

# TRANSCEND: JUNE

Ascot Vale Uniting Church Newsletter 2015

60 Maribyrnong Road, Moonee Ponds

Services: Sundays 10 am

## 'It's Time': Why I Support Gay Marriage

Rev. Ron Rosinsky



I support gay marriage because it's the right thing to do. It's wrong to deny the dignity of the institution of marriage to people who are same sex attracted, just because they are so. That's discrimination. The Bible and our faith have been purported to support such discrimination against gay persons. They don't. More about that later. *Jesus spoke powerfully against pre-judging others base on a fragmentary understanding of them.* Calling that behavior hypocrisy he said, "do not judge, so that you may not be judged...Why do you see the speck in your neighbour's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye?" (Matthew 7: 1; 3)

*But shouldn't we judge immorality? What did Jesus say about homosexuality? Insert here the sound of ...silence. He said nothing. Did he condemn homosexuality? Please insert here... the sound of crickets. He didn't condemn it; he said nothing. Nor is homosexuality mentioned in the Ten Commandments. We should not be defending a cultural bound understanding of homosexuality and call it Biblical.* In other words many misconceptions, fears and hysterias about homosexuality originate from us and from our cultural traditions, not from the Bible. Strong emotions tempt conservative and progressive Christians alike to read whatever they want into the Bible.

### What's in a Marriage?

Truth be told, the key consideration about gay marriage or any marriage boils down to two questions: *do those people who seek marriage, gay or straight, commit to each other as equals in a loving covenant relationship? And do they pledge mind, body and soul to care for the good of each other?*

*In the Bible a covenant was a promise to bless the other by entering into a relationship of unconditional love for and commitment to that person.* This is how God showed God-self to humanity, it's how God relates to humans, from the first covenant that God made with Abraham and on down to people of each generation since. That ancient Judeo-Christian principal of a covenant relationship is the foundation upon which Christian wedding vows are based, *'for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health...'*

### The Battle of Ideas

In 1989, journalist Andrew Sullivan argued that the marriage covenant should be extended to same sex couples. He wrote an essay for the *New Republic* entitled, "A (Conservative) Case for Gay Marriage." He argued that domestic-partner laws would further weaken the ideal of marriage in a world already rife with divorce, cohabitation and an absence of two parents raising their children. Marriage, by contrast, is crystal clear: "You either are or are not married; its not a complex question," Sullivan wrote. *If conservatives truly care about traditional relationships, he pointed out, they should welcome same-sex couples seeking to honour an ancient tradition- marriage.*

In many states in America, and elsewhere throughout the world, tens of thousands of couples have been lawfully joined, and the sky hasn't fallen in. Nor have churches been forced to recognize civil marriages of which they disapprove or perform same sex marriages.

From page 1.

Back in 1980 John Boswell of Yale published *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, which went on to win the National Book Award. Copiously documented and densely argued, Boswell employed his knowledge of classical and medieval languages to investigate the history of Christian attitudes toward same-sex couples. He concluded that it was not all hellfire and brimstone. In fact, Boswell found scant evidence that the early church condemned homosexuality before the Middle Ages. Provocatively, Boswell ventured that some Christian churches actually blessed same-sex unions during the first millennium of Catholicism.

Boswell's book changed the lives of many of his readers. It convinced them that discrimination against homosexuals was "*not part of the natural order.*" It was the arbitrary intervention of a particular time and place- the factious and violent medieval church.

### **What does the Bible say?**

Homosexual acts are mentioned in seven Bible passages.

- Two refer to rape (Genesis 19: 5; Judges 19:22)
- Three refer to intercourse between men, in the context of idolatry (Leviticus. 18: 21-22; 20:13; Romans 1: 27)
- One refers to sex between women, in the context of idolatry (Romans 1: 26)
- One refers to prostitution with "call boys" and pederasty (a man who engages in sexual intercourse with an under-age boy) (1 Corinthians 6: 9-10)
- One refers to sex in the context of idolatry (1 Timothy 1: 8-10)

*Many Christians claim that these passages forbid homosexual practices.* But this interpretation is strongly opposed by some Christians like D.H. Fielding.

He wrote in the *New Bible Dictionary* that these passages have been used, "as tools of a homophobic polemic which has claimed too much."

A prime example of 'claiming too much' is the oft- quoted passage from 1 Corinthians. In it Paul appears to condemn homosexual relationships. But looking at the original Greek of the passage we can see what Paul was really saying. The first word that Paul uses in his list of vices is *malakos*, literally meaning "soft to the touch". The word was frequently used to point disparagingly to a boy who was kept for sex, a catamite or a "call boy". The second word, *arsenokoites*, referred specifically to adult men who used or bought the services of the call boy. These two words should not be generalized so they are made to condemn homosexuality in all its manifestations. Paul was condemning men who were sexually exploiting boys.

*Condemnations against homosexual acts may be based on taking Bible passages out of their historical context.* The passages from Leviticus decry 'laying with a male as with a woman' as an abomination. That word was often used to describe idolatry. And the passage from Romans calls such same sex relations, "unnatural". But what's the context? All of these passages condemn homosexual activity *conducted in the course of idolatry*, but not necessarily more widely than that. Idolatry meant worshiping and serving created things, false gods of one's own making rather than the Creator.

In all these passages, homosexual activity was strongly associated with the idolatrous practices of pagan nations opposed to Israel. In Leviticus for example the Hebrew people were to separate themselves from the practices of the Egyptians and Canaanites. Thus some Bible scholars believe the condemnations are more a condemnation of the idolatry, than the homosexual acts themselves. This is a hotly contested point. It would seem that the authors of Leviticus were more clearly against homosexual practices. But is it right to appropriate views from the desert of 3,000 years ago without seeing if they agree with our conscience?

I join with evangelical theologian John Achteimer who concludes that traditional condemnations of homosexual acts are based on a fragmentary reading of the Bible. And they are inconsistent with overall Bible teachings about covenant relationships- right relationships.

- Ask: Were the Bible passages in both Old and New Testaments forbidding same sex intercourse intended to apply to all homosexual relationships, or only to homosexual acts involving idolatry, rape, prostitution or pederasty?
- Ask: Even if such Bible teachings apply to homosexuality in general, are these teachings important spiritual principles for all times? Or are they like the Bible teachings on slavery and subjugation of women? Are they remnants of Biblical-era culture that we must now reject as incompatible with the more important Bible teachings about God's love and right relationships?

**Evolution ?**

Australians have yet to give their answer to the question of same sex marriage. The Irish have voted in a recent referendum to legalize gay marriage- this in a staunchly Catholic country. Its time for Australians to decide through their Members of Parliament. And maybe the church will awaken and see what other people see, that gay men and lesbians are not aliens from society, somehow set apart, nor do they somehow need to be counseled to become straight. What harm that causes to a gay person's sense of self worth and God given identity. Whether a person is gay from birth or not, whether their orientation is a matter of nature or nurture is irrelevant and nobody's business. Perhaps God created them gay, so why should they change?

Public opinion polls in the United States have continued to show resistance to same sex marriage among Americans over 65. But those born after 1980 are stoutly in favour. Could this be the same in Australia? Perhaps this latter group are not so much deluded, but evolving beyond homophobia.

U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia has consistently dissented from the majority decisions of the court, which have upheld laws allowing same sex marriage. He has cited "moral disapproval". He asked his friend, Theodore Olsen, a conservative lawyer who supports gay marriage, "When did it become unconstitutional to exclude homosexual couples from marriage? When did that happen?" At last, Olson gave the only answer possible; the only answer where people are free to consider the arguments and make up their minds, not covered by their opponent's temper tantrums and foot stamping. "There's no specific date in time," said Olsen, "this is an evolutionary cycle."

God works for the good of all people, especially the disadvantaged, through human conscience and the evolutionary cycle.

Prejudice and discrimination demean and enslave us all- both the hater and the hated. Nearly three thousand years ago, the prophet Amos saw the corrosive effects of bad religion driven by prejudice. In that context Amos felt that God was saying to his people, "*I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies...but let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream...hate evil and love good.*" (Amos 5: 24; 15) May those waters cleanse us all and bring us back to true values, to our goodness, to right relationships based on equality. God has created us equal, gay and straight.

May justice roll down like waters. Bring on the flood. Here comes the flood.

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If you hold a different view, let's hear it publicly or privately. All will be respected and heard.

All the best,  
Ron Rosinsky

*"Education is what remains after one has forgotten what one has learned in school."*

*Albert Einstein*

*"Some people are always grumbling because roses have thorns; I am thankful that thorns have roses."*

*Alphonse Karr*

## Dates for Your Diary

Sunday June 7th.	Special lunch after service
Monday June 9th.	Queens Birthday Holiday
Saturday June 13th.	Cake Stall & Sausage Sizzle—Union Road
Sunday June 14th.	Refugee Week Commences
Saturday June 27th.	'Fish and Chip' night
Monday June 29th.	The Asylum Seeker Debate 7.30, 148 Lonsdale St.
Sunday July 26th.	Working Bee at Church after Service

## Worship Themes and Readings

**14 June:** Communion Sunday- 'Many religions and pathways, one destination: learning about compassion' Luke 6: 32-42

**21 June: World Refugee Sunday-** 'Our boat is so small, the ocean so great: finding compassion in your own world may seem hard' Mark 4: 35-41

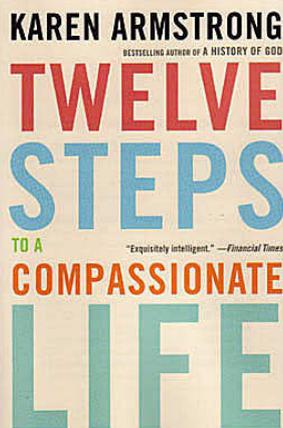
**'Soul Groups' meets today after church, 11:30- 12:30:**

**Topic-** *'Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life'*, by Karen Armstrong

**28 June:** Lay led service about "Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life"

**5 July:** Communion Sunday- 'Compassion for yourself' Mark 6: 1-13

## Soul Groups



**Study topic:** 'Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life', by Karen Armstrong  
**Chapters one and two:** 'Learn about compassion' (including compassion for yourself); and, 'looking at your own world'

**Time :** From 11:30 am to 12:30; in the multi-purpose room

**Dates:** Sunday June 21st. After church.

**Everybody is welcome to come and take part.**



## Kid's Uniting

**Teacher: Caterina Rosinsky**

**ALL CHILDREN ARE VERY WELCOME**

## CAKE STALL & SAUSAGE SIZZLE Saturday June 13th.



Time: 9am to 12pm (Set up from 8:15am)

Place: 199 Union Road in front of Happy Receptions

We need cakes, jams, preserves, crafts, plants to sell.  
Please bring items priced, and packaged ready to sell.

You can drop things to Candace's house during the week,  
or on the morning of the sale.

People are needed for an hour or so to sell, or set up, or  
take down.

We will also need others to help Michael with the sausage sizzle.



## THE ELDERS INVITE EVERYONE TO A SPECIAL LUNCH ON SUNDAY JUNE 7<sup>TH</sup> AFTER THE SERVICE

AT 10.00AM, REV ROSEMARY BROADSTOCK WILL PARTICIPATE IN THE SERVICE  
"REGENERATING THE CHURCH"

MEET YOUR ELDER AND ENJOY A CATERED LUNCH

**THIS IS A SPECIAL DAY FOR US ALL!**

IT IS ALSO A CELEBRATION OF THE EXTENSION OF  
RON'S MINISTRY AT ASCOT VALE UNTIL MAY 2019.

**PLEASE MAKE AN EFFORT TO BE THERE !**



## Come Along for Fun at the Fish & Chip Social Night:

**Dinner & Dance Night!**

**Saturday 27th June  
@ AVUC  
6pm onwards**



Bring along some dinner and dancing shoes!  
Melita and Michael will be teaching some basic partner  
dancing moves!

Don't worry if you think you have two left feet or you don't  
have a partner as you are guaranteed to have a few laughs  
and learn a few basic dance moves.

Would be great to see everyone there and we will dance the night away together!

*"If you could kick the person in the pants responsible for most of your trouble, you wouldn't sit for a month."*

*Theodore Roosevelt*



During the service on June 7th. Ron will interview Rosemary Broadstock about the Regenerating the Church strategy that has been adopted by our Presbytery.



## What is 'Regenerating the Church'

'Regenerating the Church' is the strategy adopted by our Presbytery designed to take our Church into the future.

It encourages congregations to explore new ways of being a church so that as society changes Church can remain a significant and relevant part of the community.

## Why do we need to regenerate the church?

Several decades ago, belonging to a church was seen for many as an important part of life.

Tennis clubs, womens' groups, social events, children's clubs, youth groups, large Sunday schools and their anniversaries formed an important part of community life.

Much change has taken place since then. Sundays are the same as any other day. There are now many faiths in our community, and there are many ways to belong in the community, provided by a range of organisations. Social attitudes have also changed. All this has commonly led to a situation where trying to attract people to the traditional form of church has past.

## Fresh Expressions of Church

What is now recognised is that as a Church, we have come to a new stage in our history, and that God is leading the Christian community to offer new forms of Church for the community.

This means new models of Church – not just doing things a bit differently but a way of being church that is accessible to people, and missional – that is, holding together justice, service, and making disciples.

## What would this look like?

This might mean meeting where people already are rather than in a church building.....perhaps establishing a walking group that hikes to beautiful places and breaks bread together .....offering a community meal with time for God just after dessert.....developing a form of worship based around gospel and culture in film and meeting in a local cinema.....developing a missional community that shares life together and meets around a meal in a pub....

## Renewed Life

As a result, what is experienced in many places is the development of new communities of faith, which include people with no, or only a distant experience of Church. In this we see afresh the human need to connect with the spiritual, and the welcoming and creative God who continues to call people into the family of God in new ways.

## What about existing congregations and places of ministry?

The Presbytery values and wants to promote what Archbishop Rowan Williams described as a 'mixed economy'. Some congregations will continue to attract members, and remain healthy and vibrant. However new expressions of church will also grow, perhaps within existing congregations, beyond existing congregations, or the existing congregation may become a new expression of church.

The Regenerating the Church website has six short videos showing examples or models of new ways of being Church being tried in our Presbytery.

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

## From the Treasurer...

### Offering envelopes

Offering envelopes for the period June 2015 through May 2016 are available on the front table at the entrance of the church.

Please take a set, alternatively see Peter Macdonald or Ted Jennings.

### Donations

Church council decided to donate \$150 to The Share Winter Appeal.

### Direct Credit

Several people have expressed interest in direct credit, using electronic funds for offerings.

Documentation to set up this program is now available and will be distributed to those who have expressed interest. If you are interested please see Peter Macdonald.

### Church phone

Have negotiated a reduced line rate with Telstra.

### Land Tax

SRO (State Revenue office) were requiring payment of land tax. We have requested exemption

### New Computer for the Church

Church council has approved purchase of a new computer for the Church.

### Charities Commission

The Annual information Statement for Ascot Vale Uniting Church has been provided to the Australian Charities and not for Profits Commission. (Please note that we are a charity registered with the ACNC.) and have to provide updated information each year.

### Reviews with UCA Funds Management

Church Council has approved revision to authorised signatories for our funds held with UCA Funds Management. Appropriate paperwork is now being compiled for the changes

The finance committee is now reviewing our holdings split between cash holdings (one year requirements) and the balance in growth units (equity) considering risk and returns, with a view to increasing our cash-holdings to cover our projected deficit for the next five years.

### Finance Committee

The next finance committee meeting is Thursday July 23<sup>rd</sup> 7.30pm at the church,

Peter Macdonald

Treasurer

## M.V.C.C. Free Health and Well-being Seminar

### Diabetes: prevention and early intervention

Monday, 22 June, 10am-11.30am Clocktower Centre, 750 Mt Alexander Road, Moonee Ponds

Morning tea will be provided at all sessions.

Bookings are essential - contact the Healthy Ageing Officer on 9243 8835 or

email [connected@mvcc.vic.gov.au](mailto:connected@mvcc.vic.gov.au) to reserve your place

*Two boys were walking home from Sunday school after hearing a strong preaching on the devil. One said to the other, 'What do you think about all this Satan stuff?'*

*The other boy replied, 'Well, you know how Santa Claus turned out.*

*It's probably just your Dad.'*

## NEWS FROM CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING of 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2015

**1. A Working Bee** has been planned for 11.30 to 1.00 on **Sunday 26 July**, to clear out and tidy the storage cupboard in the Gathering Space, and the small Vestry room between the Gathering Space and Meeting Room. Everyone is invited, there will tasks for both big and small, and we will enjoy a shared lunch afterwards, in the excellent tradition set by Ken. An occasion not to be missed!

**2. Our Social and Environmental Justice** group is struggling for lack of members. So it has been suggested that instead of trying to “go it alone”, we should seek to work in with other like-minded groups, either in neighbouring churches or in the community. Within our own church, the SEJC and Social Events Committee will consider how we can join forces to plan occasions for fun and friendship which will also promote the cause of justice. Our planning sessions will probably take place over a coffee in Puckle Street, and you are welcome to join us with your ideas. See Michael, Dorothy or Fiona to express your interest!

**3. Date for your Calendar:** Monday 29 June, 7.30 pm, at 148 Lonsdale Street

**Business, Faith, Law and Morality – the Asylum Seeker Debate** with a star-studded cast, including **Julian Burnside QC**, leading human rights barrister, **Rev Prof Andrew Dutney**, President of the Uniting Church, and **Pamela Curr**, who is in the Who’s Who of Australian women, and works at the ASRC. They will discuss

- \* are Asylum Seekers an economic opportunity or a threat?
- \* do we have a moral obligation to assist Asylum Seekers?
- \* does Business have a role to play in the debate?
- \* is Australia’s policy to discourage some Asylum Seekers legal?

Obtain your **free ticket** from: [bflm.eventbrite.com.au](http://bflm.eventbrite.com.au)

Dorothy Howes, Secretary, Church Council

## Turning a Ruin into an Asset?



Some of our members have been discussing the feasibility of using the raised area under the towers as a stage for drama, music or other types of performances.

Your creative suggestions would be most welcome.

*Some considerations:*

- Government or Council Grants may be available.
- We have 30 plastic chairs. Extras are cheap.
- Would need lighting and P.A. System.
- Would community groups be interested in using the space?
- Would noise be a barrier?
- Imagine a Christmas Pageant under the stars

Please pass on your constructive suggestions to Fiona.

Ascot Vale Uniting Church

Rev. Ron Rosinsky

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### ELDERS

Peter Macdonald

Angelika Ranellone

Melita Long

Michael Long

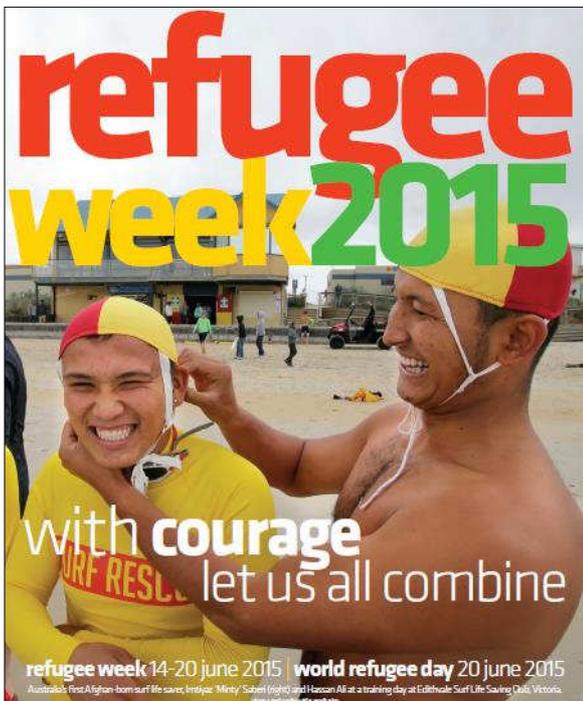
Dorothy Howes

Noel Lloyd

Dina Monaghan

*‘Transcend’ is published monthly  
Articles and photos are welcome.*

*Email to the Editor  
Robin Waltrowicz  
[avuniting@hotmail.com](mailto:avuniting@hotmail.com)*



## 14 to 20 June is Refugee Week

The aim of this week is to develop better understanding and respect between different communities and to encourage successful integration, enabling refugees to live in safety and to continue making a valuable contribution to Australia.

### Who is a Refugee?

- The person has to be outside their country of origin
- The reason for their flight has to be a fear of persecution
- This fear of persecution has to be well founded (i.e. they must have experienced it or be likely to experience it if they return)
- The persecution has to result from one or more of the five grounds i.e. race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion
- They have to be unwilling or unable to seek the protection of their country

The terms 'refugee', 'asylum seeker' and 'migrant' are often used interchangeably, particularly in the media. However, there are important distinctions in their definitions.

**A migrant** is someone who chooses to leave their country to seek a better life. They choose where they migrate to and they are able to return whenever they like.

**Refugees** are forced to flee from their country and cannot return unless the situation that forced them to leave improves. Some are forced to flee without any warning; many have experience torture and trauma. The motivating factor for refugees is safety and protection from persecution and human rights abuse, not economic advantage.

**An asylum seeker** is a person who is seeking protection as a refugee and is still waiting to have his/her claim assessed. Every refugee has at some point been an asylum seeker.

## Knit and Knatter



### Knitting Group

Have you always wanted to knit but don't know how? Or are you clever with the knitting needles and just want to be able to have a chat while making new friends?

Come along to the Knit and Knatter classes and create knitted pieces for community projects.

All materials are provided, and classes are free.

**When:** Tuesdays, 10.30am–12.30pm

**Venue:** Ascot Vale Neighbourhood Centre, Corner Munro St and Union Rd, Ascot Vale

**When:** Thursday 10am - 12pm

**Venue:** Crown Street Stables, 40 Crown St, Flemington

Register today, contact our Health Ageing Officer on **9243 8835** or [connected@mvcc.vic.gov.au](mailto:connected@mvcc.vic.gov.au)

Transport services and carer support may also be available upon request for a fee. Two weeks' notice is required.

## AVUC SERVICE ROSTER: JUNE - SEPTEMBER 2015

<b>SUNDAY 10.00am</b>	<b>SERVICE/ LEADER</b>	<b>COMMUNION ELDER</b>	<b>DUTY ELDER</b>	<b>MUSIC</b>	<b>WEL- COMER</b>	<b>READER</b>	<b>MORN- ING TEA</b>
<b>7 June</b>	Rev Ron Knowing Me, Knowing You		Peter	Maria	Peter	Ken	Ken Jenny
<b>14 June</b>	Rev Ron Communion	Noel	Dina	Maria	Michael	Angelika	Marycon Chris
<b>21 June</b>	Rev Ron Refugee Day KU end		Michael	Dorothy	Andrea	Candace	Fiona Dina
<b>28 June</b>	TBA		Angelika	Candace	Robin	Chris	Barbara Chris
<b>5 July</b>	Rev Ron Communion	Dorothy	Noel	Dorothy	Angelika	Peter	Angelika Bente
<b>12 July</b>	Rev Ron		Peter	Maria	Cally	Cally	Ken Jenny
<b>19 July</b>	Rev Ron KU resume		Dorothy	Dorothy	Michael	Marycon/	Marycon Barbara
<b>26 July</b>	TBA		Melita	Candace	Dina	Melita	Dina Fiona
<b>2 Aug</b>	Rev Ron Communion	Peter	Dina	Maria	Angelika	Barbara	Bente Marycon
<b>9 Aug</b>	Rev Ron		Michael	Maria	Melita	Michael	Angelika Barbara
<b>16 Aug</b>	Rev Ron		Angelika	Dorothy	Ken	Angelika	Ken Jenny
<b>23 Aug</b>	Rev Ron: AVUC Anniversary		Noel	Candace	Andrea	Dina	Dina Fiona
<b>30 Aug</b>	TBA		Dorothy	Maria	Robin	Chris	Chris Marycon
<b>6 Sep</b>	Rev Ron Communion	Melita	Dina	Candace	Cally	Cally	Ken Jenny
<b>13 Sep</b>	Rev Ron KU end Spring Festival		Michael	Maria	Dina	Candace	Bente Dina
<b>20 Sep</b>	Rev Ron		Peter	Dorothy	Robin	Angelika	Chris Angelika
<b>27 Sep</b>	TBA		Angelika	Candace	Peter	Bente	Barbara Dina