

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

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

e-news August 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.

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).

This issue includes:

NEWS AND INITIATIVES

- [Message from the Moderator](#)
- [God's place in the Dreaming](#)
- [Proposed customer assistance policy disappointing](#)
- [Ten years together in song](#)
- [Hymns become latest revolt trigger in Fiji](#)
- [Make your submission to the inquiry into homelessness](#)
- [Don't trade away the right to food](#)
- [South Australian chosen as Church president-elect](#)
- [Chorus steps outside concert halls](#)
- [US Episcopal Church lifts ban on consecrating gay bishops](#)
- [Churches are key to peace in the Middle East](#)
- [Surge in homelessness](#)

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

- [Why not do a MEP, begins August 7](#)
- [Cracking down on people smuggling, August 13](#)
- [African Ministry Gathering, August 15](#)
- [Climate Change, Christians and Nonviolence, August 15](#)
- [Cross Cultural youth praise and worship, August 15](#)
- [Seminar Week 2009: Focus on Worship and the Bible, August 17-20](#)
- [Calvin 500: Calvin Goes Public, August 28-30](#)
- [Wesley Photo Competition -entries close September 6](#)

- [Asian Diaspora in Australia Symposium, September 14-15](#)
- [ABC & Easter thank offering appeals 2010, applications close October 30](#)

LIVING IS GIVING: PRAYER POINTS AND RESOURCES

- [Put yourself in the Living is Giving picture: Choose focus areas now!](#)
- [We want to hear your Living is Giving stories!](#)
- [Hope makes a difference: Living is Giving presentations](#)
- [Prayer and Praise Points](#)

NEWS AND INITIATIVES

Message from the Moderator:

I write having just returned from spending six days sitting around tables participating in the 12th Assembly of the Uniting Church. For some it might seem to be a waste of time but for me, sitting through the proposals, listening to the debate, sometimes about apparently insignificant things, I discerned and perceived the presence of the Holy Spirit as in our meeting we bore witness to the sort of church we are. [READ ON](#)

God's place in the Dreaming

The Uniting Church recently became the first major Christian denomination in Australia to commence processes to formally acknowledge, in the Preamble to its Constitution, Australia's traditional owners and their pre-existing relationship with the Creator God. The church also acknowledged its complicity in dispossessing the First People of Australia from their land, culture and spirituality. [READ ON](#)

Proposed customer assistance policy disappointing

The Executive Director of UnitingCare NSW.ACT has criticised the proposed NSW Department of Water and Energy Customer Assistance Policy for electricity consumers, saying "it's not enough" to help financially vulnerable Australians. The Rev. Harry Herbert is pushing for a "No Disconnections Policy" in the Customer Assistance Policy to address the needs of financially stricken customers, stressing that the ideal solution would be the creation of a "special needs retailer" to assist those customers after other avenues have been exhausted. [READ ON](#)

Ten years together in song

A celebration of hymns was held at Pitt Street Uniting Church on July 5 commemorating the tenth anniversary of *Together in Song* (TIS), which the congregation has used since its release. *Together in Song* was dedicated at St John's Anglican Cathedral, Parramatta on June 21, 1999. The Rev. Dr D'Arcy Wood, former President of the Uniting Church in Australia and a Uniting Church representative on the Hymn Book Committee, was guest preacher at the Pitt Street service. [READ ON](#)

[Return to menu](#)

Hymns become latest revolt trigger in Fiji

Charles Wesley, the great Methodist hymn writer, may have penned his famous words "O for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer praise" almost 270 years ago, but it seems just singing these words in strife-torn Fiji could destabilise a whole government. [READ ON](#)

Methodist Church calls off conference in Fiji. [READ ON MORE](#)

The recently concluded Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia unanimously agreed to convey its support and solidarity with the Methodist Church in Fiji and Rotuma. [READ ON MORE](#)

Make your submission to the inquiry into homelessness

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth is conducting an inquiry into homelessness legislation. In this paper, the government pledged to "enact new legislation to ensure that people who are homeless receive quality services and adequate support". [READ ON](#)

Don't trade away the right to food

Church-linked campaigners for justice in the fight against hunger have urged new approaches to trade that uphold people's right to food, as the World Trade Organisation launched its World Trade Report 2009. "Food cannot be treated like any other commodity," said José Pablo Prado Córdova, president of the board of directors of the YMCA Guatemala and vice-chairperson of the Food Strategy Group for the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, an international Christian network committed to joint action on critical global issues. "Many current trade policies undermine food systems," he said. [READ ON](#)

[Return to menu](#)

South Australian chosen as Church president-elect

The Uniting Church in Australia has voted for a new President to lead the church in three years time. [READ ON](#)

Churches are key to peace in the Middle East

Jerusalem Lutheran Bishop Munib Younan has appealed to leaders of churches in Europe to stand by Christians in the Middle East in their struggle for justice and peace by remembering how injustice was fought in South Africa. [READ ON](#)

US Episcopal Church lifts ban on consecrating gay bishops

The U.S. Episcopal Church has overwhelmingly voted to lift a three-year-old moratorium on consecrating gay and lesbian bishops, despite warnings that the ban was necessary to preserve unity in the wider Anglican Communion. A large majority of Episcopal bishops, priests and lay delegates gathered here for the church's triennial General Convention asserted that "God has called and may call" gays and lesbians in lifelong committed relationships "to any ordained ministry in the Episcopal Church." [READ ON](#)

Surge in homelessness

A study of those using the services of The Exodus Foundation has shown a dramatic rise in homelessness – even among entire families. Demand for food parcels has also soared and there has been a surge in the number of people eating in the Foundation's free restaurant. [READ ON](#)

[Return to menu](#)

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Why not do a MEP, begins August 7

MEP stands for Ministry Exploration Program. Anyone can do a MEP. This program is held Friday mornings, during semester, 9 am to 10 am, beginning August 7. It takes place at the United Theological College. Prices are \$60 plus GST which includes a CD with readings / study outline. For more information please contact Renee Kelly in student admin on (02) 8838 8914, or email reneek@nsw.uca.org.au

Cracking down on people smuggling, August 13

Andrew Bartlett, former leader of the Australian Democrats, will speak about whether our current immigration policies are indicative of the Australia we want to be, especially in relation to human rights. Andrew Bartlett is a consistent and vocal campaigner for refugees and asylum seekers. Bartlett is the only Australian parliamentarian to have visited every refugee detention center in Australia, as well as those on Christmas Island and Nauru, each of which he has visited four times to meet with detainees. Zhi Yan from refugee advocacy group 'A Just Australia' will also be present to respond to questions. This event is held on Thursday August 13, 6.30pm – 8pm at the Wayside Chapel, 29 Hughes Street, Potts Point. To RSVP or request information for any of the events please contact Beres Jackson on 9358 5582 or beres.jackson@thewaysidechapel.com

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. For more information please contact Myong Yang at Board of Mission on 8267 4377. This event is held on August 15, 10am – 2:30pm at the Centre for Ministry.

Climate Change, Christians and Nonviolence, August 15

Learn about why nonviolent direct action (NVDA) in the tradition of Martin Luther King, Gandhi and Desmond Tutu is a legitimate response to the climate crisis. You can also learn about the power of NVDA, the spirituality and theology of NVDA, and how to get involved in potential actions.

Guest speakers include: Justin Whelan (Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service), Jonathan Moylan (Rising Tide), Catherine Cresswell (Greenpeace) and Anne and Ian Hodgson (climate activists).

This event is held on Saturday, August 15, 1-4pm at Quaker Meeting House, Lower Hall, 119 Devonshire St, Surry Hills. A gold coin entry is required.

For a flyer click [here](#) or for more information please contact m_d_pepper@yahoo.com.au on 0447 730 772.

[Return to menu](#)

Cross Cultural youth praise and worship, August 15

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 special guest 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.

The Cross Cultural Youth praise and worship for 2009 will be held on Saturday, August 15, 4.30 pm at Bankstown Uniting church, 72 Kitchener Parade, Bankstown. For further information please contact Belinda Fry on 8267 4270.

Seminar Week 2009: Focus on Worship and the Bible, August 17-20

This ministry conference will focus on the relationship of the Bible and worship – and the ways they combine to celebrate the Gospel. In addition to leading liturgical theologian Gordon Lathrop's keynote lectures "The Four Gospels on Sunday", one strand of lectures will explore how we negotiate the innovative & the traditional in worship and another the Bible & worship.

This conference will be held on August 17-20 at the School of Continuing Education, United Theological College, Centre for Ministry, 16 Masons Drive North Parramatta. Click [here](#) for full brochure or contact the School of Continuing Education Centre for Ministry on 8838 8936 or email sce@nsw.uca.org.au.

Calvin 500: Calvin Goes Public, August 28-30

A conference celebrating the 500th anniversary of the birth of John Calvin, held on August 28-30, at United Theological College, Centre for Ministry, 16 Masons Drive, North Parramatta NSW 2151.

Keynote speakers and presenters include Professor Randall Zachman, Professor Peter Matheson, Professor Ian Breward, Professor Samuel Cheon, and Dr Val Webb. For more information please contact Dr William Emilsen, wemilsen@nsw.uca.org.au or 8838 8925.

Wesley Photo Competition -entries close September 6

Wesley Mission's inaugural photography competition is being held in conjunction with Wesley Fair on October 8, 2009. Whatever your age or skill, or if you are an amateur we look forward to receiving your entry. Entries close on September 6 so see how creative you can be and submit your best shots online. [READ ON](#)

[Return to menu](#)

Asian Diaspora in Australia Symposium, September 14-15

Titled "Making Space for Christ: Second Thoughts on *Crossing Borders*", this symposium stars guest speaker Dr In Jin Yoon (Head of Sociology Department, Korea University) and Dr Clive Pearson (Principal of United Theological College). This event is hosted by the Association of Asian-Australian Theology and Ministry and The Korean Society of Sydney.

Held on September 14-15 at the Centre for Ministry, 16 Masons Drive North Parramatta 2151 you need to make your bookings by September 1.

Please contact Dr Myong Duk Yang 02 8838 8905 or 0418 223 261 or email him on yangmd@nsw.uca.org.au.

ABC & Easter thank offering appeals 2010, applications close October 30

The ABC and Easter Thank Offering Appeals give congregations, groups and individuals an opportunity to support new mission and ministry projects. This year the Board of Mission will support eight projects - four from partner churches overseas and four from Uniting Church congregations or agencies across Australia. Easter Thank Offering Envelopes will be distributed to congregations in March outlining the four selected projects for this Appeal. Remember applications close October 30, 2009.

The projects identified for the ABC Appeal are advertised by a DVD presentation produced by the Board of Mission and includes information about the success of the previous year's Appeal. Copies of the DVD are available from the various Presbytery offices and the Board of Mission office at Level 9, 222 Pitt Street, Sydney. The DVDs are available for loan throughout the year. For more information please contact Belinda Fry at the Board of Mission, PO Box A2178, SYDNEY SOUTH 1235 Phone: (02) 8267 4270, Email: belindaf@nsw.uca.org.au.

[Return to menu](#)

LIVING IS GIVING: PRAYER POINTS AND RESOURCES

Put yourself in the Living is Giving picture: Choose focus areas now!

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? Planning Forms for 2009–10 are now due, please make sure to have yours sent soon. If you need a new form, just contact Danielle Pitts on (02) 8267 4393 or Daniellep@nsw.uca.org.au.

Funds raised through Living is Giving are the backbone of the work of our Uniting Church in this Synod, in Australia and beyond. Please give as generously as you can — increasing your contribution from last year if possible — to ensure that the important ministries of our church can continue.

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 or call 8267 4475.

[Return to menu](#)

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 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.

Prayer point and praise points

Pray and give thanks for:

- **Jesus. All about life campaign as it gathers steam!**

One hundred Uniting Church congregations are now registered for this exciting faith sharing opportunity across New South Wales and the ACT. Congregations are being encouraged to consider how they can communicate the relevance of Jesus in their lives to those around them. Uniting Church congregations will be hosting community and cultural events across New South Wales that will invite people to investigate how of Jesus might be meaningful in their time and place.

- **More U-Turn projects**

The U-Turn program continues to encourage congregations to make space for new people. Often this can be as simple as advertising an existing church activity somewhere other than in the church bulletin. There are so many wonderful activities organised by congregations that go unnoticed by those outside the membership of the church.

[Return to menu](#)

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

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[Return to menu](#)