The Westerly

Presbytery of Western Victoria

PPW& PWV Newsletter No.37 – 14th September 2022

Presbytery of Port Phillip West

Long Live the Church!

Rev. Trevor Bassett (PWV Presbytery Minister)

The news has been full of royalty. The death of Queen Elizabeth II has rightly dominated headlines. From my some of my movie watching exploits I am aware that the cry "The Queen is dead….long live the King" might be a phrase that has been used in the last week or so, although I have not heard it to date!

I wonder how often we hear the phrase "The church is dead". Rarely do I hear the possible addition "Long live the church".

The church, in many locations, is facing challenges beyond anything we have seen before. We have smaller congregations in many places. We have many buildings that have limped along with minimal maintenance and are now failing us in a way that exceeds our financial capacity to fix. In order to address the costs associated with being a church we are amalgamating and seeking ways to work together that we have never had to do before. Sadly, in many of these situations we take actions that provide a short term fix but are really a matter of delaying the inevitable.

As a church we are people who proclaim Christ crucified and this proclamation is followed with the joy of resurrection. We are a people who do more than proclaim new life. We are a people who proclaim resurrection and transformation.

Yet, when it comes to our churches, I have observed that in fact we are not very brave. Yes, we make changes and look at options that might see us engage in a new mission initiative or add something to our worship. But the church I worship in is, in essence, not a lot different to the one that I entered as a child.

How can the church proclaim a transformative God but allow itself to be transformed?

We are a property rich church. But in many cases our property is a mill stone around our necks. What does it mean to hear the call of Jesus to cast our net on the other side? What might it be like to be a church with less property yet to have access to the income from property sales to fund our ministry and mission in a different way?

I have observed that we are, on the whole, attached to our property even though it is exhausting us and we know it is in disrepair. In many places maintaining our property is the prime focus of our mission. Keep the doors open at all costs even though fewer and fewer people come through them.

(**Long Live the Church!** by Trevor Bassett *cont*.) Every crisis has an upside if we want to look for it. We have the capacity to be radically different as a church if we look at the way we use our property in a new way. Ask ourselves what does a transformed church look like? What MIGHT a transformed church look like? Be imaginative in your thinking about this!

These are big questions and require courage for us to ask them. However, we are people of faith. If there is one faith concept that we all MUST hold, it is the faithfulness of God. Our God is the God of the covenant, the God who journeys with the people of God and promises that no matter what God is faithful. Nothing we can do can separate us from the faithfulness, from the love, of God.

If ever there is to be a time to be bold in our thinking. A time to invite the Spirit to blow among us and inspire us to what might be, it is now. Trust in God who will never fail us. We are a pilgrim people, always on the way towards a promised end.

The church is dead. Long live the church!

Mental Health Matters

REV. FI BOTTCHER (DEACON AT SUNSHINE MENTAL HEALTH)

The "get to know you" question on this particular morning was: "Which season do you like most and why?" "Definitely winter" answered one patient, "Yeah!" said others nodding in agreement.

"I love being rugged up in a blanket"

"I love standing outside during storms!"

"I like walking in the wind and rain"

"I love winter food, roasts and soup"

"No way, I hate it", mumbled Julie. "You only love winter if you know you can escape it."

Shivering from cold with no chance of warmth or comfort is awful, and this winter has felt long for many. Not just because of the dark, cold days, but the lingering effects of COVID, flu, wars and displacement that has left many feeling like they live in a perpetual storm.

While churches can offer physical places of refuge from the cold, hunger, and isolation, all of us can offer refuge to those hungering for love and compassion. We need to be places of refuge for each other. We need to feel deeply connected, to be in communion, more than ever.

For where two or more are gathered, there He will be - the Hope and refuge of the Holy Spirit, the first signs of spring.

From the Editor: If you missed an edition of The Westerly back editions are available at Newsletters – Presbytery of Port Phillip West (ucappw.org.au). Next Edition 17th August 2022. Any submission are due the Monday before publication. Always happy to receive your stories, poems, book reviews, photos, and theological reflections from across both our presbyteries. Rev Linley Liersch Linley.Liersch@ppw.victas.uca.org.au.

Lay preachers training modules…

CALD Lay preachers that need to understand the UCA...

Ministry of Pastor…

Lay people wanting to deepen their understandings…

Anyone interested ...

Understanding the UCA

eLM and Pilgrim Theological College are combining to give two offerings for those needing or wishing to understand more about the Uniting Church.

Understanding the UCA

- an online self-directed study unit with assessment and 4 group tutorials
- offered by Equipping Leadership for Mission (eLM).
- beginning on 1 November 2022, participants will have 4 months to undertake the study.
- **all group tutorials and assessment are compulsory** for those who are undertaking the unit for competency reasons.
- from 2023, the unit will be offered once or twice a year and participants will have 3 months to undertake and complete the unit
- those who successfully complete the unit (including tutorials and assessment) will receive a Certificate of Satisfactory Completion.

Register

https://victas.uca.org.au/event/understanding-the-uca-2

For further information contact:

Mel Perkins | Lay Leadership Development Coordinator
mel.perkins@victas.uca.org.au

Uniting Church Theology and History

- academic unit
- offered by Pilgrim Theological College (VicTas Synod) in cooperation with United Theological College (NSW/ACT Synod)
- Lecturers - Rev Dr Geoff Thompson and Dr Damien Palmer, supplemented by input from leaders and scholars of the UCA
- When: Feb 6-10 2023, plus one follow up day (tbc)
- Audit, Undergraduate and Post-graduate options for study
- those undertaking the unit for competency reasons will need to complete assessments

For further information contact:

Erlinda Loverseed | Pilgrim Theological College
registrar@pilgrim.edu.au | 03 9340 8892

Academic Unit

equipping Leadership for Mission | PILGRIM THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

UNITING CPE

THE JOHN PAVER CENTRE

ON-LINE (VIA ZOOM)

SUPERVISED PASTORAL EDUCATION UNIT FEBRUARY-JUNE 2023

A part-time unit will be offered commencing 2 February and concluding 8 June. Peer group seminars will run each Thursday commencing 8.30am sharp. Ten hours of individual supervision will be included in that period. The times for these will be negotiated with your supervisor at the beginning of the course. Two extra days are also required for group/individual evaluation: at mid-term and final, being 5 April and 7 June.

Interviews are scheduled for Thursday 24 November, 2022.

This Centre, with its particular focus on people engaged in community-based pastoral ministry contexts, is under the auspices of the Uniting Church Synod of Victoria and Tasmania. This program will be conducted entirely on-line (via zoom), so reliable internet connection is essential.

APPLICATIONS CLOSE: MONDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2022

EDUCATION – THE SEMINAR SESSIONS

Supervised Pastoral Education is a rigorous action/reflection model of learning – the emphasis is on learning directly from participation in a variety of experiences. The Thursday seminar sessions will be comprised of up to six students and two supervisors. The sessions provide a supervised, self-directed learning experience. Whilst participants set their own goals, the following are the overall objectives of the seminars:

- to help integrate spirituality, practice and personal identity, in both the individual and societal and contexts
- to identify and further develop pastoral care gifts and skills
- to acquaint participants with the use of peer group supervision as a way of enhancing spiritual/pastoral care
- to develop the capacity for self-supervision
- to provide an opportunity to identify and work with one's own faith heritage and development
- to offer an inter-disciplinary setting for learning

For further information about CPE and the Association for Supervised Pastoral Education in Australia (ASACPEV Inc), go to: www.asacpev.org.au

PASTORAL CARE FORMATION

Supervised/Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) is a programme of education and formation for pastoral care. The program's methodology utilises the action-reflection model of learning. The action component entails the actual provision of pastoral care within a learning ministry setting. The reflection component entails the exploration of the pastoral/spiritual experience, the dynamics present, and the theological and spiritual dimensions. This action-reflection process is integral to the participants' understanding and the formation of their pastoral process identity and competence. CPE is influenced by "theology from the living human document" (Anton Boisen).

PLACEMENT

The pastoral care placement for this program could be at any one of a number of community settings. Applicants already in a pastoral care setting may initially negotiate with the Centre Director and their employer to use their setting as a placement. Applicants may also discuss in the first instance, with the Centre Director, the possibility of another placement setting.

Either way, it is the responsibility of the applicant to initiate these arrangements in consultation with the Centre Director. The ASACPEV Inc. Standards require a minimum of 100 hours of actual 'hands-on' pastoral care to be provided in the placement.

Under the auspices of the Uniting Church Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, and in collaboration with the Centre for Theology and Ministry.

equipping Leadership for Mission
Priorities, Focus & Advocacy

Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

Training for chaplaincy
schools
hospitals
prisons
age care

Who for?
Minister Continuing Ed.
Caring Professionals
Mature Christians - seeking new vocation

People of faith push for stronger climate action

By Sue Strong (PPW Climate Action Task Group)

On **Thursday 13 October** people of all faiths both in Australia and around the Pacific will come together to show our support for an open letter to Prime Minister Albanese that will be signed by senior faith leaders both from Australia and the Pacific calling on the Australian Government to:

Stop approving new coal and gas projects

End public subsidies for coal and gas projects

Actively participate in creating a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty to phase out fossil fuels and support a just transition.

This is what Pacific nations have been calling on Australia to do.

Crucially, the letter and the service will also be pushing for serious action on climate justice by calling on the Government to:

Fully respect First Nations peoples' rights to protect Country

Re-start contributions to the United Nations Green Climate Fund

Help workers in extractive industries prosper with more sustainable jobs

How you can get involved

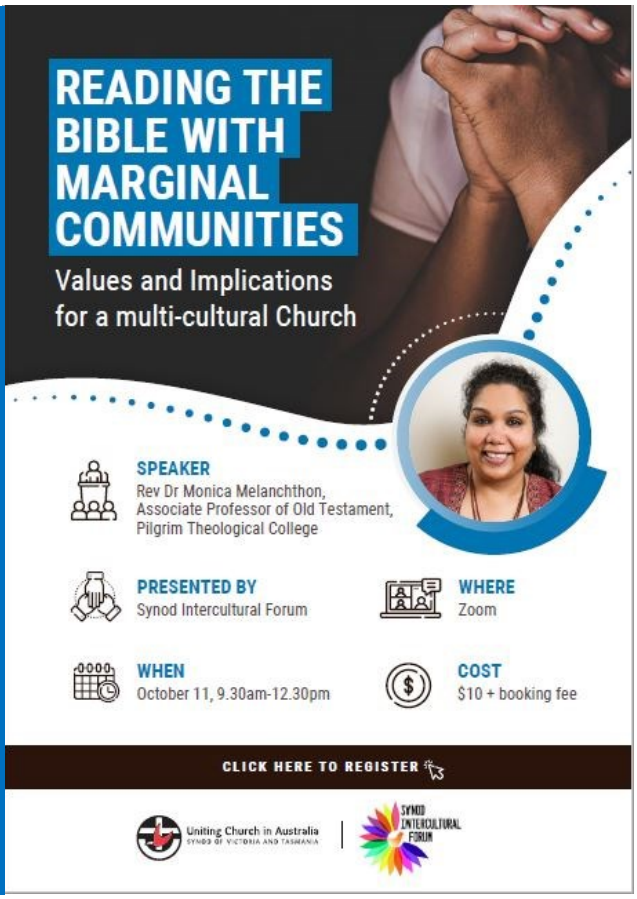
In support of this open letter **there will be multi-faith services in cathedrals and other iconic places of worship** across both in Australia and the Pacific on the same day in Brisbane, Cairns, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, Nowra and Geelong. This will be our chance as people of faith to come together to show that we care deeply about the climate crisis. Let's show solidarity with our neighbours in the Pacific. The services are open to people of all faiths and none.

In the **Presbytery of Port Phillip West** the closest services will be at:

Melbourne City, St Paul's Cathedral	**Thursday 13 October at 5 pm**
Geelong, Christ Church Anglican (Corner of Moorabool St and McKillop St)	**Thursday 13 October at 8 am**, allowing for attendees to then head to school and work.

In Geelong there will also be an **Overnight vigil** commencing sunset on Wednesday 12 October through to sunrise Thursday 13 October.

Synod Intercultural Seminar
11th Oct 2022
9:30-12:30
& Forum
12th Oct 2022



9th–11th December 2022

A Generous Openness: How can I discover and act on my deepest, most authentic desires?

9th–11th December 2022

A weekend retreat hosted by Northcote Uniting Church

Santa Casa Retreat Centre (Anna House)
33–35 Flinders Street, Queenscliff VIC 3225
www.santacasa.org.au

You are invited to come as you are to a weekend of gentle, creative prayer exercises, with plenty of space for personal prayer, reflection and rest, in the beautiful setting of Santa Casa Retreat Centre, Queenscliff.

The community at Northcote Uniting Church is delighted to welcome you to its first weekend retreat. The retreat will be facilitated by Missional Spirituality Pastor Anne Pate. Anne is an experienced retreat-giver and spiritual director in the Ignatian tradition.

Arrival from 2pm on Friday 9th, with opening session at 7.30pm
Departure at 2pm on Sunday 11th
Santa Casa Retreat Centre (Anna House. Single and double rooms available. All rooms have ensuite facilities. All meals are included. Dietary requirements can be accommodated. **$200 per person** including meals and accommodation. Northcote Uniting Church is subsidising the retreat cost for all participants. We do not want finance to be a barrier to participation, so please contact us if you need additional support.

Contact Missional Spirituality
Pastor Anne Pate: 0407 908 729

Seeds of Life: How a garden helped a church connect with its community

Article by Andrew Humphries. Photos by Carl Rainer (Edited Version Crosslight—August 2022)

When Rev Matt Cutler reflects on his role as Minister at Tecoma UC, he does so with a deep sense of gratitude. In finding Tecoma, he believes, he has been blessed. Social justice is pivotal in Matt's life and faith and, at Tecoma, he has found a congregation and community that puts that concept at the heart of everything it does. From its commitment to our First Nations people, to providing free food to some of those doing it tough in the community, Tecoma congregation members don't just talk the talk, they walk the walk when it comes to promoting social justice. A quick look at its website shows how heavily the church is involved in the community, from the free food program, to an op shop, to martial arts and dancing. Matt refers to it all as the "church as community" and he is immensely proud of its place in the Yarra Ranges, east of Melbourne.

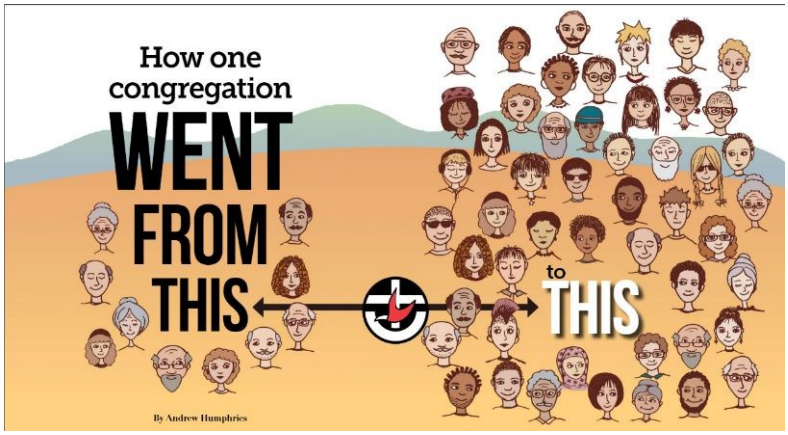
And while the future looks bright for such a forward-thinking Minister and congregation, that hasn't always been the case. In fact, at one stage, Tecoma residents were forced to ponder the possibility of closure, as congregation numbers dwindled to unviable levels... While the church held a special place in the community's affections, that didn't mean it was immune from the same pressures affecting places of worship in regional and rural areas around the country…

"When I arrived as Minister, we were down to about a dozen members attending a service and, of course, this was pre-COVID," Matt says. "Ours was the classic case of the Uniting Church congregation with an ageing population and not many young families involved. "It's the same story with a lot of the other churches in the Dandenong Ranges and Tecoma was certainly heading the same way. "Thankfully, we had a facility here that was still being used and had a good reputation within the community but, yes, if it had continued to trend the way it was going a conversation within the church hierarchy about its future wouldn't have been far away. "I think the hierarchy still had a belief that any conversation about closing didn't need to be entertained at that stage, although the tracking was looking ominous (in terms of numbers). "There was still a belief the church was doing good things in the community and there needed to be something in place that continued that work."

Through all this, Matt could see the potential in what the church offered if it was able to grow enough to remain viable. "I was certainly aware of its size, but also the fact it had a community awareness, so (as Minister) there was a great appeal in that sense," Matt says. "I was very much interested more in its potential and its reputation in the local area."

"... it only took one or two of those families to stick and then a cohort was there that we could build on. "It meant that when families did come, there was an energy they could attach themselves to. We now have a children's program convenor, families are very active in that space and meet once each quarter to plan the next term, and we now hold a very noisy and robust regular intergenerational service. "And even if only a handful of kids attend that service, it's our way of saying it's important and as a congregation we want to be sensitive and accommodating to a different cohort of people, and that's our children."

The result is a family-oriented congregation that can look towards the future with confidence. "We've got eight or nine families involved here and 18 children kicking around," Matt says. "On a good Sunday, we might have 55 people attending and we average anywhere between 40-60 people, while we will easily get 60-70 people to a community lunch. "I feel very aligned with the church here in terms of wanting it be an open door where people can be here, participate and belong first, before we have the conversation about what you believe in and how you behave. "For me, it's the classic triangle of 'believe, behave, belong' being turned over so it says 'belong first, then behave, then believe'. (Cont.)



Seeds of Life: How a garden helped a church connect with its community

Article by Andrew Humphries. Photos by Carl Rainer (Edited Version Crosslight—August 2022)

"This is an area that is very spiritually thirsty, but that people hadn't found a place that resonated with them in terms of openness and inclusivity to match what a church could and should be. "Now I see a match between what we are offering here and what people are looking for." And while he might be reluctant to suggest he has all the answers, Matt says the important role families play in any congregation should never be underestimated. "Parenting is tough these days and people will say to me, 'coming on a Sunday and knowing that I will be nourished with ideas that sustain me, and that my children will be mixing with their peers is very important'," he says.

"This is a story about what the church can reclaim in terms of being a place in which we consider who we are, our values, and how we can contribute to the world, and families naturally want those things for their kids and the church can be that place." The concept of what a church can achieve as part of a community also drives much of what congregation members such as Sue Brown aspire to at Tecoma.

As hospitality co-ordinator, Sue is responsible for the Food is Free Tecoma program, which operates on the simple, but heartfelt, premise of making food available to anyone in need. ***An expansive community garden on the church grounds provides wonderful healthy produce,*** while regular community donations are also welcomed. "Essentially, what we have are fridges, freezers and an outdoor cabinet and the idea is to keep fresh food available to whoever might need it," Sue says. ***"We are also all about minimising waste, so we might get some fruit and veg that is no longer edible, but it can be used in the compost site located in the garden."***

"We have so many dedicated people who enjoy giving back to the community, including some people who benefitted from the free food program and have decided to give back by volunteering. "For them, it's about a sense of self-worth and they have developed friendships around it, so it's a holistic thing. "Yes, what we are about is feeding people, but there is so much more to it than that."

At the heart of the community garden are volunteers such as Shakti McLaren, who was part of the group which set it up about eight years ago. "We got together at the time and asked ourselves, 'what can we do in Tecoma that is positive?'," Shakti explains. "We had a lot of people following us who were interested in good food, so we decided we would create a garden space in which to grow food." After much discussion, space was made available within the church grounds and the result is a **thriving garden which is a hub of community life.**

"What we are trying to do is make it self-sufficient and the food is free and available to everyone," Shakti says. "I don't know what the life of a church is about anymore if it isn't about promoting social justice," she says. "The church here has always been seen as a friend to the community." ...

Matt is grateful he arrived at a church with such a strong DNA geared towards social justice and the mantra of "church as community". "We have a church here that is prepared to dance with anyone who has shared values," he says. **"Our community garden is a classic example of that in that it's quite common for a church to say that 'we've got a space and we can run a garden'** but this church's model was 'we're old and small but we've got space (for others) to run a garden'. "So you end up with a situation where four or five of the community members involved in the garden end up coming to church and that's just the kind of stuff that happens. "The other point is there are so many people in the community who consider themselves very much part of the church, even if they don't come to a service on a Sunday. People have a strong sense of connection with us, even if they're not part of the worshipping community, so I think there is a larger identity here in that the church is not seen as just one hour on a Sunday, it's seen as a web of relationships. That, to me, is very exciting." Ask Matt about the importance of social justice and it goes to the heart of what being a person of Christ means. "To me, it's life-blood stuff and one of the most important manifestations of our faith," he says.
"Social justice is a strong heartbeat in this congregation."

Meeting Together

We believe that meetings can be rewarding, enjoyable and worthwhile, whether the issues that we face together are large or small. The Meeting Together workbook will assist ***Church Councils, Committees and groups*** in the Uniting Church to work more collaboratively, to understand the role of their group and leadership in the wider life of the church, and to deal with poor behaviour in meetings.

It can help to build the capacity in our members to meet and work together well, to respect and listen to one another, and to value each person's voice. It looks at the Scriptures and what we believe, the Basis of Union, the Manual for Meetings, and other resources. The booklet includes 14 short sections that can each be used to start discussion, plus resources for community building. These resources are an invitation to pause from what we do, and to have conversations about why and how we meet.

Meeting Together workbook Downloadable version & Imago Vita cards.
Launch Video available: Meeting Together Resources Launch on Vimeo

Imago Vita – Images of life

"Imago Vita" is a set of Australian photographs selected for personal and group reflection. The set is diverse and may be used for a range of purposes – community-building, story telling, identifying needs, dealing with change, discussing choices, exploring hopes, revealing strengths. There are 86 images and an activity guide providing some suggested activities for group conversation. The We recommend getting them printed on a colour laser printer/copier, then laminating them and cutting them to size.

October Education Events

2nd-9th October	**Week of Climate Action**
6th October 7:30—9pm	**Outdoor Worship Webinar**
11th October 9:30—12:30	**Reading the Bible with Marginal Communities** Synod Intercultural SEMINAR
12th October	**Synod Intercultural Forum—Save the date**
20th October 1 pm	**Messy Church Matters** Linley Liersch & Chris Barnett
14th November	**Applications for CPE 2023** Close

Are there people on your patch who could enjoy and contribute to committee membership?

The new **Synod Nominations Advisory Panel (SNAP)** is enthusiastic about its task, of which one aspect is, 'To proactively seek to identify persons who are qualified and available for appointment to Synod committees and task groups, and other bodies as appropriate'.

To do this, we need your help to find those wonderful UCA people who might consider serving the Synod on a group, who would bring particular gifts and skills to a group, and who are not the usual people we all automatically think of and might consequently be overlooked for an opportunity to share their skills with us. As we continue to be mindful of the Synod resolution regarding greater inclusion, both of adults under 50, and also of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities, we are particularly keen to hear of those who fall into this category.

We would love to hear about people who could be interested in serving the Synod on one of its committees or task groups, but would also consider being part of the network of people we could approach when a vacancy is highlighted in order to help us find the right people for the position. We're not sure if you have already started a list of suitable people in your patch, but if not, could you consider doing so? And if so, by all means send their names to SNAP, c/- clare.boyd-macrae@victas.uca.org.au