The Westerly

PRESBYTERY OF PORT PHILLIP WEST

PWW & PWV Newsletter No.79 April 2026

Presbytery of Western Victoria

Groundbreaking News

[Roots UK]

Matthew's account of the first Easter Sunday morning is very dramatic. An earthquake, a dazzling angel and guards falling to the ground like dead men. Matthew is a skilled writer, and his account clearly aims to grab the hearers' attention. How much of what he describes actually happened is a matter of great scholarly debate. Whether Matthew's descriptions are literal or metaphorical, what he does make clear is that something truly groundbreaking happened that morning. Jesus, who was crucified, dead and buried, is alive. That is the message of the angel. Like the petrified guards and the wondering women, we might not know exactly how the resurrection happened, but we can know the glorious truth that Jesus is risen.

In recent history, several notable earthquakes have devastated communities, causing many fatalities and much damage. Earthquakes are the result of energy building up in the Earth's crust until it is released as a shockwave that shakes the ground and damages buildings. In pre-scientific days, earthquakes were attributed to gods, because they were so mysterious and powerful. Jesus lived in an earthquake zone, but Matthew's point is more theological rather than merely geological. Jesus' death and resurrection were groundbreaking: they allowed the breakthrough of God's new world. This is meant to be creative rather than destructive. How does your church demonstrate this?

Two women, disciples of Jesus, visit his tomb and find it empty. We will think about how life can surprise us, but also how God always whispers in our ears, 'Don't be afraid' as the bewildered women heard through an angel when they had faithfully gone to the tomb early on Sunday morning. They are sent by an angel to tell the rest of the disciples that Jesus is raised. As they run, they meet Jesus himself who repeats the angel's message that he is risen. The women are the first witnesses to the resurrection.

Are you more likely to believe a woman than a man?
What does your answer say about your bias towards one sex or the other?
How much is a person's credibility also affected by their education, social status, appearance, race, accent?
How much does it depend on the plausibility or otherwise of their story?
In Jesus' day the evidence of Jewish women wasn't accepted in law courts because of their low social status and lack of formal education. How significant, then, that in the Gospels women are the primary witnesses to the remarkable resurrection of Jesus.

This is an opportunity to enter into the drama of the first Easter Day and recognise the presence of Jesus in the midst of events that shake us.

Groundbreaking News

Easter Messages

Rev. Salesi Faupula [VicTas Moderator]

Moderator's Easter message calls us into quiet faithfulness

In his first Easter video message as Moderator, Rev Salesi Faupula asks us to embrace the new breath given to us through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, welcoming a quiet faithfulness that marks the way forward.

"In the days ahead, our response may take many forms: practical care, patient listening, standing against hate, seeking repair where it's possible (and) returning to prayer and worship when words are hard to find – quiet faithfulness that keeps choosing love," Salesi says.

"Easter does not promise that life will be simple … but Easter proclaims that God has acted decisively in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, present among ordinary people, and speaking peace." Link

From the Editor:

I am going on LSL soon so *all future articles for* ***The Westerly,*** ***admin.ppw@victas.uca.org.au***

Please click links or pictures for hyperlinks.

Respecting Country [VCC]

National Walk for Truth

Travis Lovett, a Kerrupmara Gunditjmara man and Executive Director of the University of Melbourne's Centre for Truth Telling and Dialogue, will walk from the Victorian Parliament in Naarm to Parliament House in Canberra on Ngunnawal and Ngambri Country (820 km), to call on the Federal Government to commit to a national truth-telling process, developed in genuine partnership with First Nations Peoples.

He will begin walking on Sunday April 19th, arriving 27th May. He welcomes people to join him on the route. Public walk sections up to day 19 are now LIVE. Find out more here.

Common Grace Prayer Vigil for Aboriginal Deaths in Custody

Wednesday 15 April 2026, 7:30pm AEST (via Zoom)

This year marks 35 years since the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody released its final report. Heartbreakingly, in the decades since the 1991 report was released, 626 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have died in custody, and many of the 339 recommendations remain unimplemented. As this injustice continues, so does the deep and ongoing grief experienced by First Nations families and communities. As followers of Jesus, we are called not to turn away, but to draw near - in lament, in prayer, and in action. We will listen deeply to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Christian leaders, lament, read the Bible, pray and act together. Information and registration here.

We long to see a justice system that truly reflects justice. A society where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are supported, valued and empowered. Where structural racism is a thing of the past. Where communities are safe, free and flourishing. Where children as young as 10 are met with love and care instead of incarceration.

Easter Sunday - "Groundbreaking" [Rev. Linley Liersch]

Source: Roots UK "Thrive with Roots" designed for families worshipping on-line and at home

How to take a family activity sheets and turn it into an inspiring creative worship. Create worship station around your Church building.

Research

Find out how many Christians there are living in the world today. They all believe that Jesus is alive! Who else can you tell this week?

In which countries of the world are Christians experience persecution?

How can the church be a 'Easter People' in their neighbourhoods? Write the answer on a whiteboard.

Discuss

Discuss with your family and friends what it means to be 'Easter people'.

Pray for those who are scared.
Pray for people of the world for whom the ground is shaking, either earthquakes or bombs.
Pray for people you know who need the power of resurrection life.

Pray

Dear Lord,
when things happen that make us scared:
help us to know you are with us;
help us to hear you saying, 'do not be afraid';
help us to remember that on Easter Day
you turned fear to joy;
and help us to share this good news with others.
Amen.

Write

The women were scared when they saw what had happened, and no wonder! Write down your fears and place them somewhere to remind you of Jesus' words, 'do not be afraid', e.g. by a cross or in an Easter Garden.

Write your fears on a post it note and place it into a offering bowl on the communion table, beneath the cross. (Prayer of Confession)

First impressions

- How does it feel to be physically shaken or moved by something, e.g. a fairground ride, or travelling?
- In what ways is the Easter story groundbreaking?
- Do we make the Easter story too 'safe' in our retellings? How can we share the seismic joy of the resurrection?

Put these question on the PowerPoint and invite the congregation to talk in small groups.

Groundbreaking News Report on Matt 28:1-10 [Root UK]

You will need: *3 people to act out the script (see below); microphone (or substitute); a pop-up tent or similar to represent the empty tomb.*

Reporter: Hello and welcome to *Groundbreaking News*. I'm Tommy Truthteller, reporting on the extraordinary reports coming in concerning Jesus of Nazareth who was buried three days ago. I have with me Mary of Magdala and Mary known as 'the other Mary'. Mary and Mary, can you tell us what happened?

Mary M: Well, Mary and I had gone to the tomb to pay our respects to Jesus when suddenly there was a great earthquake. We were terrified!

Other Mary: Yes, and if that wasn't scary enough, an angel, presumably 'of the Lord' as the Bible likes to call them, descended from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. He probably needed a bit of rest after all that exertion.

Mary M: He really was quite a sight. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. I'd love to know what washing powder he uses. Anyway, for fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. Fat lot of use that was to us! Might have been useful having some guards around with all this going on!

Other Mary: But the angel said to us 'Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay.'

Reporter: So, what happened next?

Mary M: Well, that's just what we did. We had a quick peek inside the tomb and no Jesus. What on earth was going on we wondered?

Other Mary: At which point Mr Angel or Angelos, as he's called in the Greek version of the Bible, said 'Go quickly and tell his disciples: "He has been raised from the dead and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him." This is my message for you.' And, of course, Angelos means messenger in Greek so we knew we had to take that message straight away.

Mary M: Anyway…at this point we scarpered; a bit befuddled to tell the truth. Partly frightened and partly ecstatic. Then all of a sudden…Jesus appears!

Other Mary: Yes, the Jesus we loved so much. 'Greetings!' he said.

Reporter: What? He just appeared? Just like that?

Mary M: Yes, we were as surprised as you are. So we just grabbed hold of his feet and well, just kind of worshipped him. We couldn't believe our eyes but we knew it was him.

Other Mary: Yes, it was wonderful!

Mary M: And then he says 'Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.'

Other Mary: So, if you don't mind, we had better be on our way. I hope Peter and the others have got some fish for us to eat. In all the commotion we've not had breakfast yet.

Reporter: So, there you have it. I'm off to Galilee too. Stay tuned to find out what happens next. This is Tommy Truthteller on resurrection watch for *Groundbreaking News*.

Roundtable gatherings to promote Climate Justice in the Uniting Church

During 2026 the Assembly Net Zero Emissions Steering Group will be hosting three Roundtable gathering, each with a different focus

Roundtable 1. The Advocacy calling of the Uniting Church for climate justice (21 May)

Roundtable 2. Practical Steps toward reaching Net Zero Emissions from UCA properties / activities by 2040 (16 June)

Roundtable 3. Exploring First Peoples wisdom and climate justice (16 July)

The roundtables will be Zoom events and will each last 2 hours.

The starting time will be 2 pm AEST for all gatherings.

The overall purpose of the Roundtable gatherings is to:

- Inform people about activities and opportunities to be involved in climate justice within the UCA
- Help people feel supported and connected as they get involved in actions for climate justice
- Inspire people to continue act in their own sphere of influence and in the key areas identified by the Steering Group.

If you would like more information, please contact Richard Arnold at richarn50@gmail.com

Easter Messages

Rev. Charissa Suli [UCA President] Link

Multicultural discipleship

Multicultural Easter camp is on again

This Easter, Canterbury Uniting Church will be hosting a powerful and hope-filled Easter camp running from Maundy Thursday to Easter Sunday. Spanning the sacred journey from the Last Supper to the joy of the Resurrection, the camp will create space for worship, reflection, learning and celebration.

To find out more, or to register your interest, contact Nia Lavaki. Her details are in the blog post below.

READ BLOG HERE

Retired Ministers lunch (Melbourne Area)

Friday 29th May
Time: 12:00 – 1:30

The Cumberland (formerly known as Pascoe Vale RSL), 40 Cumberland Rd Pascoe Vale 3044.

Please rsvp to Mark Dunn the Monday prior to the lunch on

Easter Eggs

Australians will spend $710 million on Easter chocolate this year.
But behind many of those eggs is a different story:
❌ Children working in cocoa production
❌ Farmers earning less than $2 a day
❌ Rainforests cleared for cocoa

🌍 The world promised to end child labour by 2025.
It's now 2026 and millions of children are still working.
This Easter, your chocolate choice matters.

🍫 Check the Chocolate Scorecard before you buy.
https://lnkd.in/eFasAZsy

Events

2nd –5th April	**Multicultural Easter Camp** Virginia.Lavaki@victas.uca.org.au
9th—11th April	**TALANOA OCEANIA** Rego
15th April 7:30pm	**Common Grace Prayer Vigil for Deaths in Custody** Link
19th April— 27th May	**National Walk for Truth** Rego
25th April	**Anzac Day**
23rd May	**Presbytery in Council meeting**
29th May	**Retired Ministers Lunch—Melbourne Area** (p.7) mark@dunn.id.au

Talanoa 2026: Negotiation

9th—11th April 2026

Talanoa will be a platform for folx to talanoa (tell storied realities, invite conversations, explore ways forward) around the "arts of negotiation" in/from their life situations, and to unpack the "gifts in negotiation" for their communities and for the rest of us.

The keynotes will address **Indigenous justice** (from UAICC) and **Migration and Climate justice** (MP Anasina Gray-Barberio).

The presentations will address the topics of ***Pasifika cultures, theology, bible, climate justice, pastoral care, CPE, art, queer, decolonization, gender justice, youth justice, and more***.

The panels will be on **Justice matters**
Negotiating identities in diaspora
Raising families in diaspora
Youth matter!

Full cost $ 120, Student $ 50, 14yo and under $ 1

Registration link: https://events.humanitix.com/talanoa-2026/tickets