



Welcome to the **November** edition of **National Update** with latest news from the Assembly.

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Just a Thought

Rev. Terence Corkin



Recently I attended the meeting of the Synod of South Australia at which they recognize retiring Ministers. On this occasion this part of the agenda was the highlight of the Synod meeting. As with other Synods, a retiring Minister or two is invited to say a few words. South Australia helps this part of the program by inviting the speakers to consider a question. The two questions, addressed in turn by the retiring Ministers were; “What have you learned about Ministry over the years?” and “What would your advice be for persons setting out in the ordained ministry today?”

I am certain that I cannot do justice to the moving and wonderful presentations made by these two most inspiring Ministers of the gospel. If you know someone who was at the Synod I encourage you to ask them about these speeches. In any event it left me feeling incredibly proud to know that I am a colleague in ministry with such fine people, thankful to God for the faithfulness to the call of these men that God has shown and continues to demonstrate, and humbled by their witness.

My encouragement to you is to invite you to consider these questions for yourself - whether you are ordained or in other ministries. What would you say you have learned about ministry over the years and what advice would you give people starting out in their discipleship or in an ordained or other specified ministry? Perhaps pondering on these questions might help you to find voice to some words of encouragement, and challenge you to think who you can nurture and support in their discipleship with these few words.



From the President

Rev. Professor Andrew Dutney



At the first gathering of the UCA's Sudanese National Conference, held recently in South Australia, a young man told his story. Among the heart rending details of his flight from civil war was a theological insight that he was clearly passionate about. He explained that when he was growing up his community had its own god. No one else could seek their god's help and they couldn't have access to any other community's god.

He said that even when he became a Christian, at first he didn't realise that other people could worship Christ. And while he gradually came to know people from other communities – thrown together by the war – as sisters and brothers in Christ, he never dreamt that people other than the Sudanese or other than Africans could all be together in Christ.

His eyes shone as he looked at our gathering in the northern suburbs of Adelaide – people of many languages, different cultures, various denominations young and old, women and men, but one in Christ. He had discovered that most profound theological insight, poorly described as “monotheism”: because God is One, and all human beings are God's creatures, made in God's image, we are all equally valuable. Because God is One we are made to be at peace with one another.

You can follow the President's observations via his blog at [or click through from the Assembly Home Page](#).



Outback care and community services

Celebrating 100 years in remote Australia

More than 1000 people gathered in Melbourne on 26 September for the official Frontier Services celebration marking the Centenary of the Australian Inland Mission (AIM) and 100 years of service to people in remote Australia.

It was a significant celebration of the remarkable work begun by the AIM, the vision and determination of John Flynn, the dedication of those who have continued to serve in remote Australia and the ongoing work of Frontier Services as an agency of the Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia. People came from near and far for the celebration at the Dallas Brooks Centre.

Rev Gregor Henderson, Chair of the John Flynn Foundation and former member of the AIM Board and Frontier Services Committee, gave a rousing welcome and call to worship, recognising those who had travelled from each of the states and territories of Australia to be there.

Aboriginal Elder Joy Wandin Murphy gave a heartfelt Welcome to Country recognising the traditional owners of the land. In a symbolic gesture of coming together, bottles of water from the different parts of Australia where Frontier Services works were brought forward to the stage and poured into a water tank.

Frontier Services Patron Tim Fischer AC gave the formal welcome, sharing his own reflections on John Flynn, the AIM and the 'four Ps' - Practical, Positive, Pastoral and Proactive - which have been part of the organisation for the 100 years.

Former AIM Patrol Padre Colin Ford offered the Prayer of Thanksgiving before an address was given by the Hon Simon Crean, Minister for Regional Australia.

“Despite the advances made in medicine and transport over the past century, Flynn's vision carries on in you and your colleagues,” Mr Crean said. “The hard work and humility of the early years have left a legacy of service to the community.”

President of the Uniting Church Rev. Professor Andrew Dutney shared the Message reflecting on John Flynn's sense of call from God and how we are all called to reflect on the ways in which God is calling us today.

The service included songs written especially for the Centenary including the first performance of the song “Resilient and Free”, written by Bruce Prewer and Colin Brumby and performed on the night by the choir and Frontier Services staff.

Frontier Services National Staff Conference

Centenary celebrations continued throughout the last week of September, with more than 200 Frontier Services staff travelling from across the country for the National Staff Conference. At the beginning of the week, 30 four-wheel-drive vehicles and 50 Frontier Services staff, having travelled from different corners of Australia, drove in a convoy from Ballarat to The Geelong College.

On the final stretch of the journey, the convoy followed the Dodge, the same model of vehicle used by John Flynn on his travels outback.

During the week, staff participated in training and workshops to build their capacity in providing services to people in remote Australia. Staff also had the opportunity to visit Narana Creations, which is part of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC). They learnt about how Narana works to empower Indigenous people and create a shared understanding of Indigenous culture.

A highlight of the week was the gathering of the Frontier Services family at the Centenary Staff Reunion dinner. About 100 former staff, volunteers and supporters of the Australian Inland Mission (AIM) and Frontier Services travelled from all parts of the country to be there for this special Centenary reunion at The Geelong College.

Almost 80 Frontier Services staff were celebrated and acknowledged at the Conference for their long service with the organisation in a special presentation. The length of service extended from five years all the way to 30 years.

On the final day, the conference focused on the future of remote Australia. ABC Rural's Drew Radford was MC for the program which included a diverse range of speakers who reflected on how Frontier Services can continue to build sustainable communities into the next 100 years. Speakers included Aboriginal elder and Indigenous advocate Dr Tom Calma, who spoke about reconciliation and breaking down Indigenous disadvantage, Michelle Hau'ofa from the PNG Tribal Foundation, who gave a heartfelt account of her work in remote areas of Papua New Guinea, rural education expert Professor John Halsey from Flinders University who told Frontier Services how he saw sustainability as the biggest issue facing remote Australia in the future, and Toby O'Connor, CEO at St Laurence Community Services, who explored how the Christian values of an organisation, like Frontier Services, are integral to what we do and how we go about it.

Induction of two Patrol Ministers

The gathering at the National Staff Conference was a wonderful opportunity to induct new Patrol Minister Rev. Bruce Slater into the Katherine Patrol, and Rev. Mitch Fialkowski, former Katherine Patrol Minister, into the Murchison Patrol, based out of Meekatharra.

All the Frontier Services Patrol Ministers and other staff from across the country were present for the service.

As the induction prayers were read in the Geelong College chapel, the Patrol Ministers gathered around Bruce and Mitch in prayer. Staff who work in the Katherine and Murchison Patrol areas were able to personally welcome and affirm the Ministers as they take up their new positions. Previously chaplain in a Sydney hospital, Bruce's new patch as Katherine Patrol Minister covers a large swathe of the Top End of the Northern Territory and will take him across some of the country's most iconic outback terrain.

"The word adventure is one that I find helpful to use," Bruce said. "I am looking forward to getting to know the community and finding ways that are practical or relevant to support people in their lives. My role is about working with people rather than working for them - supporting what their goals are and experiencing their spiritual journey."

Meanwhile, Mitch said the move from Katherine to the Murchison would be a change of scenery but his core mission to support people in remote places would stay the same.

"People always need someone to talk to, particularly someone outside their family and friends who can listen and won't condemn them; someone who can let them talk about the issues until they find their own answer," he said.

"Being a Patrol Minister is about bringing Church to people in all its different forms, whether it's playing Santa for the children, or coming to conduct a baptism or marriage for people, wherever people are, regardless of their church background."

Compass: The Man on the \$20 note

Compass, on ABC TV, has depicted the extraordinary story of John Flynn in its program, The Man on the \$20 note.

The program went to air on 23 September, ahead of the Centenary celebration, 100 years after the Australian Inland Mission was established and Flynn was appointed Superintendent.

Compass portrayed the story of Flynn with beautiful archival footage and interviews with people who knew him. It was set against the backdrop of the centenary celebrations held in Alice Springs in April this year and brings the story right up to the present with the work of Frontier Services today.

The program includes interviews with Frontier Services National Director Rosemary Young, Centralian Patrol Minister Colin Gordon and former AIM nurse Dulcie Andrew, who is now 90 years old.

You can view the program by following the link on the Frontier Services website:
www.frontierservices.org

Building resilient communities in North Queensland

Families living on remote grazing properties in the Gulf Savannah region of Queensland had the opportunity to take time out and learn some important water skills when they came together for Camp Cobbold.

Frontier Services Savannah Regional Health Service partnered with the North Queensland Royal Lifesaving to conduct a number of Learn to Swim and lifesaving activities for the 170 adults and children who attended the Camp at Cobbold Gorge.

Primary Health Care Nurse Anna Burley said Camp Cobbold gave isolated families the opportunity to take part in activities they would not normally have access to, but importantly the gathering was a chance to relax and reconnect with neighbours.

“This is the fifth year of the camp, run under the umbrella of Scripture Union Queensland. It brings together parents and families together in a fun situation and helps to create a sense of community rather than feeling so isolated,” Anna said. Frontier Services has been involved each year of the camp.

Meanwhile, 24 participants shimmied their stress away at a workshop last month in Greenvale, North Queensland, which included a host of self-confidence building activities such as belly dancing and meditation. Coordinated by the Frontier Services Dalrymple Rural Family Support Service, the workshop was created to suit the specific needs of the community.

The title of the workshop ‘Woman of the Always Always (the Never Never) was fitting as in many rural communities women are expected to be ‘always’ there and often ‘never’ have time to focus on themselves. The workshop aimed to bring out each woman’s sense of worth, confidence and of course, to have a bit of laughter along the way.

Relations with Other Faiths**Interfaith Dialogue**

United Theological College (UTC) is part of Charles Sturt University’s School of Theology. Interfaith Dialogue 9THL334) is being offered as an intensive subject for session 1 from 14 – 18 January 2012.

For more information, click below or email Rev. Sef Carroll at secarroll@csu.edu.au

<http://www.assembly.uca.org.au/rof/upcoming-events/376-interfaith-dialogue-class-14-18-january-2013-sydney>

Doctrine Working Group Report

The Working Group welcomed two new members, Alistair Macrae (Convenor) and Rachel Kronberger to their first meeting. The Assembly meeting in July generated some very specific tasks for the Working Group which continue to progress, including resources for the Season of Teaching and Learning planned for 2014. Four modules comprising four sessions are at various stages of preparation under the rubric “Jesus matters – yesterday, today and forever.” A paper on ‘moral discernment’ was authorised to be posted on the website.

Alistair shared the progress made in translating the Constitutional Preamble into languages to be identified by UAICC. A ‘front translation’ of the Preamble has been commissioned and is being finalised. This will not only make the language of the Preamble translatable into indigenous languages; it will also assist with consistency of translation. Again, in consultation with UAICC, further conversations between members of DWG and UAICC communities will be arranged for 2013 using the translations as a basis for deeper learning and sharing.

A number of documents to assist the new Assembly Standing Committee Task Group on Baptism, Confirmation and membership have been forwarded to assist their work.

In response to the Assembly’s request for a discussion paper exploring the theological understanding of marriage and same-gender relationships, a preliminary ‘scoping’ paper was presented and discussed. Further drafting will happen between meetings.

As usual we shared our recent theological reading.

War and Peace

Rev. Dr Chris Walker explores the history of Uniting Church concern about Australia’s involvement in the War in Afghanistan. Read more:

<http://revdrchriswalker.wordpress.com/2012/11/14/war-in-afghanistan-2/#more-157>

The Joan Stott Bursary

The UCAF National Committee is pleased to announce the awardee of the Joan Stott UCAF Bursary. The Joan Stott Bursary has been awarded to Hannah Rate from the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania. Hannah is from Carnegie Victoria is 20 years old and in her second semester at Tabor College studying for a Bachelor of Theology.

From her application Hannah says:

She seeks to...‘actively pursue the counter-cultural values of the Kingdom of God and what that might look like for a young person today.. and ...’if it is God’s will, I hope my study will equip me to exemplify Christ in this broken world in such a way that is sensitive, relevant and yet consistent with Jesus’ teachings. Whether that manifests in teaching, children’s ministry, chaplaincy or being a mum...I do not know: I am trusting that God has purposefully created me with this enthusiasm for theological study and that in God’s perfect time, all things will work for good’.

‘My faith has become so much more real and life-giving just in these last few months. I never expected this study to impact my life so richly and I find myself living out Paul’s call’

“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is —his good, pleasing and perfect will.” (Rom 12:2 NIV)

Words that give life, connect worlds, open God's grace margin...

It is a long, difficult and often lonely journey from no English to slowly improving English.

The expanse of the world and the depths of your feeling, hopes, dreams and faith are limited to your own heart and memories.

Peter Adur is the only person from his culture and languages background in his home UCA congregation at Hamilton in the Hunter Valley. This is 'home', where he is deeply loved, welcome, cared for and belongs. That community organised for him to attend the very first national gathering of people from South Sudan who are connected to, members of and leaders in the Uniting Church in Australia.

His home congregation believed that opportunities to talk and think, to worship and celebrate, to sing and eat among people who spoke one or more of his languages would be life generating for him. So, with his permission, they organised for Peter to come to Adelaide for the weekend of 9-11 November 2012 for the first South Sudanese UCA National Conference.

I was not there when he first arrived and met the folk who were gathering: Dinka, Nuer, and Arabic speakers from the world's newest country, the Republic of South Sudan. There were others there also who support this ministry and want to understand more about the land and its peoples, their expressions of faith and worship. However, I can easily imagine the joy, excitement and energy of those conversations because I was there when Rev. Amelia Koh-Butler introduced him to UCA ministers the Rev. Gaby Kobrossi (country of origin, Lebanon), and Rev. Dr Emanuel Audisho (country of origin, Iraq). They both greeted Peter in Arabic and those of us nearby who were caught up in the gift of presence were overcome by his response and their interactions.

This very tall, gentle man, with so much to share of his journey, faith and experiences, lit up the room with his smiles and joy as these strangers addressed him respectfully in one of his languages. Peter, Gaby and Emanuel quickly discovered that they spoke Arabic with quite different accents, and different local and regional ways of shaping the language, but that did not diminish in any way the world that was opened – for Peter and for this wider community beyond the South Sudanese.

In singing that he led (in at least two languages), conversations and his participation in the various small groups for understanding and planning for the future, there were none of the 'normal' barriers that surround Peter on his home patch. Of course this does not mean he is totally isolated there, but it does mean, as his minister and congregation recognised, that everyone's world is limited when a person and community cannot speak to each other the deep down things that shape our innermost dreams and longings, loves and fears, hope and faith.

A lot of threads contributed to Peter's experience. The insight and encouragement of his home congregation; the opportunity to gather for support, nurture, and celebration provided by UCA National Conferences, and the visible and tangible support of others – with backgrounds from the west, middle East, South east and Central Asia – all wove into the tapestry imaging life under the Cross. He shared his faith with the president of the Assembly, Rev. Prof Andrew Dutney. This is an insight into what it means to journey a-cross boundaries, expectations and norms. This is the space where Grace works and recognising God at work among us all were key to this, as well as words in-language!

In this UCA in 2012, the Northern Synod takes this part of our commitment to be a truly multicultural church, living faith and life cross-culturally seriously enough to hold their meetings in 4 languages and to shape their agenda and meeting space to fit this: Yolngu (a major language in East Arnhem Land), Pitjantjatara (a major language in Central Australia), Indonesian and English. We also have one presbytery that is intentionally bi-lingual: the Korean Presbytery in the Synod of NSW/ACT.

Some critical questions arise from all of this. Are these mustard seeds, to be nurtured into a great tree in which all the cultures in Australia might build nests - places of safety and nurture, life-giving and a rich source of blessing for the whole UCA and this land? Or are they aberrations, to be overtaken again by the default thinking, energy and structures that seem to rise up to dominance when ever the church struggles with resources, membership and change, or the dominant group among the second peoples give way to our fears and anxieties? God will give us all the grace we need, but on the way to God's promised end of reconciliation for all creation, not as a form of dried food we can store up first. I

recall an ancient story in the early part of the Old Testament that deals with that line of thinking!
(Exodus 16)

Tony Floyd: National Director, Multicultural & Cross-cultural Ministry

Everything In Common – Get in your canoe this year

Yes, we know there are many gift catalogues to choose from – every year, more and more choices hit the market. So why go with Everything In Common – the Uniting Church's very own gift catalogue? Well, we work with Uniting Church partners on creative projects that save lives, it's true. Your gift of medication for tuberculosis victims in North Korea, for example, is just one way we're helping stem the tide of needless deaths worldwide.

But we don't just leave it there. We're committed to seeing people living dignified lives that genuinely have meaning and are well prepared for the future.

Read more at <https://www.everythingincommon.com.au/index.php>

Position Vacant: Manager – Church Partnerships, Asia

Are you passionate and knowledgeable about mission?

Are you able to lead Uniting Church people and communities in deepening relationships between the Uniting Church in Australia and Asian church partners?

Can you both articulate a broader vision and establish and manage specific programs?

Are you able to connect a network of people – volunteers and others – with Asian partners and their issues?

UnitingWorld is looking for a Manager – Church Partnerships, Asia, to enrich relationships between the Uniting Church in Australia and its Asian church partners. The appointee will identify and implement ways to express these vital partnerships both in Australia and overseas and will contribute to the agency's goal to grow a movement of people across the Uniting Church committed to international partnership and relief and development.

Read more: <http://www.unitingworld.org.au/2012/position-vacant-manager-church-partnerships-asia/>

Vale Elizabeth Wood-Ellem

October 19th, 2012

The Uniting Church in Australia has a rich, deep and active partnership with the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga. People such as Elizabeth Wood- Ellem.

Read more: <http://unitingworld.org.au/blogs/vale-elizabeth-wood-ellem-2/>

Listening to the voices of women

A few weeks ago my wife and I trudged down a maze of narrow laneways in a run-down, slightly seedy part of Norwich. We were not sure where we were going and you could be forgiven for thinking this was an odd way to have a holiday!

Read more: <http://unitingworld.org.au/blogs/listening-to-the-voices-of-women/>

India Makes My Face Hurt: sharing more, saying less.

India makes my face hurt.

Sitting in a church overflowing with colour, song and saris, I'm feeling quite happily fatigued from a bout of serial smiling and eyebrow gymnastics. The results, however, are encouraging. There's a ripple effect along the first two rows that spreads into the third and down one side of the congregation.

Read more: <http://unitingworld.org.au/blogs/india-makes-my-face-hurt-sharing-more-saying-less/>



Justice and advocacy

“No Advantage” test application is unspeakably cruel

The Uniting Church in Australia has expressed profound concern at the Federal Government's decision to withhold support services and appropriate visa status from asylum seekers proven to be refugees.

The National Director of UnitingJustice, Rev. Elenie Poulos, has described the application of the Federal Government's No-Advantage Test outlined today by Immigration Minister Bowen as “a cruel policy of punishment”.

“The policy outlined today is that confirmed refugees will not be issued with a permanent Protection visa until such a time that they would have been resettled in Australia had they undergone regional processing,” said Rev. Poulos.

“Under the Minister's perverse application of the No-Advantage Test, refugees will remain on bridging visas indefinitely with no right to work and only basic accommodation assistance and limited financial support.

“This is nothing short of forced destitution. Similar policies under the Howard Government saw asylum seekers living in dire poverty with chronic health issues, sometimes lost in the system for years.

Read more <http://assembly.uca.org.au/news/item/1262-%E2%80%9Cno-advantage%E2%80%9D-test-application-is-unspeakably-cruel>

UnitingJustice calls for changes to ASIO assessments

In light of the recent decision of the High Court of Australia, UnitingJustice Australia called on the Government to urgently address the issue of negative ASIO assessments of refugees.

The indefinite detention of refugees who receive a negative security assessment has left 59 men, women and children in legal limbo, prompting the National Director of UnitingJustice Australia, Rev. Elenie Poulos, to urge the Government to responsibly address national security concerns.

'We have witnessed a disappointing lack of compassion and tolerance from both sides of Parliament over recent months in particular in this area,' said Rev. Poulos.

'We hope and pray that refugees in Australia are soon to be afforded the rights that they deserve.'

A full copy of the media release may be found on the UnitingJustice website:

<http://www.unitingjustice.org.au/refugees-and-asylum-seekers/news/item/880-church-calls-for-changes-to-asio-assessments>

UnitingJustice responds to Labor's push to amend the Migration Act

UnitingJustice Australia spoke out with dismay at reports that the Federal Labor Caucus is moving to include the Australian mainland in the Migration Act excision zone.

Rev. Elenie Poulos expressed extreme disappointment in the enactment of this recommendation of the Houston Panel Report.

"This is a shameful abdication of our moral responsibility as a nation towards vulnerable and oppressed asylum seekers," said Rev. Poulos.

Rev. Poulos said Labor had neglected one of the country's greatest moral challenges, and was now leading a 'race to the bottom' on asylum seeker policies.

A full copy of the media release may be found on the UnitingJustice website:

<http://www.unitingjustice.org.au/refugees-and-asylum-seekers/news/item/882-labor-should-be-ashamed-of-push-to-change-migration-zone>

Justice for Asylum Seekers: A Call to Prayer

The Federal Government has now begun to process asylum seekers on Nauru, with plans for an offshore processing centre on Manus Island well underway.

Offshore processing breaches one of our most fundamental obligations under the Refugee Convention to process the claims of all asylum seekers who arrive in our territories. Such legislation will effectively close the door to those who come seeking our care and protection against persecution and torture.

In response to the many queries we have had about what can be done, UnitingJustice, together with the Assembly Working Group on Worship, have produced a prayer resource that we hope may inspire Uniting Church groups and congregations to pray for asylum seekers and their family, and for our country, that we may one day soon return to be a place of welcome.

Hard copies of the resource may be obtained from your synod office, or by emailing UnitingJustice directly on unitingjustice@nat.uca.org.au

You can also download a PDF version of the kit here: <http://www.unitingjustice.org.au/refugees-and-asylum-seekers/information-and-action-resources/item/879-justice-for-asylum-seekers-a-call-to-prayer>

Support for new book 'A Decision to Discriminate'

UnitingJustice are proud to support the launch of a new book on the Senate Inquiry into the Stronger Futures legislation. The book, 'A Decision to Discriminate: Aboriginal Disempowerment in the Northern Territory' allows us an insight into what Aboriginal people in the NT are saying to Government about their experiences of the Intervention and the Stronger Futures legislation.

The book highlights the fact that a wide range of Aboriginal people and organisations have clearly stated to Government that they are not happy with the Intervention and do not want 'Stronger Futures', yet the legislation has been introduced. The book is available to purchase from Concerned Australians www.concernedaustralians.com.au

You can access the Stronger Futures Call to Action Kit here: <http://www.unitingjustice.org.au/justice-for-indigenous-australians/information-and-action-resources/item/851-stronger-futures-call-to-action>



Croker Island Exodus

When the Japanese bombed Darwin in 1942, ninety-five Aboriginal children from the Stolen Generations, along with their missionary carers, were trapped on Croker Island, 200 kilometres off the Northern Territory coast. Their only route to safety was by boat to Barclay Point, then across Arnhem Land by foot, canoe and truck, led by Methodist missionary, Margaret Somerville.

They reached their final destination, a Methodist farm just south of Sydney, forty-four days and almost 5000 kilometres later.

The ABC recently aired a documentary about this incredible journey 'Crocker Island Exodus'. You can still catch the program on ABC iview.

http://www.abc.net.au/indigenous/programs/crocker_island_exodus/

Christians unite to end modern day slavery

On Sunday November 25 churches around the country will come together to call for the end of modern-day slavery.

Abolitionist Sunday is an annual day when Christians join the next generation of abolitionists by engaging with the fight for freedom and justice of millions of people trafficked and exploited worldwide. Last year, nearly 16,000 Christians participated in the movement.

Read more: <http://www.insights.uca.org.au/news/christians-unite-to-end-modern-day-slavery>



To find out about what is happening across the country visit the Synod news sites below:

New South Wales and the ACT - [Insights](#)

Northern Synod - [Northern News](#)

Queensland - [Journey](#)

South Australia - [New Times](#)

Victoria and Tasmania - [Crosslight](#)

Western Australia - [Revive](#)