

Uniting Church in Australia – Queensland Synod
Together on the way, enriching community



UNITING GREEN (QLD)

Eco-Mission Consultant
Eco-Mission Facilitator

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News 7

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*Joy to the world! The Lord is come;
Let earth receive her king;
Let every heart prepare him room,
and heaven and nature sing...*

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1. FROM GREEN CHURCH TO UNITING GREEN (QLD)

Green Church has changed its name to become Uniting Green (Queensland) as part of the reorganisation within the Synod to journey *Together on the way, enriching community*. <http://together.ucaqld.com.au/Default.aspx>

We are working to assist the whole Church become more aware of creation care as a core part of Christian discipleship and mission. We are looking at ways of helping the church through each of the identified priority directions A-E:

- A. establishing *safeguarding creation and sustaining the earth* (eco-mission) as an integral part of the mission of the Church
- B. promoting eco-spirituality
- C. organising for eco-mission
- D. resourcing eco-theology education
- E. encouraging eco-justice links with the wider community

From now on we are identifying ourselves as follows:

- Rev Dr Clive Ayre Eco-mission Consultant
- Rev Judith Dalton Eco-mission Facilitator

Both of us are still working in a voluntary capacity, each with other commitments in 2012, so we really need to build our capacity to resource the church for eco-mission. Any offers of help would be greatly appreciated.

We want to organise regional groups through each Presbytery, so as to be able to respond more effectively to particular issues, and build a network that can assist each other.

Could YOU please let me know if you could help us by

- being a contact for your presbytery
- sharing your experience
- developing a better database and mailing format
- collating and editing Uniting Green News
- surfing other websites and developing the Uniting Green website

Thank you!

Judith Dalton

2. CHRISTMAS ECO-GIFT IDEAS

- **UNITING GREEN (QLD) ECO-TRAVEL MUGS**

The change to Uniting Green was promoted at the recent Synod meeting through selling our own special “Keep Cups”

(<http://www.keepcup.com/>). The Uniting Church logo is debossed into the green band, with the words UNITING GREEN.



The 340ml standard mugs are excellent for take away barista coffee fitting under coffee machines. They fit into most car holders, keep the coffee warmer longer and have tops that seal. These are ideal Christmas gifts for people on the go! They are for sale (with white, grey or charcoal lids) for \$15 through Café Manna at the Uniting Church Centre in Auchenflower, and proceeds will assist Uniting Green.

Email: green.church@ucaqlld.com.au

- **UNITING WORLD PACIFIC CLIMATE CHANGE RESPONSE PROGRAMS**

Uniting Church President Alistair Macrae has recently asked us to pray for our partner Church in Tuvalu, Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu (EKT) which is attended by the majority of the population. They are facing extreme drought with severe water shortages and food shortages as crops are being affected by salt water. Household water consumption has been limited to 20 litres per day, schools have been closed, and the hospital has nearly run out of water. AusAid has already been assisting.

Uniting World has just introduced their *Pacific: Climate Change Response Programs*, and their first project is Tuvalu.

<http://www.unitingworld.org.au/programs/church-solidarity/church-solidarity-pacific/pacific-climate-change-response-program/>

You may wish to donate to the *Church-based Community Education for Climate Change in the Pacific* which aims to enable people to reflect theologically on their experience and respond proactively. This will be done through three initiatives:

1. The establishment of a “climate change desk” position.
2. Reflection through a workshop course that has been developed called “Noah and Climate Change in Tuvalu.
3. Engaging youth in a stewardship education program by involving them in ecological projects.

Bruce Mullen of UnitingWorld has also referred to the following websites for further information on Tuvalu and Climate Change:

- <http://www.australiangeographic.com.au/journal/on-the-frontline-climate-change-in-the-south-pacific.htm> (Videos, including an interview with the General Secretary of EKT)
- http://www.cawcr.gov.au/projects/PCCSP/pdf/4_PCCSP_Tuvalu_8pp.pdf (CSIRO and Bureau of Meteorology Pacific Climate Change Science Program)

3. UNITING GREEN STORIES

i. STAFFORD UNITING CHURCH (Moreton Rivers Presbytery)

Hope for Creation Day of Prayer, 6 November 2011

Rev Ben Webb and congregation member Colleen Geyer (Blue Care Director of Mission) drew on the Day of Prayer resources (<http://hopeforcreation.com.au/>). The video was used as a call to worship. The communion table, in the round, was decorated with greenery, and the communion liturgy also picked up on the theme. The focus was on stewardship of all that God has given us, rather than emphasising political action, but 40 people filled out a postcard addressed to the Queensland Minister for the Environment. This was felt to be a good way of starting a journey towards linking faith and climate change.

Contact: St Pauls Stafford (Email stpaulss@dovenetq.net.au)

Editor's Note: The resources can be used at other times of the year. Prayer is currently focused on the forthcoming meeting of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, COP17, in Durban, Nov 27– Dec 9.

ii. COORPAROO UNITING CHURCH (Moreton Rivers Presbytery)

Community Garden

Sunflowers in abundance produced much excitement and joy at the Coorparoo community garden, and the young people packaged hundreds of seeds to pass on these blessings at Synod.



The Church made their land available for a community garden in 2009. Church members, local residents and members of the Stepping Stones Clubhouse have all been working together with assistance from Brisbane City Council.

They have also made a pizza oven and now have community pizza nights. They have had gatherings of “Messy Church” including blessing the animals... all creatures great and small.

http://web.me.com/ymcrostie/Community_Garden/Latest_Garden_News/Latest_Garden_News.html.

Contact: Yvonne McRostie (Email: office@seuc.com.au)

iii. PALMWOODS UNITING CHURCH (Mary Burnett Presbytery)

Green Bush Christmas, 4 December 2011

Kay Nixon, Community Pastor of the Palmwoods Uniting Church has initiated and planned a “Green Bush Christmas” celebration with the community. It will be held at the Palmwoods State School on Sunday, 4th December, and has been sponsored with a grant from the Sunshine Coast Council.

People are being encouraged to walk to the event if they can and invite a neighbour to come too. There will be games and environmentally friendly crafts. Children will be making Christmas cards and decorations from recycled materials. Candleholders are being made from used milk bottles. There will be a Sausage Sizzle followed by songs, a Christmas story and a visit from Santa.

The Aussie theme in the stories and songs will encourage an appreciation of the local environment while celebrating the traditional message of the first Christmas.

Contact: Kay Nixon, Community Pastor (via Rev Peter Overton or via Uniting Green)

iv. BURDEKIN UNITING CHURCH (North Queensland Presbytery)

Recycling Message at Magnetic Island Festival



God the First and Greatest Recycler was the subject of Rev Paul Clark's conversation with his puppet "Hairy". A group of young people from Burdekin Uniting Church joined the Magnetic Island Uniting Church in reaching the community through the Bay Days Festival in mid-September.

"We did this puppet play on Saturday night after a bunch of games. There were families there who were not regulars at church at all. Because we had built rapport with the kids they listened very intently. In fact, you could have heard a pin drop and it was one of those rare moments when you can see the cogs moving in people's heads as the words and spirit stir. The crowd really connected. It was a real blessing."

Contact: Rev Paul Clark (Burdekin UC) (burdekinuc@bigpond.com)

v. MAREEBA UNITING CHURCH (North Queensland Presbytery)

Solar Power paying off

At the end of May 2011 a 2.28kw Photovoltaic Grid Connect Solar System was installed on the roof of our Church Hall in Mareeba.

After the upfront discount for Small-scale Technology Certificates, our 2.28 kW solar energy system cost us \$5,296.73 excluding GST.

In the first three months of use it has generated 786 kWh of electricity which has provided us with an income of \$345.84.

This indicates a possible income of between \$1300 and \$1400 per annum which, if achieved, would pay off our system in around four years.



Mareeba is one of the sunniest towns in Queensland but it is quite likely that our income will fall during the wet season and that would make the above calculations a bit optimistic. However, we are still hopeful that we should pay it off in between four and five years.

Contact: Ruth Beasley (Email: marebauc@telstra.com)

4. ECOMISSION

- **REPORT ON AAMS CONFERENCE (September 2011) including**
- **NORMAN HABEL'S RAINBOW COVENANT**

Mission in a Globalised World: A new vision for Christian Discipleship

In addition to this report on the conference, the Secretary of AAMS, Prof Ross Langmead, has an official report on the organisation's website.

<http://groupsthatclick.com/aams/index.php?type=page&ID=3515>

The conference of the **Australian Association for Mission Studies** was held at Mary MacKillop Place in North Sydney from 22nd to 25th September 2011. Participants gathered from various countries, but principally from the Asia-Pacific region. As a member of the organising committee I was pleased with the final shape of the event; it would have been good to have more attending, but it must be acknowledged that cost was probably a factor. At a practical level I would say that the conference was well organised and a good spirit prevailed. Worship segments throughout were well done, and there was space allowed between sessions so as to avoid a sense of rush.

The main keynote speaker was Prof Ernst Conradie for South Africa, whose address on the theme of globalisation was insightful and raised some important issues. The overall theme of globalisation was explored through 4 focus areas. These were:

- Ecology and Mission.
- Mission in Australia and the Asia-Pacific
- Leading and Educating for Mission
- Secularity and Secularism

All of the papers presented are available on the AAMS website. A selection of papers will be published in subsequent issues of the Australian Journal of Mission Studies.

In addition to Conradie's keynote on the globalisation theme itself, each focus area also had a keynote address to the whole conference. In the case of Ecology and Mission that role was filled again by Ernst Conradie, whose topic was *Missiology and Ecology: An assessment of the current state of the debate*.

Other Ecology and Mission papers covered the following topics:

- Habel: *A Rainbow Charter for Earth Mission Australasia*
- Ayre: *Christian Faith and the Earth: a regional response to a global issue*
- Mallaby: *Ecological Mission: Children encountering God in gardening, care of animals and play in natural surroundings*
- Pope: *A Pauline Ecomissiology from his Letter to Rome*
- Pepper: *Church-based Community Gardening: Where mission meets ecology in local settings*
- Seaman: *Red, Yellow, Blue and Green: Eco-mission within the Salvation Army*

It was most interesting that at the last conference 2 years ago there was only one paper on ecology and mission, but this time it represented one of the main focus areas, and in various ways almost seemed to dominate the whole gathering. There were several factors involved in that. One was the number of papers on offer in that area and the general interest shown, but another was the fact that **Prof Norman Habel** presented what he called the **Rainbow Covenant**; having outlined it early in the conference he had the opportunity near the end to have a second look at it in order to gauge the responses of the group. It was heart-warming to have the conference affirm the covenant through the singing of a new hymn Norm wrote to express the Rainbow Covenant theme. That information is also on the AAMS website. <http://groupsthatclick.com/aams/index.php?type=page&ID=3515>

In between conferences a series of regional networks aim to maintain contacts; one of those groups is based in Brisbane. If anyone would like to join us you have only to let us know.

Clive Ayre

- **REFLECTION ON COAL SEAM GAS AND MINING ISSUES**

Recently there has been considerable public outcry against coal seam gas mining. A number of social and ecological concerns related to mining and coal seam gas were mentioned at the Synod meeting. At the same time I was sitting looking at the *Together on the Way* vision wheel (<http://together.ucaqld.com.au/Default.aspx>) and kept on noticing that part of the vision is to be a *prayerful listening church*.

How can the church respond to these complex issues? We are all inevitably involved in some way, as consumers of energy, materials, food and water. We are individuals, but we are also part of communities, both local and global: interdependent communities of human and non-human life and inorganic substances.

In these communities we have differing experiences and perspectives. Can the church be a community where we listen to each other, learn to understand different perspectives, and together seek God's wisdom, compassion and justice for all. Let us pray for each other and our wider communities, for the earth and the systems that sustain life.

Let us pray for the mining companies and their employees and residents in local mining communities, that fair arrangements for families, education and health are made for all. Let us pray for the farmers, families and communities whose land and livelihood are threatened by exploration and development.

As Uniting Green we are particularly concerned for the ecological implications: let us pray for the availability of clean water, for endangered species of plants and animals, for safety of cropping lands and ecosystems.

Since the Synod meeting, different insights have been gathered, collated and passed on to the General Secretary. There are many members of the Uniting Church involved in different ways in the various issues in their local communities.

As Christians in Tuvalu are being called to think theologically about the impact of climate change on their land and community, so, I believe, we too need to bring our faith to bear on social, political, economic and ecological choices we make concerning the impact of mining and coal seam gas on our land and community. How is God calling you to live out your discipleship in your community?

Judith Dalton

BOOK REVIEWS FROM CLIVE AYRE

- Ecology at the Heart of Faith: the change of heart that leads to a new way of living on Earth: Denis Edwards. Orbis Books, Maryknoll New York, 2006.

I “discovered” this book when I was in Sydney for the AAMS Conference, and what a find it was! No one work can legitimately be expected to cover all aspects of such a big subject, but Edwards has produced a highly readable work that is not only scholarly but also accessible to a wide readership well beyond his Roman Catholic identity. As the title suggests, this book is an encouragement to the ecological conversion that is so much needed, but in doing so it provides some theological grounding for such an approach. In my view Edwards has produced an excellent text that may serve as a solid introduction to an eco-theology that demands a corresponding eco-mission.

- Christianity and Earthkeeping: In search of an inspiring vision. Ernst Conradie. Sun Press, Stellenbosch, South Africa, 2011.

This is one of Conradie’s latest books and offers what we have come to expect of him – insightful scholarship in a readily accessible form. Conradie relates 19 possible reasons for engagement with the eco-crisis in what he prefers to call “earthkeeping”. No one position is advocated, but rather the various options are listed on a continuum from the more basic, such as “it is in our own best interests” to the deeply theological, such as “a God who is loyal to this earth”.

In one example Conradie cites Paul Knitter’s call for a “deep ecumenicity”, or the need for “religious traditions to find common ground on a common earth.” (p.14). This implies that “the more the religions of the world can ground themselves in this earth and the more deeply they can connect with nature and the needs of this planet, the more they will find themselves interconnected.” He goes on to quote McDonagh: “There are no Catholic lakes, Protestant rivers or Muslim forests. We all share a common earth...”

I find a compelling argument in Conradie’s approach to the Church as “members of the whole household of God.” “The church is that place where one can find traces that bear witness to the presence of the owner and keeper of the house.” (p.120). Some positions are more profound than others, and it would be good to move to a deeper level of engagement; but as Conradie says, it would be helpful for Christians to engage in “earthkeeping” for any of the reasons listed in the book.

Clive Ayre

6. COMMUNITY CALENDAR 2011-12

2011

Nov 27- The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, is
Dec 9 meeting in Durban. Inter-Faith Communities activity at COP 17:
<http://www.cop17faithcommunities.org.za/index.html>

2012

- UN International Year of Sustainable Energy for All
- International Decade for Action: Water for Life
- Education for Sustainable Development

March 2 World Day of Prayer: Let Justice Prevail (prepared by Malaysia)

March 4 Clean Up Australia Day
See churches working together in community:
<http://www.unitingearthweb.org.au/explore/maroubra-junction-uniting-church-clean-up-australia-day-clean-up-and-festival>

7. CONTACT THE UNITING GREEN OFFICE

If you have any questions or suggestions for how we may be able to help creation care become an integral part of Christian discipleship and the church's mission, please contact us, **preferably by email as we are not often in the office.**

The emails and website are still the same as for Green Church. We will let you know when they change.

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