


COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

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

e-news November 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).

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NEWS AND INITIATIVES

Message from the Moderator

Just yesterday as I was driving along I heard a radio report of a fire seriously threatening Brooms Head on the north coast of New South Wales. The shocking events of last summer remind us of the need for preparation prior to disastrous events and the effort involved in rebuilding communities damaged by them. It has also pointed out the very valuable place that churches have in helping meet needs and supporting community recovery. [READ ON](#)

Physicians give hospital chaplains a clean bill of health

Science and faith may often clash, but a new survey suggests that most U.S. doctors believe religion and spirituality can help patients. [READ ON](#)

We're Uniting Creative now!

The Synod's Communications Unit is now known as *Uniting Creative*. This reflects the reality that the unit has grown from being the publisher of *Insights* magazine to also being a design studio and print bureau for a variety of church and other organisations.

Manager Marjorie Lewis-Jones said "We continue to publish *Insights*, the most efficient and effective way to reach Uniting Church members with news and advertising messages.

"But we also deliver graphic design and concept-to-final-product publishing services.

"As Uniting Creative our experienced team will be even more focused on helping people find affordable, ethically-consistent and striking solutions to their communications problems — in the media, on the internet or in print."

For more information please visit our exciting new website at <http://www.unitingcreative.com.au>

General Secretary recruitment

The Rev. Paul Swadling, General Secretary of the Synod of New South Wales and the ACT, is retiring in July 2010. Recruitment is now underway to look for a suitably-qualified person to take up this significant role. See <http://news.nsw.uca.org.au/employment/> for more details.

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Synod 2010 study leader

The Rev. Ken Sumner, National Chair of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC), will be a Bible study leader at Synod 2010. Mr Sumner was ordained in 1998 at Salisbury, became the Congress minister at Salisbury and has been the State Chair of the UAICC in South Australia for many years.

He has been the State Development and Outreach Officer for the past six years and overseen the growth of the UAICC in South Australia.

The Synod meeting will also have presentations on:

Amendments to the Uniting Church Constitution and Preamble

Adopted by the 2009 Assembly, amendments to acknowledge the place of our indigenous sisters and brothers in the life of our church will only have effect once they are approved by a majority of synods and two-thirds of presbyteries.

Future vision for the church

This will encourage Synod members to imagine how the church can best move with God and transform communities over the next decade and beyond.

"Generous ... as God is" is the theme of the meeting of the Synod of New South Wales and the ACT at Canterbury Park Race Course from April 10 to 13.

To find out more visit the website at <http://nsw.uca.org.au/synodmeeting/>

Forget-me-knot day

Support Australian adult survivors to untangle the knot of child abuse. Friday November 13 is ASCA's Forget-me-knot Day, when all Australians are encouraged to show their support for more than two million adult Australians* personally affected by childhood abuse, as part of an International Week For Prevention of Child Abuse. [READ ON](#)

Diversity among Christians on Human Rights Act

The Uniting Church supports a Human Rights Act as an important legislative tool in ensuring equality for all Australians. We are concerned with the protection of the basic human rights and freedoms of everyone, not only those which relate to our own life as a church. [READ ON](#)

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First woman to lead German Protestants will speak out

Bishop Margot Kässmann, the first woman to lead the Evangelical Church in Germany, has pledged to work to promote relations with other Christian denominations, something that originally inspired her in her church work. [READ ON MORE](#)

Remanded juveniles have 'nowhere to go'

The NSW Department of Community Services, already under siege over avoidable deaths of children, is failing in its duty towards juveniles accused of crimes, according to a new report. Juvenile detention centres are being used as a form of "crisis accommodation" for children and young people, according to the report by 12 non-government organisations involved in juvenile justice, including the Council of Social Service and UnitingCare. [READ ON](#)

Food — and love — for 'the needy'

Driving from Western New South Wales to the city of Dubbo, travellers find some sense of refreshment as they pass through Narromine. [READ ON](#) Canowindra Food Basket opens its doors. [READ ON](#)

Lutheran federation says GFC may lead to cuts in its work

Churches have been hit by the global economic crisis as much as other institutions and the president, general secretary and treasurer of the Lutheran World Federation all say its effects have been deep. [READ ON](#)

Numbers praying up, while religious links decline

The number of Americans who are praying is increasing at the same time as more of them say they have no formal religious affiliation, a study of religious trends has found. [READ ON](#)

Uniting Church opposes further weakening of CPRS

The Uniting Church in Australia has written to MPs and senators, urging them to vote for a strengthened Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. National Director of UnitingJustice Australia, the Rev. Elenie Poulos, said, "We are unable to support any further weakening of the CPRS which compromises its integrity, increases support for polluting industries and holds back Australia's transition to a low carbon society." [READ ON](#)

Church urges constructive dialogue on asylum seekers

The Uniting Church in Australia has written to Prime Minister Rudd and Shadow Minister for Immigration and Citizenship Sharman Stone to express concern and disappointment at the Government's responses to asylum seekers arriving by boat. [READ ON MORE](#) PM in hot water for calling asylum seekers 'illegal'. [READ ON MORE MORE](#)

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Stimulus package cuts must not target social housing

Major Church Providers of social services in Australia have urged the Federal Government to ensure its stimulus funding continues to support vulnerable Australians, especially through its promised investment in social housing. [READ ON MORE](#) Churches unite for homelessness. [READ ON](#)

Easier, faster, simpler - with Uniting Financial Services

Uniting Financial Services is proud to announce two initiatives that will make it even easier for you to invest in higher values.

We have moved to an easier, industry standard investment and loan numbering system. Investments and loans will now have just one BSB number and one investment/loan number applying for all transactions - wherever or however you make them.

We are also pleased to announce the launch of BPAY® Electronic Payment Service for Uniting Online users.

All investments with Uniting Financial Services benefit the Synod. Our work provides around 80% of the income of the Synod, which is used to support the church's worship life and provide resources for congregations large and small. For further information click [here](#) for our latest interest rates and special offers, please call our friendly Service Team on 1300 133 673 or visit our website unitingfinancial.com.au.

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Caring for Ex-Offenders Workshop, November 7

Churches are often confused as to the right approach to take when welcoming and supporting someone who has been in prison. Helping broken people find a safe secure place.

At the workshop we will hear from men and women who have been prisoners who are now "set free". Churches that are helping to make our community a safer more welcoming place - Debbie Schaefer from Edge Church SA, is coming across to share with us how they minister in the Adelaide women's prison and care for the women as they come out through their church.

We will discover that even Christian ex-offenders can struggle as they attempt to reintegrate. How can churches and their agencies make a difference? How can you make a difference? These questions and more will be explored with experienced prison ministry workers and churches working with broken people. The workshop will be held on Saturday, November 7, at the Sydney NorWest, International College, Vineyard. For more information please click [here](#)

Who would Jesus Bomb? November 10

Peace activist Donna Mulhearn, part of the human shield in Iraq in 2003, tells her story and explores the radical Christian notion of "love your enemies, do good to those who hurt you".

This event will be held on November 10, 7:30pm - 9:00pm at the Bald Faced Stag Hotel, 345 Parramatta Rd, (Cnr Balmain Rd), Leichhardt. For more enquiries please see Newtown Spirituality in the Pub www.catalyst-for-renewal.com.au or contact (02) 9230 7631. Donations required.

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Gungahlin Uniting Church Fundraising Dinner, November 12

You are invited to hear and see the latest information about the Uniting Church's new Christian Community Centre in Gungahlin. Come and share together in a delicious three course meal cooked by the students at CIT and help participate in the work of the wider church throughout the Canberra Region Presbytery. All funds raised from the dinner will be used specifically for the new building and you will be given the opportunity to consider donating to this significant venture. The dinner will be held at CIT Restaurant, Constitution Ave. Reid, Thursday November 12 at 6.30 pm. Tickets cost \$50 and can be ordered from Natalie Hine 62419396 or email hineclan@netspace.net.au

Spirituality: Medicine's Fourth Dimension, November 12

Rabbi Jeffrey Cohen will give a talk on "Spirituality: Medicine's Fourth Dimension or Twilight Zone" at the Great Synagogue, 166 Castlereagh Street (just up from Park Street) on November 12 at 12.30 pm.

Rabbi Cohen is currently a Visiting Senior (Research) Fellow in the School of Public Health and Community Medicine at UNSW. His areas of research include the ethical, spiritual and cultural issues at the end of life as well as spirituality and health. He is particularly interested in public policy as it applies to health and spirituality. He is a Visiting Professor at the Mary Seacole Research Centre at De Montfort University in Leicester, UK. From 1996 to 2001, he served as Chief Executive Officer of the Sydney Jewish Museum.

Rabbi Cohen is a past President of the NSW Council of Christians and Jews. A (kosher) sandwich lunch will be served — admission is free (gold coin donation will be appreciated).

RSVP for catering purposes to William Szekely, President: 9290 3222, 041 846 4056 or szeklex@szeklex.com.au

Building Capacity with Indigenous Communities, November 26-27

A two-day seminar conducted by Richard Trudgen, author of the influential book *Why Warriors Lie Down and Die*, and Yolju co-presenters from north-east Arnhem Land. Learn more about Indigenous Yolju culture than most people would in a lifetime. Understand why Yolju people and other ethnic minorities are suffering.

See a model that works, developed with the Yolju people in Arnhem Land; a model that allows the people to build their future around health, economics, law and governance, and social issues. Gain personal communication and cross cultural skills necessary in working with Indigenous and ethnic groups.

Be part of the solution; know how we together, can help close the gap.

Limited spaces available for Canberra, November 23-24 and Sydney November 26-27.

Register now [online](#) or contact: (08) 8987 3910 seminars@ards.com.au.

Stations of creation Advent concert, November 27-28

Stations of Creation premieres new creative works of music by ten of Australia's leading emerging composers performed by an ensemble of Sydney's finest classical musicians alongside cutting-edge vocal ensemble Halcyon in a unique Advent concert.

Composers include Katy Abbott, Andrew Batt-Rawden, Corin Bone, Steve Hodgson, Annie Hsieh, Anthony Lyons, Bryony Marks, Alex Pozniak, Amelia Schmidt and Dan Walker.

Stations of Creation Advent concert will be held on November 27 and 28, 8pm, at St Ives Uniting Church, Cnr Mona Vale Rd & Douglas St.

Tickets are \$20 for Adults and \$10 for Students including wine and cheese with composers. Tickets are available on 9449 6004 9144 5795 or

stationsofcreation@gmail.com,

www.stives.unitingchurch.org.au/StationsofCreation.htm or

www.myspace.com/stationsofcreation

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Song-writing competition, February 26, 2010

"Songs that unite" is the title of the inaugural national song-writing competition of the Uniting Church in Australia. Song-writers are encouraged to write a piece of contemporary music for use in congregational singing in the following categories relating to aspects of a worship service: 1. Gathering the people; 2. Opening up to God; 3. Responding to God; 4. Sending.

Entries close on 26 February 2010. The winners will be announced on March 31, 2010. There will be \$500 for the first prize and up to four \$150 highly commended prizes. The winning songs will be promoted across Australia. Further information about the competition, including conditions of entry, application forms and judging details, is available from the website [by clicking here](#).

LIVING IS GIVING: PRAYER POINTS AND RESOURCES

October Living is Giving updates

If you've contributed to Living is Giving this financial year, you should recently have received a thank-you letter indicating how much you have contributed, and most importantly, feedback posters highlighting some of the ways your contributions have been helping the wider work of our Uniting Church. Please remember to display these updates in your church building and let congregation members know that they have arrived.

Think big – think 1 per cent ...

It doesn't seem like much – but 1 per cent can make a huge difference. If every Uniting Church congregation in New South Wales and the ACT contributed 1 per cent more of its total annual expenditure to Living is Giving, there could be up to \$600,000 more that goes into mission work.

That's an extra \$600,000 for mission initiatives in new housing areas, training people for ministry, bringing the gospel to schools and universities, supporting

drought-affected rural communities and the day-to-day administrative and legal tasks that keep our congregations, faith communities and agencies running.

Unfortunately, contributions to Living is Giving have fallen, which means a leaner Synod budget and an uncertain situation for many of the church's ministries in the coming year. Many of these ministries offer people hope in hard times; providing shelter, care, sustenance or spiritual support where otherwise they may have none.

If you believe the mission work of the Uniting Church matters, make Living is Giving a priority in your congregation this financial year. Can your congregation or faith community commit to an extra 1 per cent per annum to help keep the many ministries of the New South Wales Synod strong and viable?

Please, think big by digging deep and continue to support these mission initiatives. We need to make Living is Giving a priority in the financial year ahead. Let's face the challenges ahead with renewed vigor and make a difference.

For more information please contact Kimberly Almarza on kima@nsw.uca.org.au or call 8267 4475. Make sure you visit the website for more information and resources on <http://livingisgiving.nsw.uca.org.au/>

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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 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:

- **UnitingCare Chaplains** like the Rev. Bruce Slater and the Rev. Jennifer Kivikko who minister in the most challenging environments, sharing Christ's compassion with people facing a time of crisis in their lives. Hospital Chaplain Jennifer Kivikko works at the Prince of Wales and RPA hospitals, and is an integral part of the health care team, seeing patients, working with families and being a

caring presence to staff. While the Rev. Bruce Slater is a prison chaplain at Sydney's Parklea Correctional Centre, offering spiritual counselling to over 95 prisoners during his Sunday morning and afternoon services.

• **Resource Officer, Hazel Leano** - July was an important month for the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC), as it welcomed its newest member, Resource Officer, Hazel Leano. Before she accepted the role, Hazel was already a committed member of the Uniting Church and a member of the Filipino Congregation at Quakers Hill. She is a Youth Elder and is dedicated to young people's spiritual growth and discipleship — a dedication which is also aligned with UAICC's vision and mission of "Bringing Forth Tomorrow's Leaders Today". UAICC hopes to extend this vision to not only young people but also to strengthening the role of elders as mentors.

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For more on these mission focus areas 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://news.nsw.uca.org.au/employment/2009/graduates-students.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: unitingcreative@nsw.uca.org.au

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