a congregational meeting, a small meeting with key leaders from your congregation, or in another appropriate setting, presentations are especially tailored to your congregations needs.

Depending on the mission focus areas your congregation supports, we can also arrange for a speaker from that area of ministry to visit your congregation and talk about their work, and how your congregation is supporting it.

Please contact Kimberly on (02) 8267 4475 or kima@nsw.uca.org.au if you'd like to arrange for a speaker to come to your congregation.

Select your mission focus areas now!

Support the many faces of the Uniting Church's mission and service by contributing to Living is Giving — the major way congregations contribute to the wider work of the Synod of New South Wales and the ACT. Decide which mission focus areas you and your congregation will support in 2009-10 and how much extra money you can commit.

You can also find the Living is Giving Handbook and Leader's Guide and Planning Form online at <http://livingisgiving.nsw.uca.org.au/>.

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Prayer point: Mission focus area

Pray and give thanks for:

- A new monthly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's group at Glebe Uniting Cafe Church.

The women's group offers a safe haven to exchange ideas, customs, beliefs and a place to improve the spiritual and physical wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

- United Theological College (UTC) in its important work of preparing people for ministry and providing educational opportunities for people who would like to understand their faith better. Please pray for UTC as it plans to teach the University Certificate in Theology at a number of regional locations throughout the Synod.

Commencing in 2010 this will offer introductory studies for people involved in church life but who want to explore key questions of faith and discipleship at a deeper level.

For more on these mission focus area please visit:
<http://www.livingisgiving.uca.org.au/missionfocusareas.htm>

To find out more about Living is Giving visit: <http://livingisgiving.nsw.uca.org.au>.

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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

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