The Westerly

PRESBYTERY OF PORT PHILLIP WEST

PPW & PWV Newsletter No.80 May 2026

Presbytery of Western Victoria

Goodbye, Farewell and Amen

Rev. Linley Liersch [Mission Development Strategist & Education—Presbytery eLM Minister]

The name of the final episode of M*A*S*H* seems appropriate as I say goodbye to my 6 1/2 yr placement at PPW . It also fitting that I say farewell with the **80th Edition - The Westerly**. It has been my delight to curate this newsletter each month. We surveyed our PPW presbytery members to find out 88% of our members use it weekly or monthly. I have had a lay preacher in PWV tell me they use the theological reflection on the front page as a core to their sermon that month.

In this newsletter I have sought to collate and curate the many emails that fill-up a ministers inbox, but also make that available to those congregations without ministers. I have also enjoyed advertising the many education events and courses that the 'equipping Leaders for Mission' have offered: from Lay Preaching to Continuing Education; Justice and Advocacy; Younger generations; Intercultural; New and Renewing. Training to stretch and empower the leaders of the church so that they can role model their faith.

In the final double episode of M*A*S*H* Dr. Hawkeye Pierce has been admitted to a psychiatric hospital and is under the care of his good friend Dr. Sidney Freidman. We spend most of the episode trying to work what had happened to Hawkeye that cause him to have a split with reality, supressing the true horror of the war-time event. The second episode sees a return to work for Hawkeye, as the M*A*S*H* Hospital is pulled apart and many of his colleagues leave. Hawkeyes best mate BJ has trouble saying goodbye to him. So Hawkeye takes off in a helicopter to find the word spelt out in white rocks 'Goodbye'.

The lectionary in May is all about farewells. On 14th May is the day of Ascension, where we see Christ saying his goodbyes to his followers and the 12 disciples and he promises them a baptism of the Spirit and he commissions them to go to the ends of the earth with his message. Sure enough the day of Pentecost comes, the Spirit descends upon a household, the disciples go out into Jerusalem City only to find Jews from 'every nation under heaven' are assembled in the city.

One of the hardest parts of work has been to teach some congregations to say farewell to their buildings and dare to dream that there is life and faith on the other side of the church door.

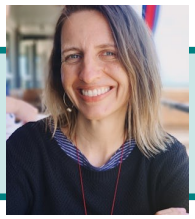
One of the best parts of my job has been to meet people who have come to be believers through the work of the spirit, walk in through the church door and be baptised.

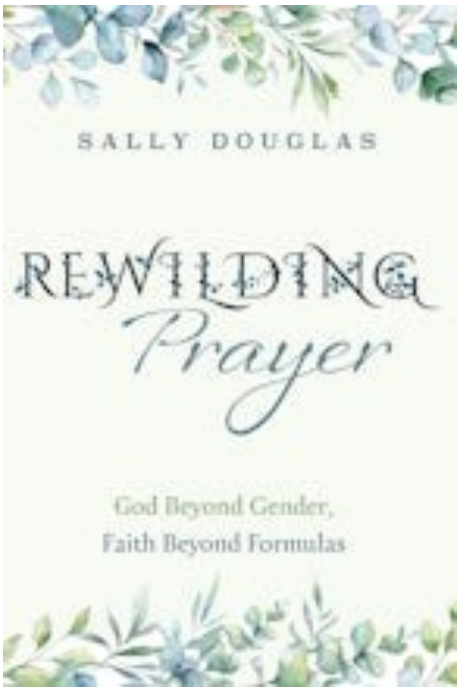
It is hard for me to say my goodbyes to people across two presbyteries who I have kept in my heart and mind, even though I do not know you all as I collated The Westerly each month for you. So I say... **Amen**.

Goodbye, Farewell and Amen

Rewilding Prayer

Rev. Dr. Sally Douglas [New Testament—Pilgrim]





Sally Douglas is Senior Lecturer in New Testament Studies at Pilgrim Theological College within the University of Divinity, Melbourne, where she also teaches in the fields of theology and spirituality. Across her work, Sally continues to explore questions of meaning and the biblical text. *Her recent books include Jesus Sophia: Returning to Woman Wisdom in the Bible, Practice, and Prayer (2023) and The Church ~~Triumphant~~ as Salt: Becoming the Community Jesus Speaks About (2021).*

Rewilding Prayer disrupts the idol of pretending that God is a man and upends the delusion that prayer is about wishful thinking, vending machines, or reciting words. Grounded in her experience as a biblical scholar, theologian, minister, and student of contemplation amidst the mess of living, Sally Douglas offers a collection of stunning prayers, blessings, and liturgies for use in daily life and for the gathered community. This book shows that there are faithful and expansive ways of naming the Triune God that do not rely on gender.

Rewilding Prayer takes seriously that a life of prayer is not static but circles through seasons of emptiness, growth, dryness, nourishment, and difficulty--often in quick rotation. With insight and honesty, questions about what prayer is for, what prayer does and does not do, and what we can do when we cannot pray are explored. Exuding a gritty hope, Douglas demonstrates that prayer is the call to the real. This book is for the curious, the "spiritual not religious," the faithful, the disenchanted, and those who thirst for more.

Focus on families

A webinar being held on May 4, involving Uniting Vic.Tas, will bring together insights from the Uniting Families' 'It takes a village to raise a child' report. Uniting Vic.Tas will be one of the organisations sharing experiences around supporting families to connect, build confidence and access help earlier.

From the Editor: (This is the last Westerly for me hope you have enjoyed reading our newsletter, Linley.)

All future articles for ***The Westerly, admin.ppw@victas.uca.org.au***

Please click links or pictures for hyperlinks.

Next edition submissions 25th May

Climate Champion Afternoon Tea

SAVE THE DATE

CLIMATE CHAMPIONS AFTERNOON TEA

SATURDAY 9 MAY AT 2 PM

BRUNSWICK UNITING CHURCH, 214 SYDNEY ROAD, BRUNSWICK

We will enjoy being together and sharing.

Activities include discussing the Fossil Fuel Treaty, singing climate action songs, Q & A to help congregations reduce greenhouse gas emissions and sharing yummy afternoon tea.

Bring along your friends

For more information:
RICHARD ARNOLD Email richarn50@gmail.com Mobile 0407796429 or
SUE STRONG Mobile 0437 741077

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

Pilgrim Theological College: Intensives

Queer Theology J Inkpin and P Jones

5 –day Intensive 9 – 10 and 13 – 15 July, 9.30 am – 5 pm (In person & on-line)

Unit Description: This unit explores queer theology as it has emerged from queer theory, LGBTIQ justice struggles, and faith development and practice. It will acquaint students with the history and challenges of the term 'queer', and introduce the multiplicity of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer Christian theologies that have emerged in recent decades. It will seek to analyse and critique theological loci and motifs of Christian theology, including the queering of scripture and hermeneutics and key theological doctrines. Exploring intersectional approaches, including postcolonial perspectives, queer art, action and contemporary reflection, participants will be enabled to assess critically the value and possibilities of queer theology for faith and society today.

Spiritual Care: Trauma and Moral Injury Field D – Pastoral Care L Mosso and colleagues

Semester 2: Monday 20 July, 3 August, and 17 August, 9 am – 4pm (In person & on-line)

Unit Description Especially for chaplains and spiritual care workers, this unit focuses on advanced spiritual care techniques to care for people who have experienced trauma and/ or moral injury. You will further develop your ability to offer a non-anxious presence through informed reflective practice. You will deepen your personal and professional integration while developing particular skills built on trauma-informed care principles and recent developments moral injury care.

SEMESTER 2	27 Jul – 30 Oct 2026	
BN2030P/3030P/9030P	Mark's Gospel in Context	pg 14
BS3100P/9100P	The Bible and Ethics	pg 14
CH2060P/3060P/9060P	History of Peace and Justice	pg 16
CT1000P/8000P	Christianity's Big Ideas	pg 17
CT3001P/9001P	Queer Theology	pg 17
DM2500P/9500P	Practicing a Missionary Church: Forming a Community of Christian Witness	pg 18
DP1600P/8600P	Life Abundantly in Christ: An Introduction to Pastoral Theology and Pastoral Psychology for Ministry Practice	pg 20
DP9041P	Spiritual Care: Trauma and Moral Injury	pg 21
XX3330P/9900P	Capstone Integrative Project	pg 22

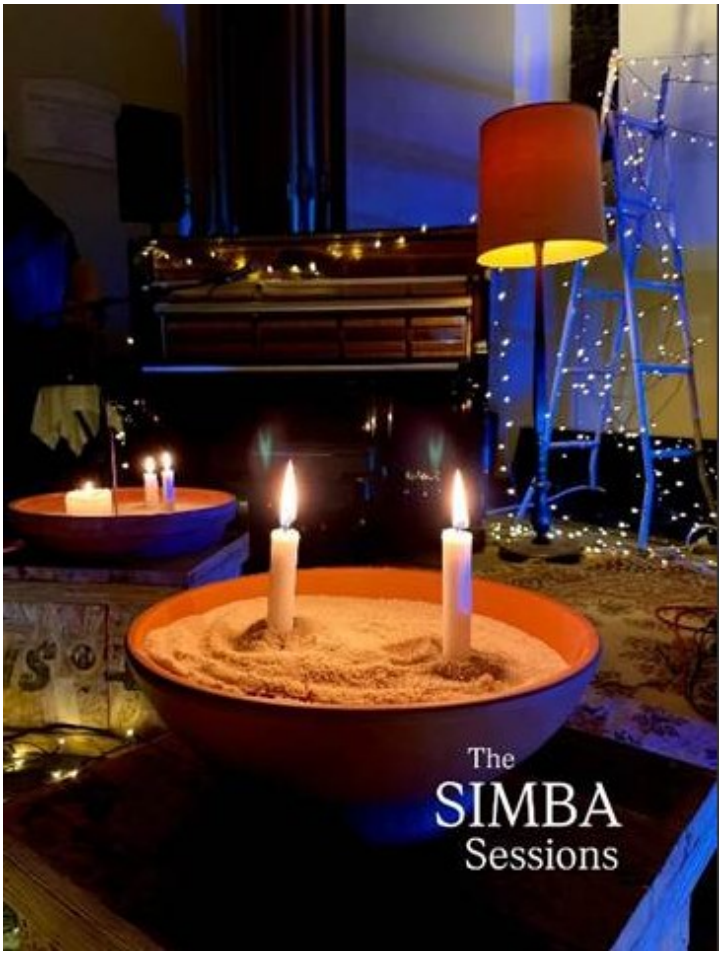
NON-ACCREDITED STUDIES		
DL (non-accredited)	Liturgy and Worship in Multicultural Contexts (workshops)	pg 18

Simba Sessions @ Kyneton UCA

Rev. Mat Harry [eLM New and renewing Communities Catalyst]

Inspiring 2026, New and Renewing event, was a great success with many people online and more in-person connecting and sharing and hearing ways of being creative in seeking how to connect and 'be' followers of Jesus in our local contexts.

Paul Banks – from Kyneton Uniting Church – an hour north of Melbourne shared about Simba Sessions. This is a monthly seeker space held within the Kyneton Uniting Church building on a Friday night. I had the privilege of being there for the February Simba Sessions and it was a beautiful gathering of music and poetry.



The inside of the church was transformed with only a small adjustment of soft lighting, some taper candles and fairy lights. Wow – what a glorious and warm atmosphere the Simba team were able to create.

Could your congregation transform spaces like the Simba team are able to?

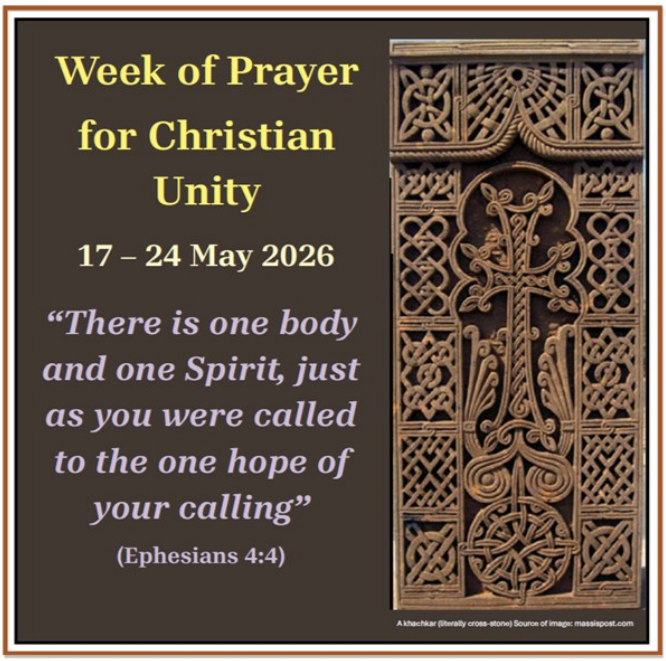
In the presentation – captured in the video recording – Paul shares how Simba is… *"a warm womb, a safe space in a world where we talk a lot about safe spaces but there really aren't any safe spaces. Simba tries to be a safe space to be challenged."*

Paul goes on to describe it as a *"courageous space of compassion and create communities of belonging."*

The video has been uploaded to YouTube and can be viewed here:- https://youtu.be/5u_QqRFhxj4

Hope that there is some inspiration for you in the insights from Paul.

And remember… ***God is always waiting on people faithful enough to be optimistic and courageous enough to take the next step.***



Property queries

Internal processes have been improved around monitoring and managing incoming requests related to UCA properties. Queries or concerns regarding properties can be submitted via a Property Services Query through the new online form or by email to the Property inbox. The new online form allows the relevant congregation to be selected (where applicable) and provide an address if useful.

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.

Pentecost - [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.

God's gift [1 Corinthians 12:3b-13] Paul writes to the church in Corinth who were in danger of thinking they were 'God's gift' to the Church – believing their spiritual gifts made them special. Paul explains that the Holy Spirit gives different gifts to God's people, but they are to be used to serve the common good. The believers should be united as one body in Christ, no matter their background or status.

REFLECT

Take time to think about the different gifts listed in the Bible passage – do you recognise any of those gifts in different people in your church – what about in yourself? Thank God for all these gifts and how they help us to be stronger together!

LOOK

Keep a note of the different skills you see your friends and family use this week. You can encourage them by telling them what they're good at doing.

Gift a small notepad to each member of the congregation for this task. Write each note as a thanksgiving.

UnitingWorld

Individuals in the congregation might like to make donations to Uniting World for families overseas.

Research

Research how churches look different in other countries. Take some time to pray for churches across the world who make up the Body of Christ. An organisation like Tearfund might be good launchpad for your research.

First impressions

- How would Paul use a chocolate selection box to explain his point about the spiritual gifts?!
- What gifts/skills has God given you? Ask someone if you're unsure!
- How can we encourage others with gifts that are different to ours?

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

Discipleship school

Younger Generations team member Kelly Woods is looking to recruit 20 young adults from Victoria and Tasmania to attend the annual School of Discipleship in New South Wales from June 26-28.

EVENT DETAILS 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 mark@dunn.id.au

Events

4th May 10:30 am	**Focus on Families -** Uniting Webinar (Page 2)
9th May 2 pm	**Climate Champions Afternoon Tea** (Page 3) @ Brunswick UCA, **214 SYDNEY ROAD, BRUNSWICK**
14th May	**Ascension Day**
16th May	**PWV Presbytery meeting**
17th—24th May	**NCCA Week of Prayer for Christian Unity** resources (Page 5)
21st May 2—4pm	**Roundtable Discussions to promote Climate Justice in the UCA** (Page 3)
23rd May	**PPW Presbytery Meeting** (Linley's Farewell)
24th May	**Pentecost**
26th May	**National Sorry Day**
27th May - 3rd June	**National Reconciliation Week 'All In'** resources (Page 5)
29th May 12 to 1:30 pm	**Retired Ministers Lunch—Melbourne Area** (Page 7) mark@dunn.id.au
31st May	**Trinity Sunday**
3rd June	**Mabo Day**
5th—8th June	**State Youth Games 'Spark' 2026**
26th—28th June	**School of Discipleship** (Page 7)