

# COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

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

e-news July 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 June I attended the National Council of Churches' *Safe as Churches?* conference. There is a prior responsibility for the Christian community to create safe places where our primary goal is to create a community of healthy relationships, a community in which the remedy is little used because it is little needed. [READ ON](#)

### **Paying Tribute to our Volunteer Heroes**

People in the Uniting Church in the Synod of New South Wales and the ACT 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. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the value of the work contributed by volunteers to non-profit institutions in 1999-2000 was estimated to be \$8.9 billion. To celebrate the work of this Synod's volunteers *Insights* asked readers to nominate their volunteer heroes. [READ ON](#)

### **Uniting Church stands out on human rights**

The Uniting Church in Australia is the only church formally supporting a Human Rights Act in Australia. The Uniting Church Assembly's submission to the National Human Rights Consultation, according to UnitingJustice Australia National Director, Rev. Elenie Poulos, reflects the church's commitment to social justice and the achievement of human dignity for all. [READ ON](#)

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### **Uniting Church minister honoured during Refugee Week**

Uniting Church minister the Rev. John Jegasothy was presented with a humanitarian award by the NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors in recognition of his work in supporting refugees, advocating human rights and building an inclusive society. A refugee himself long ago, John has been opening his door to Tamil refugees, asylum seekers, the homeless, mentally ill and new immigrants for years. [READ ON](#)

## **News from the 12<sup>th</sup> Assembly**

The national Assembly of the Uniting Church is meeting in Sydney at the University of New South Wales from July 15 to 21.

A range of news services are available in the lead-up to and during the 12th Assembly meeting:

- A daily news alert sent electronically which will capture the news of the day including stories, reports and resolutions; subscribe here: <http://www.assembly2009.uca.org.au/resources/subscribe>
- Stories and photographs from the meeting which will be posted on the website at <http://www.assembly2009.uca.org.au/>
- You can sign up to Twitter to receive tweets from the President of the Uniting Church, Uniting Justice Australia and others [here](#).

Should you receive inquiries about the Assembly meeting from the media, please refer all calls to:

- Stephen Webb, Synod Media Officer, 0423 259 945, or
- Penny Monger, Senior Communications Officer, Uniting Church National Assembly, 0421 315 956 or
- the Assembly meeting media office at the University of New South Wales, (02) 9385 3779.

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## **Report highlights need for things to be done differently**

An early July report titled *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage* showed that little progress had been made in closing the gap for Indigenous people but provided the strongest argument yet for the need for a new way of working with Indigenous people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Tom Calma had said. [READ ON](#) COAG's response to this report demonstrates that nothing much will change in the future. [READ ON](#)

## **Uniting Church calls for trade justice**

The Uniting Church National Assembly has joined more than 30 civil society groups from the Pacific, New Zealand and Australia in a joint statement expressing concerns about the negotiations for a new Pacific-wide free trade agreement, PACER-Plus. [READ ON](#)

## **New mission leader, UnitingCare Ageing**

UnitingCare Ageing NSW.ACT has announced the Rev. Eric Drury as its new Director Ministry and Mission. The Rev. Drury is a well known figure within the organisation and has been serving as the Acting Director Ministry and Mission in a part-time capacity since November 2008. With a strong focus on people and relationships, he hopes to engage with the six UnitingCare Ageing regions to continue strengthening the role of older people within the Uniting Church. [READ ON](#)

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### **Fight to keep Exodus Foundation open**

A Sydney charity begun more than two decades ago when homeless children came to sleep on church pews is struggling to survive after being hit with the double whammy of the economic crisis and Victorian bushfires. But the Exodus Foundation's dedicated founder The Rev. Bill Crews is refusing to give up, saying closing down was "unthinkable". [READ ON](#)

### **UnitingCare Kippax welcomes winter relief funding**

UnitingCare Kippax welcomed the announcement of additional funding from the ACT Government to assist people through the harshness of a Canberra winter. [READ ON](#) UnitingCare Kippax team leader Gordon Ramsay says the money will be spent on shoes, warm clothes, bedding and curtains for people in financial difficulty. [READ ON](#)

### **Government to help the Wayside Chapel**

The New South Wales Government will give \$2 million to help rebuild the crumbling facilities at Sydney's Wayside Chapel. Located in Kings Cross, the Wayside Chapel provides free social services and shelter to tens of thousands of people each year, but needs more than \$6.5 million to fund urgent repairs. NSW Housing Minister David Borger says the Wayside may have to close if it cannot raise the money. Mr Borger says the Government will donate \$2 million but more is still needed. [READ ON](#)

### **Arrest culprits to restore calm, say Christians**

Christians in the troubled Kandhamal jungles of India's eastern Orissa state say strong action must be taken against Hindu extremists backing violence against them, in order to restore peace. More than 90 Christians were killed, over 5,000 Christian houses and 250 churches and Christian institutions were looted and torched from late August 2008 in Kandhamal. [READ ON](#)

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### **Lutheran world leader urges end to Islamophobia**

The general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, the Rev. Ishmael Noko, has urged world religious leaders at an inter religious congress in Kazakhstan to renounce "Islamophobia". Mr Noko, a Zimbabwean, commended U.S. President Barack Obama for reaching out to Muslim communities and moving away from the language of the "war against terror". [READ ON](#)

### **Catholic leaders urge G8 nations to protect the poor**

The presidents of the Roman Catholic bishops' conferences in the Group of Eight main industrial nations have urged their leaders to "protect poor persons and

assist developing countries" at the forthcoming G8 Summit in Italy. "Ironically, poor people have contributed the least to the economic crisis facing our world, but their lives and livelihoods are likely to suffer the greatest devastation because they struggle at the margins in crushing poverty," the bishops said in a 22 June letter to G8 leaders. [READ ON](#)

### **Two candidates nominated for WCC general secretary**

After three days of interviews and thorough discussions, the committee decided by consensus to propose the following two candidates for election by the Central Committee during its meeting in August 2009: the Rev. Dr Park Seong-won of the Presbyterian Church of Korea and the Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit of the Church of Norway (Lutheran). [READ ON](#)

### **New opportunities for investors- UFS**

Uniting Financial Services is pleased to announce their latest Special Interest Rate Offers. Enjoy interest rates up to 5% p.a., available for new\* investments for terms from 4 to 24 months. These offers are available for new\* investments of \$50,000 and more, and are available for a limited time only. For more information on our current offers visit the [website](#). Special Interest Rate Offers will be released regularly on our website and to all investors contactable by email. \*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. You are also invited to a pre-parliament event on August 2. [READ ON](#)

### **We want your songs**

Calling all songwriters! *Songs that Unite* is a songwriting competition of the Uniting Church in Australia with prizes totaling more than \$1,000. Enter your original, Australian Christian music for congregational (or other group) singing and your song could be recorded and promoted across Australia. For details visit the [website](#).

### **Jesus, the misunderstood Jew, July 9**

It's not too late to hear the NSW Council of Christians and Jews Luncheon Club's July guest speaker, Amy-Jill Levine – a Professor of New Testament Studies at

Vanderbilt University Department of Religious Studies. 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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### **African Ministry Gathering, August 15**

The African Ministry Gathering is the first gathering of African people in the Synod, hosted by Blacktown UC and the Cross-cultural Ministry of Board of Mission. The purpose of gathering is for fellowship, to network and explore orientation into the UCA. The Moderator and other leaders of the church will welcome the African Ministry. The event will be held at the Centre for Ministry on August 15 at 10am – 2:30pm. For further information please contact Belinda Fry on 8267 4270.

### **Cross Cultural youth praise and worship, August 15**

The Cross Cultural Youth praise and worship for 2009 will be held on Saturday August 15 at pm at 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, 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.

### **Canberra Woman's Christian Convention, September 19**

The Canberra Women's Christian Convention is getting closer! It will be a day of getting to know the bible and each other and to be encouraged and inspired by connecting with other Christian women from the region. The convention commences on Saturday, September 19, 2009, at Rydges Lakeside, London Circuit, Canberra from 9:30 am to 3:30 pm. The convention's main speaker is Greta Gaut, speaking from Titus. Details about the convention can be found on the [website](#). Online registrations are open now. Register before 31 July and take advantage of the early bird rate.

### **National seminar on word and music in worship, October 16 - 18**

Wesley Music Centre is pleased to announce the publication of details and the commencement of registrations for the National Seminar on Word and Music in Worship: "*Celebrating our Faith*" to be held in Canberra from October 16 -18, 2009. Three internationally renowned leaders, John Bell, Colin Gibson and Professor Michael Hawn and six specialist facilitators will lead an array of stimulating and thought provoking sessions. Full details, including registration forms are now available on the [website](#) or booklets are available on application from the Wesley Music Centre. There has already been a high level of interest in the Seminar and places are limited so early registration is advised.

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## LIVING IS GIVING: PRAYER POINTS AND RESOURCES

### **We want to hear your Living is Giving stories!**

On June 4, 2009 the children of West Ryde Uniting Church Congregation had no idea of the surprise that awaited them as they arrived to their Thursday afternoon children worship service called "Charged".

For some time, the children have been saving up their hard-earned pocket money in a "petrol bank" — a piggy bank in the form of a petrol bowser — with the purpose of "fuelling Gods kingdom". They chose to do so by selecting rural ministry as their mission focus area for Living is Giving.

This is just one of the awe-inspiring stories we come across where congregations give above and beyond their own means. Yet, it's the unique fashion that the children of West Ryde Congregation went about raising money for Living is Giving that's exceptional — by "fuelling God's kingdom".

How does your congregation "fuel Gods kingdom"? We want to hear your fundraising stories. Send your story to the Kimberly Almarza on [kima@nsw.uca.org.au](mailto:kima@nsw.uca.org.au) or call 8267 4475.

For more information on Living is Giving, visit:

### **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.

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

Pray and give thanks for:

- Plans to build Gungahlin Uniting Church. Thanks to the significant support provided by Canberra Region Presbytery, Synod of New South Wales and the ACT, other surrounding congregations, and the generous pledging of the Gungahlin congregation, Gungahlin Uniting Church plans to build a church by the end of this year. Let's pray that everything runs smoothly for Gungahlin Uniting Church.
- The Quakers Hill Uniting Church Filipino Congregation which recently had its ten- year anniversary in a celebration that is testament to the Uniting Church's strong commitment to encouraging multiculturalism. This is a great achievement given the congregation's humble beginnings — from a few Filipino families who wanted to form a fellowship, ten years on it's a congregation of more than 30 families with multiple ministries, two worship services and one full-time pastor.

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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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