

To read this newsletter online, visit <http://nsw.uca.org.au/e-news>



Community Connections is a monthly email which contains news and announcements from the New South Wales Synod, along with items of social, religious or cultural interest and information on upcoming events. Its primary aim is to promote the wider work of the Uniting Church, and how you can support it through the Living is Giving program.

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 emmah@nsw.uca.org.au.

NEWS AND INITIATIVES

Sorry sandblasts through to truth and hope

The Moderator, the Rev. Niall Reid, was in the Great Hall of Parliament House in Canberra with leaders from the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress on February 13 for the Federal Government's historic apology to the stolen generations. Read his reflections in this month's *Insights*.

Easter's rituals have many fruitful paths

As retired Uniting Church minister, the Rev. Dr Geraldine Wheeler, was creating the artwork that features on *Insights'* cover this month, she read of a man who was ill and had fallen in Brisbane's Queen Street Mall.

Although the mall is one of Brisbane's busiest places, the man had been ignored by passers by.

Dr Wheeler said her artwork "Jesus Falls" points to the way that a community can ignore Jesus' suffering and in a parallel way can also treat their own members uncaringly. *Insights'* feature story in March asks people to consider how Easter rituals might help them connect with, and not ignore, Christ and his command to care for others.

Lay Preachers' conference plants seed of hope

Hope is such a precious commodity these days. Like water, it is the vital essence that keeps us going, and in the current drought, water and hope have been very much intertwined! So it's appropriate that the National Lay Preachers' Conference, being hosted by New South Wales at Merroo Conference centre, Kurrajong, on April 28 to May 2 this year, is entitled Seeds of Hope. For more information, visit the new ELM website, <http://www.elm.org.au> or call (02) 8838 8910.

Build houses in Mexico in 2008–09

Moderator the Rev. Niall Reid and his wife Paula are proposing to lead their fifth trip to Tijuana, Mexico from December 29, 2008 to January 13, 2009. This is an opportunity to experience, be inspired, humbled and taught by people and communities living in poverty. At the same time participants will build houses as partners in mission with the local church. The trip is suitable for families and participants of all ages. Past trips have had up to 47 participants with 50 per cent or more of the team members aged in their teens and early twenties (the youngest member was 8). If you are interested please contact the Moderator as soon as possible on kathyjam@nsw.uca.org.au.

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Stations of the Cross, from March 14

St Ives Uniting Church is holding a unique Easter exhibition — a visual experience created by 15 of Australia's leading artists, including winners of the Archibald, Blake, Doug Moran, Florence Biennale and other major local and international prizes.

Stations of the Cross 2008 will commence on Friday March 14 and continue until Sunday March 23. There will be a bread and wine reception on Thursday March 20 from 6 to 8 pm and a lecture tour of the works at 2 pm on the weekends and holidays.

For more information, visit <http://www.stives.unitingchurch.org.au/>.

Wesley Mission Easter Breakfast, March 19

All are invited to attend Wesley Mission's annual Easter Breakfast at 7.15 am (concluding by 8.45 am) on Wednesday March 19 in the Lyceum Theatre at Wesley Centre, 220 Pitt Street, Sydney.

During the breakfast Keith will speak on the theme *Unlock the Power of Easter, Environment — A Sacred Charge* and the Moderator, the Rev. Niall Reid, will lead the Prayer for the Nation. The cost of the breakfast is \$35. RSVP by March 11 to Carolyn Beattie on (02) 9263 5438.

Future Dimensions: Faith in the 21st Century, April 5 and 6

April 5 and 6, Chapel by the Sea, 95 Roscoe St, Bondi Beach 2026.

Chapel by the Sea, Bondi Beach Mission will be sponsoring a conference, *Future Dimensions: Faith in the 21st Century*, featuring some of Australia's top religious thinkers including Clive Pearson, Ann Wansbrough, Greg Jenks, Ian Pearson and Dorothy McRae-McMahon.

For more information, phone (02) 9130 3445 or email ucabondi@bigpond.com.

Spirit Nurture: the interface between spiritual growth and pastoral care, April 22 and 23

A two-day event led by Ross Kingham and Suzanne Dunbar (Spiritual Formation Facilitator, Mid Lachlan Mission Area), April 22 and 23, Wesley Uniting Church, Forrest, ACT. For more information and to register, contact Ross Kingham, (02) 6295 6766 or barnabasmin@ozemail.com.au.

Reel Dialogue conference 2008: Reel Faith in Action, August 29 and 30

The Reel Dialogue conference is a creative dialogue between the church and culture with Christians discovering how common theological ground can be forged with story tellers, image shapers, and culture makers.

The conference will be held over two full days with an optional dinner on Friday August 29 to talk and network with the speakers. There'll also be a film and group discussion held on the Saturday afternoon. For more details and to register securely online, go to www.reeldialogue.com.

LIVING IS GIVING: PRAYER POINTS AND RESOURCES

Living is Giving 2008-09 Handbook in March Insights

In March *Insights*, you'll receive the Living is Giving Handbook for the coming financial year. It contains information on the 15 mission focus areas your congregation can choose to support, as well as fundraising ideas, tips for encouraging stewardship in your congregation, and more.

For more information, visit www.livingisgiving.uca.org.au or contact Mele Akau, (02) 8267 4393 or melea@nsw.uca.org.au.

Living is Giving presentations in congregations

Would you like to motivate your congregation in its financial stewardship and learn more about Living is Giving?

Speakers are available to visit congregations to talk about Living is Giving and stewardship — whether at a Sunday service, a congregational meeting, a small meeting with key leaders from the congregation, or in another appropriate setting. 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 Emma on (02) 8267 4475 or emmah@nsw.uca.org.au if you'd like to arrange for a speaker to come to your congregation.