

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



## **UNITING GREEN (QLD)**

**Eco-Mission Consultant**

**Rev Dr Clive W Ayre**

**Eco-Mission Facilitator**

**Rev Judith Dalton**

**Email**      [green.church@ucaqld.com.au](mailto:green.church@ucaqld.com.au)

**Web**         [www.greenchurch.ucaqld.com.au](http://www.greenchurch.ucaqld.com.au)

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*Lent is a time to take seriously the ways we live as signs of death rather than of life, the ways we steal from the earth rather than sprout from it.*

*Richard Swanson*

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**1. ECO-MISSION CALENDAR 2013**  
**INTERNATIONAL YEAR FOR WATER COOPERATION**

**March 2 Invitation from AngliGreen:**

**10.00-4.00 "Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream Symposium"**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ttiTZq1lBoE>

An exploration into the state of the Earth and our place within it.

Darnell Room, St John's Cathedral, Brisbane

Cost \$25, BYO lunch. Morning and Afternoon teas provided

REGISTER NOW through PMC [jmould@anglicanbrisbane.org.au](mailto:jmould@anglicanbrisbane.org.au)

**March 3 Clean up Australia Day** <http://www.cleanupaustaliaday.org.au/>

**March 22 World Water Day**

<http://www.unwater.org/watercooperation2013/index.html>

**March 23 Earth Hour** <http://earthhour.org.au>

Did you know this started in Sydney 2007, and is now held in more than 6,950 cities and towns in 152 countries and territories?

**March 31 EASTER**

Go FairTrade/ Rainforest Alliance/UTZ Chocolate! (See last Easter's Green News 8, page 7, at [www.greenchurch.ucaqld.com.au](http://www.greenchurch.ucaqld.com.au))

**Invitations from farmers in CSG mining communities:**

**April 14 Friends of Felton Food Festival**

<http://www.feltonfoodfestival.org.au/>

**April 25 ANZAC Day at Acland**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQRDZRwLzcU>

**April 22 Earth Day** <http://www.un.org/en/events/motherearthday/>

**May 22 International Day for Biodiversity** <http://www.cbd.int/idb/>

**May 26 National Sorry Day** <http://www.nsd.org.au/>

**May 27-31 National Reconciliation Week** <http://www.reconciliation.org.au/>

**June 5 World Environment Day** <http://www.unep.org/wed/>

(UCA Resource available for download in May)

## **2. SEASONAL REFLECTION: Lent and Easter**

*Lent is a time to take seriously the ways we live as signs of death rather than of life, the ways we steal from the earth rather than sprout from it. (Richard Swanson, Provoking the Gospel of Luke)*

As we journey towards another celebration of Easter it is towards both the cross and the resurrection of Christ. The powers of death cannot prevail. It is a time for struggle in the light of hope. A time of challenge to travel the road together as God's people on the Way, to put on our "L" plates again and deliberately seek more holistic ways of living together on this earth. Listen, Pray, Act.

I hope you may find some inspiration and encouragement in the different possibilities highlighted here. Please share them with others in your congregation.

Judith Dalton

## **3. GREEN STORIES**

### **i. Qld Synod Energy Management Policy**

Under the Federal Government's National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting (NGER) Scheme, companies and organisations are required to report annually regarding their energy use. This includes electricity, gas and fuel use. In the 2009-2010 financial year, the Qld Synod and all its parts reached the threshold set by the NGER scheme of 500 TJ per annum. This meant that we had to comply with the requirements of the Federal Energy Efficiency Opportunities legislation.

As the Synod's community service work was the largest user of energy (UnitingCare Qld 85% and Wesley Mission Brisbane 10%), the work of complying with the legislation in the first five year program was undertaken by these bodies and is coordinated for the Synod by UnitingCare Qld. This has involved writing plans, undertaking extensive and particular audits of buildings and our fleet, and reporting publicly annually (first report was made in December 2012) about the audits and initiatives that have been identified to reduce energy use. This has been a major undertaking.

As part of the initial plan, it was agreed to develop and implement a broad Energy Management Policy for the Synod, which would then provide the basis for more particular Energy Management Policies for UnitingCare Qld and Wesley Mission Brisbane. These policies were finalized in 2012, and the Synod policy will now guide its thinking and work in being more energy efficient and responsible for its footprint on our planet.

Colleen Geyer  
Director of Mission, UnitingCare Qld

## **ii. Reflection on the Callide Valley Flood**

Accepting the invitation to write a reflection on the recent floods in the Callide Valley has resulted in an article which is based on conversations with those directly affected as well as my own personal response. This is not really my story to tell as I was not affected, yet I offer it so that you may know something of what has happened here in the valley. Like many other rural communities which have experienced flooding and fires there is a perception that our story has been lost in the face of what appears to be greater tragedy. Even in this valley, isolation caused by flooded and damaged roads coupled with the absence of a telecommunication system has in some instances resulted in the perception that people in outlying areas have been forgotten.

I have lived in this area for a long time. There is almost a sense of bewilderment that a few days of heavy showers could lead to major flooding. Local folklore whispered of the 1942 flood level. We believed that the dam would put paid to a similar event. The jury is out on that one. In effect,



Biloela did become isolated from its neighbours who were experiencing the worst of the flooding. The townsfolk knew very little of what was occurring further down the valley, yet given what was happening near Biloela, we sensed that it would put the township of Jambin in great danger.

The geographical layout of the valley is such that the headwaters of our major creek systems begin in the Calliope and Dawes Ranges, Kroombit Tops National Park to the south and east, Banana Range to the west, and Mt Morgan range to the north. From what I have gathered, the ranges to the east received around 900 millimetres, causing a major body and force of water to pour into the Callide and Kroombit Dams and Don River. This water had nowhere else to go but over spillways, into the creek systems and cut a path across farmland. It seems that the massive outflows from both dams resulted in flooding in the towns of Jambin and Goovigen causing evacuations. From the direction of Mt Morgan, the Dee River flooded Dululu, converged with the Don and flooded Wowan and the Rannes district.



Words and photographs do little justice to what you actually see and sense when you stand and survey the landscape. Aside from the human face of pain in the destruction, the natural world around us has been reshaped and left groaning as new waterways have been carved out and

age-old trees have been uprooted. But then, a second look at the height of creek banks and the wideness of flood plains indicates that major floods have happened before, and to a greater extent. This is the natural world, ultimately untameable and we are but sojourners who walk upon this earth but briefly.

It seems to me that the further we remove ourselves from the natural environment, the more we want to manage and control it, and most of the time, take it for granted. For those of us who live in towns and cities we like to think that infrastructure and services offer, or ought to offer, protection from the elements. In the aftermath, we discovered the extent of the damage to prime agricultural

farmland. Fences washed away or buried beneath someone else's topsoil, cattle washed away, cropping land stripped of its goodness.

The process of cleaning up and starting over begins as soon as possible. To date, the organisation of the recovery process is just now finding its feet. There is a great desire to ensure that everyone who needs help receives it and a co-ordinated effort is essential.

Some members of our congregation have been directly affected and like many others will spend the next few months and even years bringing their farms and livelihoods back to pre-flood operation. As a congregation so far our response has been prayer, physical support where we are able, and lots of telephone conversations beginning with simple questions such as "How are you? How did you fare?"

Our community has taken a battering, and I suppose that those questions about God which have puzzled theologians and philosophers for centuries will surface once again. Why does God let things like this happen? Where was God... ? Why didn't God stop the rain?

During a conversation with a local farmer many years ago, they shared that they never prayed for a particular weather pattern to start/stop, but simply prayed for the strength to endure whatever state was being experienced at the time. That strength comes from the God I hear in Isaiah 43. That's the God who knows each of us by name, who walks with us through fire and flood.

I don't ask anything of you other than the next time you ask "How are you?", please be prepared to take the time to really listen to the response.

Donna Muston (Pastor, Callide Valley Uniting Church)

#### 4. ECUMENICAL ECO-MISSION

##### i. Queensland Churches Environmental Network Forum (QCEN)

The Qld Churches Environmental Network has been in existence for less than a year, but has already demonstrated that it is prepared to do something a little bit different by holding its February meeting in Toowoomba. The theme of this enlarged and all-day meeting was **the impact of mining on rural communities.**

A total of about 30 people from Catholic, Anglican, Uniting Churches and Salvation Army attended the meeting in St Patrick's Cathedral Parish Centre on 12<sup>th</sup> February, including local leaders, people from the rural areas and from Brisbane. The aim was 3-fold: first, to enable QCEN members and their constituents to be more informed; second, to enable rural people to have a greater sense that they are not alone and that someone cares; and third, to begin a conversation about the theological dimensions. We heard some powerful and moving stories from some of the people affected by the mining; we heard their plea for support, the struggles they have, the sense of injustice, and their efforts to make their voices heard.



But we also heard from Katie Lewis about important research to be undertaken by a widely representative group led by the University of Qld and UnitingCare (Qld) on the impact of mining on those who are most vulnerable. Chris Dalton (a PhD student at CSU) spoke on how theology can inform the choices to be made by the Church in response to CSG developments. Sharon Kirk (Presbytery Minister of The Downs) and John Cox spoke on UC pastoral initiatives. David Ferguson from Clermont had an important perspective to share on a peacemaking role of the Church; this reflected both his strong academic understanding of mining and CSG (with a PhD in that area) as well as pastoral perspectives.

This is not a simple matter, and so there was never any intention of reaching a conclusion or making a statement after just 5 hours of talk; this was essentially a conversation and the beginning of a process. Beyond that QCEN is shaping up well to fulfil an important role in this work in Qld.

Note: The Anglican Discussion Paper on Coal Seam Gas can be found at:

[http://anglicanbrisbane.org.au/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files/2012/08/Diocesan-SRC\\_CSG-discussion-paper\\_Dec12\\_v1.0\\_final.pdf](http://anglicanbrisbane.org.au/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files/2012/08/Diocesan-SRC_CSG-discussion-paper_Dec12_v1.0_final.pdf)

## **ii. Toowoomba Churches Environmental Network Formed**

There was a really important and exciting development with the formation of the Toowoomba Churches Environmental Network which will in effect be a regional expression of QCEN. It will be associated with Toowoomba Churches Together, and of course with QCEN and Qld Churches Together. In the first instance 3 denominations are represented, but that could well grow. Part of the background to this important step was the use of the Christians in Dialogue studies (see below) in an ecumenical setting over 6 weeks. It is our hope that this group will be another link in the chain of communication and understanding between regional and urban areas, and that the Toowoomba example will be repeated in multiple locations throughout Queensland. QCEN itself continues to be a model for other States. One outcome has been the formation of an effective group in NSW.

## **iii. Ecumenical Studies**

The Christians in Dialogue studies “**The Relation between Faith and Caring for the Environment**” launched last year are available for free download from Qld Churches Together Resources <http://www.qct.org.au>. It is designed for use in an ecumenical context, but it can also simply be used within a congregation. A leaders’ Guide is included. There are 5 studies:

1. Humans and the Web of Life
2. Towards an Environmental Theology
3. Justice for all Creation
4. The Environmental Consequences of Human Activity
5. From Eco-Theology to Eco-Mission.

This could help you to move towards the next step in caring for creation. We already have one account of how the studies were used to good effect, and would love to hear your story in due course.

Clive W Ayre

## 5. NEW RESOURCES

### Resources for Lent

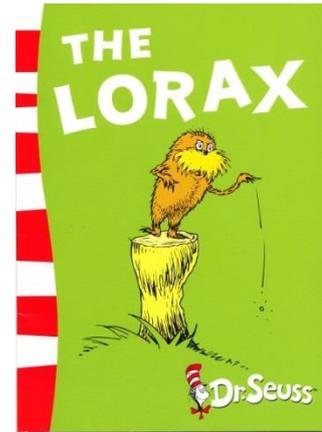
There are some interesting resources for Lent from different GREEN perspectives. These could also be used at other times of the year:

- i. The TEAR Fund is encouraging a **Carbon Fast**, with 6 weeks of biblical reflections and actions to reduce our carbon footprint:  
[http://www.tearfund.org/en/get\\_involved/campaign/carbon\\_fast\\_2013/](http://www.tearfund.org/en/get_involved/campaign/carbon_fast_2013/)
  1. Reuse, recycle and Freecycle
  2. Use vehicles a lot less
  3. Eat less meat
  4. Save energy and water
  5. Stop wasting energy when electrical appliances are used, or even just left on standby: switch off at the wall.
  6. Shop smart: buy less
  
- ii. The Franciscan Action Network includes **SPIRITUALITY OF SOIL: A Lenten Journey from Cosmic Dust to Easter Garden** (5 weeks)  
<http://ecospiritualityresources.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/lent2013.pdf>
  
- iii. The Ecumenical Water Network (EWN) of the World Council of Churches (WCC) has biblical reflections and resources on water for use during Lent, **Seven Weeks for Water** leading up to World Water Day.  
<http://water.oikoumene.org/en/whatwedo/seven-weeks-for-water/2013/2013>
  1. Drip, drip, drip
  2. Waters of baptism, water of life
  3. Wells of quarrel – space for peace
  4. Sister water or blue gold?
  5. Give me water... the living water!
  6. We need to wash our dirty feet

## 6. RECOMMENDED BOOKS

### i. “The Lorax”

If you are looking for a little book to help children care for the environment, it is hard to go past “**The Lorax**”. It was first published over 40 years ago, but it is still as relevant now as it ever was. It is in the unique Dr Seuss style and so it appeals to the younger reader. But while the book is ostensibly for the younger reader, it is very much for adults.



What happened to all the Truffula trees, or the animals and birds who depended on them? What happened to the environment, or to the greedy axe-wielding Once-ler for that matter? Is there hope for the future? Clearly this isn't just a story to be read and enjoyed; I'm not sure that anyone *could* enjoy it! Rather it is one that needs to be discussed. In fact, it would be most interesting to hear an adult discussion around the theme of this book.

Clive Ayre

**The Lorax has also been made into a movie: The Lorax (2012)**

**Watch the Movie trailer: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1bHdzTUNw-4>**

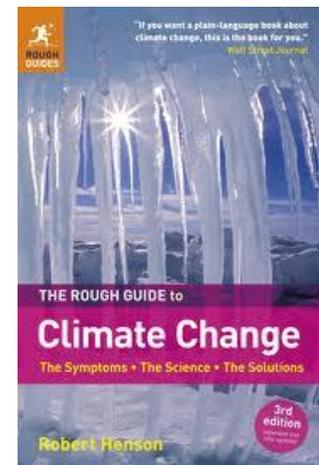
### ii. “Climate Change”

It can be very difficult to understand all the complexities of climate change and to keep up to date with what can best be described as “the single biggest issue facing the planet”, but recently I came across a book that will help. It is called

**“The Rough Guide to Climate Change: The Symptoms, The Science, The Solutions”** by Robert Henson. It was

shortlisted for the 2007 Royal Society Prizes for Science Books. As the Wall Street Journal said, “If you want a plain-language book about climate change, this is the book for you”, while James Lovelock described it as “...a truthful

reference point in an ocean of misinformation and special pleading.” It is profusely illustrated and contains numerous photographs, which makes it much easier for the non-scientist to begin to get a grip on complex material. There are six sections: the Basics; the Symptoms; the Science; Debates and Solutions; What can you do?; and finally Resources. The 3<sup>rd</sup> edition is copyright 2011, so it may be considered to be up to date. My copy set me back \$27 – less 5 cents!



Clive Ayre

**7. TRINITY LIBRARY** <http://trinity.qld.edu.au/library/>

Reminder: All members of the Uniting Church have free membership of Trinity Library. And there is an increasing collection of material. There is also a growing EBook library, but separate registration is required, and it may take a day or two before you have access... so join now!

**8. IN THE NEWS**

**i. Soft Plastic bags can now be recycled through Coles stores**

<http://redcycle.net.au/redcycle/how-to-redcycle>

Bread bags, Biscuit packets, Frozen food bags, Rice and pasta bags, Confectionary packets, Newspaper wrap, Plastic shopping bags, Old green bags

For store locations, insert your postcode: <http://redcycle.net.au/redcycle/locator>

**Now there are 10 participating Coles Stores in Brisbane:** West End, City, Petrie Terrace, Newmarket, Ashgrove, The Gap, Kenmore, Indooroopilly, Toowong, Jindalee

**ii. Obama and Climate Change**

In both his Inauguration speech on 21st January this year and his more recent State of the Union address President Obama has placed action on climate change firmly on the agenda. He said, "We will respond to the threat of climate change". "The Conversation" website reported that "His approach sought to connect climate change with the lives of everyday Americans. In emphasising the widespread destruction caused by wildfires, droughts, heatwaves and hurricanes in the U.S. in recent years, he framed it as a domestic issue that Americans have no choice but to address now 'for the sake of our children and our future'. He also connected climate change to the economy.... What is striking is the way he connected domestic concerns to global ones."

The President went on to outline specific actions he would take; he called for a clean energy revolution and investment in clean energy innovation so that renewable energy will become increasingly cheaper than fossil fuels. He plans to implement limitations on emissions from existing power stations and support action taken by the States. Apparently polling indicates that support for action on climate change is high in the U.S.

There are significant implications for Australia as a major player like the U.S. sets out to transform its economy to in renewable energy terms, and even China has acknowledged that “there is no market for further development of energy-intensive industry.” Quite apart from the significant ethical implications, Australia cannot afford to consider repealing the Clean Energy package and thus move against the global trend to embrace a low carbon future. Nothing happens quickly, but President Obama gives some cause for hope. The question is, what are we going to do about it?

Clive W Ayre

Thanks to David, a Uniting Green News reader, for his contributions. Please see **David’s blog** at <http://convenientsolutions.blogspot.com.au> on both items above and other GREEN matters.

## 9. ECOMISSION DEVELOPMENT

We would love to know what congregations and individuals are doing towards becoming a Green Church. Are we any “greener” than 3 years ago? If so, how?

Would you like to be a contact for your congregaton? I would LOVE to hear from you so we can put a picture together of what is happening .... PLEASE email [green.church@ucaqld.com.au](mailto:green.church@ucaqld.com.au) with the following information:

- Contact Name, Phone, Email
- Congregation/ Town/ Postcode
- Presbytery
- What you have done (eg individually, in worship, property management, studies or discussions, community projects)
- Any difficulties encountered (optional)

Judith Dalton

## 10. CONTACT UNITING GREEN (QLD)

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 **by email as we are not often in the office**. Please include your phone number.

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

<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.greenchurch.ucaqld.com.au"><u>www.greenchurch.ucaqld.com.au</u></a>
<b>Rev Dr Clive Ayre</b> (Eco-Mission Consultant)	<a href="mailto:clive.ayre@ucaqld.com.au"><u>clive.ayre@ucaqld.com.au</u></a>
<b>Rev Judith Dalton</b> (Eco-Mission Facilitator)	<a href="mailto:judith.dalton@ucaqld.com.au"><u>judith.dalton@ucaqld.com.au</u></a>
<b>Uniting Green</b>	<a href="mailto:green.church@ucaqld.com.au"><u>green.church@ucaqld.com.au</u></a>
<b>Mail</b>	<b>GPO Box 674, Brisbane 4001</b>
<b>Phone</b>	<b>07 3377 9777 (Synod Office)</b>