

VIEWPOINT

Volume 2 Issue 3 Spring 2019

A quarterly magazine of THE CANBERRA REGION PRESBYTERY of The Uniting Church in Australia
LINKS - see online copy at canberra.uca.org.au under Presbytery News

How we are responding to the Gospel call to follow Jesus ♦ What Ministry Agents want to say to the Church

**THIS
ISSUE**

Deepening Connections



Articles and photos from around
Canberra Region Presbytery





John Squires speaks to the proposal to listen to the 2017 Statement from the Heart made at Uluru.

Synod 2019 - see also Presbytery Minister Rev Dr John Squires' blog <https://johntsqires.com/2019/07/09/>

Synod 2019

was held at Knox Grammar School in Wahroonga over three days from 5-7 July with over 350 delegates from across the state in attendance. As a Uniting Church – a Living church – we committed to:

1. Supporting existing, growing new and renewing our missional focus in congregations and service agencies through **Growing Healthy Congregations**. This was underpinned by a Focus on Growth proposal.
2. Equipping and empowering disciples for missional leadership and ministry by **Developing Vital Ministry**. This was underpinned by a renewed commitment to **Pulse, Saltbush** and a **Renewed Vision for Formation** proposal.
3. Serving, leading and advocating with our congregations and communities to create a world that is inclusive, just and connected through **Transformative Community Engagement**. This was underpinned by the Climate Action Strategy and Treaty Makaratta Statement from the Heart proposals.

A huge amount of material is available online:

- **Stories on proposals and more** - visit *Weekly Insights* <https://www.insights.uca.org.au/category/synod-2019-living-church> [Telling our Story - Canberra Region Presbytery Report to Synod <https://nswact.uca.org.au/media/4704/canberra-region-presbytery-report-to-synod.pdf>]
- **All video resources** from Synod, including General Secretary, Jane Fry's introduction video, keynotes from Wayside Chapel Pastor Jon Owen, (Karina Kreminski and Joshua Gilbert to be added), **Bible Studies** from Uniting Theological College Principal Peter Walker and all evening events: <https://vimeo.com/nswactuca>
- **Galleries of photos** - <https://www.facebook.com/unitingchurchnswact/>
- **To keep up to date** with Synod: Sign up to receive the *Weekly Insights* email in your inbox <http://www.vision6.com.au/em/forms/subscribe.php?db=408936&s=144683&a=47004&k=83d7ec0>



John Williams praying with the Moderator, Rev Simon Hansford (left), whose term has been extended to 2023 <https://www.insights.uca.org.au/slider/moderators-term-extended>

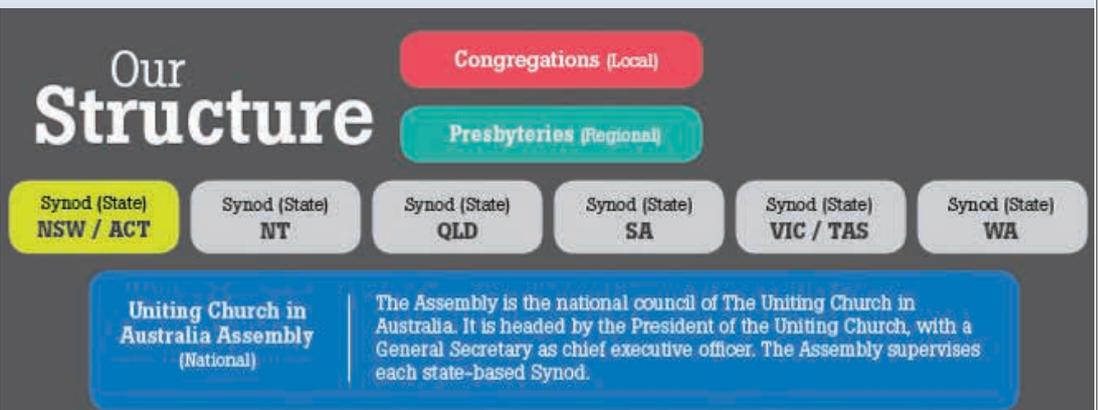
The Synod of NSW & ACT/Uniting Communications

We are introducing our theme **DEEPENING CONNECTIONS** on the next page by looking at how the Uniting Church connects and why. This diagram from NSW/ACT Synod's website may help.

Different Dimensions of Connections

The Uniting Church in Australia

<https://nswact.uca.org.au/about-us/our-structure/>





The Uniting Church in Australia

Different dimensions of connections

Rev Dr John Squires, Presbytery Minister - Wellbeing

Presbytery's theme for its August meeting and this issue of Viewpoint, is DEEPENING CONNECTIONS, with a focus on Synod and Uniting. We are introducing our theme by looking at how the Uniting Church connects and why.

Within our Synod ...

... we have connections with the **four Boards** that undertake the work of the church in a variety of ways - [Uniting Resources](#), [Uniting Mission and Education](#), [Uniting Financial Services](#) and [Uniting](#). For example:

Uniting Mission & Education (UME): we have connections through UME's educational opportunities for members of the Uniting Church, communities, individuals, Ministers, lay preachers and interested parties. There is a local cohort of candidates for Ministry currently training within the Presbytery; and there are congregational connections with UME's [Saltbush Project: Uniting the Scattered Community](#).

Uniting We have connections with the diverse range of community services in our Presbytery, including aged care, disability, early learning services and chaplaincy, along with advocacy and social justice campaigns led by Uniting for the Synod and the broader community engagement supported by [Briony Griffiths](#).

The Uniting Church is a relational church. We are committed to fostering positive, respectful relationships with people.

One dimension of how we connect with each other is found in the relationships we form **across our congregations**, from Goulburn, Crookwell and Yass in the north, through the Canberra-Queanbeyan metropolitan area, down the southern tablelands to Cooma and Jindabyne, and along the coast from Batemans Bay to Bega and Eden.

Another dimension of our connectedness lies **within all those local communities** where Uniting Church congregations are grounded. There are important connections to be noted between people involved in the church—whether that is through worship, witness, service, or fellowship—and people encountered in the local community—whether that is in shopping malls, service clubs, community action groups, welfare activities, political gatherings, craft groups, or in any of the scores of community activities found in our society.

Both connections across congregations and connections within local communities are fundamental to our way of being church. We need to nurture those forms of connection.

A further dimension of how we connect can be found in the **lines of intersection and co-operation amongst the councils of the church**.

The **local Congregation**, as the Basis of Union declares, is the embodiment in one place of the One Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, worshipping, witnessing and serving as a fellowship of the Spirit in Christ. The Congregation has a **Church Council** which has oversight of its activities, and that body serves as the local council.

Other councils of the church are the **regional council** (the Presbytery, in our case Canberra Region), the **state-based council** (the Synod of NSW and the ACT), and the **national council** (the Assembly). Each of those councils has specific responsibilities, and each is charged with the task of working co-operatively with the other councils, as appropriate, across their areas of responsibility.

So our church is structured on the assumption that we will foster positive and fruitful connections, and that our service as disciples depends on the connections we make, grow, and value, in each of the areas identified.

Each of these connections is important. Each form of connecting needs nurturing. Each way of connecting with others needs to be valued and supported. Each relationship born through our connections contributes to who we are as human beings, as well as who the other person is as a human being. Connections are essential for human life. Connecting with others is fundamental to our way of being.

John Squires, Presbytery Minister - Wellbeing

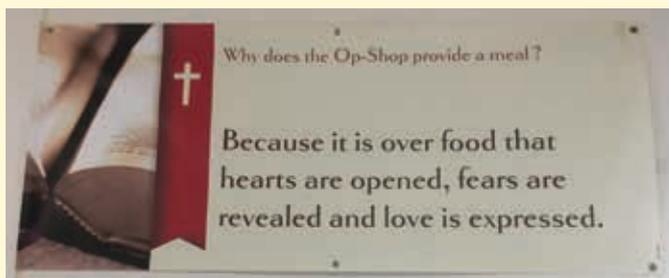


Deepening Connections across

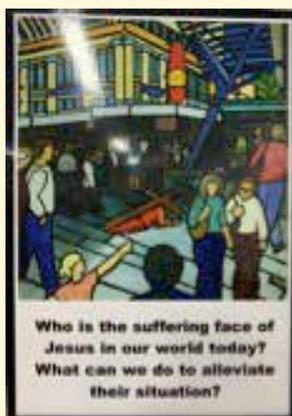
The congregation is where “the rubber hits the road”. There are many good things happening in our congregations and this is where I see rubber hitting the road.

Consistently I see actions seeded and driven by two or three congregational members responding to their call of God - actions to deepen connections and to meet community need.

I have seen this done in a variety of ways. All involve listening, building connections, fostering relationships and walking with those in need of compassion, care, and advocacy. I have seen congregations exploring ways to express why they do what they do. For instance in **Jindabyne**, as the Alpine op-shop offers meals to hundreds on a Wednesday night, they use the inscription below to tell some of their story.



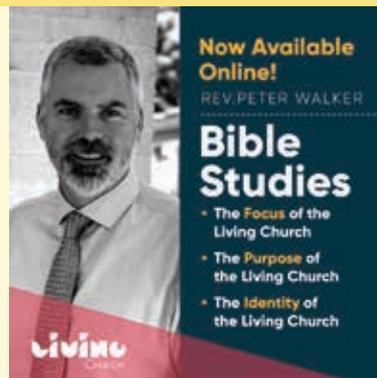
Meanwhile at **Eden**, the **Aboriginal Christian Fellowship** express their action in the poster below which asks the question “Who is the suffering face of Jesus in our world today?”



One such suffering face of Jesus is perhaps the way we currently treat drug addiction. While a congregation can do much, the action and advocacy of the wider church for the reform of Drug Addiction treatment can further help to alleviate the situation.



The launch of “Fair Treatment” following Uniting’s movie “Half A Million Steps” shows how connections can work from congregation to Synod. [Marion McConnell reflects on this movie on page 14 of this Viewpoint.]



Each congregation seeks to express and live out their witness, service and worship in their own way.

At the recent Synod gathering, Uniting Theological College Principal, Peter Walker (left)

painted a picture of the “Living Church” which, at its core, is to bear witness to the presence of the living Lord Jesus Christ through word and deed integrated together.

It is the maintenance of that message and living it out in proclamation, acts of love and works for justice that is our focus in all we do.

To do that well we need to be connected to each other across our four councils and beyond.

Local Congregations are connected together through regional Presbyteries and Presbyteries through state-wide Synods and finally Synods through the national Assembly. We are part of a church with four councils, each with specific responsibilities, each “charged with the task of working co-operatively with the other councils, as appropriate, across their areas of responsibility.” [John Squires on page 3].

It is these connections within and beyond the church that we seek to develop, grow and improve when we talk of “Deepening Connections” as the fifth Pillar of the “Future Directions” strategic plan of Canberra Region Presbytery. In “Deepening Connections” we seek to work with the wider church for mutual well-being. In particular we work closely with Synod and Assembly to communicate and to progress the witness, service and worship of the Uniting Church.

This means deepening and strengthening our connections with Uniting. It also means building better connections to Aboriginal and Islander faith communities and congregations as part of Uniting Aboriginal and Islanders Christian Congress (UAICC); taking steps to work together for a shared future where we listen to the voices, explore treaty and share the truth of our history.

both Church and Community

Celebrating NAIDOC week across many of our congregations were some recent first steps in the “DeepeningConnections” process. (NAIDOC: *National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee*).

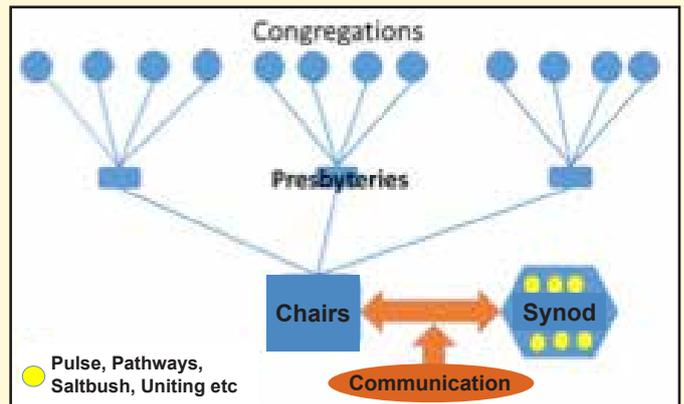
Working to understand how the “ULURU Statement from the Heart” can be progressed by working with First Nations people, is a firmly resolved undertaking from Synod. These are big challenges for us in our quest to “Deepening Connections” beyond our congregations and presbytery.

So how do the three Councils of Synod, Presbytery and Congregation work collaboratively to deliver action on the ground?

I came away from the Synod gathering encouraged and with a strong sense of hope in our future. Yet when I considered the many programs which were approved and endorsed I was struck with the need to get a clear plan of how we were going to collaborate, to bring teams and task forces together between our three councils to get the job done. We have a great opportunity to get the rubber hitting the road. To see possibilities become solid realities in our congregations and communities, we must assemble ourselves in ways that get the job delivered.

My first thinking is about how the meeting of Presbytery Chairs might play an active role in connecting and building collaborative teams and task forces with the resources in Synod, Presbyteries and congregations to deliver action on the ground with community.

My mind model looks like this:



The Chairs working with Synod executive would then be in a position to consider how to build teams of people to connect, plan and implement together.

I don't think the Chairs and Synod executives do more than to specify the priority teams that need to be formed and then keep the connections happening while off-line, the teams and task forces build the collaborations, plan the activities and deliver the outcomes. It could be how we deliver Mission Shaped Ministry or Pulse in regional towns, or Saltbush in scattered communities.

The shape of the connecting and teams will be different for, and specific to, the task at hand. Maybe we should first try with the priority tasks we really want to see realised and learn as we go. But collaborate and support each other, we must. That is why “Deepening Connections” is an important pillar of activity in building our future together.

John Williams, Co-Chair, Canberra Region Presbytery

Reconciliation Action Plan

Delia Quigley, Presbytery Co-Chair.

When I attended one of the Uniting Leadership Forums (in Sydney on 16th July), I was privileged to see the new Reconciliation Action Plan and hold the Message Stick conveying the good news of the Uniting discussions and the agreement on the plan with the consulting committee. **Website:** <https://uniting.org/who-we-help/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islanders-services/reconciliation-action-plan>

PULSE - building relationships between young people and Uniting Church communities.

<https://www.ucapulse.org.au>



SALTBUSH Uniting the scattered community

<https://ume.nswact.uca.org.au/our-work/rural/saltbush>



A day in the life: Kippax



UnitingCare Kippax *Caring locally, building community* *UnitingCare Kippax, an agency of UnitingCare Australia, works in close co-operation with Kippax Uniting Church. Minister, Karyl Davison, Community Relationships Minister, Aimee Kent and Executive Officer, Steve Coster have put their heads together to bring us a day in the life: Kippax - with all its myriad connections.*

It's 9am on a Wednesday morning at Kippax, and one of our front office volunteers opens the front doors as a number of playgroup families wander in from the carpark.

People arriving for emergency help arrive from the bus stop, the urn is on and the kitchen starts to hum with preparations for lunch. There's lots of excess bread from Woolies out for people to take and some fresh vegetables from our community garden.

Steve is on the phone to Synod Human Resources talking about staffing contracts, between pastoral conversations with staff, Karyl is uploading leftover items from the Garage Sale on Gumtree, Aimee is working with our CIT community services students in the kitchen to produce lunch for 100 people at the *Welcome Café*, and Michael Nurmi is working on the expansion of our social enterprise and developing our partnerships and networks across the ACT. He's very excited about upcycling of furniture.

UnitingCare Australia connection

UnitingCare Australia is:

- *the national body for the Uniting Church's community services network and*
- *an agency of the Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia. <https://www.unitingcare.org.au/>*

UnitingCare Australia's services and agencies in this Presbytery:

- *UnitingCare Kippax working in close co-operation with Kippax Uniting Church.*
- *Early Morning Centre working in close co-operation with Canberra City Congregation.*
- *Uniting: a Board of the Synod of NSW/ACT. (see also page 3 of this Viewpoint)*

It's also important to say ...

We can only do what we do at Kippax because we receive support from you – the congregations and members of this Presbytery – THANK YOU! **If you would like more information** about what we do or how you can help you can go to the UnitingCare Kippax website:

<https://kippax.org.au/> **Karyl, Steve, Aimee.**

Case managers are heading out to do home visits, NewPIN staff are preparing parent support training with the support of a couple of congregational volunteers, HIPPIY staff are tutoring parents to be teachers, MowerShed staff have been out working on lawns for a couple of hours now, Emergency Relief counsellors are preparing the pantry, and job ready training is about to begin for Kippax Pathways and Kippax SPARK.

Behind the scenes our admin and support have been making sure that the books balance, looking for opportunities for funding, preparing reports and evaluations, taking room bookings and making sure we are a place of welcome.

It's all hands on deck as the Oz Harvest delivery arrives and the pallets need to be unloaded into the pantry.

Lunchtime arrives and the *Welcome Café* is in full swing.

Today over 80 people from our community service programs, the congregation, staff, volunteers and community members have gathered around tables for games, food and company.

Late in the afternoon, a family comes into the foyer looking for help. Mum, Dad and a 6 year old child are living in their car. Because they want to stay together as a family, it would seem that no agency or organization can help. We provided them with food, letters of referral and a connection with an agency we expect could help.



.../continued on next page

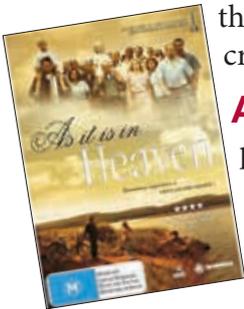
For small groups

A new study from Kippax

As it is in heaven

A new five-session study, written by a group from Kippax Uniting Church and based on the movie, 'As it is in Heaven', is now available for small group use.

'As it is in Heaven' follows the story of Daniel Daréus who, returning to the village where he grew up, appears to be experiencing a profound sense of freedom—for the first time in many years, 'my calendar was completely empty'. And we sense that he is 'coming home' in a deeper sense as, taking up the position as the cantor of the church choir, he seeks to pursue his dream to create music that 'opens people's hearts'.



About the study While the movie explores how supportive communities can protect and nurture people through the process of suffering and be agents of grace, the study invites us to reflect on what has given us the capacity to keep going in difficult times and what have been the catalysts for seeking and discovering deeper meaning in our lives.

For those who are interested in exploring what role the church might play in today's world, the film provides much food for thought. The study includes questions that prompt us to think about the life of our own church community.

This study has richness and depth and draws on the wisdom of a variety of sources including Scripture and contemporary commentators. It gently challenges and encourages the participant to be curious, cultivating the habit of listening deeply both to other participants in the group and to God's Spirit within.

Copies of the study may be obtained by emailing kucaiihstudy@gmail.com.

Hilary Berthon
Kippax Uniting Church

This piece is adapted from a review published in the August 2019 edition of Eremos magazine (<https://www.eremos.org.au/magazine>) © Copyright 2019 Eremos Institute.



Hilary Berthon
Kippax Uniting Church

Copies of the study may be obtained by emailing kucaiihstudy@gmail.com

[A day in the life: Kippax - continued](#)

In the afternoon, Steve attends an ACTCOSS (ACT Council of Social Service) gathering for directors and CEOs of community service organizations. Their focus is on the scarcity of funding in the sector and increase in demands for support.

At the end of the day we're heading home with mixed feelings. We're grateful for the many and varied conversations we've had, and the connections we've made or enabled.

We're again surprised by the depth and spiritual nature of those conversations with staff, volunteers, congregation, and community members. We're glad we've been able to help in some ways, but there's also frustration that so much more needs to be done.

Tonight, Church Council hears a report about the first couple of months of BILT (build your own worship experience), sets up a Governance review for the whole organization, does some Grooming Awareness training and approves short term plans to provide much needed office space.

Tomorrow we're planning an all staff gathering to increase our cultural awareness. This follows a recent training on how staff and volunteers might respond helpfully to visitors in a heightened state.

There's never a dull moment at Kippax! And while that's often challenging, it's also hugely rewarding.

Karyl Davison, Aimee Kent and Steve Coster
Kippax Uniting Church and UnitingCare Kippax



EDEN Far left, Pam Skelton shows Simon around the Community Pantry, left Rev Michael Palmer and his wife, Petra; above, members of the church and community.

GLIMPSES of Presbytery

welcoming the Moderator of NSW & ACT Synod, Rev Simon Hansford

Photos courtesy of John Williams, Delia Quigley and John Squires.



Members of **INNER NORTH CANBERRA** Congregations had dinner in Lyneham with Simon on 23 July 2019. An article on this gathering by Jenny Rowland is in the August issue of Canberra City congregation's magazine, **CONTACT**, available from their office, Ph 6257 4600. Jenny says, "Constructive points considered at the conversation will feed into ongoing discussions about the Inner North Canberra Uniting Churches".



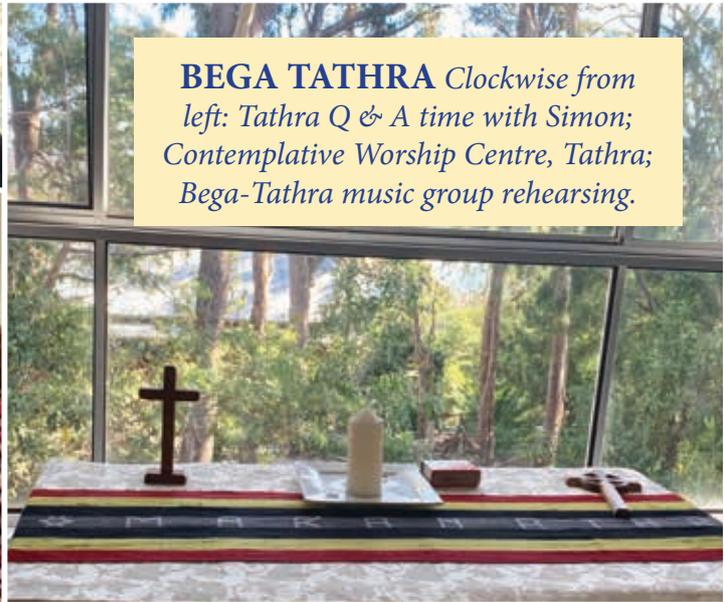
GRACE
Faith
Community,
Goulburn
and a game
of "Exploding
kittens".



GOULBURN Front page photo: The Moderator conducts the service for the re-opening of Goulburn Uniting Church following the replacement of the old damaged Church spire. Above clockwise: the new spire (and the church plaque), the choir sings, Julie Lawton-Gallard, Daniel Mossfield and Simon Hansford lead the service.



BEGA TATHRA Clockwise from left: Tathra Q & A time with Simon; Contemplative Worship Centre, Tathra; Bega-Tathra music group rehearsing.



NEXT ISSUE of VIEWPOINT
50-200 words describing encouragement received from the Moderator's visit or President's visit (page 13) would be most welcome.

The Moderator's visit to this Presbytery was one of a number of extended visits he is undertaking during the three years of his moderatorial term. It helps to build the connections between the Synod and the Presbytery.

At Synod 2019 three key markers were adopted to guide its work. They are based on Growing Healthy Congregations, Developing Vital Ministry and Transformative Community Engagement. [see page 2]. There are a number of strong resonances with the Five Pillars our Presbytery has adopted. [Viewpoint Summer 2018]. At a number of the occasions during this visit, there was fruitful discussion about ways Synod could strengthen and support the Presbytery in working with Congregations to be proactive in mission and strengthened in ministry. *John Squires.*

ALPINE - NSW Deputy Premier, John Barilaro and Minister John Sidoti, (far right) visited Jindabyne 26 July 2019 to meet with locals and Alpine Uniting to discuss Jindabyne community needs. Co-Chair Delia closed the discussions with prayer for those in the community in need and gave thanks for the volunteers who do so much to serve and feed those in need.



Simon opens the Op Shop extension.

Visiting MPs: John Sidoti left, with Don Hayman

TUGGERANONG
On Wednesday 24 July, the Moderator met with green thumbs at the Erindale Community Garden prior to spending time hearing from members of SOUTH CANBERRA congregations followed by a wonderfully filling lunch. *Delia Quigley.*



More GLIMPSES of Presbytery

From VIEWPOINT EDITOR to CONGREGATIONAL EDITORS - To help me keep in touch, may I please be put on your mailing list to receive your magazine or newsletter? Email viewpoint@cruc.org.au Carolyn



The Moderator Rev Simon Hansford joins the MINISTERS' WEEKLY LECTIONARY MEETING



Grace Faith Community catch-up

Aimee Kent: Grace Faith Community, Goulburn farewelled Rev Aimee Kent 22 Dec 2018 after five years of ministry. Aimee has been pro-active in setting up several ministries under the Grace banner, for people of all ages. **Outdoor Adventure Church** has seen the annual camping trip grow into one of the most looked forward to events of each year. Aimee has now joined the staff at **Kippax Uniting Church** in Canberra as Community Relationships Minister. Aimee will still be a part of the Grace community and continue to participate in several of their activities.



A closure and induction three days before Christmas. ... Right: Aimee and Daniel

Daniel Mossfield: On the 1st January, Daniel entered into placement as Minister of the Word with both the Crookwell Uniting Church (50%) and the Grace Faith Community (50%). This followed his ordination and induction on 22nd December at Crookwell, by Presbytery Co-Chair **John Williams** - the culmination of seven years of work and study for Daniel, including the last two leading the Crookwell Church. **Daniel** has already energized the region with his fresh ideas and open communication with the congregation.

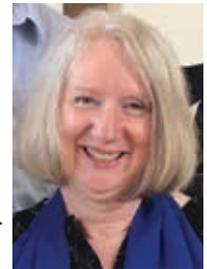
[With thanks to *Crookwell UC Newsletter* for this information.]

Braidwood

and a warm welcome for **Pastor Dr Julie Fletcher**, commissioned by Presbytery Co-Chair, **Delia Quigley** on Palm Sunday 2019.

Julie and her husband Neil have moved to Braidwood from the farming area of Nyrang Creek in the Central West to take up the position of Pastor at Braidwood Uniting Church. Julie received her Doctor of Philosophy from ACU in Ballarat, through research into Spirituality and a multi-disciplinary Palliative Care team. Working as a spiritual support worker for the terminally ill has led to a passion for conversations about the journey of dying and grief across the many facets of our lives. This has resulted in assisting people with advanced funeral planning, legacy creation and finding life through decline and hard times: a Spiritual Life Coach.

Julie has been delighted by the warmth of welcome received by the people of Braidwood, and is looking forward to serving the Uniting Church congregation and the community of Braidwood.

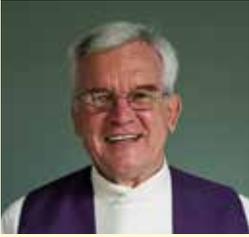


Amala/ Mirinjani

Uniting has warmly welcomed **Shirley Campbell** as a Pastoral Practitioner at Amala/ Mirinjani Aged Care, Canberra ACT. Shirley was commissioned

by Uniting's Chaplaincy Convenor South, **Rev Nigel Hawken** on the 26th July 2019.

<https://uniting.org/services/services/uniting-aged-care-home/>
<https://uniting.org/services/spiritual-and-pastoral-care>



Talking about PASTORAL CARE for Pastors

I retired from active ministry 13 years ago. It was a traumatic experience.

I had journeyed through a very challenging stage in the life of the congregation I served and in the end I had little energy to continue. I felt bound to seek retirement and the process was a sad one. With school age children my wife and I decided to remain in the country town and relocate to rented accommodation.

In time I found employment in a former career. In time I began to pick up the threads of a meaningful and spiritually enriching life again. Why? Because I had people around me, both within my

former congregation and beyond it, who affirmed me and helped me discover the reality of God and the life of Christ at the very heart of my experience. I was deeply blessed by others' pastoral care.

A few months ago I was invited to accept a short term role of offering pastoral care to ministers in placement and lay pastoral leaders as part of the Presbytery's role in providing for the wellbeing of its ministers.

It is a ministry which I realised would be a privilege to undertake.

I see it as having a different focus to ministries of mentoring or supervision, Christian formation or professional counselling.

It is simply a ministry of Christian encouragement and unconditional affirmation, conveyed through conversations that remain confidential apart from any issues requiring referral as requested by the minister. Already I have had the privilege of conversing with all but two of our ministers and I have been humbled by the positive way in which I have been received.

I should have known. With Christ, the best is always yet to come, even for a long retired minister who thought that his best years were consigned to history!

Ian Diamond, Presbytery Minister (Supply) Pastoral Care



"Greenhills is the place to stay!"

(Nambour Christian College, QLD)







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Paul Chalson and Amy Junor, speakers at the Presbytery Meeting, 17th August 2019, reflect on the Climate Change Pastoral Care Training Day hosted by members of Uniting Earth.

Solastalgia

If nostalgia could be defined as homesickness when you are away from home, then solastalgia is homesickness when you are still at home. Glenn Albrecht.

Solastalgia - a new word I learnt recently from its inventor, Glenn Albrecht. Whilst a recent word, it has been included in dictionaries and used by musician, Missy Higgins, as the title for her most recent recording.

Solastalgia is a form of mental or existential distress caused by environmental change. I learnt about solastalgia at the recent *Climate Change Pastoral Care* workshop organized by Uniting Earth.



During this workshop a number of attendees grappled with the pastoral implications arising from the trauma of climate change. Solastalgia was just one of

a number of emotional, mental and physical health issues identified as being linked to climate change. In response to these issues the workshop was conceived to offer tools with which the church can give pastoral ministry to those impacted through climate change.

We examined the theological basis for our work, noting that God cherishes all creation and calls us to care for creation and that every act we undertake for good is an act that is worthwhile. Uniting Church President, **Deidre Palmer**, reflecting upon the ministry of caring for children, spoke of building a narrative that envisions a hopeful, compassionate future. She also noted that activism can contribute to emotional wellbeing at such times. There were workshops on practices that encourage wellbeing through reconnection with nature. There was also an excellent presentation from **UnitingWorld** regarding their work with the church in Pacific nations to develop a theology of disaster resilience.

Climate Change is perhaps the most crucial issue confronting our time and it presents a number of challengers on various fronts. The church has a calling to be active for the care of all creation and to minister to the needs of those in our congregations and communities who are feeling impacted and overwhelmed.



This workshop offered a good introduction to the issues and practices of Climate Change pastoral care; issues and practices with which we will need to become increasingly familiar.

Paul Chalson, Minister, Canberra City Uniting Church.



After we were welcomed to a country on the morning of Climate Change Pastoral Care training, I stood with my hands being squeezed by two strangers, and I squeezed back my acknowledgement of their presence. Under the beauty of autumn trees, we prepared to consider the task of caring for our communities in a changing climate.

Later, I shared with members of my faith community the statistics we were reminded of in the morning session. I told them I was feeling emotional, grieving again at the grim picture before us. I entered a session afterwards where we were given 10 things that we can do to help care for people experiencing climate distress. Number 8 was to 'live in a well-functioning and connected community' where the burden can be shared. I told my people that I am grateful that we can speak about these things together.

In the afternoon, we listened to voices from our nearest neighbours in the Pacific Islands and the First Peoples of Australia. We spoke together about how we hold the information about our situation and respond helpfully and practically.

.../continued on next page



Conversations with the President

Dr Deidre Palmer, is travelling around Australia giving opportunity to young adults to reflect with her on their faith journey, hopes and concerns, the Uniting Church and our participation in the liberating mission of God in the world



[This and more photos are on Facebook](#)

At Wesley Uniting Church, Forrest, on the 25th July 2019, young people from Canberra Region Presbytery congregations met the President at the first of 12 Roundtable discussions with young adults around Australia. Deidre has written to Co-Chair John Williams saying, "It was a wonderful conversation and it was inspiring to hear their stories and perspectives". *For more about the day, an article by Jenny Rowland is due to appear in Canberra City Uniting Church's September issue of their magazine Contact, which will be available from their office - 6257 4600.*

[Solastalgia ... Amy continues from the previous page](#)

I drove home that evening in a rainstorm – the wild world we care for refusing to be ignored. The first line of Psalm 19 played on repeat in my mind.

I have a friend who has been part of our congregation and is one of the most environmentally responsible people I know. She said to me once as we spoke about climate action;

"we don't need one person to do this perfectly, we need everybody to be doing this imperfectly".

This has stayed with me as I have processed these stories.

One of the best ways we can care for our neighbours (and young people especially) is to be modelling active (if imperfect) care for the creation around us.

Maybe for you the first step is changing an aspect of your lifestyle or that of your congregation to produce less waste.

Maybe your congregation could contact *Common Grace* [<https://www.commongrace.org.au>] to hear about the work they are doing in this area, or together you can write to your local council about making sustainable changes in your neighbourhood.

I hope that we as followers of Jesus can step forward gently, squeezing hands as we acknowledge one another's grieving the reality, and committing to hopeful action together.

Amy Junor, Pastor, Queanbeyan Uniting Church.

Uniting Earth Ministry

part of the Advocacy Unit of Uniting

<https://www.facebook.com/unitingearthnswact/>

> Extra resources for the Climate Action proposal which was passed at the recent meeting of Synod are available at: <https://www.unitingearth.org.au/synod-pre-reading>

> General information can be found on Uniting Earth's old site (new site due Aug 2019) <http://unitingearthweb.org.au/>

> Uniting Earth is inviting **Uniting** individuals to join the Living the Change campaign <https://livingthechange.net/> and ... congregations to fill in the survey on the Five Leaf Eco-Award site. <https://fiveleafecoawards.org/>

THE AUSTRALIAN RELIGIOUS RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE (ARRCC) inaugural national Conference will be held November 08, 2019 at 4pm - November 10, 2019 at Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture, 15 Blackall St, Barton, Canberra ACT.

For more information : https://www.arrcc.org.au/arrcc_national_conference.



Marion McConnell, a speaker at the Presbytery Meeting, 17th August 2019, reflects on Uniting's Documentary ...

Half a Million Steps

What a moving and liberating experience it was to be at the Palace Chauvel Cinema in Oxford St Sydney on 13th June for the premiere showing of Uniting's documentary – "Halfpage a Million Steps".

I use the word moving because it was a faithful depiction of the lives of so many families who had been devastated by drugs. I use the word liberating because it didn't shy away from acknowledging that present drug laws and policies play a large part in adding to this devastation.

After advocating for a change in drug laws for 27 years, I personally felt validated that, at long last, this advocacy had finally been realised in this splendid documentary, as a result of the Uniting Church taking up the challenge. And it all started with the Canberra Region Presbytery's Social Justice Group.

This film was a dramatisation of the journey people would need to embark on to get treatment for their drug dependency because nothing was available in their local area. It covered the half a million steps from Dubbo to NSW Parliament House in Sydney where a petition, calling for better treatment and drug law reform, was handed to four NSW politicians.

It starkly highlights by means of cleverly chosen camera cuts, the contrast between scenes of those who intrepidly shared their stories of despair and the artistic cinematography of serene beauty from the Blue Mountains as well as peaceful clips of kangaroos in the dry grasses. It is a most powerful symbolic tool in the film making.

This is a first-class documentary, which treats a complicated issue seriously. It is also a political statement. It doesn't only want the viewer to be empathetic or compassionate, although of course this is an important part of the documentary, it also wants the viewer to understand and recognise the futility and injustice of criminalising people for using certain drugs.

To read the Australian Government's
National Drug Strategy 2017-2026

go to <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/national-drug-strategy-2017-2026>



Half a Million Steps is a 90 minute documentary produced by the Uniting Church and Uniting as part of its "Fair Treatment" campaign for drug reform.

There's more at: <https://nswact.uca.org.au/social-justice/the-social-justice-forum/fair-treatment-campaign/>

Mick Palmer, a former Australian Federal Police Commissioner and **Nicholas Cowdery**, a former Director of Public Prosecutions speak from their personal experiences of involvement in enforcing the drug laws over many years.

They now strongly advocate for removing the criminal sanctions for personal drug use.

Moderator **Simon Hansford** plays an important role and clergy from the congregations visited along the way speak about the importance of caring about and connecting with people.

Tony Trimmingham, in a movingly dignified and solemn presence tells the story surrounding the death of his son from a heroin overdose. This was one of the most heart rending stories in the documentary. More so because his loss could have been avoided if only drug use were treated as a health and social issue rather than a criminal justice one.

Don't miss an opportunity to view this documentary and be captivated by its message. It is a message which I was reminded of recently when the Sunday sermon was based on the Good Samaritan. The lawyer was advised by Jesus to go and do as the Good Samaritan had done. As our Minister explained "In other words, forget about your definitions of who's in and out, forget about legal obligations, get on with being neighbourly. And how do we do that? By drawing near. By being compassionate".

This message of social justice and warm humanity is well portrayed in "Half a Million Steps".

Marion McConnell (OAM), Member St Ninian's Social Action Group; Member Presbytery Social Justice Group; Founding member of Families and Friends for Drug Law Reform

Worship - deepening connections

United by the love of God

There is an image from the book of Revelation that I have deeply appreciated for a long time:

After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, saying.

‘Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!

(Revelation 7.9-10)

As you may know, I have just got back from a trip to the USA for the [Festival of Homiletics](#). Over five days, 1600 preachers gathered in the city of Minneapolis to worship together, attend workshops and hear sermons and lectures presented by some of the best preachers from across America.

There were many powerful moments at the conference, which focused on prophetic preaching and moral imagination. I am grateful for the opportunity to be confronted by many powerful and life-giving sermons throughout my week there.

However, one of the most wonderful things I will take out of the conference was the experience of worshipping with this group of preachers – for truly, I have seen the Kingdom of God breaking into the world.

Amongst those 1600 preachers that attended the Festival were people from Australia, America, Canada, the UK, New Zealand, and even Iceland. There were African-American, Anglo and Asian preachers. There were Presbyterians, Lutherans, Baptists, Methodists, Pentecostals and even Uniting Church ministers. There were gay preachers, and straight preachers; married preachers and celibate preachers.

Together we sang Gospel music accompanied by a choir; old Wesleyan hymns led by a beautiful pipe organ; bluegrass renditions of worship songs; and new songs played on piano and guitar.

We worshipped in the way we had learned in our own tradition, and we opened ourselves to the beauty of worshipping in ways that were meaningful for the people standing alongside us.

And as I stood there, singing ‘To God be the Glory’ in the Westminster Presbyterian Church with all these fellow preachers, all I could think about was the above passage from Revelation.

For the vision of God’s Kingdom is one in which all the children of God lay aside those differences which we so often choose to fight about, and gather together before the throne of God, ‘from all nations and peoples’ in awe and wonder at the God who made us all.

My hope for Crookwell is that in our own small way, we too might embody such diversity united by the love of God – and experience the beauty of God’s shalom.

Daniel Mossfield,
Minister, Crookwell Uniting Church and Grace Faith Community

‘United by the love of God’ reprinted with permission from the online Crookwell Uniting Church Newsletter, June 2019.



“for truly, I have seen the Kingdom of God breaking into the world.”

VIEWPOINT



NEXT ISSUE - Articles and contributions are due mid-October in time for the 16 November Presbytery meeting. Please send to the Editor, Carolyn McAllister, viewpoint@cruc.org.au Enquiries: Co-Chairs John Williams 6254 3612 H Delia Quigley 0438 018 799

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