



No. 19, Feb. 2015

## WINDS OF CHANGE



In 1985 a film series was launched called "Back to the Future". It made huge profits by utilising the fictional notion of time travel to send its hero back into the past to remedy mistaken decisions that some people had made in their lives.

**I wish!!** We know that we can't actually change the past, though with God's help the past can be redeemed. The bloodied cross and empty tomb have paved the way, and they embolden us to look forward.

Meanwhile we live in the troubled present, offering hope in Christ to the despairing, always on mission while we look forward to a renewed creation. But which way is the Uniting Church in Australia looking?

Reference was made in *Winds of Change* last October to the questions raised by Dr Keith Suter's analysis of possible futures for the Uniting Church. A summary was made available at "CampFIRE 2014", and a bit later another useful summary of it also appeared in *Revive*.

Is anyone listening? There are signs that the church in W.A. may be walking backwards into the future. Tradition and the survival of an ageing membership all too easily take priority over missional vision.

At the same time, working for the most part outside the processes of our overstuffed Synod office, some individual congregations are seeing visions and trying new things. No-one can see the future, but Dr Suter is helping us to face up to our possible futures.

In one scenario, the church has lost its Gospel and what remains is a secularised welfare net kept afloat by government subsidy - and control. In another, remnant Synod bureaucracies have one agenda left - designing exit strategies for winding up pensions and empty properties. Both scenarios, in the light of present trends, are credible possibilities.

The other two possible scenarios think big and small respectively. But both rely upon a revived sense of mission guided by a robust confidence in biblical revelation such as the Basis of Union confesses.

For the sake of lost souls in our bewildered society, **PNEUMA** stands by the Basis of Union and aims at balanced evangelical revival in our congregations, prompting evangelistic discipling at the personal level, and justice and concern for the common good at the social level.

Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem, in order to secure our future. The question is: In which direction have I set my face? And in which is my local church facing? ◇

### PASTORS AT PRAYER

A clergy breakfast organised by **PNEUMA** on Feb. 5 this year drew together 27 Uniting Church pastors in the Perth area. Fortified by good fare, they then prayed in small groups for the church and the world. A great event, worth copying in your area!



### TOWARDS NATIONAL UCA ASSEMBLY 2015



The 2015 Triennial National Assembly of the Uniting Church of Australia will be held in Perth in Winthrop Hall through the week of **July 12 to 18**.

Many local and interstate members of the Assembly of Confessing Congregations (ACC) within the UCA - some delegates and some observers - will be getting together in Perth from time to time during the National Assembly, to pray for its Proceedings and to discuss the implications of the decisions that will be taken.

To that end, Peter Bentley, National Director of ACC, paid a short visit to Perth in February to check contacts and seek local accommodation near the University of WA for non-delegate interstate ACC visitors. Can you help?



**PNEUMA** is in close fellowship with ACC. Indeed, at the level of individual membership, most members of ACC in WA are also members of **PNEUMA**. Therefore you will be very welcome to attend these get togethers when details become available.

Continued over page

Some of us will remember the discussions which led to the formation of *PNEUMA* in 2007, given that few UC congregations in WA at that time were sufficiently unified in belief to identify corporately with the ACC.

In WA, despite the Basis of Union, most WA congregations are theologically diverse. So *PNEUMA* was set up to provide pastoral support and missional guidance to individual evangelical believers in such congregations. Pray meanwhile that soundly biblical faith will rise up throughout our faltering denomination. ◇



### DR SUTER IN PERTH

Such has been the interest in Dr Suter's study of future scenarios that *PNEUMA* and other agencies have been able to arrange for him to come to Perth for a seminar in May.

Provisionally, lock in the evening of May 7 in your diary, and meanwhile: **WATCH THIS SPACE!**

### Got a moment to pray?

\*Jan Ali, one of the four refugees who fellowshiped with us at CampFIRE 2014, is in a desperate place. Denied a visa three times in a row, he is on notice to be deported back to Afghanistan. He left because he is a Hasara and a Christian; his life was at risk. **Forced return would mean certain death.** John Broadbent and many other concerned Australians are pleading his cause with officials. Pray urgently.

\*Pray for the Illingworth family as Mark, obliged to stand down from The Billabong UC, takes up a part-time consultancy with Scripture Union and seeks to develop a viable leadership coaching service as well.

\*Pray for those planning the agenda and papers for the coming UCA National Assembly in Perth, that out of this event may come a truly biblical vision of, and renewed commitment to, a holistic Gospel mission.

\*Pray also for our Moderator, Rev. Steve Francis, that he may have the loyalty of his colleagues and the freedom to exercise true Christian leadership. ◇



### Do they just work?

What child could resist this product of Bicton UC's "Men's Shed"? A wooden kangaroo rocking chair! What next? Naturally there was no time to talk. That's not the way of men. Or is it?



### Young Adult Pilgrimage to Israel

Ian Robinson is leading a group of 20 young adults, plus ten Christian mentors, into Jordan, Israel and Palestine, to connect

with Bible locations and local Christians in each place. Lock it in to your diary now.

Likely dates: **Nov. 8 to Dec.13, 2015.**

Likely cost: **\$6250.** Closing date: **June 1.**

Enquiries: [idtr@westnet.com.au](mailto:idtr@westnet.com.au)

### Has your local school got a "chappo?"

State school chaplains are widely valued and sought after for their supportive pastoral services. Despite criticisms from a small anti-faith minority in the community, most follow carefully framed guidelines about how to minister in this secular setting without causing ethical offence. And many students - and staff - seek their counsel.

The Federal Govt, however, has just slashed subsidies for chaplaincy, causing 100 schools in WA to lose their chaplains. Attempts are being made to find other sources of support for them, for the needs are great. Is there something more your church community could do to keep this channel of ministry open in your locality? ◇

### Mission and Discipleship Workshop

What does it mean to build a discipling culture? This workshop sponsored by *PNEUMA* includes teaching, testimonies and table group discussion led by a local and international team from 3DM.

Date: Saturday 2nd April 2015

Venue: Churchlands Christian Fellowship

Cost: \$40pp For more info.

See [www.missionalcommunities.org.au](http://www.missionalcommunities.org.au)

### Makes you wonder

Ian Robinson's well known course for training in faith sharing, A prerequisite 'taster' session will occur on Mar. 28 from 9-12. A full day training session is also coming up on June 28, for the series on *The Story and Our Story*.

Contact: [idtr@westnet.com.au](mailto:idtr@westnet.com.au)

And have you noted the dates for CampFIRE 2015 in your diary?

**Sept. Sat.26 to Mon.28**

**More information soon!**



Do you know other folk who would welcome being on the *PNEUMA* mailing list? Tell us, or tell them how to contact us, as indicated in our letterhead.