The Westerly

PRESBYTERY OF PORT PHILLIP WEST

PPW & PWW Newsletter No.68 – April 2025

Presbytery of Western Victoria

‘Do not linger in the Shadows of Fear and Despair’

Rev. Charissa Suli [UCA President—Easter Message]

It began in the shadows. A story of death - but also life.

The women came at dawn on Easter Sunday. Hearts heavy. Hope buried. They had seen the cross, had stood in the silence of loss. Now, they stood before the tomb. Cold, silent, unsealed. The place where dreams end… or so they thought.

But when they arrived, the stone was rolled away. Empty. And then: words that shattered the silence forever: ***"Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; He has risen!"***

The tomb – once a symbol of defeat – became the birthplace of courage. They came grieving and afraid and were called from their sorrow. They rose up. They ran and they proclaimed. Fear gave way to faith. Despair gave way to purpose.

And now, the question comes to us:
What tombs are we living in?
The tomb of fear? Of division? Of hopelessness?

The resurrection of Jesus is more than a promise. It is now. It is ours. It calls us to rise from death to life. From despair to hope. From the tomb to new beginnings, or new life!

Like the women who were the first to proclaim that Jesus had risen, we cannot stay silent. We cannot go back to life as it was while our communities long for renewal and our world aches for peace.

This is our moment. We cannot wait. We must rise now and speak words of healing into a world torn apart. Act with courage where the vulnerable are forgotten. Love without limits. Serve without fear. Hope without hesitation.

From the silence of the tomb rises the song of hope. Do not linger in the shadows of fear and despair. Step out from the tomb. Stop looking for the living among the dead, for Christ is risen.

Let’s live boldly as people of new life, strong in courage and relentless in love.
May the joy of the risen Christ bring you peace and renew your spirits.
Wishing you and your communities a blessed Easter!

HOLY WEEK

Caring for Creation 2025 Lenten Calendar

6th April "*Be praised, my Lord, for brother fire by whom the night brother fire by whom the night is illumined for us. He is....full of power and strength.*" Fire can also do great damage in areas affected by drought	**7th April** Know your food miles, take the 200km supermarket challenge. Can you purchase only those goods that have travelled less then 200km.	**8th April** Walking school buses can get us more connected with neighbours, the local environment and reduce pollution from cars and congestion around schools. Be an active transport advocate.	**9th April** Learn more about "God's Holy Fool", St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology. Learn about Saint Kateri, Patroness of the Environment.	**10th April** A lot of plastic lines our shores and ends up in the water, mistaken for food by marine life. Consider participating in the autumn and spring coastal clean-ups. It's fun and a good thing to do.	**11th April** More and more packaging involves plastic...coffee pods, detergent pods, food items like cheese slices. Choose one product and write to the company to ask them to reduce the plastic in their packaging.	**12th April** Buy a green plant . Whenever you water it, say a prayer of gratitude for the incredible beauty and variety of all God's creation. If you can, plant a tree; they are sponges for soaking up CO_2.
13th April Palm Sunday "*Be praised, my Lord, for Sister Earth, our Mother, who nourishes and sustains us bringing forth diverse fruits & grains & flowers of many colours.*' Be a "tree of life"	**14th April** Adjusting how and what we eat is a big step, but when you're making the commitment as a group, you're more likely to see it through and reap the many health benefits—together.	**15th April** Consider divest/invest: Divest your savings and super from fossil fuels (oil & 'natural' gas) and invest in renewable energy projects or companies. Ask your bank or super to check for this. It's a win-win. Market Forces can help.	**16th April** "*Let us sing as we go. May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope.*" Laudato Si' 244	**17th April Holy Thursday** At the Last Supper, Jesus called us to service. Laudato Si' calls us to care for creation & care for the poor. What can I do today or next week to serve the poor?	**18th April Good Friday** Review your ecological practices of this Lent. What can you continue after Easter? Let's renew our commitment to protect God's creation & join our sacrifices with that of Jesus to bring forth a New Creation!	**19th April Holy Saturday** "What kind of world do we want to leave those who come after us, to children who are growing up." Laudato Si'
20th April *Glorious Easter* Christ is risen and all of creation with Him! Savour the life that is in you and around you! The flowers bursting forth, the friends and your family, clean water and air! Be grateful for God's gift of creation! ***Rejoice and be glad!***					Special thanks to Mary Jane Gocher, Church of St. Francis Xavier, New York City	

From the Editor: If you missed an edition of The Westerly see Newsletters – Presbytery of Port Phillip West (ucappw.org.au). Rev Linley Liersch Linley.Liersch@ppw.victas.uca.org.au.

Please click links or pictures for hyperlinks.

Next edition submissions 25th March 2024 .

Spiritual Care Matters

REV. FI BOTTCHER (DEACON–SUNSHINE MENTAL HEALTH)

How many hospital chaplaincy placements are there in the UCA?

I now know there's at least eight in Victoria after meeting with six of them at our first Community of Practice gathering hosted by Rev Lauren Mosso and Rev Isabel Greenall. These new gatherings come in response to the Synod chaplaincy strategy which includes a goal to develop and sustain a strong sense of Community of Practice for chaplains.

At this first meeting we shared our experiences by considering these questions:
What does it mean to be a UCA Chaplain?
How do you connect with the Uniting Church beyond your workplace?
And how are you perceived/understood by the UCA in your role?

These are fundamental questions for anyone in a ministry setting placed outside of the traditional worship space. Our discussions reminded me of advice I was given from a fellow minister when I was preparing for ordination: …
"Remember to stop and ask: "who's praying for me?".

Chaplains are not "sent out" by the church, they are "sent with": resources, blessings, encouragement, support. We nurture each other in these relationships as we connect with "the world" and allow "the world" to connect with us: to change us, renew us and strengthen us.

(Image: Messages of Hope wall art, Sunshine Mental Health Hub)

Dear God,

We give thanks for our Hospital Chaplains:

- Fi Bottcher at Sunshine Mental Health Hospital,
- Isabel Greenall at Barwon Health
- Andrew Shearer Cox at Ballarat Hospitals.

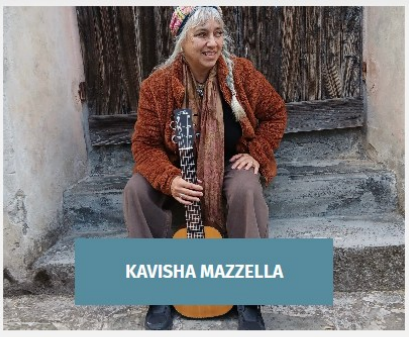
We give thanks the chaplains and for their caring ministry to staff and patients. We give thanks for their gentle support and wisdom as they sit and listen to needs and concerns of others. We give thanks for the their support of the sick and dying.

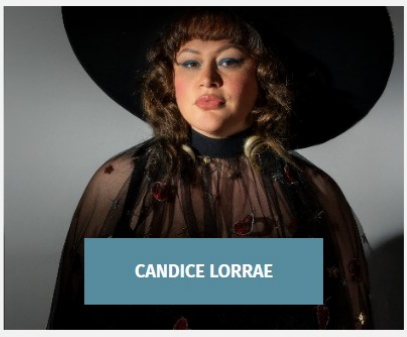
We prayer for all the support staff in our hospitals, may they be supported well for the demanding work daily. We give thanks for nurses who help give patients dignity while tenderly caring for their humanity. We give thanks for doctors and therapists whose give specialized and professional care.

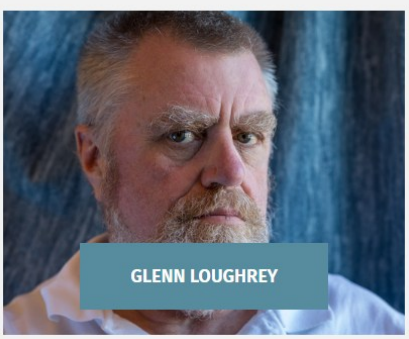
We pray for those we know in hospital now surround them with your love God. Holy Spirit drive away their fears and uphold them in your grace. Lord Jesus may they know that you companion them in this life and the next.

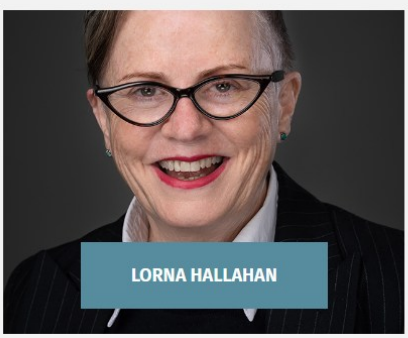
Amen. [Linley Liersch]

A weekend of diversity and inclusion under one roof. Sacrededge brings Artists, Musicians and Storytellers together into a unique community over the Sacrededge weekend. Conversation and deep listening, music, stories and dance, art and ocean labyrinth, food and fun, concerts and workshops… with indigenous, refugee, environmental, LGBTIQA+ and disability advocates, all with their own particular spiritual focus.









A LOOK AT THE SYNOD EMISSION REDUCTION FUND
Climate Action Task Group

The Synod released funds of $100 00 last year in order to support churches that wished to make progress towards zero emissions. Submissions were made and their total value was three times the allocation.

Decisions were made and the successful churches advised. Four of the approved projects were in the Presbytery of Port Phillip West, and you may like to read reports from two successful churches here.

BRUNSWICK UC

The Synod Emissions Reduction Fund (SERF) has just awarded two grants to our congregation, to reduce the emissions from our hot water. At the main church kitchen and the final student house, the SERF will pay half the cost of replacing gas water heaters with electric heat pumps. The other two units at the student house are already heat pumps; across the whole church we will now have just one gas water heater that isn't used very heavily. The pollution from these electric water heaters will steadily drop over the next decade as the electric grid decarbonises, and we might get the chance to accelerate this with more solar panels if there is a future SERF round.

An image of what the hot water heaters will look like. Thanks to the BUC Property Committee for putting the application together, and the working group at Synod who put in all the work to devise a methodology for evaluating these proposals and selecting the best ones.

QUEENSCLIFF UC

(these are excerpts of a letter to the moderator)

The final element of our transition off gas at the Manse was to replace a gas underfloor ducted heating system. We were enabled to carry out this project through the SERF Grant of $9,860 awarded in December 2024. The installation was fully funded by the grant and was completed on 24 January at the quoted price! A really “Good News Story”.

We offer our support (as well as great thanks) for the SERF grants process, and therefore recommend to Synod that it continue providing a continuing Synod allocation for grants in 2025 and beyond.

Yoorrook Justice Commission report on ABC 4 Corners

If you missed the exclusive insight into the Yoorrook Justice Commission – Victoria's formal truth telling process, it is available **here**. Australia's first ever truth-telling commission uncovers our hidden history. Bridget Brennan examines how we as a nation reckon with our colonial past and take critical steps towards truth, healing and justice.

Walk for Truth

Listen Deeply

Yoorrook Justice Commission is inviting people to be part of the Walk for Truth from Portland to Parliament. Yoorrook Deputy Chair Travis Lovett, Kerrupmara Gunditjmara, will walk from Portland, where colonisation began, to Parliament, where we can transform the future. Starting on Sunday 25 May on Gunditjmara Country at Portland, the Walk will travel through communities including Warrnambool, Colac, Geelong and Footscray, finishing at Parliament House on Wednesday 18 June. Along the way there will be opportunities for people to join the Walk and attend community events. This powerful journey aims to bring everyone together to walk toward truth, celebrate the strength and resistance of Aboriginal people, and be proud to have the oldest living culture in the world as ours. To find out more, including dates and details of specific legs and community events, register to join the **Walk for Truth.**

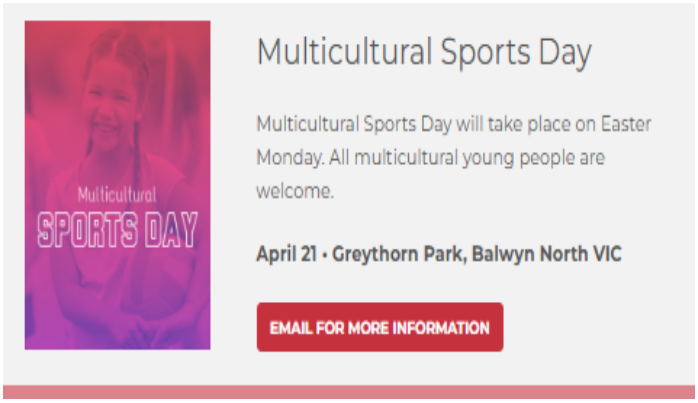
Lay Preacher Studies in 2025

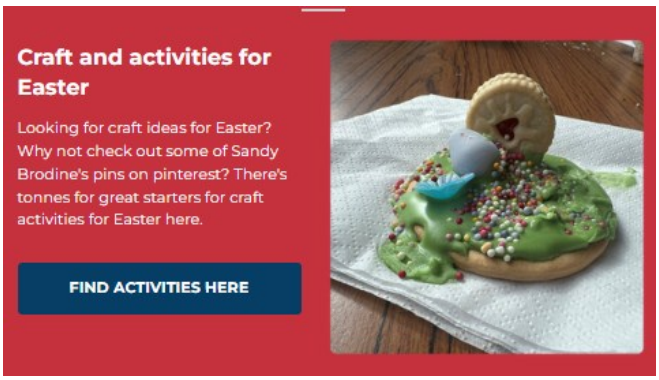
Semester 1 /2 **Understanding the UCA** - 25 Feb to 30 June; 5 August to 17 Nov -

Semester 1 **- Exploring Theology in the UCA** -24 Feb to 26 May https://victas.uca.org.au/exploring-theology-in-the-uca/

Semester 2 - **Exploring Christology** -7 July to 22 September https://victas.uca.org.au/exploring-christology/

Semester 3 **- Exploring Preaching in the UCA** - 13 October to 24 November - $30 https://victas.uca.org.au/exploring-preaching-in-the-uca/





DIGITAL TOOL KIT: Easter is a powerful season of hope, renewal, and celebration. To support your congregation's preparations and outreach, we've gathered a range of resources to help you share the message of Christ's resurrection with your community — both in-person and online. This toolkit includes designs for print materials such as posters, flyers, postcards, and half-page newsletter adverts. It also features social media images for Facebook and Instagram, along with presentation slides available in both light and dark versions, themed for Holy Week.
These templates are easy to customize with your congregation's details, making it simple to create consistent and meaningful communications.

Events

12th April 9am—2pm	**Easter Market** @ Western Heights UCA
13th April 2pm	**Hakuna Matata (Kenyan Orphanage) Children's Choir** @ Grovedale UCA Cost: Donation only
13th April 1pm 2pm	**Palm Sunday 'Asylum Seeker & Refugee' Event** @ Princes Bridge, Banner & Riff Raff Marching Band Tom's Block—Placards for Justice & Kindness for Refugees
13th—20th	**HOLY WEEK & EASTER DAY**
21st April	**Multicultural Sports Day**
25th April	**ANZAC DAY**
28th April 10am– 1pm	**Shared Future Workshop** by Phil McCredden @ CTM, 29 College Cres, Parkville
2nd—4th May	**Sacred Edge Rego** @ Queenscliff UCA (page 4)
23rd May	**RAAF Band** @ Wesley Uniting Church

University of Melbourne - Southbank Campus - UCA Chaplain WANTED

Non-Placement Pastor—Level 2 Position Description

We are looking for a person who will be the Chaplain to the students and staff at the Melbourne Southbank Campus. The position will be 2 days a week and be a non-placement pastor position and paid at a level 2 rate according to the synod ministerial pay rate. The Chaplain will be providing pastoral care and gathering young people around the ethos of the Uniting Church. The chaplain will be accountable to the Northcote Uniting Church Council.

Key selection criteria - Qualifications and experience — Degree-level education is required; Experience of chaplaincy work or similar would be helpful; Proven track record of working with young people in pastoral settings; Appropriate theological qualifications or preparedness to enter into a plan of study as determined in consultation with the presbytery PRC; Membership of a UCA congregation, or preparedness to join one; Accreditation by the Council of Chaplaincies in Tertiary Institutions.

Inquiries & Applications to Rev Narelle Collas – narelle.collas@ppw.victas.uca.org.au **by April 28, 2025.**