



Bulletin – March 2018

Encouraging each other in ministry and mission,
sharing resources, providing mutual support

Network News

May Network Gathering for 2018

Thursday 31 May 2018
6.00 for 6.30 pm

Christ Church Uniting
26 King William Road, Wayville

Continuing the UMN theme for 2018:
Community Connections

Donation to cover the cost of the meal.

RSVP on, or preferably before, Thursday 24 May to
susan@urbannetwork.org.au.

Please advise of any dietary needs.

Save the dates

August Gathering
Thursday 30 August

Workshop for Church Councils

Saturday, 11 August
9.00 am. – 12.30 pm

November Gathering
Thursday
22 November

Community Connections

How well does the church engage, cooperate, converse with the broader community? How open are we to working and learning together? Brett Manuel, guest speaker at the February Gathering, challenged our thinking in this regard and inspired us to act.

Morialta Uniting Church's immediate response to Brett's prompting

Margaret Cargill writes:

"Morialta's attendees at the UMN February Gathering recognised two immediately relevant ideas among the many great possibilities flagged by **Brett Manuel**. Responding to the first prompt – 'Inform' – on the Community Engagement continuum diagram, we have designed and distributed to our immediate neighbours a small flyer alerting them to the impending demolition and re-building of our old manse; at the same time we let them know our purpose – two new four-bedroom homes to better accommodate eight rural university students as part of our longstanding Student Accommodation Program.

The second idea will take longer, but formation of an action team is underway. We will investigate using the history of our buildings and the once-associated cemetery nearby to produce a curated tour and resource package to meet relevant curriculum objectives for our local primary schools, as well as a way to interest locals in 'coming in for a look.' We're too late to be registered for the SA History Festival this year, but local promotion on the back of History Month should still work. So thanks for the Gathering!"

In response to the February Gathering, Rev. Dr Dean Eland prepared the following paper

Art of Association: Facing the Future with Hope

Many stories can be told when Uniting Church congregations were important centres of community life. Until the 1960s congregations were neighbourhood gathering places and children walked to Sunday School, teenagers readily joined drama and music groups and local sporting teams. In adult life, the local minister served as pastor to church members and others in the local community by conducting family baptisms, weddings, and funerals.

In the new post-Christian world, the closing decades of the 20th and early years of the 21st century, churches are discovering ways to respond creatively in a very different context. Profound changes are evident in personal preferences, shifting loyalties, attitudes and an outlook on life. Note: these social changes are beyond the control of your church council!

Congregations once shaped with strong identities, and cultural homogeneity are now present in diverse, cross-cultural and hybridised contexts. The challenge for ministry, the public presence of any faith community today is found in the context of this radical pluralism and social diversity.

In responding to this sociohistorical habitat, many congregations are responding to emerging opportunities by forging partnerships with others who are working to strengthen and build community life. Many are committed to the “art of association”, helping neighbours to find places where strangers meet, where the lonely and isolated find friendship, experience hospitality and welcome.

In practical terms, this suggests that congregations do not need to do it all. Others are also part of being a serving community, neighbours working together to create a better and more just world,

Creative and innovative responses to this new age are expressed in the groups and activities located

in church buildings, seven day a week places to meet. Buildings and a committed core of members is a valuable neighbourhood asset. Congregations of the open door are becoming new again when they provide a welcome and join with others as equal partners. Not a ministry of us to them but a collaborative task, together with others, discovering new ways to develop a local culture of community care.

The greatest benefit of civic participation, Tocqueville argued, was not its effects in the world, but on the relations among people engaged in civic life, the “schoolhouse of democracy.” This we could name as, “gospel practice”, habits and practices fostered and beneficial changes generated by citizens themselves.

In becoming a servant community, neighbourhood churches are becoming a catalyst for new forms of local association. There are many examples to draw on, and the list includes...community gardens, cafes, and meals, op shops, interest groups including choirs, book, arts, health and craft groups, English classes, positive aging activates and playgroups for children. Networking opportunities also emerge when locals are campaigning to protect open spaces and heritage sites.

Insights and concepts about mission theologies have also challenged congregations to discover they are called to follow and join in *missio Dei*, God’s mission in the world. “To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God’s love toward people since God is a fountain of sending love.” “Mission as solidarity with the incarnate and crucified Christ.” (David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, p. 390).

Why Does a Nice Atheist Spend Time Hanging Around Church

David Winderlich, Manager of Spire Community who hosted the February gathering

If ever someone (presumably visually impaired) was to try to “pick me up” at work their opening line could be, “what’s a nice atheist like you doing in a church like this?”

Because I am an atheist, but as manager of the Spire Community I work in and partly for a church, the Clayton Wesley Uniting Church.

Some atheist friends are quite disturbed by this apparent contradiction. I’ve tended to respond by saying “when the atheists give me a job, some great premises, and the mandate to work broadly with migrants, refugees, people on low incomes and other marginalised groups I will be there in a shot,” but so far all they do is complain about religion.”

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And that's the first reason why a nice atheist like me spends so much time hanging around church. Churches, at their best, practice positive social action. Some Christians or Muslims see the holiness in every human and work to ensure that every individual receives the care and dignity and autonomy that flows from that belief.

Churches also have much more freedom than other organisations. Some of those freedoms irk me, such as the tax-exempt status of churches. Others I see as a vital protection against the creeping bureaucracy of welfare and community services. Your freedom means there is more room to experiment and to take risks.

For example, on March 13 at least 100 Iranians refugees and migrants will be jumping over fires at Clayton Wesley Uniting Church as part of their New Year Celebrations. Try doing that on the premises of a Government office, a council or even a non-Government organisation.

Of course, you could not do that at most churches. The tolerance of the Clayton Wesley Uniting Church has been vital to the development of the Spire Community.

That freedom is to a significant degree the result of economic autonomy. Churches are significant landowners and do not depend on Government or corporations to survive. I wish you would make more of that freedom.

Last but presumably not least, you guys do have a certain set of values that are arguably the best hope of the world.

Australia and most Australians treat the poor with contempt. How else can you explain an approach that imposes drug tests for people on Centrelink and relentlessly and often mistakenly hounds them for overpayment of their paltry Newstart benefits while giving a slap on the wrist to politicians for much worse behaviour?

But you guys have this book that says things like "judge not lest ye be judged."

Asylum seekers, including children, are about to start their fifth year on Manus and Nauru, penal colonies created by a nation born of a penal colony, where many are self-harming and frankly going mad.

But you have the story of the Good Samaritan. And Jesus, Mary, and Joseph had to flee to Egypt to save their lives. That's why the Spire Community was able to hang a banner saying "Jesus Was A Refugee" on the fence of the Clayton Wesley Uniting Church at Christmas 2012. The Government is full of Christians. If only they were true to their beliefs.

So, these are the reasons why I a lapsed Lutheran and comfortable-in-my-skin atheist, have been

hanging around the Uniting Church.

My father was a good man. I learned my values and many of my approaches from him. But he was also a fire and brimstone preacher, and he used to always finish his sermons with a challenge. So here it is.

The Uniting Church is in a creeping crisis. Your membership is ageing and

shrinking, and your churches are closing. But as they say, the Chinese symbol for crisis has two meanings, "danger" and "opportunity." The danger is that you will shrink into irrelevance and all the great work of generations of members will cease.

The opportunity is that you will find a new way forward that will meet the needs of a new age. The Uniting Church has significant assets, it still has a large number of members, and it is the most open-minded of all the Christian churches, so I think it is the best placed to evolve.

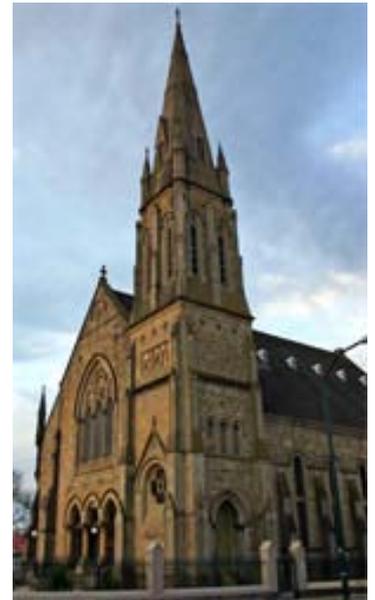
The Spire Community is the result of Clayton Wesley Uniting Church opening itself to the community. It has brought in a wave of new energy. It is an experiment that is showing positive results, but it has not proved itself yet. Financial sustainability is a challenge, and there needs to be some sort of spiritual link between the established congregation and the new community that is forming before it can be seen as an unqualified success.

But it is a serious attempt to build a future. You need many more.

The way I see it, the Uniting Church has two choices. If you do not succeed in turning your congregations and churches into vibrant communities, you will see them turned into commercial property developments.

If you don't do the work to bring in the downtrodden (the "beggars") and the good-hearted people you will end up with the money changers at your table. Take it from me, you want beggars; they are a better class of people.

The Spire Community is a collaboration between Uniting Communities, the Uniting Church of Australia (SA) and the Clayton Wesley Church.



Seniors with Style

12 April
11.30 am – 2.30 pm

North Terrace (opposite Scots Church, Adelaide)

For church and community members, particularly those who identify as seniors or Baby Boomers.

This event will focus on the role Baby Boomers had in bringing revolutionary shifts in Western society. It will explore identity and social change in the 1960s and 70s through the lens of culture and fashion. It will include displays of photos and other memorabilia from the 60s and 70s, live music, food and drink, engagement with fashion, community café conversations and much more!

This is also an opportunity for people to engage with the new Creative Ageing and Spirituality collaboration, which is an initiative of the Urban Mission Network. The focus community is seniors, and the group aims to empower senior citizens to find ways of fostering uniqueness, skills, spirituality, and gifts, to explore meaning in ageing and create networks of community to support each other.

There are some ways you can get involved:

Volunteer to lead conversation groups on the day, as well as people to be in our fashion event.

Displays donations or loans of items we can use for our displays – photos, stories, old magazines, vintage/retro clothing, etc.

Clothing donations clothing donations to fill the Goodies 2U is the Scots Church Adelaide op shop with items from those seniors for people who are inspired by the fashions at the event.

If you would like to help out with any of these items or get involved in another way, please contact Elferaan Williams 0420844771, seniorswithstyle@creativeageingsa.org.au or Ken Burt 0455830292, kennethburt@bigpond.com.



Other News from UMN congregations and agencies

Church in a Cultural Village

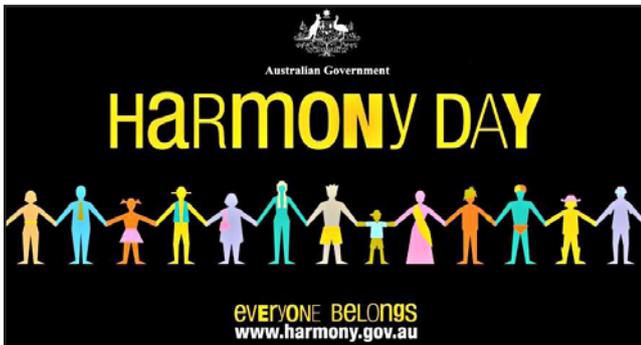
Mitcham Village Uniting Church is an integral part of the Mitcham Cultural Village and works closely with other village partners in various community programs. Special events include their annual life@death art exhibition. The original concept was devised by Rev Dieter Engler and is held to coincide with Easter. The exhibition is a joint project between Gallery One and Mitcham Village Uniting Church.



Life @ Death Exhibition 2018

16 March to 11 April
Tuesday to Friday
10.00 am. – 4.30 pm.
1 Torrens Street, Mitcham.





Harmony Day Variety Show

St Andrew's by the Sea Uniting Church

92 Jetty Road, Glenelg

**18 March 2018 2:00 pm –
5:00 pm**

Arts by the Sea brings you an afternoon of entertainment featuring the performing arts of different cultures in Australia today.

Free entry to Food Hall. Entry to performances: \$5 donation.

Proceeds to benefit local outreach program Community Aid, supporting refugees and others who are struggling.

For more information contact:

Arts by the Sea

Phone 0405 459 214 or

email artsbythesea@standrewsuc.org.au

Visit [www.facebook.com/](http://www.facebook.com/events/1975555762459356)

[events/1975555762459356](https://www.facebook.com/events/1975555762459356)

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Sandy Creek Uniting Church Easter Services 2018

All welcome to all or any of the following services

Tenebrae service

Thursday 29 March

Sandy Creek Uniting Church

Williamstown Road, Cockatoo Valley

Light meal supplied at 6.30 pm Service at 7.30 pm

Good Friday 30 March

Combined service 10.00 am

Williamstown Uniting Church

Easter Sunday 1 April

Dawn Service 6.30 am

in the Bush Chapel at Sandy Creek Uniting Church

Followed by supplied breakfast

Easter Day service

10.00 am

Williamstown Uniting Church

Wider Church

Ethos of the Uniting Church

with Rev Prof Andrew Dutney

Uniting Church SA Office

Level 2, 212 Pirie Street, Adelaide

14 March 2018 4:30 pm – 6.30 pm

Everything you ever wanted to know (and ask) about the Uniting Church in Australia - who we are, what we believe, how we are organised, and much, much more. Book your spot for this free session now using this link: www.eventbrite.com.au/e/ethos-in-the-uniting-church-with-rev-prof-andrew-dutney-tickets-42890342168

