

Welcome to ER Direct

Editorial



The NCLS profile of 'churches with a faith sharing profile and people who share their faith' (see article 6) identifies some significant themes about the **Jesus all about life** campaign which were highlighted by Thomas Bandy when he visited Australia.

"The nature and purpose of Christian evangelism is no longer about assimilating new members or convincing people about a belief system but about connecting people with the experience of Christ."¹

(Thomas Bandy)

With this understanding in mind a new series of programs, based on the principle of hospitality and informal chatting around a meal, is being released by BOM across the Synod called '**Rediscovering Hope.**' NCLS figures indicate that churches who are faith sharing are inviting and keeping newcomers partly because they are also inclusive and enriching. These NCLS figures also indicate the UCA is 50 - 500% less likely than almost all other mainstream denominations to have offered a training opportunity to engage in outreach or evangelism over the previous two years.

The 'Big Shifts' in our society according to Bandy are:

- **Crucial credibility:** From professional expertise to lifestyle authenticity
- **Disciple-making:** From human decisions to surrender to Christ
- **Mentoring:** From dogmatic authority to guidance through ambiguity
- **Companionship:** From institutional allegiance to serious accountability
- **Practical benefits:** From private salvation to a unity of faith motivation and social action
- **Ongoing networks:** From stable church attendance to mobile spirituality.

"Evangelism is an experience of spiritual 'teamwork' in which the individual sows seeds, confident that the Spirit will call another to water, till the soul, nurture the growth, and harvest the fruit. You never know what impact your words and actions will have on another ... you can only surrender every word and deed to the Spirit."²

The opportunities we have to reveal Christ to Australians are:

Worship Evangelism

Special occasion worship uses the significant spiritual moments in the world as opportunities to share. Some good examples are Mother's Day, the Worship Services at the Parkes Elvis Festival and the Tamworth Country and Western Festival.

Workplace Evangelism

Help people to discern their spiritual gifts and align their work to fulfil them. There is a spirituality in labour that only co-workers can communicate to one another, if they themselves see mission as more important than career. Opportunities for mission include Christian Farmers camp, Christian Businessmen and Playgroups.

Recreational Evangelism

A high percentage of the population are retiring early and investing in leisure time, but increasingly they want to invest that time in meaningful ways that bless others. 'Vacations' that are really mission trips, learning opportunities and service ministries are all opportunities for mentoring people deeper into faith. Examples within UCA in NSW include Beecroft-Mexico house building, Peak Hill – mission trips to East Timor and Earth Ministry by Sydney North Presbytery.

Intervention Evangelism

Addiction is still the #1 health issue today, and the faith-rich intervention that helps people connect with a '*higher power*' is a significant ministry. Rick Warren's program '**Road to Recovery**' identifies many styles and natures of addictive behaviours, much more than just drugs, alcohol and cigarettes. Each gives Christians an opportunity to communicate the hope and the apocalyptic power of God. Significant programs include the Pastoral Counselling Institute's '*Raising Difficult Children*', '*Anger Management*' and the '*Hey dad!*' Program.

Crisis Evangelism

Crisis may be on a personal or global scale, but the desperation, tragedy, isolation, and pain of any crisis is an opportunity to bless others not only with practical help, but with a change of attitude and mindset that gives them confidence for the future. Examples include community barbeques, hospital /home visiting and the Riverina fencing teams.

Life Cycle Evangelism

Birth, puberty, marriage/divorce, vocation and career change, relocation, and death are still opportunities to help people invest life with new meaning and purpose. For example, To Have and to Hold pre marriage courses, ELM, men's sheds and the Midnight Café in Dubbo.

"Evangelism is not a program of the church ... it is the essence of the Christian movement. It is not something experts are trained to do, but something that members do naturally and spontaneously."³

I am sure many of you could add programs or activities that your church are undertaking but many churches would agree we don't train or prepare our people to comfortably share their experience of Christ in these situations. The NCLS figures support this understanding. Most of the elderly who responded to the NCLS survey expressed that they :'***do not like to talk about their faith 'my life and actions are sufficient'***. I believe this is the reason the UCA does not do well at evangelism, because life and actions are no longer as effective by themselves in today's multi-faith world.

Fresh Expressions Workshops

In June 2010 **Dave Male**, an experienced **Fresh Expressions** practitioner and lecturer in Pioneer Ministry at Ridley College, Cambridge will be visiting Australia and conducting a number of workshops across our Synod.

- ⇒ **Wednesday 23rd June - Canberra**
- ⇒ **Thursday 24th June - Hunter**
- ⇒ **Friday 25th & Saturday 26th June - Sydney**

This will be a great opportunity to glean some insights from someone who has invested many years in the challenging task of growing new forms of church that connect with the unchurched. David has authored the book *'Church Unplugged: Remodeling Church without losing your soul'* which looks at how to create a new church through ten essentials that create an indispensable framework.

For more information about these events please contact Peter Hopkins at the Board of Mission Ph: (02)8267 4361 Email: peterh@nsw.uca.org.au

Lenten Resources



Bronwyn Murphy, Resource Minister for Macquarie Darling Presbytery, has produced Lenten Bible Studies for 2010.

For more details contact: bron.murphy@bigpond.com or 02 6885 5772

Another Lenten Resource Bronwyn recommends is the Bible Study *'Peacemaking and Discipleship: Putting God's peace into practice'* written by Rev Dr Chris Walker and available from mediacom.org.au at a cost of \$12.95.



THE WATERHOLE PROJECT

There are many ways in which "The Waterhole" AIMS to support the spiritual growth of groups both individually and collectively.

"The Waterhole" team invite you to consider the following list, discern what would be appropriate for your group and then contact "The Waterhole" committee, and they will work together to make it happen.

Quiet Days

Quiet days provide space and time for prayerful reflection and attentiveness to God's Spirit in our lives in company with others who share the same intention. The quiet day allows for rest, refreshment and new insights.

Quiet Gardens

You may have a garden where you could be supported in offering a quiet space for reflection and prayer. This could be a one-off or regular event.

Workshops on areas of spirituality

We can offer short workshop (1-2 hours) to longer ones (1-2 days) or a series of workshops. Some topics are various forms of prayer, journaling, dreams, discovering God through art or poetry. We are happy to develop a workshop for you on an area of spirituality that interests your group and in which we have appropriate expertise.

Series/workshops for Personal Growth

In particular, workshops in the Myers Briggs Type Indicator which offers understanding of self and others. This is helpful when working as part of a team and in personal relationships.

Retreats

We can design overnight or longer retreats for your group, based on a theme, or for developments of a team like parish council, music group, work colleagues and so on.

Meditation

Both training in and opportunities for meditation.

Spiritual direction

Trained people are available to accompany people in their personal prayer and faith journey.

"The Waterhole" is recognised as a faith community by the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA). Activities are currently being offered under the direction of Sue Dunbar, Spiritual Formation Facilitator with the Mid Lachlan Mission Area (UCA)

For more information contact Sue on 02 6862 5392 suedunbar53@yahoo.com



National Conference 28-30 May 2010 Parkes Uniting Church

The vision...

To hold a national gathering of all those involved with Project Reconnect and all those who would like to be.

This will be a tremendous opportunity to bring all these people together (for the first time) to share each other's experiences and stories, to meet the people behind the scenes and to offer feedback to the PR team and to the presenters. You can learn new ways to utilise PR as well as help make this resource even better!!

Who is invited?

Everyone! Well, nearly everyone. In particular, at least 2 people attend from each of the current PR user congregations. Also invited are past users, those considering PR, our partners who assist with contributions and filming, as well as ministry agents who are in situations where PR can be utilised.

Cost \$80 (for meals only)

Registration by 14th May

For more information...

Contact: Kingsley Murphy
Project Reconnect Development Consultant
Phone: 02 68855778
Email: kingsley.murphy@bigpond.com
www.projectreconnect.com.au/conf.html

[Click here to view brochure](#)

Resources Direct



To request copies of any article, Phone (02) 6361 4224 or
Email to: bomrural@bigpond.net.au



1 Muslim Followers of Jesus Joseph Cumming Christianity Today Dec 2009 www.christianitytoday.com

Can one be a Muslim and a follower of Jesus? Tens if thousands believe so Joseph Cumming describes the furious debate their example has fuelled.

Some Jews who become Christians see themselves as 'Messianic Jews' and still uphold their identity as a Jewish follower of Jesus. In the 1980's a similar movement began among Muslims who had turned to Christ. Their desire to remain within their Muslim community, honouring Jesus in that context, caused mixed reactions from the Muslim and Christian communities. Crossing cultural boundaries with the gospel brings about various difficulties for those who choose to respond to Jesus. This article examines the opposing views expressed in the 'C4-C5' debate. Some comments challenge assumptions about what it means to be a Muslim or a Christian. Whatever our opinion, we need to be careful not to reject brothers who have already suffered persecution for their new faith and are struggling to know how to express their identity as followers of Christ.

3 Conversation of the Imagination Ian Packer Faith and Life Issue 3 October 2009 www.ea.org.au

To the unbeliever the Bible displays a 'strange new world'. Living in this world requires more than just a change of beliefs. What is needed is 'a conversion of the imagination.' Packer describes our imagination as 'a theologically contested battleground'. The conquests of the Roman Empire over people's minds depended upon people adopting a new 'normality' creating 'imagined communities.' What are the 'imagined communities' of our time? Do the liturgies and practices of the mall and market shape our imaginations and how we relate to the world? Discipling people in this consumer culture is a process which requires long-term reconstruction. Activate your imagination, let God's message dwell within you and become a genuine alternative for the sake of God's world.



4 Men and Their Sheds Dale MacArthur Prac 09 Crossover Spring 2009 Issue 57

Doing Ministry a Man's Way

Bridgeman Baptist run regular events called 'Shed Nights' to address the needs that are particular to men. They aim to make the average bloke feel welcome and comfortable. Apart from an informal time around the barbeque there is an opportunity to cover issues such as marriage, divorce, being a workaholic, being husbands and raising children. This includes asking how all these things relate to a faith in God. Men talk and share their own battles. They gain more freedom to be real.

If your congregation is interested in this ministry check out www.shednight.com for ideas and advice on how to set up your own Shed Nights.

2 The Liberal Experiment and the Culture of Uncertainty David Millikan ACCatalyst Vol 3 Number 3 December 2009

'There are some of us here who do not believe that Jesus was God.' This was David Millikan's introduction to one group of the Uniting Church people. Current generations of Church membership have seen a remarkable challenge to their beliefs. The works of Bishop Spong, which receive varying responses within the Uniting Church, are examined and challenged in this article. Millikan is strong in his criticism: "Spong has so little of the flesh and blood Jesus left, that he is almost transparent" and he calls for open theological discussion for the sake of the Gospel.



We are seeking rural congregations who would like to 'twin' with an urban congregation. If you would like more information on twinning activities see our website or contact the Rural Office.



Articles for ER Direct

Read any good articles lately?

ER Direct welcomes articles, poems, web sites, books you have read, reviews of articles and pictures of any form relating to evangelism from its' readers. Anyone who has an article or review should send a copy to Rural Evangelism and Mission Office, we'd love to hear from you.

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To request copies of any article, Phone (02) 6361 4224 or
Email to: bomrural@bigpond.net.au



5 Still The Way, The Truth, and The Life John R Franke Christianity Today December 2009

Confusion over the 'uniqueness' of Jesus Christ' seems more common than we may have thought. What Christians have historically affirmed is now up for grabs. A surprising number of Christians, including evangelicals, are not convinced of Jesus' unique nature and some argue that such talk should be discouraged in our pluralistic society. Franke states that there is a great deal at stake in denying that Jesus is **the** Way, **the** Truth and **the** Life. He expounds on this thought in great detail and explains the consequences of not standing fast on this belief. Are we willing to compromise on the core understanding of our beliefs? In the midst of our diversity we must remain unified on this point - Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2009/december/6.27.html>

7 Keeping Holy Conversations Going Dawn Darwin Weak Australian Leadership Vol 2 Issue 4 Nov/Dec

Facing questions from unchurched people can be daunting. Are you ready to host a holy conversation with a seeker? Talking about your faith can be awkward, even terrifying as we feel the pressure to convert someone or at least get them to church. It may be that evangelism is more about hospitality than conversion. Our purpose may only be to begin the conversation and listen well. This is just the start of the process of seeking. The Holy Spirit's job is conversion and our job is to provide a safe, loving space in our lives for seekers. Once you have developed a relationship with someone you may want to offer them a simple book to help them draw closer to God. Dawn recommends 'A Travel Guide' and 'Before You Go', both published by Chalice Press. This article offers a different perspective to the old problem of how to tackle evangelism.

You can subscribe to Australian Leadership by contacting MediaCom Education Inc by phoning toll free on 1800 811 311 or ordering online at www.mediacom.org.au for an annual fee of \$68.00 (print copy) or \$47.50 (electronic copy).

6 A Profile of People who Share Faith NCLS Research team <http://www.ncls.org.au>

What characteristics are common in people who actively share their faith? This article highlights the link between personal growth in faith and being at ease in sharing faith with others. Find out how involvement in church life, practical serving and age difference influence faith sharing. See how youth and young adult retention rates are affected by faith discussion at home.



8 Church On Demand Drew Clinebell Leadership Fall 2009 www.LeadershipJournal.net

Drew's experience of God 'building' a church out of the people God sent him is simple and refreshing. Then, through a personal crisis, God opened up an opportunity for wider witness. The outcome was 'Church on demand' which has had far reaching effects and provides a service to all who might respond. The church has no building of its own or even paid staff but the faithfulness and belief of a few overcame boundaries. One of the many miracles from this story.

Find this article at:

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/preachingworship/worship/churchondemand.html>



The ER Direct Team
Editor: Ross Neville
Co-ordinator: Gillian Blowes

**Activities of the e-team of
The Board of Mission**

Jesus Conversations Network
Evangelism Resources
ER Direct
In a State of Prayer

*This work is funded by Living is Giving
Mission Focus Area No.7 and direct donations.*

Rural Chaplains Roundup

Julie Greig and Kel Hodge now have their own blog! Go to www.ruralchaplains.blogspot.com

Their Newsletter can be viewed on the website at: <http://www.ruralchaplains.blogspot.com/>
(follow this link)



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Pastoral Counselling Institute – Training in Pastoral Care

www.pastoralcounselling.org

The Pastoral Counselling Institute offers a **Certificate IV in Pastoral Counselling Skills** which is a part time full year course offered weekly in Sydney and Intensively in the country. Introduction to counselling, communications skills, basic counselling skills integrated with theology are the first subjects in the Certificate IV in Pastoral Counselling Skills. This course trains people to provide practical visitation in both parish and community settings, provide effective listening and care and compile a referral list for further counselling if required. NOW TAKING APPLICATIONS

They also offer training in a number of areas and in a variety of settings – they come to you - for churches and ministry teams. They run programs on 'Learning How I Listen' and 'I'm Going Visiting and Qualities of Leadership', which encourage members of your congregation to increase their skills in pastoral care. Some funding will be available from a grant with the BOM to assist rural congregations with this training in 2010. See the website for more details and an application form for the CERT IV 2010. If you would like more information on any of the Pastoral Counselling Institute activities please call on 9683 3664 or email to pcinsw@ihug.com.au

ELM COURSES for 2010:

25-27/3	Understanding the Sacraments (Part 1) Illawarra South/Canberra
16-18/4	Old Testament Foundations (Part 2) Orange, Macquarie-Darling
23-25/4	Old Testament Foundations (Part 2) North Parramatta (includes Georges R & Sydney Nth)
29/4	New Testament Foundations – Train the Trainer Sydney (Synod Offices)
30/4-2/5	Old Testament Foundations (Part 1) Grafton, Far North Coast
30/4-2/5	Understanding the Sacraments (Part 1) Georges River (South)
7-9/5	Understanding the Sacraments (Part 1) Sydney
14-15/5	Understanding the Sacraments (Part 2) Georges River (w Illawarra & Sydney)
8/5	Living Values (short course 1-day) Sydney North

Check out their website <http://www.elm.org.au>

BOOK REVIEW



'Church Unplugged' by David Male

(Authentic) ISBN-13: 978-1-85078-792-1

'It's been painful sometimes but alive and real' so read the closing words of Dave Male's excellent book – 'Church Unplugged'.

Born in 1999 but conceived several years earlier 'The Net' was one of the very first Fresh Expressions of church in the UK. Describing it as a 'network' church Dave tells the story, warts and all, not only of the journey he made personally as a Church of England pioneer minister but also that of the brand new congregation as it struggled with issues of identity, purpose and calling. He describes it as an ordinary story in an ordinary town with ordinary people. That may be the case but undoubtedly through the perseverance, hard work, courage and faith of those who committed to this venture the ordinary was turned into something exceptional and that's what makes it compelling reading. I particularly liked the real-life story inserts and the questions for discussion after each section. The heart of the book is divided into 10 essentials covering issues such as focus, community, discipleship and expectations. I feel that Dave approaches these in a balanced and reflective way and there are some pearls of wisdom scattered about which any 'would be' church planter would do well to heed.

This is for those who want to progress beyond the dreaming stage. It's a 'this is how you get your hands dirty' type of book. A book for people who want to do something new but who are also prepared to do it in the real world where knocks and bruises come as standard issue. Engaging, honest, practical – get a copy and be inspired.

Reviewed by Chris Stoddard

Director - RUN

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Useful Websites



- ◆ Share Your Materials with **Uniting Earthweb**. Uniting Earthweb is a network of Uniting Church people within NSW and the ACT who are interested in/active on matters of faith and ecology.
- ◆ Subscribe to **Dave Male's** blog or podcast
<http://davemale.typepad.com/churchunplugged/>
- ◆ NCLS have various fact sheets that can be downloaded including '**A Profile of People who Share Faith**' which examines the characteristics of people who actively share their faith. <http://www.ncls.org.au>

Forthcoming Events

From the School of Continuing Education (SCE)

Fundamentals of Transitional Ministry (FTM)

FTM is a three-day program providing ways of understanding, and skills for ministering with, congregations going through times of transition. The program is scheduled to be offered four times in 2010, and is available in NSW/ACT rural areas on request:

Tuesday 4 – Thursday 6 May: Uniting College for Leadership & Theology (Adelaide)

Tuesday 18 – Thursday 20 May: Centre for Ministry (North Parramatta)

Tuesday 22 – Thursday 24 June: The Hunter Presbytery (venue tba)

Monday 28 – Wednesday 30 June: Centre for Ministry (North Parramatta)

Early-bird rates: \$160; Less than 3 weeks prior to course: \$180. (Includes refreshments, lunch and work-book).

Program enquiries: Rob McFarlane:

robertm@nsw.uca.org.au or 02 8838 8935

Bookings: Sue Bowra sueb@nsw.uca.org.au or 02 8838 8936

For brochures go to <http://nsw.uca.org.au/boe/sce/> & click on the link.

FTM is the prerequisite for both the Resource Ministry Training Course and the Intentional Interim Ministry.

Resource Ministry Training Course (RMTc)

Resource Ministry represents a renewed way of looking at the nature of the church and ministry. People who embody resource ministry enable congregations to form disciples, equip people for ministry, and engage in God's mission.

The course includes input in a wide range of areas, such as leading teams, spiritual direction, and educational skills.

Pre-requisite: FTM

Dates: Monday 16 to Friday 20 August, 2010

Venue: Centre for Ministry (North Parramatta)

Early-bird rates (closes 31 July): \$450 live-in, \$170 live-out

Full rates (from 1 August): \$480 live-in (if places available), \$190 live-out

Program enquiries: Chris Lockley: chrisl@nsw.uca.org.au or 02 8838 8908

Bookings: Sue Bowra at the School of Continuing Education (SCE): sueb@nsw.uca.org.au or 02 8838 8936

For brochures go to <http://nsw.uca.org.au/boe/sce/> & click on the link.

Resource Ministry In-Service Programs

The gathering provides opportunity for Resource Ministers and others (lay and ordained) interested in Resource Ministry to:

- Learn new skills and resources for discipleship formation;
- Share our experiences of resourcing congregations
- Explore future directions together

Sessions include:

- Developing Faith Practices in Congregations
- Preaching Resources
- Decision-Making Processes for Congregations
- Forums with Resource Ministers
- Congregational Community Engagement (north coast program only)

Dates & venues:

Mon 22 to Wed 24 March, 2010: Galong (Riverina)

Tues 21 to Thurs 23 September, 2010: North Coast – venue tba

Costs for Galong (with North Coast expected to be similar):

Early-bird rates (closes 28 Feb): \$260 en-suite bathroom, \$240 shared

Full rates: \$280 en-suite bathroom, \$260 shared

Program enquiries: Chris Lockley: chrisl@nsw.uca.org.au or 02 8838 8908

Bookings: Sue Bowra at the School of Continuing Education (SCE): sueb@nsw.uca.org.au or 02 8838 8936

For brochures go to <http://nsw.uca.org.au/boe/sce/> & click on the link.

Intentional Interim Ministry (IIM)

Intentional Interim Ministry (IIM) training is a specialist program for people who are called to minister in a focused way in situations after betrayal of trust, lack of direction, congregational trauma or conflict.

Pre-requisites: FTM; confidential references from your presbytery or agency.

Contact: Rob McFarlane robertm@nsw.uca.org.au or 02 8838 8935

Dates:

Extensive 9am—5pm each day at the Centre for Ministry (Nth Parramatta)

Mondays: 19 July, 26 July, 2 August, 9 August and 23 August, 2010.

Early-Bird Rate (Before 30/6/10): \$400. Normal Rate: \$450 OR

Residential (South Australia – venue tba)

Monday 30 August – Friday 3 September

Early-Bird Rates (Paid before 31/7/10): \$650 live-in (highly recommended) or \$400 live-out. Normal Rates: \$700 live-in, \$450 live-out

For brochures go to <http://nsw.uca.org.au/boe/sce/> & click on the link.

Transitional Ministry & IIM Conferences:

Annual Conference of the Interim Ministry Network (IMN): 5-7 June, 2010, in St Louis, Missouri (USA)

Go to <http://www.imnedu.org/index.htm> and click on the "annual conferences" tab on the left for ongoing updates on program. Registrations are open.

The IMN is our partner in FTM & IIM training.

Trans-Tasman Transitional Ministry Biennial Conference: 12-14 October, 2010, at Vaughan Park (near Auckland, NZ)

Program details and costs have yet to be finalised, but note the dates.

Co-convened by the School of Continuing Education & the Anglican Archdiocese of Auckland.

CONTACT US

If you would like copies of any articles covered in this edition of ER Direct please contact us :

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Check out our web page on the Board of Mission site for more resources and information about events.

<http://nsw.uca.org.au/bom/Rural.html>