

NEWVIEW

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Celebrating Community

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It is in human nature to celebrate significant events, and by celebrating we are acknowledging the significance of an event. We are saying, 'This is worthy of recognition.' It shows what we value.

In Australia certain events are marked by a national holiday: New Year's Day, Australia Day, Easter, Anzac Day, Queen's Birthday, and Christmas and Boxing Days. This tells us something about our nation and what we have valued and continue to value (although these may change in the future). It recognises our Christian heritage, our connections to the British monarchy, and our participation in wars in which our citizens have fought and died. On New Year's Day as a nation we both look back to the year just completed, and forward to the opportunities of the year ahead. It is a time to pause, and reflect.

In Victoria, we celebrate other public holidays. To the amazement of many overseas visitors, this includes a horse race (an Australian preoccupation of past and present); and on Labour Day, we remember an earlier time when the eight-hour day for the working man became enshrined in legislation which protected and recognised the value of his labour.

At the personal level our celebrations bestow significance on major events in our individual lives. Last Saturday many of us witnessed Debbie Davey's marriage to Tim Brewster, when the union of their two lives in marriage was joyfully celebrated in words and music. That same afternoon I learned of the death of a friend, whose long life will be honoured and celebrated at a service in the coming week. At birthdays, or name days, we note the milestone of another year and what it has brought us, as we look ahead to the next.

We also celebrate occasional events, such as a promotion, or success in some project. Next week I celebrate with an asylum seeker friend her successful application for permanent residency and we will look forward to her future with a certainty which she has not enjoyed for more than four years.

And within our shared Christian community at GWUC we celebrate this Advent season, remembering that with the coming of Jesus into the world we were shown the Way of God's kingdom. In celebrating this every year, we are demonstrating our recognition of its continued significance in our lives.

This issue of *NewView* contains many reminders of what we have cause to celebrate, both here at GWUC, and in the wider church. May your Christmas with family and loved ones be a time of joy, and a conscious recognition of the many blessings which are ours, especially in the coming of the One who challenges us to generously share with others what we have so bountifully received.

Robin Pope



We prepared



Young, and not-so-young, they came



We worked



Occasionally we relaxed



and we had fun!



CELEBRATING COMMUNITY

“DOING IT GWUCian STYLE”

‘We always save our money to spend at your fete, because you guys give away the profits to others and do not keep it for yourselves.’ What a wonderful affirmation of our standing in this community! I am sure that this comment is quite representative of the sentiments our neighbours have towards GWUC and we can see this in their continual support through the generous donations of their preloved items and attendance at our fete. There is a lot of shared goodwill and a sense of camaraderie between us and our neighbours when it comes to fund raising to assist others. This year, cheques amounting to \$25,898.38 have been written to support 7 projects.

It is a wonderful testament of how well the stalls have been co-ordinated by the dedicated convenors who have managed to keep prices so low that many have not been increased in the last 5 years, making it a most affordable day out. And yet, our fete income continues to increase! Could it be that our visitors feel welcomed and comfortable when they attend our fete? There was a definite positivity in how everyone conducted themselves ... I think it's very likely that the most exercised muscles on the day were our facial ones! Everyone had a smile on their face. Brilliant!

There is so much to be thankful for. Many groups willingly relocated so that we could setup properly on Thursday, giving us all day Friday to sort out the donations. The improved display of items have definitely helped sales in the preloved books and clothing stalls. This year, we had over 80 local businesses that helped with a donation towards our fete and many have already committed to helping us again next year. Hallelujah!

Some ‘light bulb moments’ over the many years have resulted in many improvements and improvisations. The food stall tents have always required some ingenuity to transport, setup and keep water proofed, which has led to some ingenious tweaking by one individual who has now produced a pew mover which worked well during fete setup [thanks DM; patent pending?].

The celebration of the human spirit was evident with many cuppas and happy banter during setup. It was most encouraging when some of the visitors to the HUB started helping us with the trestles setup. Moreover, the many ‘GWUCian’ travellers who scheduled their travels in order to help in the fete was a most welcomed endorsement of the fellowship and common purpose we all share for this event. It was also a great occasion to catch up with friends who came back to GWUC for a visit. For the first time, we even had our fete promoted in the GWUC face book page and on twitter! It was a great joy to see how eagerly young adults reacted to this news, immediately checking it out on their mobiles and passing on the promotion to their friends! I know of at least 7 stalls that involved youth and young adult helpers or convenors.

The fete has been a great way to celebrate our diversity and unity in a common purpose: to have fun, fellowship and to raise some money to assist others. In return we have all been enriched by our efforts and I look forward to receiving many more ideas of what we can do to improve on our Grand Fete.

Yan Emms

[We thank Jit Tan for the accompanying photographs on p.2]

Individual Stall Results (27 Oct 2012)		
Apologies if we have left any names off this list		
Stall	Groups/Coordinators	Profit
\$2 boxes	4.30 Worship/Ken Devos	\$249.50
Asian Food	Onn & Cynthia Chin, Asian families	\$1928.65
Animal Farm	Donations/Cliff Baker	\$113.95
Band	Donations/Andrew Wright	\$20
Beeac Premium	Beeac & Rokewood UCs/ Andrew & Lois Hosking	\$822.30
BBQ	Youth/Susan & Michael Stringer	\$773.45
Books	Book & Tennis Club/Bev & Don Reid	\$3898.90
Cards/Notebooks	Shirley & David Williams	\$300
Cakes	UCAF/Jacqui King	\$2360.80
Collectables	Margaret Lemke & Joanne Boldiston	\$915.10
Crafts	Judith Greenwood, Laurel Muir	\$2220.55
Devonshire Tea	Choir/Eileen Scott	\$1118.60
Face Painting	Kat Mann & Alanee Hearnshaw	\$277
Fairy Floss	Youth/Jane Hart	\$141.90
Jewellery	Ashleigh Robjant (donation)	\$55
Nail Art	Rhian Owen	\$72
Pedal Cars	Youth/Joel Hearnshaw & John Colvin	\$213.70
Pizza	La Porchetta/Sue Morgan	\$150
Photo Cards	Jenny Vass	\$295.05
Plants	Elders/Ian McMillan	\$1462.30
Pre-loved Clothes	Sue & Glenn Laub	\$883.75
Treasure	Adult Group/Pam & Lyn McDonald	\$4085.85
Donations	Various	\$89
Total Takings		\$27504.39
Less costs		\$2030.71
Net Income	For Congregational Outreach Projects	\$25,473.68

At the Feast

It's a Feast;
the most important persons
sit with the invited Leader.

We along with others
enjoy the Feast –
spiced with a little humour
and light hearted revelry.

The most important persons
with all their excesses
engulf the invited Leader
with the effervescence
of their presence.

Uncomfortable
the invited Leader withdraws,
followed by
the most important persons
covered with confusion.

We sit in amazement
pondering the ambiguity
of success and excess
as the invited Leader returns
and the Feast continues.

P G Baker

9.03.12

CELEBRATING COMMUNITY

CELEBRATION – 100 YEARS OF THE AUSTRALIAN INLAND MISSION

On Sunday September 30 GWUC celebrated 100 years of the inauguration of the Australian Inland Mission and the continuing work of Frontier Services.

All church services came together in a wonderful combined service attended by about 360 people. The service started off with the carillon sounding and Robert Young, a member of the Wurundjeri people, playing the didgeridoo as a tribute to the traditional owners of the land. En masse the congregation sang the hymns selected for the day while the Uniting Voices choir delivered a moving rendition of 'On Eagles Wings'. The message was delivered by Rev Clem Dickinson.

A barbecue lunch followed for those who had chosen to participate and the hall was packed with 180 people. This included specially invited guests like the Young family and visitors from other congregations. The guest speakers were Franca Frederiksen and Dr Charles Butcher. Franca, the Development Manager at St Philip's College, a boarding school in Alice Springs, told us about her work at the school and her obvious passion for what she does. Dr Charles Butcher, a retired surgeon, spoke about the tireless work he had done in the area prior to his retirement.

The celebration of the Frontier Services Centenary at GWUC was organised by a committee which included Peter & Alison Barr, Warren & Lorraine Bartlett, Malcolm & Barbara Chamberlain, Fred & Donna Van Clay, Faye & Ray Wagon, David & Shirley Williams and the members of our ministry team. This had taken all of six months or more. During this time David & Shirley Williams put together an amazing 35 metre collage mural designed to inform viewers of the history and work of Frontier Services, especially Flynn's mantle of care, the development of communications, remote education and the Royal Flying Doctor Service.



This was unveiled on 25 September in the hall, and together with other displays in the foyer was available for viewing for about two weeks. This was an eye-opener for those who were not aware of the connection between Frontier Services, School of the Air, the Royal Flying Doctor Service and a host of community care facilities. Any donations collected at this event will go to Frontier Services. This collage/mural is available to other churches and has recently travelled to Echuca, Beechworth, Chiltern and Greensborough, courtesy of David & Shirley.

A big 'thank you' to the committee for all the work they put into this very special event which allowed us to understand the events of the past 100 years and appreciate the selfless work which has been, and is being, done in the outback.

Cynthia Chin

CELEBRATING GIFTS

On September 30 when we celebrated the 100 year anniversary of Frontier Services [formerly Australian Inland Mission] with a combined worship service followed by lunch, we had hoped to have the following poem read by Donna Vanclay, but due to time constraints this unfortunately did not happen. However, we thought that we could still share this with you through NewView.

The Ears of John Flynn

When John Flynn had a vision he needed a hand
With his mantle of safety protecting the land.
For the sick and the injured from stations within
had no means of attracting the ears of John Flynn.

For his vision had need in the practical sense
as the problem of distance was proving immense.
Needless suffering cries to this man was a sin,
and a deafening roar in the ears of John Flynn.

Then he heard of a man with a strange back-yard
shed,
A young radio ham with ideas in his head.
And the sounds that rang out from this shed made
of tin
was an angel's refrain to the ears of John Flynn.

Soon a partnership formed – common faith and
like goals,
to form medical links with these suffering souls.
For Alf Traeger knew radio one day would win,
bringing cries of distress to the ears of John Flynn.

This young radio whizz on his quest persevered,
There were triumphs and failures from things
engineered.
Till a genius' stroke was displayed with a grin
With a shout of success in the ears of John Flynn.

For the folk of the Outback, their problems were
solved
when this new pedal radio quickly evolved.
And white, yellow or black – any colour of skin
could transmit through the air to the ears of John
Flynn.

From the length and breadth of our dangerous
land
Traeger's radio network began to expand.
And the stations way out and the doctors within
were connected by Traeger – the ears of John
Flynn.

Bringing drones overhead on a Kimberley run
for a busted up ringer the race was now won.
The stock camp gave thanks to the plane coming in
and a cheer for Alf Traeger – the ears of John Flynn.

Or a grief stricken mother, sick child at her breast,
got instructions for cures from the medicine chest.
And a plane in the air for her babe, weak and thin,
Her prayers answered through Traeger – the ears of
John Flynn.

Innamincka was sending a plea through the air
and a miner from Cobar was needing repair.
And from Mornington Island, the voice of a gin
summoned help via Traeger – the ears of John Flynn.

Though the folk of the inland revered Traeger's name
he stayed shy and retiring, resisting the fame
he had love of God and the love of his kin,
quite content just to serve as the ears of John Flynn.

Though the banners of Traeger have long since been
furled
now with satellites beaming distress to the world.
Still the old reminisce as they stroke each grey chin
Some alive, thanks to Traeger – the ears of John
Flynn.

And now up in heaven, his mortal work done.
Traeger rests from his work and the victory won.
He has rewired his halo with pedals to spin
and transmits in morse code to the ears of John
Flynn.

This poem was written by Bob Magor and comes
from his book *'The FMG and other verses – Bush
Ballads by Bob Magor'*.
[Bob Magor PO Myponga SA 5202]

CELEBRATING COMMUNITY

COMMUNITY HUB



As a Community Hub Missional Group, we are celebrating lots of things that have happened during the year 2012.

At the start of the year, we celebrated the coming together of 4 groups under the umbrella of the Community Hub. Leisure Time, Playgroup, Cooee and The Hub are all part of the Community Hub. These groups are working together and helping each other in a caring and very supportive way.

Later in the year we celebrated the start of Story Hub, as the need arose for some of the Mums from Playgroup to meet again during the week. We are encouraging the Mums to bring their own lunch and stay after Story Hub and have lunch together.

We certainly celebrate having so many wonderful volunteers who are willing to help in our Community Hub activities and are thankful for all that they do each week. It is wonderful to have so many volunteers who make the time to help in some way, and many of them help with more than one of these activities.

We celebrate that through the Community Hub activities around 225 people come into our church each week. This includes volunteers from our church and people from the wider community, and even more when there is a special event.

- We celebrate the way we are connecting with so many people from the community each week, and the way our relationships with these people are growing.
- We celebrate the way friendships have been made and support has been given.
- We celebrate the hospitality we offer by being able to provide meals or a simple cuppa, and someone to share with or some company.
- We celebrate that so many people from the community are thankful and really appreciate the volunteers and the activities of the Community Hub.
- We celebrate that we are able to provide activities for people in the community ranging in age from babies to seniors.

At the end of our first year together, we certainly are celebrating all the different ways that we are sharing God's love with our neighbours, the people in our community. Our Community Hub activities – Leisure Time, Playgroup, Cooee, The Hub and Story Hub are helping us to meet and get to know our neighbours and their real needs, and helping them to feel a part of our community at GWUC.

Our vision for the Community Hub is to grow these groups, to have the volunteers to do this, and to extend our Christian hospitality in other new and exciting ways to the people in our community.

What a lot we have to celebrate and to look forward to as we continue to share God's love with our neighbours!

If you would like to help with any of the Community Hub activities, please contact Judith on 9803 8373.

Judith Greenwood

CELEBRATING with FAMILY

How I Spend My Christmas

As a child, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day morning were always very special days for us. The rule was that we were always home on Christmas Eve till after lunch on Christmas Day and that was something that we were not allowed to break even as young adults. We started our Christmas celebration with a family dinner on Christmas Eve followed by family time when my dad led in family contemplation, then to church for Christmas Eve service. After church we got home to open our presents and for some sleep. On Christmas Day itself, we again went to church as a family followed by lunch. After that, we were free to spend time with our friends.

Now with a family of my own, I have tried maintaining these special family times with a twist. Instead of dinner on Christmas Eve, we have a family Christmas lunch after Church service and this usually includes "extended" family or as my daughter passionately calls them "cherished 'riff-raffs'". They are people who do not have families to spend Christmas with for various reasons. It started during the time when we were looking after overseas students, then it extended to our children's friends and people we meet in our daily lives. Nowadays we spend Christmas lunch at our timeshare resort in Rosebud. After lunch, friends and family can spend the rest of the day swimming, playing tennis etc.

We have also stopped exchanging presents; instead we donate money to organizations like TEAR. To me, Christmas has become too commercialized and there are people who are less fortunate than ourselves who can do with the "unwanted" presents that we give each other. I know my own children do not need the extra presents as they are old enough to get what they need or want anytime. This practice started when we were really down and could not afford much so we re-assessed our situation and concluded that the small amount we could afford goes a long way for others. Honestly, this has made my Christmases less stressful as I do not have to worry about looking for suitable presents (some may consider this a cop-out but it does not bother me). All I need to worry about is buying the food needed to feed my family and guests on this special Christmas day and enjoying their company.



Vida Foo

CELEBRATING OUR NEW ORGAN



On Sunday 4th November at 2pm the long-awaited 'inaugural' concert on our new Johannus organ was given by Rhys Boak (organ) and Bruno Siketa (trumpet), both highly regarded recitalists throughout Australia. The programme was varied, and even included a bit of jazz!

The playing and the combined sound was phenomenal. The performers made it look easy - even Widor's famous Toccata - and delighted the large and diverse audience of about 200 which, although mainly from



GWUC, included many visitors from further afield. The concert had been widely advertised in various churches, printed media, local circles and on radio (3MBS). The afternoon concluded with a noisy afternoon tea, during which many catch-ups occurred, some friendships and connections going back many years to other places. It was a great celebration.

As a result of everyone's efforts, and due to the generosity of the performers, the concert raised over \$3,200 for our church's Organ Fund, which further reduces the impact of the Johannus's purchase on general parish funds. The Organ Fund has passed \$11,000 and is still open for further donations.

On a personal note, while it was nerve-racking being asked by Rhys to turn pages for him, it really does focus one's attention on the music !

Geoff Willis

CELEBRATING POSITIVE CHANGES

These two items were included in the November mailout of the Justice and International Mission Unit of the Uniting Church. They each indicate that action for justice is having some effect, and may help in determining where your donations and social justice activity might be directed.

Global infant mortality rates continue to fall

UNICEF released new figures on child mortality showing in 2011, an estimated 6.9 million children died before their fifth birthday, compared to around 12 million in 1990. Rates of child mortality have fallen in all regions of the world in the last two decades - down by at least 50% in Eastern Asia, Northern Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, South-eastern Asia and Western Asia.

The rate of children dying before their fifth birthday has decreased globally from 87 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 51 per 1,000 live births in 2011.

And progress is accelerating: between 2000 and 2011, the annual rate of reduction in the global under-five mortality rate jumped to 3.2%, up from 1.8% in 1990-2000. Sub-Saharan Africa, the region with the greatest challenge in child survival, has doubled its rate of reduction, from 1.5% per year in 1990-2000 to 3.1% in 2000-2011.

In Laos, the child mortality rate fell 72% between 1990 and 2011, while East Timor's dropped 70%.

An estimated 19,000 children still died every day in 2011, and around 40% in the first month of life most from preventable causes. The gains in child survival, although significant, are still insufficient to achieve Millennium Development Goal 4 of reducing the the global under-five mortality rate by two-thirds between 1990 and 2015.

Only six of the world's 10 regions are on track to reach the target. Proven solutions need to be expanded to accelerate progress on child survival faster and farther.

Sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia face the greatest challenges in child survival, and currently account for more than 80% of global under-five deaths. Their disparity with other regions is becoming more marked as regions such as Eastern Asia and Northern Africa have cut child deaths by more than two thirds since 1990.

Half of all under-five deaths occurred in five countries: India (24%), Nigeria (11%), Democratic Republic of the Congo (7%), Pakistan (5%) and China (4%).

Globally, the leading causes of death among children under five are pneumonia (18% of all under-five deaths), preterm birth complications (14%), diarrhoea (11%), complications during birth (9%) and malaria (7%).

The number of children dying from diarrhoea has decreased from 1.2 million to 700,000 a year in the last decade. In the same period the number of children dying from measles has decreased from 500,000 to 100,000.

Thanks to everyone who has supported the MAKE POVERTY HISTORY and Micah Challenge campaigns in support of the Millennium Development Goals and increased aid funding from Australia to developing countries.

Hershey comes through on ending child labour

In our last mailing we included a postcard to The Hershey Company on the issue of forced and child labour in the production of cocoa in West Africa

On 3 October The Hershey Company announced by 2020 all of the cocoa used by the chocolate company will be certified against standards prohibiting the use of forced and child labour. This comes a week after the Uniting Church released a scorecard showing The Hershey Company was doing the least among major chocolate companies to address the problems.

...The announcement by The Hershey Company means four of the big six global chocolate companies, Mars, The Hershey Company, Ferrero and Lindt, have all committed to having their cocoa sourced against standards that forbid forced and child labour by 2020. Nestle is also making significant progress...

...Kraft, and its subsidiary Cadbury, are now the company that needs to reveal what its plans are to make sure all their cocoa is sourced under a standard that excludes forced and child labour. It is now the company that is least transparent in its efforts. The JIM Unit is in dialogue with Kraft...

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EVEN DAYS

*"Replenish the earth and subdue it." ¹
The Maker gave a twofold instruction.
Adam ignores the first, pursues the second,
and begins seven days of corruption.*

- the first day:* Light and dark were states distinct
until Adam with fire is acquainted.
Smog causes day to seem as night,
and even the breath of life is tainted.²
- the second day:* Waters above fed pure mountain streams
which Adam takes to sluice fouled streets.
Drains and sewers, laced with poisons,
force-feeding creatures of the deep.³
- the third day:* Out of the waters appeared fertile land
where Adam digs for ores commercial,
and dumps rich soils in wasteful heaps.
Ancient land forms deemed immaterial.⁴
- the fourth day:* Two lights were set to tell the seasons,
but Adam ever craves more information.
Ten thousand spies clutter the heaven,
used for a moment, then a junk collation.⁵
- the fifth day:* Creatures of all kinds abounded
until Adam steals their dwelling places.
Countless species are endangered,
as the land suffers more urban spaces.⁶
- the sixth day:* Herb, tree and beast were entwined as one
wild garden where Adam cannot pluck bread,
so clears and cultivates vast fields of grain,
and sprays all creeping things stone dead.⁷
- the seventh day:* The Maker rested, while Adam continues
denuding the land and polluting the water.
The laws of the Maker forever prevailing,
the earth mutates toward an unstable order.⁸

*Day Eight dawns with a glimmer of hope,
for anxious Adam now strives for redemption
through reduction, reuse, recycling, renewal.⁹
Too late to comply with the Maker's instruction?*

Graeme Frecker 2012

1. Genesis 1:28

2. www.sustainablelivingmagazine.org/planet-watch/environment/fresh-air/44-smog

3. www.home.deds.nl/~jamedia/The_last_drop/Water_Pollution.html

4. www.pollutionissues.com/Li-Na/Mining.html

5. www.alamogordonews.com/ci_20337165/space-junk-floats-above-us-night-sky

6. www.worldanimalfoundation.net/f/HabitatDestruction.pdf

7. www.ucsusa.org/food_and_agriculture/our-failing-food-system/industrial-agriculture/

8. www.sunhomedesign.wordpress.com/tag/ecosystem-instability/

9. www.interfaithenvironmental.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Michael-Churchman-Presentation.pdf

GENEROUS GIVING

Telling God where to spend his resources

One person's view of generous giving

"I like to give God my money, as long as he spends it where I decide it should be spent."

It is always interesting to hear why people do and don't participate in regular weekly giving at our church. It almost sounds like they are trying to justify their actions to themselves rather than those around them. And for many years I could not help myself and I would have to comment, but then I came to the conclusion that it was pointless saying anything, because there is no logic in any giving for many people.

People responded to the call of a need on many different levels and for many different reasons, and so my view of the world was never, and is never, going to be the same as yours. And does not have to be. So I ceased commenting on other people trying to tell God where the resources should go, as that was their cross to bear, not mine. But this year I felt compelled to say something about the topic of giving.

I do get concerned when people use resources paid for by other *generous givers*, to raise funds for their favourite concerns, and give no contribution, acknowledgment or thanks to those who pay for that boring electricity and the maintenance of the facilities they have just used.

Glen Waverley Uniting Church is a resource rich, generous community who have always responded to real need. That's why I attend GWUC. So I struggle when groups use the church facilities and have access to a caring community for free, and then talk about giving all their funds to "*real outreach activities*".

We even have people and groups who donate funds to us as a thank you for the time and effort the ministry team have assisted them, and they say "*Thank you for the pastoral care you have shown us – please make sure this donation goes to outreach activities*" – however, the pastoral care they just received is an *outreach activity* of GWUC – the regular *generous givers* paid for the ministry team to exist and to provide that care.

We all want the money we give to go to those who need it most. We are all passionate for our causes. But sometimes to do that, we must use some of it to help make that passion happen.

When any group uses the GWUC resources, the rooms, the ministry or office team, they are using gifts given to the church by others - for their own interests. But...

- Someone else has paid the electricity and gas bills.
- Someone else has paid for the insurances that protected them.
- Someone else had to purchase the toilet rolls they used and the tea and coffee they drank.
- Someone else had to pay for the art supplies, the office paper, the telephones, the posters they pin up and the licences for the music they sing.
- Someone else paid for the chairs they sat on and the heaters they leave turned on.
- Someone else paid for the petrol when the ministry team visited them in hospital or at home, and
- Someone else paid for the cost of the facilities used when they died.

GENEROUS GIVING

I know that is harsh, but someone else has paid or donated funds, so that we can sing, pray, raise our funds and support your charity.

And even after we die, some of us try and control what God's faithful servants are doing. By leaving money to an organisation (not just GWUC) with a string attached: "*It must be used for outreach purposes*" or "*It cannot be used for salaries and wages*" (someone else can pay those – not me).

Now before all those people who spend many many long hours raising funds for congregational outreach projects take umbrage at my words, I am NOT saying we should not raise funds for outreach activities – we should – always.

I am talking about our regular weekly gifts to the work of the church in GWUC, that we should all be contributing to, so that our children and our grandchildren will also have a place to worship and a facility to help them to continue to support their outreach activities.

But next time you book a room for your fund raising function, or send a cheque to the office with a condition of use attached, take a moment to say thank you to those people who trust God's servants to do his work well and who just give to support the work of this church. No strings, no conditions and no instructions to God.

Next time you look at a *Generous Givers form*, think about those who paid for the paper you are using, served you the coffee last Sunday, and made you warm and safe in the building – and give thanks that they were also *Generous Givers* in a different way and who trusted God's servants at GWUC to be good stewards.

And before you say "*I give all my support to outreach activities*", consider what has to happen so you can raise funds for your projects, and ask yourself, 'Should I be telling God where his work is needed or should I be listening to God and trusting his servants?'

Always be a regular *Generous Giver* – not just a special occasions giver.

Warren Greenwood November 2012

Book Review from p. 13 [continued]

Mortenson takes advice from local elders instead of deciding himself where the needs lie:

... 'Why don't you leave [the decision] to us? I'll call a meeting of all the elders of the Braldu and see what village is ready to donate free land and labor for a school. That way you don't have to flap all over Baltistan like a crow again, eating here and there,' Haji Ali said, laughing.

'So once again, an illiterate old Balti taught a Westerner how to best go about developing his "backward" area,' Mortenson says. 'Ever since then, I've remembered Haji Ali's advice and expanded slowly... going where we'd already built relationships, instead of trying to hopscotch to places I had no contacts...' (p. 352).

Mortenson's language skills, his childhood upbringing in a culturally diverse setting, his medical skills, his fitness for coping with the mountainous conditions, and his obvious gift for establishing respectful relationships demonstrate how many apparently unrelated aspects of his life have come together to form a blueprint for the ways in which change for the better have been made. It confirmed for me the wisdom of the support our GWUC community is providing, for instance, in the East Timor projects at Baguia and Ermera.

My large print copy was borrowed from the Monash Library (Call no: LP 923.6 MOR). I recommend it to all who are interested in outreach projects of all kinds.

Robin Pope

BOOK REVIEW

Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin

Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Promote Peace ... One School at a Time,
Wheeler Publishing, 2006. Large Print edition, 691 pp.

We are confronted daily with news about some new crisis - often man-made, occasionally not – in other parts of the world. If the crisis is of large enough dimensions, and especially if seen as a 'natural disaster' then appeals from the stricken nation for international assistance are responded to by governments around the world. We know, however, that the public governmental display of compassion and commitment is frequently an opportunistic response to garner votes, or alliances, or contracts for the businesses of the donor country in 'helping' to reconstruct damaged infrastructure. The aftermath of events in Haiti and the failure of the international community to provide long-lasting assistance – or indeed to even provide the promised money - is only one example of how 'official' responses often fail to live up to the hopes of those in dire need.

Three Cups of Tea is an inspiring story demonstrating how one person has succeeded in fulfilling raised hopes. In recent weeks we have read about the widow's mite which a poor insignificant woman gave out of the little she had. At the same time we have heard about Malala, the Pakistani girl who publicly campaigned for the rights of her gender to access education. Malala became the targeted victim of a shooting from those of her country who believed she was a threat to the *status quo*, but she has inspired others to continue the cause.

Greg Mortenson, after a childhood spent in Tanzania (he climbed Mt Kilimanjaro at age 11) moved back to the US, trained as an emergency room nurse, and took up mountaineering as his passion. As a memorial to his disabled sister who had died at age 23, he decided to climb K2 – considered by many to be the hardest mountain in the world to climb - in the Karakoram Range in northern Pakistan. For various reasons the attempt failed. Groggy from the sustained period in high altitudes, he became separated from his companion and his porter on the descent, and found himself lost without any of his gear. A chance rescue by someone from the village of Korphe saved his life. Recuperating in this isolated, almost abandoned village, he became aware of the extreme difficulties that simple survival presented the villagers, and was reminded of the daily struggles his sister had faced; hence he decided that assisting them would be a more meaningful memorial to her. He established a relationship with the village elder whose house and food had been shared with him despite their poverty. Unusually for a Westerner keen to help, he respected the villagers' own perceptions of their greatest needs rather than imposing his own views.

The remarkable story of how the first school was built details his personal commitment and philosophy: his return to the US to raise money and find sponsors; his use of Pakistani architects, suppliers and workmen; the difficulties –near impossibilities! – of transporting materials to distant outposts; the setbacks he overcame and his learning to cope with the different cultural ways of negotiating business. What emerges in this gripping tale is a story of someone who values relationships above all else, and who makes a lasting difference to the lives of others because he respects what they know and understand.

After the delays and sidetracks of getting the Korphe School built, Mortenson's work expands by word-of-mouth fame and requests, so that at the time David Relin sets down this story of Mortenson's life, he has built 55 schools. His biographer was told by the daughter of the family who first took him in: *'We saw he had peculiar habits, very different from other Europeans. He made no demands for good food and environment. He ate whatever my mother put before him and slept together in the smoke like a Balti...[He has] excellent manners and he never tells a lie...'* (p.351).

[cont'd p.12]

JUSTICE FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS

*The Justice and International Mission Unit (JIM) recently asked participants which issues they most wanted resourced. For the second year running **Asylum Seekers and Refugees** topped the list of concerns as the issue on which most were prepared to write letters, attend a forum or rally, get others to sign a petition, organize events in support of addressing the issue, or be willing to write to or visit their local MP. The following three pages contain excerpts from Justice for Asylum Seekers, a booklet of facts and resources published by UnitingJustice for those desiring to work towards just outcomes for those strangers in need, and a letter by UC President Rev Prof Andrew Dutney in response to the Houston Panel report. Contact the UnitingJustice Australia for the full text.*

Who is a refugee? Who is an asylum seeker?

The United Nations defines a refugee as 'someone who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.' An asylum seeker is someone who has fled their own country and applies to the government of another country for protection as a refugee. In Australia, when someone is recognised as a refugee, they are given the right to permanent residency and access to the range of rights and protections that other Australians have.

Asylum Seekers or Illegal Immigrants?

Migrants leave their home by choice...Asylum seekers are often fleeing persecution, torture or war. Asylum seekers do not need a valid visa to enter Australia. Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights says 'Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.'

The Refugee Convention which Australia signed also includes:

Article 31: The right of asylum seekers not to be punished based on their mode of arrival (such as boat or plane)

Article 23: The obligation of the Government to offer public relief and assistance

Article 32: The right of asylum seekers not to be expelled except under certain, strictly defined conditions.

Some Facts:

- In Australia there is only 1 refugee for every 1000 people.
- Of the 10.4 million refugees under the UNHCR's mandate between 2005 -2010, the top five refugee-hosting countries took in almost half of all people deemed to be refugees. On this scale, Australia ranked 47th, but when all refugee-hosting countries are assessed according to their national wealth, Australia ranked 91st.
- Pakistan hosted 1.74 million refugees; Iran: 1.07 million; Syria: 1.05 million; Germany: 594,000; Jordan: 451,000 - and Australia? : 22,548
- Of the asylum seekers who arrive by boat, around 90% are determined to be genuine refugees. The most common myth about asylum seekers who arrive by boat is that they are 'jumping the queue'. In countries like Iraq and Afghanistan there is no 'queue' to join, as there is nowhere to have their applications assessed. **Australia is the only country in the world** that has a policy of reducing its offshore refugee intake for every onshore claim that is accepted. This link has contributed to the myth of the 'queue jumper'.
- We hear some politicians claim that they 'stopped the boats' because of their policies. **Global** asylum seeker numbers dropped markedly from 2001 to 2006 (asylum applications in **all** industrialised countries fell by 49% over this period) - as did applications in Australia. Over the last five years **global** asylum seeker numbers have increased - and so we see this trend reflected in Australia once more.

JUSTICE FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS

Some Facts (cont):

- Offshore processing of asylum seekers before they reach the Australian mainland began in 2001 after the 'Tampa crisis'. In 2006 the Australian government extended this to all asylum seekers who landed in Australia without a valid visa. This policy was abandoned in 2007 but it has been reinstated following the release of the Houston Panel Report. When last used as a detention site, conditions on Nauru severely impacted the mental and physical health of asylum seekers, inflicting further suffering on vulnerable people who were not breaking any laws.
- The negative effects of mandatory detention are well documented. Asylum seekers have already experienced trauma before arriving here, including torture, separation from family and community, extreme hardship and food scarcity and appalling conditions during their journey. These traumas are exacerbated by our current system of indefinite detention, resulting in high rates of self-harm and attempted suicide amongst asylum seekers and refugees. Children and young people are particularly at risk. Feelings of hopelessness and despair may manifest in long-term depression and anxiety, particularly for unaccompanied minors.
- Any policy transferring asylum seekers involuntarily to other countries for processing is likely to be unlawful. It violates the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to which Australia is a signatory.

An Asylum Seeker Speaks

*This is a poem written some years ago by 'a prisoner at the Baxter detention Centre - no name, he has only a number'.
Circulated by the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre in Melbourne.*

I do not know
what will happen after I die.
I do not want to know,
But I would like the Potter to make a whistle
from the clay of my throat.
May this whistle fall into the hands
of a naughty child
and the child to blow hard
on the whistle continuously
with the suppressed and silent air of his lungs
and disrupt the sleep
of those who seem dead
to my cries.

A Prayer of Invocation

God of hospitality and refuge,
come to us here
in this place of security and safety.
Remind us that you are the God Almighty
large enough for all people,
all nations, all tongues.
Help us,
with the presence of your Holy Spirit,
to be able to create space
for those who seek asylum and refuge.
In the name of Jesus, your Son.

Amen

Punishing the Vulnerable: The Houston Panel Report

Rev. Prof Andrew Dutney, President of the Uniting Church in Australia, responded to the Houston Report (the 'Expert Panel') on Asylum Seekers. This is most of the text which was first published on the website ABC Religion and Ethics, 16 August 2012, <http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2012/08/16/3569184.htm>

The Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) is deeply disappointed at the recommendations of the Houston Panel on Asylum Seekers. And we are dismayed by the enthusiasm with which the Parliament has passed legislation which will see Australia close its doors to asylum seekers arriving by boat.

...Elenie Poulos, Director of UnitingJustice, said: "Australia is a safe, secure and wealthy country and it has been a grave moral failure that we have become so intent on punishing vulnerable people."

For my part, I've been reflecting on what it is about the Christian faith that makes this week's developments so disheartening for me and many other church members and leaders. It's not hard to see what's at stake. We are witnessing not only "grave moral failure", but also a political process that has completely lost its moorings in the Christian heritage - tenuous enough to begin with - and now drifts like one of the crowded, leaking boats at the centre of this debate, aimless and deadly.

Jesus taught his followers to welcome strangers in need. And even more than welcome them, to recognise Christ himself in those people. 'I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me' (Matthew 25: 35-36). This bundle of physical, psychological and spiritual neediness is very familiar. It's right there on our big, flat-screen televisions, as we watch people huddled together on dangerous vessels approaching Australian territorial waters. It's me, Christ here says to his followers, and I need your help.

This teaching of Jesus was itself built on the Long Hebrew tradition of extending hospitality to foreigners and others strangers [...]The prophets drew attention to the same principle in their warnings to the nation: "I will be swift to bear witness ... against those who thrust aside the alien, and do not fear me, says the Lord of Hosts" (Malachi 3: 5). And if compulsorily detaining them in Nauru, Papua New Guinea or Malaysia, or sending them back to Indonesia isn't "thrusting aside" the stranger seeking asylum, I don't know what is.

These teachings of Jesus, the law and the prophets about strangers and foreigners are examples of an even more fundamental biblical principle. With striking consistency, the books of the Old and New Testaments describe a God whose saving mission begins not with strong, important or even worthy people, but with the stranger, the disadvantaged and the unwanted people and their specific needs. The hope that is offered to them is ultimately the hope of all nations - and, indeed, for the whole creation. But it begins with those who are most vulnerable - whether they "deserve" it or not.

So for Christians, welcoming the stranger isn't just about obeying a commandment but is a concrete way of being part of this bigger story of the mission of God. And conversely, avoiding, ignoring or mistreating the stranger is a concrete way of opposing God - for "just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me" (Matthew 25: 40).

[...]The freshly stated policy goals are based on a theory of deterrence. The aim is, effectively, to punish new arrivals so that when others hear about it they will be deterred from attempting the same thing. The horrifying message that we are sending is that, not only are strangers not welcome here, they are risking further harm at our hands.

Furthermore, Australia remains the only country in the world with the inhumane policy of reducing its offshore refugee intake for every person accepted as a refugee onshore. While the Uniting Church welcomes the promised overall increase in humanitarian places in the new arrangements, this continuing policy is arbitrary and unnecessary. It achieves nothing other than to perpetuate the double lie: that our hospitality is already stretched to the limit, and that onshore refugees are "queue jumpers".

[...] The reasons for the dismay of the Uniting Church over the outcome of the Houston Panel report are not mysterious or complicated. Jesus said it. We try to do it. And we are deeply unhappy when the governments who represent us adopt policies that punish rather than welcome the stranger in need.

As a church leader I don't presume to endorse one particular public policy as the most effective in delivering the hospitality to strangers that Christ commands. That's the particular skill and responsibility of politicians. But it would appear that ... all the political energy is devoted to eliminating one kind of appeal for asylum...

[T]his is wrong. It is unworthy of those of us...who would follow Jesus.

MODERATOR'S LETTER

The following letter from the Synod Standing Committee was read out to congregations following the closure of Acacia College. It is reproduced here for those who were not present at its reading.

20 October 2012

Dear Members of the Uniting Church Community,

This week the Standing Committee made one of the hardest decisions it has ever had to make. We resolved to close Acacia College, a Uniting Church school in the northern growth corridor of Melbourne, at the end of the year. This vibrant college started as a Prep to year 7 school in 2010, and had grown to a Prep to year 9 school of 540 students this year.

What could have prompted the Standing Committee to make such a decision, a decision that has had a profound impact on the lives of 500 families and staff who have cherished their time as part of the Acacia community?

Six years ago the then Presbytery of Yarra Valley presented the Standing Committee with a vision for a ministry centre in this new growth area. The Acacia Ministry Centre was to include two local congregations joining together; a school; a kindergarten; sporting facilities and maybe even a maternal health centre. It was a big vision, but it was never the intent of the church to pay for this vision. A developer was identified to build the project, and the school and Ministry Centre would be tenants.

Sadly difficulties arose very early, when the developer could not source enough funds for the project. The church decided to arrange loans in order for the project to continue. The original vision of ministry had to be relinquished as the size of the loans increased. The subsequent history is a very complex multi stepped story, which included a halt to the building project, legal action between the developer and the church, new project managers, further loans being drawn down by the church to ensure the college could grow, and redesigned master plans that suggested the project was still viable. Eventually the Standing Committee resolved not to approve any further loans.

In recent weeks the church became aware of additional cost overruns and unanticipated financial obligations. It was discovered that many more millions of dollars would be needed to complete the school. Financial modelling demonstrated that based on its chosen educational model, and the further funds needed to complete the school and meet council compliance requirements, Acacia College would not be viable.

A decision had to be taken. Synod was unable to secure a buyer for the school in a timeframe that would enable choice for families and staff. Thus the Standing Committee made the resolution you heard about last week. In meetings with the school community on Wednesday 17 October the Moderator unreservedly apologised and reiterated a deep sadness about this decision.

Information packs went out to all families providing them with information about other schools, and questions and answers including compensation for school uniforms, on site counselling for their children and possible reimbursement of school fees. Synod's human resources team is working closely with Acacia College staff.

The Synod is working to find another education provider who will buy and run the school. That provider would be able to start afresh and not have the construction debt with which we are faced. A new provider would also determine its own educational model.

The \$10 million figure that has been reported in some parts of the media relates to statutory obligations to the City of Whittlesea. In recent days the council has been willing to reduce that figure significantly. That will be very helpful for any new education provider. However, this amount is only part of the much larger debt that has been incurred in building and operating Acacia College and which remains to be addressed.

An independent review will analyse the entirety of the project to enable all of us to understand what went wrong, and how we as a church can improve our due diligence, governance and other processes that have led to this sad day.

In the meantime, we ask for your prayers for the students, staff and families of Acacia College.

Grace and peace,

Isobel Thomas Dobson (Moderator) and Peter Blackwood (General Secretary)

On behalf of the Standing Committee

PASTORAL NOTES

for everything there is a season
and a time for every matter under heaven...

We record with sadness the deaths in the past months of members of our church family and we extend our love, support and sympathy to their families.

Norman Douglas Allan

Mollie Georgina Perram

Patricia Yvette De Kretser

Lynette Frances Wilkinson

We record with joy the baptisms of

Natasha Leanne Young

Emily Ronda Mason

Nikita Grace Hunter

Zachary Hayden Pryde

We celebrate the marriage of

Ricky Wayne Eginton & Karen Amy Macartney

Deborah Leanne Davey & Timothy James Brewster