

Welcome to ER Direct

Editorial

Over the past few years I have been working with congregations planning their future and mission. One of the things that strikes me about churches which are growing is the increase in meetings with non-church people outside of church services. I have also been at meetings considering what church, presbyteries and synod will look like in the next few years. Following are a few of my gut instincts and the signs I am reading.

The church is moving from a congregational base to a small group base with less formal links to church services. I don't believe we will lose the power and effectiveness of congregations as a base for worship, inspiration and fellowship but most of the mission and activity of the church is happening in small groups. We see some of the biggest congregations in the world with a major focus on small groups membership as their vehicle for belonging, growth and outreach. I believe the UCA is following this trend, replacing small regular congregational worship events with large regional events. Such meetings may be weekly, fortnightly, monthly, six monthly, or annually. We see this already happening with large events such as Katoomba Women's and Men's conventions, Hillsong conventions. It is being proposed that our Synod become such an event. Many people, especially those from the country, will set aside a few days or a week to attend such annual events for teaching, encouragement and fellowship.

As we have such a large number of small congregations I believe we have to begin transitioning them to become and behave as small groups. These congregations will have to stop trying to emulate the services of large congregations, with all the bells and whistles such services require. Ministry agents are set apart to organise everything to the degree of excellence required and lay people and local preachers are beginning to burn out trying to continue the practice.

We know people look for relationships and it is the most common vehicle for people joining the church. Belonging then Belief. We can see the focus of our society is on individualism and home with a withdrawal from membership of institutions and organisations. Every volunteer organisation in our society is having to struggle. Most of these organisations and institutions will not disappear but their role as a major vehicle in community building is declining.

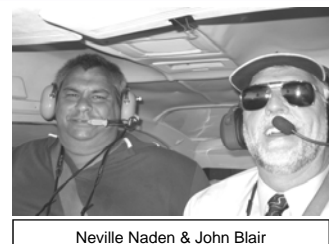
We know world wide the number of small groups is growing exponentially throughout the western world matched by the number of congregations declining or reducing in size except for large churches.

In the UK the Methodists and Anglicans are calling such changes in church 'fresh expressions of church' In the UCA we are calling them U turn groups, fellowships, men's sheds, community gardens, coffee groups, young mum's, pub groups, work groups, morning teas, discussion groups, bible study groups etc. Christians are meeting with non church and church people in non formal groups that offer fellowship, belonging, common interest, teaching, love and grace. The Christian faith is being lived out and occasionally talked about in these environments. People have more loyalty to their group than they do to a church congregation and many groups do not have demand for loyalty or commitment which suits many in our society.

This is one of the ways that evangelism is happening effectively across Australia. It has many implications for the way we organise church. I am glad I belong to a church that is always trying to 'move with God'

Ross Neville

Flying Padre John Blair



I am....

Two metres tall and have scars on my head to prove it, I'm happily married to Becky—40 years this June 27!

We are the proud parents of Matt, who loves to travel and currently teaches ESL and coaching basketball in a Taiwanese school in Malaysia. (His contract finishes in July. We'd love to see him teaching here in Australia).

I love flying the Cessna to stations in the Outback. It means a lot to these interesting and hard working pastoralists, to have that link, to be able to bring some emergency supplies, medicine, food, books, a church service, or to be a bit of essential company during this severe drought. The Uniting Church should be proud to supply a reliable airplane for this mission of 42 years. Our 1974 Cessna 182 is a ute with wings! It is a marvellous tool in keeping various organised appointments, inevitably spread over a great distance. We had hoped to get a brand new airplane, but that looks nearly impossible. So, I now hope for a new engine which is on order.

While starting the old engine (on Pancake Day, Shrove Tuesday, actually!), the battery overheated, and caught fire, causing damage only to the battery and battery box and some plastic bulkhead liners. (That answered my seven year old question: "I wonder if this fire extinguisher works?" We've ordered a new extinguisher, too, not that I'm ever planning to have to use it again!) VH IRM should be back in the air this week.

You can request John's newsletter 'Word's Aloft' by following the link for **Flying Padre** on the BOM Rural webpage.



‘Jesus. All about life’ is a prime-time media campaign that presents the words of Jesus to the community. It will run from September 15th for six weeks across NSW.

- Over 90 percent of the population will see or hear a ‘Jesus. All about life’ commercial or billboard at least 10 times during the six weeks.
- Every local church has the opportunity to be the place where people who see the ads can find out more about Jesus and meet people who know him personally.
- For just \$100 registration fee, payable on-line at www.jesusallaboutlife.com.au your local church can be a part of this campaign.
- For this fee, you will receive an information kit with a church calendar, promotional DVDs, sample resource material, etc • Your church may also decide to run some additional events or outreach services to ensure you make the best use of the campaign as it generates interest in the community.

EXTRACTS FROM MINISTRY OF PASTOR BLOG

By Jorge Robelledo

This week it's Andrew Dutney's "Introducing the Uniting Church in Australia", Uniting Church Press, 2008 (available from MediaCom

This book has 7 very useful chapters:

1. What were they thinking?
2. Family Traits
3. It's all about mission
4. Gifts and Ministries for Mission
5. A Pilgrim people, organised
6. An Emblem
7. What are you thinking?

This book is a very clear and succinct summation of many of Andrew's works on the Basis of Union. In a very easy to access, conversational style, he once again brings us to the depth of meaning in the history of the Basis of Union, the spirit of unity and courage out of which it was born, and the spirit of adventure and mission which it contains and compels us forward. It is an excellent resource for anyone wanting to know more about the Uniting Church and the Basis of Union, and I would definitely would recommend it for use in training for people who are needing to demonstrate the core competencies in the ministry of Pastor. I will be using it along with ELM in the ELM course (for ministry of Pastor training) Living Values.

Ministry of Pastor Handbook The updated ministry of Pastor Handbook (NSW/ACT) is now available for download

from www.ucapastor.org

It has increased in content and includes the following updates:

- FAQs
- Core Competency update
- extra resources and templates
- additions from Assembly (from the conference)
- updated guides with checklists

You can find the Ministry of Pastor website at:

www.ucapastor.org and the blog at:

www.ucapastor.blogspot.com

RMU CONFERENCE 2009

30, 31 July & 1 August

at

St Clements Retreat Centre, Galong

RICHES In the
DRY PLACES



The theme of this year's conference picks up the idea that the place of formation of God's people was often in dry or difficult places e.g the wilderness for the people of the Exodus, a strange land for the exiles.

Cost: \$150 per person

Enquiries: Anne Ryan annieryan59@bigpond.com

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Ph 02 6959 3547

Registrations to: Kevin Harper,

5 Sherwood Road, TEMORA NSW 2666

PH/Fax: 02 6978 0685

kevsan@simplex.net.au

Closing date: for registration 20th July

TWINNING UPDATE

The record of Twinning Updates can be found on our web page under 'Twinning'. You will also find background information on Twinning and some examples of stories from various congregations. If your congregation is not listed please contact us. If you would like more details or if you have your own twinning stories to share please contact us at the BOM Rural office tel. 02 6361 4224 Fax 02 6362 5328 or email bomrural@bigpond.net.au



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1 Do Things "Good People" Think Is Crazy Multi-Site 101 Karl Roth Australian Leadership Vol 1 Issue 6 March/April 2009 www.mediacom.org.au

Fulfilling the Great Commission - we probably spend more time preaching about it than doing it. Having spent time building a church with a good foundation, Karl Roth wanted his church to reproduce more churches. He was reminded about the importance of 'praying for opportunities', 'watching for potential leaders', 'assessing the potential leaders' and 'letting the players play'. God was guiding the process as they faithfully followed. In attempting to include the 'unusual people' in ministry an opportunity opened up to reach the unchurched in less 'normal' venues.

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 \$65.00 (print copy) or \$45.50 (electronic copy).

4 Night Clubs and Street Chaplains Garth Eichhorn Faith and Life Issue 1 April 2009

A late-night city ministry making a difference

At 2am in Perth's entertainment precinct a girl sits alone on the footpath with her feet in the gutter. A chaplain, herself a Mum with grown up children, talks to the girl about the night, her depression and the dangers of binge drinking. It is a busy night for the chaplains. By 4am things are slowing down so they drop into the city's hospital and spend time offering support to those in need. Seventeen trained Street Chaplains work voluntarily in crisis pastoral care among some 40,000 people over Friday and Saturday nights. It is challenging work but it is starting to reap the reward of people asking questions that have a direct link to the gospel.

2 The Leaf Raking Doctrine Gordon MacDonald Leadership

Leaders have a particular need to be reminded of their responsibilities to their 'loved ones'. The priority given to them often indicates the balance of one's life. Loved ones keep you grounded in the 'real' world, performing the daily necessities, like raking the leaves. Life flourishes among loved ones and you become the person you are meant to be. Thankfulness, listening, co-operation, repenting, cheerleading, playing and a shared spiritual life - all little routines that can be shared with loved ones to help souls meld together. When was the last time you went home to your family to 'rake the leaves'?

3 Harnessing Wind Power - Working with Volunteers Sharonne Price Australian Leadership Vol 1 Issue 6 March/April 2009

The author compares utilising the potential of volunteers with harnessing the wind. She examines five factors to achieve a successful outcome to this challenge and poses the question 'How do we harness the power of God moving in people's lives?' Useful suggestions, which are explored in some detail, provide a good basis for groups to work together successfully. A fresh look at this topic of volunteers, which is relevant to most congregations.

Spirit Journeys God in the Outback 21st -25th September 2009

September is the correct month and not October as stated in the last newsletter.

This retreat provides time and space for us to immerse ourselves in the spirit of the land. Creation is the first word of God. In the desert, many distractions disappear which enables us to, more clearly, encounter God's word both in the exterior landscape and within our own interior landscape. As the retreat leader, John 'Jack' Stuart will provide gentle guidance to assist us as we journey through the land.

For more details see the website:
www.desertjourneys.com/index.html



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5 Let Us Stand for the Benediction

Lee Eclov
Leadership
January 2009

www.christianitytoday.com

Reclaiming the lost art of blessing

Ending a worship service with 'see you next week' bears no comparison with "The Lord bless you and keep you: the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you." Congregations can be really blessed by these words of benediction. It is a declaration - like God renewing his vows to us. It is a priestly function and it should be done for the Lord's sake. Scripture provides countless examples of blessings. Many are used on a regular basis, are memorised, even sung and they do not need to be reserved only for the end of the service. Weddings, hospital visits, letters - all provide opportunities for blessings. The secret of being blessed is in the heart of the receiver.

Find this article at: <http://ctlibrary.com/le/2009/winter/letusstandbenediction.html>

6 Why a Green Economy?

Julie Polter
Sojourners May 2009
www.sojo.net

There is a growing realisation that the processes of saving energy and producing products in an environmentally friendly way can have financial as well as moral profit. It is a win-win situation for the poorer nations as their living conditions are cleaned up and jobs provided. Is this all too idealistic and impractical in times of recession? Possibly, but it is too important not to try. We can all do something, however small, to bring about changes in attitudes and production of goods. Companies respond to customer demand. It will help the poor and vulnerable who are at greatest danger of being affected by the results of increasing carbon emissions.

Find this article at:

<http://www.sojo.net/index.cfm?>

[action=magazine.article&issue=soj0905&article=why-a-green-economy](http://www.sojo.net/index.cfm?action=magazine.article&issue=soj0905&article=why-a-green-economy)

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

7 Rising above the Storm

Report of the CRE8 Kingdom
Business Summit in Melbourne
2009

This Business Summit was held in March 2009 with the aim of providing encouragement and practical support to Christian business owners, leaders, emerging leaders, entrepreneurs and church leaders. Many of these are facing a turbulent future at a time when the current world economy is in crisis. 'Rising above the Storm' focussed on overcoming the impact of the global recession by helping Christian business people recognise their calling to the Marketplace Ministry and how to impact the marketplace as leaders. DVD's of the individual speakers are available for \$5 each or a DVD bundle of all the Keynote Speakers for \$29, or all the sessions for \$99. For more details go to the CRE8 web site at:

<http://cre8conference.org/au/>

8 Meager Harvest

Telford Work
Christianity Today
February 2009

www.christianitytoday.com

The Green Bible promises to grow our understanding of creation care. Unfortunately, it's results don't satisfy.

The Green Bible is described by the publisher as "the definitive Bible for the growing creation care movement". It's green ink highlights more than 1,000 passages. Telford Work provides a personal view of the 'Green Bible' describing it as an ideological fashion accessory, and a vehicle for promoting conventional progressive environmentalism. One of the final sections of the 'Green Bible' is 'Where Do You Go From Here?' This includes action items for households and churches, which may be viewed as 'secular environmentalism plus some prayer and Bible memorisation.' It is to be hoped that the reader will become not just a green devotee but a discernor of God's will for our environment.

Find this article at:

http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/article_print.html?

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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The Silver Fox Barbershop Quartet

Mal Castledine provided this report about the barbershop quartet mentioned in the 'Twinning Report' of Autumn ER Direct 2009.

Our quartet 'Silver Fox' are based in Penrith but we have had a marvelous time traveling round NSW visiting rural towns. We normally stay a few days and sing at the hospital, nursing home, senior citizens Club or drought relief concerts. Highlights of our travels have included singing at The Roxy Theatre in Leeton, a combined church service at Junee Railway Station and singing on the ABC Radio at Orange.

Up to April 2009 we have visited Glen Innes, Coffs Harbour, Grenfell, Boorowa, Tulibigeal, Lake Cagelligo, and Wellington (twice). They loved usand we loved them. We have bookings for Eurongilly, Forbes and Boorowa.

We want to continue this adventure. If there is any other town who would like a barbershop quartet to visit and lift the spirits, please contact us. We sing a wide variety of songs and hymns. We do not charge for our performances - this is purely voluntary. We do ask for accommodation at your homes or farms and a light breakfast. We usually arrive Friday morning, lots of work from Friday afternoon through Saturday to the Sunday morning service, after which we return home - hopefully making everyone happy. Check with the previous towns we've visited.

Mal Castledine
Silver Fox Quartet

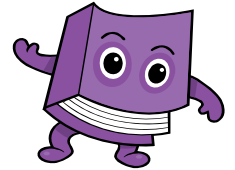
Read the ABC Review : <http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2008/05/29/2259266.htm>

For more details phone
Mal on
02 4735 2432



BOOK REVIEW

BY
ROSS NEVILLE



I personally have been reading Tom Wright's book 'Surprised by Hope' Tom provides some interesting challenges to what is being added to by TV and Movies about our christian 'hope' of life after death. He suggests even the church and many of our church prayers and hymns have got it wrong.

Meeting St. Peter at the pearly gates...Walking on streets of gold... And of course, being reunited someday with Grandma and Sparky.

Many Christians operate out of "confusion, half belief, sentiment and superstition" when it comes to thinking about heaven, says Anglican Bishop N.T. Wright in his book.

Christians have been more influenced by medieval art and drama depicting disembodied souls in a heavenly realm than the Bible, Bishop Wright says. Such theological ignorance leads Christians to believe "that the whole point of the christian faith is to follow Jesus away from earth to heaven and stay there forever."

Scholars say having a more accurate view of heaven will better guide our lives as to what's important in the here and now.

Thinking rightly about heaven also "should energize our work for God's kingdom now," says Bishop Wright. That includes working for justice - knowing that God intends "to set the whole world right" someday - fostering the beauty of creation and participating in evangelism, or telling others the good news to come.

A really challenging and necessary read about what is a critical issue for Christians and preachers because there is a lot of confused thinking around.

Activities of the e-team of The Board of Mission



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

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

This work is funded by Living is Giving

Useful Websites

**Heavenly minded: It's time to get our
eschatology right, say scholars, authors**



Robin Russell, April 6, 2009 in the United Methodists summarises some of the current books circulating about what happens to people when they die.

See the Synod website under News to read Robin Russell's summary of a number of authors or go to:
<http://www.umportal.org/article.asp?id=5101>

Board of Education forthcoming events

Fundamentals of Transitional Ministry (FTM)

The Fundamentals of Transitional Ministry (FTM) is a stand-alone program which gives participants both a conceptual framework and practical skills to minister in situations of transition. It is also phase 1 of specialist Intentional Interim Ministry (IIM) training and a pre-requisite for our new Resource Ministry Training course. FTM courses now include a special session on making the transition to resource ministry/lay ministry teams.

Program enquiries: Rob McFarlane:

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

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

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

Dates for 2009 (each day runs 9.00 am to 5.00 pm):

Centre for Ministry (North Parramatta):

Tuesday 19 – Thursday 21 May

[LAST SCHEDULED NSW/ACT FTM PROGRAM FOR 2009]

Available in NSW/ACT rural areas on request.

Brochure: <http://nsw.uca.org.au/boe/sce/tm-iim2009.pdf>

NEW FOR 2009: Resource Ministry Training Course (RMTTC)

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 School of Continuing Education's RMTTC will include input in a wide range of areas, such as leading teams, spiritual direction, and educational skills.

Pre-requisite: FTM (last scheduled 2009 program in May, see above)

Dates for 2009: Monday 22 to Friday 26 June

Venue: Alan Walker College (North Parramatta)

Cost: \$400 live-in; \$250 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

Brochure: http://nsw.uca.org.au/boe/sce/Resource_Min_Training_2009.pdf

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-requisite: FTM

Dates:

Extensive mode: Five Mondays: 31 August, 7, 14, 21, 28 September.

Residential mode: 9-13 November 2009

Venue: Centre for Ministry (North Parramatta)

Costs: Early-Bird Rates (Paid before 1/11/09 for the residential): \$650 live-in (highly recommended) or \$400 live-out. Normal Rates: \$700 live-in, \$450 live-out

Contact Rob McFarlane at the School of Continuing Education, robertm@nsw.uca.org.au or 02 8838 8935

Brochure: <http://nsw.uca.org.au/boe/sce/tm-iim2009.pdf>

Turkey Study Tour: 5-22 April 2010

No, not a study of the poultry industry! A visit to Turkey focussed on NT background and interfaith issues. The NT background includes both Paul's mission and resource ministry with the churches he founded, as well as the later realities of the churches to whom the letters in John's revelation were addressed. Interfaith issues will include Byzantine church history, the rise of Islam and the Ottoman Empire, as well as contemporary Jewish-Muslim-Christian relations.

The price of \$6,490 includes airmiles, all meals and accommodation, portage/tips, all tours and entry fees. The price does not include airport taxes, visa, travel insurance, single supplement and beverages. See brochure for details.

The tour can be taken for academic credit with Charles Sturt University. The departure date from Australia is fixed, but can be from a range of Australian capital cities. The return date is flexible and can be from a range of European cities served by Singapore airlines. Information on post-tour travel is available from our travel agent, Steven Green of ETM Group (Melbourne) – see brochure.

Important dates:

Information evening (no obligation) at the CFM, 7.00-8.30 pm, Friday 4 September, 2009 (RSVP by 15 August)

Deposit of \$350 due 1 October, 2009

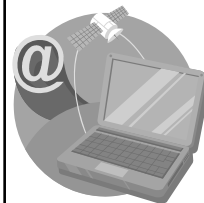
Full payment due 15 February, 2010

Pre-departure: optional orientation meeting with Turkish-Australian Muslims and background visit to Macquarie University's Museum of Ancient Cultures (convenient time to be arranged)

For more information contact Rob McFarlane

robertm@nsw.uca.org.au or 02 8838 8935; download a brochure from

http://nsw.uca.org.au/boe/sce/turkey_study_tour_april10.pdf



Chris Lockley has set up a Facebook group called **Resource Ministry Network**. If you are not already a member of Facebook, it is easy to set up and join. The ways in which the group could be used include:

- discussing issues and questions relating to Resource Ministry and its implementation
- mutually developing and sharing resources that can be used in worship, pastoral care, training etc.
- initiating peer learning and discussion
- sharing ideas

CONTACT US

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

Post PO Box 70 ORANGE NSW 2800

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Email bomrural@bigpond.net.au

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>