

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

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

e-news March 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:

The nation is responding to the horrors of the bushfires in Victoria and the compassion and generosity of the Australian community is being expressed in amazing giving to various appeals. At the same time we face the ongoing financial crisis, which our government is seeking to address with its stimulus package. I believe this ongoing crisis will also need Australians to exhibit compassion and generosity. [READ ON](#)

Church responds to bushfire tragedy

Three weeks have passed since the devastating bushfires raged across Victorian and rural communities on February 7. From the ruin, an unprecedented show of unity has risen among faith communities. Religious leaders from around Australia gathered at a Melbourne service [READ ON](#). Throughout Australia, people are showing their support and offering their heartfelt prayers. [READ ON](#)

If you would like to offer your support by making a donation please contact the Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania's SHARE Appeals Unit (shareappeal.org.au) on 1800 668 426.

The Synod of New South Wales and the ACT [website](#) contains an easy click through to the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania's bushfire appeal. Click on the text below the large bushfire photo at the centre of the screen (one of five rotating photos) to take you through to the donations page. Also visit the Uniting Church national Assembly website [here](#) to find liturgical and other resources.

Bushfire fencing: register your interest

The Riverina Presbytery of the Uniting Church in Australia is calling for expressions of interest from individuals who would like to practically support the Victorian bushfire relief effort. People are invited to assist in the re-fencing of rural properties affected by the fires in north eastern Victoria. Volunteers are required from February 28 onwards, initially for the Kergunyah area. [READ ON](#)

Synod 2010: have your say in what it is going to look like!

At its last meeting in 2008, Synod determined an alternative model for the gathering should be trialled in 2010, paying attention to the balance between important business matters, the Synod's financial and legal responsibilities, and inspiring its members. The Synod also recognised the potential for such a large gathering to include training and encouragement for people in their mission and engagement in the world. People interested in making that change have been exploring what a changed Synod meeting might look like. The group wants to gather a wider range of responses. Everybody who is interested in helping to make this change is encouraged to complete an online survey that explores what

type of Synod gathering you might attend. The survey can be found on the Synod website: <http://nsw.uca.org.au/>.

If you would like to participate in the discussions about the changed Synod you can sign up to the e group "A changed Synod Meeting" at <http://groups.google.com/group/a-changed-synod-meeting> or participate in the online forums at <http://nswsynod.forumotion.net/>
For further information, contact the Rev. Simon Lee on info@cronulla.unitingchurch.org.au or on 02 9544 1144.

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Lent: the Faith Central Guide

Ash Wednesday is the official start to Lent, the 40-day season prior to Easter, in which Christians through sacrifice, fasting and prayer remember Christ's Passion, suffering and eventual death on the Cross. [READ ON](#)

Join the national conversation about human rights

Right now in Australia we have a valuable opportunity to join a national conversation about human rights. The National Consultation established by the Government is being held to consider how well we protect human rights in Australia and how we might do it better. Uniting Church members can participate in the Consultation by sending a written submission to the Consultation committee, attending a Consultation Community Roundtable or both. For those interested in exploring the relationship between religion and human rights in Australia, UnitingJustice and the Public and Contextual Theology Research Centre is hosting a conference in Sydney from April 3-4. [READ ON](#)

A spiritual approach to money

In Boston, small groups of churchgoers have been applying a different message to money management. During the past two years, they have studied what the Bible teaches about money and wealth, discussed their personal budgets, and taken concrete steps aimed at four commitments: "Living gratefully, spending less, buying justly, and giving more." Find out more about their 12-session curriculum, "Lazarus at the Gate," that helps participants explore the meaning of economic discipleship. [READ ON](#)

Celebrating the life and service of the Rev. Ken Cornwell

A thanksgiving service for the life and ministry of the Rev. Ken Cornwell, a former Moderator of the Uniting Church NSW Synod and Minister of Wesley Mission, will be held at Wesley Church, Sydney, on Wednesday, March 4 beginning at 10 am. Mr Cornwell, 77, passed away after a long illness. [READ ON](#)

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Worship, witness and discipleship at NCYC 09

It's the largest national event in the life of the Uniting Church where 1,500 young people from across Australia came to Melbourne in January to live the experience of the National Christian Youth Convention (NCYC) 09. It was under the theme of "Converge" — and that they did and more. [READ ON](#)

Applications open: World Council of Churches Stewards Program

Applications are invited for the World Council of Churches Stewards Program, for young adults aged 18-30, to take place in Geneva from August 19 to September 4, 2009. The program will bring together 25 young people providing them with opportunities to deepen their knowledge of the ecumenical movement and find inspiration for further work towards the unity of the church. Applications close March 31, 2009.

For more information visit the website <http://nyyam.org> or contact Sandy Boyce, sandyb@nat.uca.org.au (0409 283 004).

Vicious cycle in communities forgotten by economic boom

Australia's jobless rate is 4.5 per cent, but in a cluster of some 20 suburbs on Sydney's fringe it is more than 13 per cent — among the nation's highest levels of unemployment.

Housing estates around Blacktown in Sydney's far west, like Bidwill, are wracked by chronic drug problems, broken homes and poor education outcomes.

Bidwill is a place the economic boom forgot. At its decayed heart is the "town square" — a giant vacant car park.

A nearby UnitingCare centre helps fathers like Luke Logan. [READ ON](#)

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EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Maximum Generosity Seminar, March 12 - March 18

All are invited to attend a day of biblical insights and ideas for encouraging stewardship. Hosted by the Salvation Army, the seminar will be lead by the Senior Pastor of the First Evangelical Free Church, Colorado Springs, Rev. Dr. Brian Kluth. Stretched out over a couple of days in various locations such as:

- March 12, 9.30 am - 2.30 pm at Penrith Salvation Army, 48 Luttrell Street, Penrith.
- March 19, 9.30 am - 1.00 pm at Campsie Salvation Army, 23 Anglo Road, Campsie.

To register click [here](#) or for more information email Stephen Burfield: stephen.burfield@ae.salvationarmy.org and phone (02) 92669529.

AFL fun in the spirit of harmony: Harmony Day Festival, March 15

Hosted by Australian Federal Police, Australian Football League and the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Harmony Day celebrates our nation's

multiculturalism and cultural diversity. Free entry includes: NAB AFL Auskick kids super clinic, Harmony Cup - AFL Footy match, prizes and give-aways, food stalls and live entertainment. Join the fun on Sunday March 15, 10am-3pm at the Belmore Oval, Belmore.

For more information contact the AFP Community Liaison Team on cltso@afp.gov.au or phone 0427 662 725.

Positive parenting seminar, Queanbeyan, April 4

The Pastoral Counselling Institute, in partnership with Canberra/Queanbeyan ADD Support Group and SHOUT Inc is holding a seminar on April 4 on the subject of "Raising Difficult Children: Realistic Behaviour Management for Children with Learning, Behaviour and Social Difficulty". The seminar will take place in Queanbeyan Uniting Church, corner of Rutledge & Crawford Streets, Queanbeyan.

For more information phone 6290 1984 or 6287 4608 (after hours), or visit the [website](#). Registration is essential - Presbytery Office can provide registration forms.

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Refugee benefit concert: "Singing the Spirit Home," celebrating the songs of Eric Bogle, April 5

"Singing the Spirit Home" is a refugee benefit concert held by Bridge for Asylum Seekers Foundation (BASF). Songwriter and performer Eric Bogle will be joined by the talented Adelaide band Colcannon. The concert will feature a line-up of world class performers including Chris While and Julie Matthews, Martyn Wyndham-Read, John Williamson, Graeme Connors, and Judy Small.

Held at the York Theatre, Seymour Centre, the concert begins at 2pm on Sunday April 5. To book click [here](#) or phone (02) 9351 7940. For more information or if you would like to help, contact Kate Maclurcan on katemaclurcan@hotmail.com or phone (02) 9810 5826.

'How shall we read? The scriptures', April 18-19

The Second Future Dimensions Conference will cover the topic, "How shall we read? The Scriptures."

"We believe that the divisions and debates in the churches (particularly the Uniting and Anglican churches) built around the issue of sexuality have an understanding of the Scriptures at their heart."

The conference is scheduled for April 18-19, at Chapel by the Sea, Bondi Beach. You can keep up to date with developments [here](#).

'UTC Communitas Contextual Theology & Mission Conference', April 18-21

Posing the question "what has contextual theology to offer the church of the 21st century?" this Communitas conference is set to discuss significant issues and trends of contextual theology. It offers a few days of challenging conversations,

sharing good practice stories, listening to world class theological/academic presentations, exploring contextual theology and mission (theory and practice) during workshop, plenary sessions, Bible studies and worship. *Communitas* is a contextual theology and mission program of the United Theological College, Uniting Church in Australia. Scheduled for April 18-21, 2009, registration is \$200.

For more information email Katalina Tahaafe-Williams katalinat@nsw.uca.org.au or phone (02) 8838 8906.

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LIVING IS GIVING: PRAYER POINTS AND RESOURCES

Living is Giving 2009-10 Handbook available in March edition of *Insights!*

Support the many faces of the Uniting Church's mission and service by contributing Living is Giving – the major way congregations contribute financially and prayerfully to the wider work of the Synod of New South Wales and the ACT.

The Living is Giving Handbook inside this month's issue of *Insights* contains 15 vibrant stories of activities and people that depend on your congregation's generous giving.

Take the time to read through the handbook and come together with your congregation to decide which mission focus areas you'll support in 2009-10 and how much extra money you can commit.

Also find the Living is Giving Handbook and Leader's Guide and Planning Form online at <http://livingisgiving.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 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.

Introducing the new Living is Giving Mission Promotion Officer

We are pleased to welcome Kimberly Almarza as the new Synod Mission Promotions Officer and member of the Synod Communications Unit team. Kimberly will play a lead role in promoting Living is Giving – a principal means by which the Synod raises funds for existing work and helps fund new mission directions.

Kimberly brings broad-ranging experience to her position with the Synod – having worked for a number of communications consultancies serving local, national and international clients including non-profit organisations.

Please contact Kimberly if you have any questions about Living is Giving or if you would like to contribute to Community Connections on (02) 8267 4475 or kima@nsw.uca.org.au

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Prayer point: Mission focus area

We offer our prayers to those affected by the bushfires

- Pray for the many people whose lives have been forever changed by the bushfires. We offer our deepest condolences to those who have lost family, friends, homes and communities.
- Pray for the bravery of those who fought the fires, often at their own risk, in order to save the lives and homes of others. And lets not forget the goodness and unity sprouting from the public and various agencies that have assisted in anyway they could.

We also pray and give thanks for:

- Living is Giving for 2009. This is the major way congregations contribute financially and prayerfully to the running of the denomination and all its mission, service and administration. More money means more resources to make a difference. Pray that congregations and individuals will give generously in the year ahead so that our church's important ministries can flourish.
- UnitingCare NSW.ACT hospital chaplains, the Rev. Bruce Slater at Westmead and the Rev. Jennifer Kivikko at Prince of Wales and RPA, whose ministry often goes unseen by the wider community. Anyone who has faced a stay in hospital, or has sat alongside a loved one, will know the comfort that the presence of a chaplain can bring. For more information visit the Living is Giving [website](#).
- Mental health chaplains like Miriam Lacey who help and support people suffering mental illness. Employed by the UnitingCare as a chaplain in the Sydney West Area Health Service, Miriam work spans the Westmead, Parramatta region and Blacktown areas. The Uniting Church's mental health and prison chaplains bring God's love, grace and hope to some of the most vulnerable, broken and needy people in the community. For more information visit the Living is Giving [website](#) or www.unitingcarenswact.org.au.

To find out more about Living is Giving visit <http://livingisgiving.nsw.uca.org.au>.

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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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