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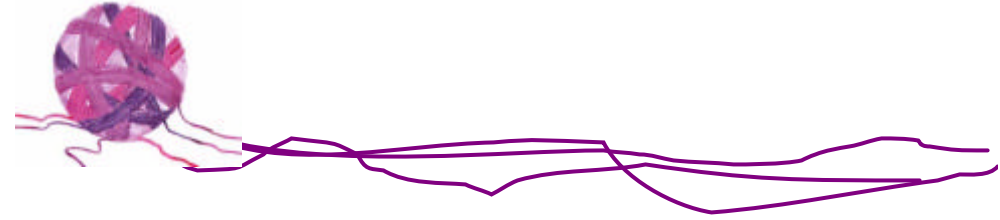
QLD - Contact Revd Beverly Cameron in Sydney (02) 9957 5367
Bev can refer individuals to people in QLD

SA - Unity and Friends of Unity
Unity is a support group for lgbt people, their families and friends.
Friends of Unity is an association of Uniting Church people
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Uniting Network Review is a quarterly publication of Uniting Network Australia, produced in December, March, June and September. Subscription is via membership of the Network. *UNR* is edited and produced by UN NSW/ACT which, since 1989, has formally linked and reported to the wider Uniting Church through the NSW Synod Board of Education. *The Christian ministry of the Uniting Network NSW/ACT is education and adult faith development concerning gender identity, sexuality and related matters, expressing pastoral care and respect for the God-given dignity of all people. Membership of the Network is open to all. Our primary purpose is to share the love and grace of God in Her world.*

Contributions are welcome.

The views expressed in *UNR* are not necessarily those of the Uniting Network or the Uniting Church, and should not be presented as such. Please direct all contributions and inquiries to the Deputy Editor, wrtalbot@gmail.com or by mail to PO Box 98 Enmore NSW 2042. The deadline for the next issue is 1 February 2007. Where authorship has not been stated, news, views and articles have been written by the Deputy Editor. Copyright rests with each writer. Permission needs to be sought for any copying or reproduction. Approval for publication and re-printing rests with the Editor, Ms Teece.

Next issues and themes:

June 2007 - Single-sex relationships: marriage? unions? open? single?

September 2007 - Pastoral Care guidelines

December 2007 - Liturgies and rituals for our lives

March 2008 - "Coming Out" - entries from December 2007 UN/UTC conference

June 2008 - Daring 2008, the eighth national daring gathering set for Adelaide.

Contributions on these themes, news or any matter which may further the aims and objectives of the Network are invited. Articles should be brief (maximum 700 words), although longer articles will be considered.

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Editorial

Fear, timidity and courage. These are three of the themes found in the range of articles in this quarter's edition of UNR.

The report on the National Christian Youth Convention demonstrates, and not for the first time at NCYC, the fear and timidity of some Christian leaders in dealing with sexuality issues for young people and young adults. This is understandable from the view of protecting young people from harm, but frequently misplaced in preventing good education, including peer education by and for young lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people.

It is pleasing to read of the courage of those who lobbied for the Immersion workshops to go ahead at NCYC, and the success that it had.

Fear of a related but institutional kind is being seen in the worldwide Anglican Communion. At a meeting in Tanzania, Anglican Archbishops were agitating to distance the Communion from the USA Episcopal church as it offers support for and implementation of LGBTI equality. A report from the BBC describes this. Primate Williams may sincerely believe that there is a "challenge to both sides", but it is the USA Church being called to abandon justice for LGBTI people - not Anglican dioceses such as Sydney being called upon to abandon their blatant discrimination.

It was fitting, therefore, to include the recent words of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, to offer perspective, Christian reason and balance.

Of course, it's all very well to identify the fear and timidity of "others"; and to admire the courage of "others". It is good to remember the words of Dag Hammarskjöld, a very private homosexual man and second Secretary General of the United Nations:

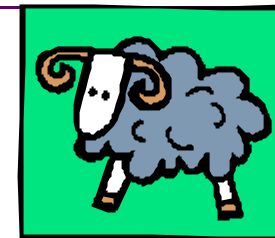
"Life only demands from you the strength you possess. Only one feat is possible - not to have run away." (*Markings*, p 33)

Warren Talbot
Deputy Editor

"The lost sheep"

A biblical narrative on Luke 15:1-8 by Elizabeth Moran

In this reading the leaders of the synagogue are whinging because they don't understand why Jesus was associating with the people that they saw as inferior and unimportant - tax collectors, prostitutes, outcasts. They felt that they had the right to impose their views on those around them as though they were God. They felt that their views had come from God.



Have you ever been in a situation where your views were not that of the majority? Have you ever felt that someone was overriding you with a louder voice or more dominant personality than you? If so, you may feel that you are an outcast spurned by church leaders.

However, there is hope. In telling the story of the lost sheep, Jesus is warning the church leaders that how the people around them are treated is most important. When the shepherd leaves all his sheep to search for the one that was lost, he is ensuring that all the sheep are seen as equally important.

Do we sometimes try to force our views onto other people without taking the time to listen to their story? Do we follow the crowd when speaking up for a minority might cause the people of "power" to shun and reject us? Jesus uses this story as a warning to those people in leadership positions within a community that they are not God and that all members of the community are equally important.

So, are you a church leader or an outcast? Have there been times in your life when you could fall into both categories? Jesus's story is for all. If we take the time when mixing with others to remember that "all are equal in his sight" then surely as a community we will please God.

News, news and news

From NSW/ACT

In June, representatives of Uniting Network NSW/ACT met with Elenie Poulos of Uniting Justice staff to discuss the possibility of linkages between UN National and UnitingJustice. A UN NSW/ACT committee member attended Assembly on the visitor program during July.

UN NSW/ACT prepared a submission on behalf of the National committee to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) enquiry *Same Sex, Same Entitlement*. Views from UN members were sought and compiled to form part of the submission. A representative attended the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board consultation in July, and we have continued to attend the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board GLBT consultation meetings. The main issue raised was the funding reduction to the Board leaving it only able to handle actual complaints with no funding for any proactive work.

In August, we met with Harry Herbert of UnitingCare NSW, which was a supportive conversation. Harry mentioned one of his recent sermons and agreed for its use in the *Uniting Network Review*, as well as agreeing to the idea of UN working with UnitingCare to produce an information sheet to highlight the new Assembly proposal in action through the agency's work.

A UTC lunchtime seminar held on 30 August proved to be successful for the students and faculty who attended. One outcome from discussions at the meeting was the concept of a "Coming Out" conference where anybody could come out to reveal something about themselves (not restricted to sexuality). The conference is now being planned to take place in late 2007, with using funds left over from the 2005 Homophobia Conference.

Our planning day in September evaluated the past year's activities and determined the direction and activities for the coming year, with the goal of further acceptance of equality of GLBT people in UCA. The committee explored what particular activities are required to further support

congregations and/or individuals within congregations throughout NSW, along similar lines to the discussions and visits with Lane Cove held during 2006.

NSW Synod 2006 saw three UN NSW/ACT committee members being elected to Synod: Jonathon Rea, Liz Moran and Leanne Hutcheson. UN NSW/ACT hosted a table with both national and state based resources. We held a lunchtime workshop on Pastoral Care with about 20 people attending, which was successful in generating ideas towards our next rainbow brochure and resulted in the committee being approached by the NSW Synod Youth Unit to collaborate on a youth orientated pastoral care brochure.

Our AGM was held 6 November, at which the following people were elected:

Elizabeth Teece - Co-convenor
Leanne Hutcheson - Co-convenor
Lizzie Groves - Secretary
Elizabeth Moran - Treasurer
Warren Talbot - Education Officer
Jonathon Rea - Committee member
Pastor Ian Tucker - Committee member
Rev Bev Cameron - Pastoral Care Contact

From Western Australia

The UN Daring gathering in Perth in June this year was a great way for the local UN scene to be revitalised. Through the gathering we were able to establish a new contact list, which has given the local members renewed hope in ongoing activities.

As a way of gathering people together again a dinner was held in October. The evening, though mostly social, was also an opportunity to discuss future possibilities for the group, vote in a new WA representative for the UN national executive, and share other news of interest. This dinner was considered very successful and it was decided that UNWA events would be held several times per year.

As part of the annual Perth Pride Festival in October, the Christians With Pride ecumenical group once again marched proudly. The aim this year was to get '200 Feet on the Street' and we feel we came pretty close to having 100 people march. We had a few first time marchers who had lots of fun, and were received warmly by the crowds.

Rev. Bev Fabb, as part of her ministry with Uniting Church in the City, has started a discussion / bible study group for glbt people to explore issues of spirituality and sexuality. The first meeting was in November, and ten people attended from a variety of church backgrounds. They enjoyed some cake and coffee, shared about expectations for the group, did a Bible study together and prayed together. Another meeting was held in December, and the group plans to meet regularly in 2007.

From Victoria

A fundraiser for the Cutting Edge UnitingCare's Goulburn Valley "Diversity" program was held in October and was described as a great success by organisers. Money raised went towards the group that supported young, same-sex-attracted and gay people in the Goulburn Valley. There were 31 attendees from the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and allied communities, including the Diversity support group and Goulburn Valley Pride social group members, Cutting Edge UnitingCare staff and Uniting Church congregation members.

National Christian Youth Convention - True Colours

Report by Jaye Edwards, Youth Development Officer

True Colours is a program of UnitingCare West that aims to encourage safe and inclusive rural and regional Western Australian communities where young people with a diverse sexuality or gender, their family and friends are supported and affirmed. At the recent NCYC I had the opportunity to host a Mission Immersion - where delegates are exposed to community service organisations so they can see 'faith in action'.

I submitted a proposed schedule of activities to the Mission Immersion team in October and recruited young people from WA and rural Victoria to assist with the delivery of the workshop. Understanding that issues of sexuality and gender can be very confronting for young people we gave great consideration to creating a safe space, implementing a fun and engaging afternoon while ensuring that the workshop material steered well clear of discussions regarding sexuality and leadership in UCA and the morality of sexual diversity - this was a workshop about the experiences of young people and their families as they come out and the ways in which True Colours offers them support.

On Friday 22 December, without any consultation with me, a decision was made by NCYC management to pull the True Colours Immersion - there were concerns about the content of the workshop. I am very pleased to say that the Management and staff of UnitingCare West, UnitingCare and some NCYC management committee members rallied their support and strongly advocated that the Immersion go ahead. The NCYC committee discussed the issue and with the inclusion of some additional risk management strategies agreed that the Immersion could go ahead.

I always put myself under immense pressure to make my workshops a great experience for participants but with the controversy surrounding the Mission Immersion I put every atom of my energy into creating a safe but challenging experience for the 30 young people who would participate in the workshops! I lost a lot of sleep in the days leading into the Immersion.. it was all worth it!

Twenty-nine young people were briefed on the Thursday about the Immersion. They were given an 'opt-out' if they felt that the topic would be too

confronting to them. Four girls approached Chaplains explaining that they were very uncomfortable about the Immersion but they would still participate.

On the day we allocated three experienced Chaplains to the Immersion, we ensured a safe space was available for anyone who no longer wanted to participate. We spent the best part of an hour laying group boundaries and breaking the ice. One activity asked each person to choose a picture card that represented how they were feeling about participating in the Immersion - "uncomfortable, unsure, out of my comfort zone" were common responses. Delegates were asked to 'stretch their comfort zones'.

We worked our way through some of the terms relating to sexuality, a little bit of theory and some current statistics. Two young male volunteers and I shared our stories of our coming out journeys. As the day went on the level of interaction and energy increased. We looked at the impact of homophobia and then we asked them to go into the Hay Street mall in teams and find information about sexuality and gender diversity in bookstores, newsagencies and DVD shops. They shot out of the classroom like competitors in the "Amazing Race" and came back with remarkable stories of how clerks had responded to their requests, what they managed to find and what was conspicuously absent. One young woman was even exposed to blatant homophobia! Their energy, excitement and enthusiasm was a strong contrast to the reservation we were seeing merely hours before.

We debriefed the session by asking each participant to share how they felt about the Immersion - their responses were overwhelmingly positive. One young lady felt safe enough to out herself in a group situation for the first time!! Many of the delegates (and Chaplains) saw sexuality as a human rights issue rather than a moral issue for the first time. In keeping with the theme of NCYC, we managed to create 30 agents of change. In the days following the Immersion we had a number of young people, community and adult leaders disclose to us feelings of same sex attraction. They were very grateful to learn that there are safe spaces to be who they are in the Uniting Church. Enormous heart felt thanks to Kaye, Ro, Damien, Keaton and all the other people who advocated for and supported this Immersion! I truly believe we have made the world a friendlier place.

Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Fair Day 2007

The Fair Day is held every year, with 50,000 - 70,000 persons in attendance. This is the sixth year, every year since 2002, the Uniting Network has held an information booth at Fair Day. Here are 26 snapshot notes we took of the people we talked to on the day.

1. Two women, very interested, purchased two copies of "Claiming the Promise", the ecumenical Bible Study on homosexuality
2. Older man. "Not available to be converted back". Ostracised by Christianity. Takes material anyway
3. Two gay male Quakers, couple. Quakers are debating the use of the word "marriage", but same gender commitment ceremonies are OK
4. Woman seeking local support. Referred to Glenbrook Congregation
5. Man. Has friend in Victoria. OAC Congregations in Victoria provided
6. Other gender couple. Questioning about Bible references to homosexuality
7. Man, North Cost, enquiring re Bible study
8. Man, Asian background, ACON researcher, attending a City Catholic Church, also from Melbourne
9. Same gender couple, North Coast, obtain information, Anglicans
10. Woman. Inquiries re Spong visit
11. Seahorse (very established transvestite group) leave brochures
12. Partner of gay man at MCC leaves brochures for partner's new play
13. Various drop in visitors from MCC

14. Man. Asking about the "ecumenical" service with Stephanie Dowrick
15. Transgender person and her work colleague. She states that she was summarily sacked by Wesley Mission for being transgender, but now extremely positive about her employment by UnitingCare Supported Living
16. Same gender couple discuss faith issues - one an Islamic person from Malaysia
17. WA UnitingCare "Same sex attracted youth" Report attracts a lot of notice - topic? or colourful cover? or both? The only Australian Church report to address the topic
18. Same gender couple, women, attend St Barnabas, some pain
19. Disabled man, PLWHA, attends Wesley Mission, is supported
20. Lesbian woman and child - tried Ashfield Uniting, but uncertain about acceptance. Now happy at Paddington UCA
21. Male, Catholic from rural NSW, now living in Balmain, searching. Various options given
22. Woman and son, SW Sydney. Where to go? We can offer one UCA option - maybe Campbelltown.
23. Archivist, male. Collects everything, feverishly
24. Male, takes material, not Christian but "keep up the good work".
25. UNIFAM staffer - why doesn't UNIFAM or UnitingCare have any material for staff or clients on LGBTI issues?
26. One new person on our contact list, gay man in relationship, bellringer from St David's UCA, Kurrajong Heights, the couple being accepted there by the Congregation and Minister.

International - Anglicans face split

BBC News 19 February 2007

Anglican leaders have issued an ultimatum to the US Church over its attitude towards homosexuality. Archbishops meeting in Tanzania have demanded in a communiqué that the US Episcopal Church stops appointing gay clergy and blessing same-sex couples.

If US bishops fail to give guarantees by 30 September, their relationship with the rest of the Church will remain 'damaged at best', the document says.

The crisis began when the US Church approved an openly gay bishop in 2003. Conservative Churchgoers were angered by that decision, as they believe homosexuality is contrary to the Church's teachings. However, liberal Anglicans have argued that biblical teachings on justice and inclusion should take precedence.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, said the document provided "a challenge to both sides... certainly falls very short of resolving all the disputes.. but provides a way of moving forward with dignity".

The communiqué drafted by the archbishops in Tanzania comes after a series of meetings aimed at preventing a worldwide split on the issue. The document calls for the US House of Bishops to "make an unequivocal common covenant that the bishops will not authorise any Rite of Blessing for same-sex unions."

It also asks for confirmation that "a candidate for Episcopal orders living in a same-sex union shall not receive the necessary consent - unless some new consensus on these matters emerges across the Communion."

It concluded: "If the reassurances requested of the House of Bishops cannot in good conscience be given, the relationship between the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion as a whole remains damaged at best."

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, said the document provided "a challenge to both sides".

He admitted the communiqué would "certainly fall very short of resolving all the disputes", but said it would "provide a way of moving forward with dignity."

The document details plans to allow traditionalist members of the US Church to leave and form a separate organisation. They will be administered by their own specially appointed council - with most of its members chosen by non-US clergy.

Groups such as Integrity, which represents Episcopal gays and lesbians, have accused the leaders of bigotry and urged Episcopalians to lobby their Bishops to reject the demands.

Anglican leaders in many parts of the world were angered by the consecration of openly gay Gene Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire in 2003.

Archbishop Tutu defends gay and lesbian people

Source: Outplanet, 31 January 2007

The Nobel Peace laureate and former Anglican archbishop of Cape Town has warned that a hysterical obsession with gay sex leaves African churches in danger of ignoring more pressing issues facing the continent. On a rather more contentious note, he suggested that the mistreatment of lesbian and gay people is akin to apartheid.

"I am deeply, deeply distressed that in the face of the most horrendous problems -- we've got poverty, we've got conflict and war, we've got HIV/AIDS - - and what do we concentrate on? We concentrate on what you are doing in bed" Tutu told journalists in Nairobi for the World Social Forum last week. During the forum, an international gathering of human rights and peace workers, gay activists took many Kenyans by surprise when they marched through Nairobi's streets in black T-shirts proclaiming: "We are here, we are queer and we are proud."

Tutu addressed a taboo that has so far proved socially divisive. "To penalize someone because of their sexual orientation is like what used to happen to us; to be penalized for something which we could do nothing (about) -- our ethnicity, our race," said Tutu. "I would find it quite unacceptable to condemn, persecute a minority that has already been persecuted." Disputes over the acceptance of gay men and lesbians have threatened to tear apart the worldwide Anglican Communion, with some parishes cutting links with the Episcopal Church in the United States over the issue.

Three days after the end of the World Social Forum, which many Christian groups attended, the Rev. Samuel Njoroge of the Anglican Church in Kenya joined Tutu's voice of reason. He hoped that greater tolerance from Christian leaders might win back the gay community, which has understandably been leaving in droves.

"We need to re-examine our doctrine on sexual matters," he told Ecumenical News International on Monday. "We have to find how we approach the issue, but not throw them (homosexuals) out. As pastors, we are supposed to minister to the good, bad and ugly."

First Transgender religious conference in the USA

Anthony Glassman, Centre for Gay and Lesbian Studies in Religion and Ministry

In what is being billed as the first event of its kind, the National Center for Transgender Equality and the Center for Gay and Lesbian Studies in Religion and Ministry at the Pacific School of Religion held the Transgender Religious Summit in Berkeley, California from January 19 to 21, 2007.

The private conference's organizers invited leaders from Christian and Jewish denominations, as well as Muslim, Buddhist and Pagan community leaders.

According to Richard Lindsay of the Center for Gay and Lesbian Studies, it is the first time transgender issues were focused on at a Christian seminary, as well as being the first transgender summit held at a seminary.

National Center for Transgender Equality executive director Mara Keisling pointed out during a conference call on the summit that, while her organization focuses on legislative advocacy for transgender people on the national, state and local levels, "these issues are impacted very much by people of faith in the country, and should be impacted even more by people of faith."

She wants to "begin conversation among people of faith about how the fight for social justice can be used to positively impact governmental policy and various organizational policies. We expect to talk about the negative impact religion can have on policy and transgender people's lives."

Justin Tanis, NCTE program director and a board member of the CGLS, echoed Keisling's sentiment.

When laws are proposed protecting the rights of transgender citizens, "We find the majority of people speaking in opposition, sometimes the only people speaking in opposition to this legislation, are members of the religious right."

"We don't believe that they represent the full spectrum of people of faith," Tanis continued. "We wanted to address the fact that the voices of progressive

people of faith, people who believe that transgender people deserve civil rights and human rights, were not being heard as part of this conversation."

Bernard Schlager, the director of national outreach for the CGLS, is "eager to learn about ways in which people of faith who are allies can create change for all people, especially LGBT, within faith communities and especially in seminaries."

"This Religious Leadership Summit represents for me, and probably for a lot of people who are religious leaders across the country, a really significant turning point in how transgender people are seen in their religious communities," Erin Swenson, a transgender Presbyterian minister, said, pointing out that the conference "would have been unheard of even ten years ago."

She related the story of her own childhood, realizing at ten years old that she was a boy who wanted to be a girl.

"In Atlanta, Georgia in 1957, this is not the kind of thing that any kid with half a brain would have revealed to anyone, and I didn't," she noted.

A change came when "my family started attending a small Presbyterian church just down the street from our home," Swenson continued. "The minister and the staff of this church spoke a powerful message, that God knew me to the very marrow of my bones, something a little frightening to a ten-year-old who had just begun to contemplate the impossible, but also that God loved me right down to the marrow of my bones."

It is that message of love that the summit sought to spread, to counteract the religious right's use of God as a weapon.

Tanis believes that, ultimately, God should be taken out of the legislative equation.

"In a democracy that separates church and state, do individuals have the right to say that because my faith says a particular action or identity is sinful, that should form public policy?" the Harvard Divinity School graduate asked. "I don't think it should."

Contributors, *UNR*, March 2007

Jaye Edwards is the Youth Development Officer with True Colours, WA.
Elizabeth Moran is the Treasurer, Uniting Network NSW/ACT.

Uniting Network Australia (UNA)

UNA is the national organisation, which brings together support, education and advocacy groups for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, friends and families, in the life of the Uniting Church. The organisation is lead by a national committee. National office-bearers are: Rowena Allen (Co-Convenor), Revd Robert Humphrey (Co-Convenor), Andrew O (Secretary), Meredith Knight (Treasurer), Malcolm Cowan (Archivist), Wal Anderson (Web Convenor), Elizabeth Teece (UNR Editor) and state/territory representatives.

Uniting Church in Australia (UCA)

This publication comes from within the life of the Uniting Church in Australia, a 1977 union of the Congregationalist, Methodist and Presbyterian churches. The UCA lives within the reformed and evangelical traditions of the church catholic, naming multiculturalism, diversity, biblical witness, social justice and inclusiveness as key components of our identity. For official national Uniting Church comment on any matter, please contact the Office of the Assembly General Secretary, Revd Terrence Corkin. For matters of human rights and social justice, contact the Revd Elenie Poulos, National Director, Uniting Justice Australia. Details on the UCA, including contact details for the Revds Corkin and Poulos can be found at www.uca.org.au.