

# COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

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

e-news June 2009

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](mailto: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:**

In last month's *Insights*, reflecting on Billy Graham's 1959 visit to Australia, I indicated that I believed that in 21st century Australia effective evangelism has to be on the ground in one-to-one relationships. This year The Uniting Church is participating in a Bible Society initiative, the *Jesus. All about life* media campaign. The idea is that, over a six-week period in September-October, an advertising campaign will be conducted on prime time TV with the goal of connecting with people in the context of their life-experiences. The purpose of the TV ads is to encourage people to engage and to talk about Jesus, to be the catalyst for conversations. [READ ON](#)

### **Helping our homeless ride out the recession**

In 2008, the Federal Government launched an unprecedented plan to address the problem of homelessness — and then the recession hit. *Insights* spoke to key researchers and service providers in the field to find out whether the face of homelessness is changing and if the problem is set to get worse instead of better. [READ ON](#)

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### ***Insights'* Volunteer Heroes — nominate yours!**

You've got until June 22 to nominate the person 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 form [here](#) telling us why this dedicated person should be honoured in *Insights* for their vital contribution.

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.

### **Change in the air on Israel-Palestine, say global churches**

Change is in the air as churches in many parts of the world hold a "World Week for Peace in Palestine-Israel" which began on June 4 2009, say organisers and participants. New voices are advocating steps toward peace which churches have been promoting for years. [READ ON](#) The Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism has raised questions for pilgrims during the world week for peace. [READ ON](#)

### **Uniting Church supports Fiji Methodists**

The Uniting Church in Australia has expressed grave concern for its partner church, the Methodist Church in Fiji and Rotuma. Uniting Church President, the Rev. Gregor Henderson, said he was distressed that the Fijian military and police had been intimidating Methodist Church ministers, and had announced the government will prohibit the church from holding its Annual Conference in August. [READ ON](#) Frank Bainimarama tries to stop Methodists. [READ ON](#) Church leaders meet over ban. [READ ON](#) A Christian state? [READ ON](#)

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### **Indian churches slam attacks on students**

Church groups in India have expressed concern over increasing incidents of attacks on their compatriots in Australia. About 10 students from India were attacked in the past few weeks in Australia in what media called "curry-bashing". The attacks prompted widespread protests in India.

The Rev. Enos Pradhan, general secretary of the Church of North India, a union of Protestant Churches, has called the attacks "sad", saying that "we condemn them".

He noted the attacks on Indians in Australia have become a serious matter. The Australian government "should take strict and urgent actions to stop such incidents", he said.

He also said his Church plans to discuss the matter with its counterpart, the Uniting Church in Australia, to press its government to protect foreign students. [READ ON](#)

### **Obama seeks common cause with Muslim world**

Invoking the Quran and his rarely used middle name, Barack Hussein Obama declared Thursday that America has a common cause with Islam and never will be at war with the faith. Obama spoke at a seat of Islamic learning, his 55-minute address suffused with respect for touchstones of the religion. He said the time had come to "speak the truth" and "seek a new beginning." [READ ON](#) American Christian leaders applaud Obama's speech. [READ ON](#)

### **UnitingWorld responds to crisis in Sri Lanka**

UnitingWorld has launched an emergency appeal to respond to the 'humanitarian crisis' unfolding in Sri Lanka. The appeal is in response to desperate pleas for assistance from Uniting Church partners in Sri Lanka and Sri Lankan Uniting Church members following the recent military victory over the LTTE.

Within the Church, Tamil and Sinhalese members have spoken of their anguish at the situation of their families and friends, many of whom remain in camps short of food, water and shelter. They have called on the Church to act in support and have sought peace within a divided Australian community.

UnitingWorld has sent an initial \$25k for immediate relief and kept in regular contact with Sri Lanka partners throughout the war assuring them of the Uniting Church's prayers and concern. [READ ON](#)

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### **Ecumenism is a way of life**

Sister Pina Sandu says that in her Orthodox monastery, in the mountains of Romania, they practise "touristic spirituality". With a resort built up around the monastery, "like it or not" the tourists "hear the bells, hear the services three times a day... They hear, they feel, they know that something is happening." As a result, their curiosity leads them into the yard and into the church – "small, sure steps towards something beautiful." [READ ON](#)

### **Reformed church groupings take further step to unity**

Representatives of Reformed, United and Presbyterian churches from diverse traditions have voted to form a worldwide union which proponents say will help to overcome longstanding divisions among some churches. The executive committees of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Reformed Ecumenical Council, meeting jointly in Geneva, approved a draft constitution for a new organisation to be called the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC). [READ ON](#)

### **Keep flicking the switch for the sake of the Earth**

UnitingCare NSW.ACT Executive Director the Rev. Harry Herbert has called for people to "continue flicking the switch" — a simple act for the Earth. In thanking Uniting Church staff and services that participated in Earth Hour on March 28, Mr Herbert said, "By taking part in Earth Hour you have helped send a positive message of hope and action to combat climate change, demonstrating how one small action, made by many, can make a huge difference." Mr Herbert said there were four great reasons to continue flicking the switch...[READ ON](#)

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### **'Remember stand against Hitler' 75 years ago**

The actions of a group of German Protestants in 1934 to resist the Nazi regime still serves as a powerful model for churches says the Rev. Setri Nyomi, general secretary of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. Clergy, theologians and church members who disagreed with the leadership of the German Protestant church, which was willing to follow the orders of the government, gathered in

Wuppertal's Barmen district to prepare a declaration that said only the Scriptures have authority over the church. [READ ON](#)

### **NCYC lives on**

A firm recommitment has been made to make sure the National Christian Youth Convention lives on, and grows into a movement — not just an event. For the “true believers” who attended the National Christian Youth Convention (NCYC) National Consultation in May, the future of the event looked uncertain. [READ ON](#)

### **Looking for a special rate? Talk to Uniting Financial Services!**

Uniting Financial Services is pleased to announce a Special Interest Rate Offer for new funds coming to Uniting Financial Services - 4.6% p.a. for 4 months on new\* investments of \$50,000 and more. Hurry, this offer won't last!

For full details, visit our website [www.unitingfinancial.com.au](http://www.unitingfinancial.com.au). Interest Rate Offers will be released regularly on our website, so visit often or call our friendly Service Team on 1300 133 673 for information on the latest offer.

\*This offer is available for funds that are new to Uniting Financial Services at the date of application.

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## **EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES**

### **The Synod wants to hear your interfaith stories**

Your interfaith stories could help people hear each other and heal the earth. The Synod's Relations with other Faiths Committee is seeking local stories of interfaith cooperation as part of the lead up to the world's biggest inter-faith event, the Parliament of the World Religions in Melbourne, December 3-9. [READ ON](#)

### **Safe as Churches? IV Conference 2009**

The National Council of Churches in Australia is pleased to announce that the *Safe as Churches?* IV Conference 2009 will take place in Adelaide, South Australia. Heads of Churches, professional standards directors and other practitioners from churches across Australia and New Zealand will be invited to this conference. An extensive program is currently being planned with opportunities for theological reflection, professional development and nourishment for the work to be done in creating safer churches. The event will be held at Adelaide West Uniting Church, Adelaide, South Australia on June 11 to 13, 2009

For further information about the conference visit [www.safeaschurches.com.au](http://www.safeaschurches.com.au) or contact Tracy Lethbridge at [tracy@bridgeevents.com.au](mailto:tracy@bridgeevents.com.au).

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### **National Climate Emergency Rally, June 13**

Climate change is already affecting people across the world. Join with thousands of people across Australia on June 13 to stand up for urgent action on climate change.

Organised by the Community Climate Network and supported by many organisations, including UnitingCare NSW.ACT. There will be rallies in Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, Brisbane, Canberra and Hobart on the same day. Wear red and bring red banners and props, to communicate the urgency of action on climate change.

For more information on the rally visit the website on [www.climaterally.org](http://www.climaterally.org)

### **The 15th year of NCCA and Commissioning of the Rev. Tara Curlewis**

You are invited to join the members of the Executive of the National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA) to a service celebrating the 15th anniversary of the Council and the commissioning of Tara Curlewis.

The service is to be held at Wesley Mission 220 Pitt Street, Sydney from 7 pm (followed by a light supper) on Wednesday, June 24 2009.

Please RSVP no later than June 15 to [secretariat@ncca.org.au](mailto:secretariat@ncca.org.au) or (02) 9299 2215.

### **Resource Ministry Training Course**

The School of Continuing Education is proud to present a resource ministry training course. The course is set to take place at the Alan Walker College, 6 Lincluden Pl, Oatlands (Nth Parramatta) on June 22 – 26, 2009. Tuition, workbook, accommodation (if live-in), refreshments and all meals included. Cost for the course vary from (early-bird rates) \$400 live-in, \$250 live-out. After June 8, after \$450 live-in, \$300 live-out. For more information, phone: 02 8838 8935 or visit the [website](#)

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### **Lifting the Lid on UnitingWorld: a new name, a uniting vision**

A special gathering to celebrate the coming together of Uniting International Mission and Uniting Church Overseas Aid into a single focused agency. Join the team at UnitingWorld for input, interactive panel, DVD Launch, and world worship. Speakers will cover issues relating to Fiji, Sri Lanka, new developments in partnerships and relief and development. The gathering takes place at Thornleigh Hillcrest Uniting Church, 3 Paling St, Thornleigh at 3:00 pm, Saturday June 27. For further information contact Rob Lutton: 02 82674223 or email by clicking [here](#).

### **Jesus, the misunderstood Jew**

The NSW Council of Christians and Jews Luncheon Club is proud to invite you to hear its July guest speaker, Professor of New Testament Studies at Vanderbilt

University Department of Religious Studies, Amy-Jill Levine.  
Holding a B.A. from Smith College, an M.A. and Ph.D. from Duke University and an honorary Doctor of Ministry from the University of Richmond, Dr. Levine has held office in the Society of Biblical Literature, the Catholic Biblical Association and the Association for Jewish Studies.

A self-described "Yankee Jewish feminist" who teaches in a predominantly Protestant divinity school "in the buckle of the Bible Belt," Dr. Levine combines historical-critical rigor, literary sensitivity and a frequent dash of humor with a commitment to eliminating antisemitic, sexist and homophobic theologies.

DATE: Thursday 9 July at 12.30 pm until 2.00 pm.

VENUE: The Sydney Great Synagogue Hall. Entrance at 166 Castlereagh Street (between Park & Market Streets)

ADMISSION: Free – the Council requests a gold coin donation to cover the cost of the KOSHER Sandwich Lunch to be served

RSVP: William Szekely, President, on tel: 0418-464056; email:

[szeklex@szeklex.com.au](mailto:szeklex@szeklex.com.au)

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### **Cross cultural youth praise and worship**

The Cross Cultural youth praise and worship gives young people an opportunity to showcase their hidden talents through singing, dancing, and testimony. Due to the success of last years event the Board of Mission look forward to running another youth praise and worship in 2009. This years gathering is expected to exceed last years group of 300 people.

The event will be held on Saturday August 15, 2009 at 5pm at the Bankstown Uniting Church, 72 Kitchener Parade, Bankstown. The theme for this year is "Living water". Ten youth groups from different cultures will be performing on the night with a short reflection from guest speaker Rob Hanks who is the Synod Youth Unit Coordinator. The night will end with a free meal provided to everyone and an opportunity for people to purchase theological, spiritual and inspirational books from the book stall.

For further information please contact Belinda Fry on 8267 4270.

## **LIVING IS GIVING: PRAYER POINTS AND RESOURCES**

### **Get planning! Send in your Leaders Guide and Planning forms**

Has your congregation made its decisions about which mission focus areas to support in the coming financial year, and how much money it can contribute?

Living is Giving gives your congregation an opportunity to make choices about which areas of the wider church's mission to support — choices that reflect your own convictions and passion.

Please give generously. Talk to your congregation about increasing your contribution from last year, if possible, to ensure that the important ministries of our church can continue. Working together, all congregations can genuinely make a difference!

Planning Forms for 2009–10 are due in by **June 30**. If you need a new form, just contact the Kimberly Almarza on (02) 8267 4475 or [kima@nsw.uca.org.au](mailto:kima@nsw.uca.org.au).

For more information, visit the [website](#)

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### **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](mailto:kima@nsw.uca.org.au) if you'd like to arrange for a speaker to come to your congregation.

### **Prayer point: Mission focus area**

Pray and give thanks for:

- The Education for Life and Ministry (ELM) Centre, which offers a wide range of much-needed education and training opportunities around New South Wales and the ACT. Among other services, ELM provides distance education, lay preacher schools, discipleship, evangelism, fun biblical studies and worship leadership training. Lets give thanks to the ELM Centre in its important work of preparing people for lay ministry particularly for their highly successful "Talking Faith", an intensive school for lay preachers, which in its first two years increased the number of lay preachers by 35, today a remarkable 450 people are enrolled in the course.

- The Youth Unit in its work of nurturing and inspiring young people on their faith journey. Pray for the Youth Unit as they continue to encourage the Synod to support youth ministry by maintaining current funding for a number of youth-focused ministry agents working within and across presbyteries.

- The National Assembly as preparations begin for this year's 12th national Assembly at the University of New South Wales in July.

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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>.

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](mailto:cu@nsw.uca.org.au)

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