



Uniting Church in Australia
Synod of Victoria and Tasmania
Presbytery of Yarra Yarra

PO Box 4308
Balwyn East VIC 3103

6th November 2020

Notes and news for Yarra Yarra Congregations and Institutions

As usual, the newsletter contains a number of items which may be of interest to your congregations. Please identify other items relevant to your community, and promote the issues and events listed below through your own newsletters and other communication channels as appropriate. There is much going on, so please take a few minutes to review.

Please ensure that items for the next edition are sent in by the end of the month. It is helpful if you can provide text, rather than copies of fliers which need to be transcribed and summarised. Please include contact information for those seeking more information.

PRESBYTERY NEWS

While our newsletters have been more intermittent this year, in a reflection of the reduced number of activities that are being arranged for people from across the Presbytery, it is encouraging to know that our life in the Uniting Church continues. The recent survey of the way congregations have responded during the periods of lockdown has shown that the great majority of congregations have developed new and innovative ways to continue to engage their congregations. Over 80% have indicated that they are using online and streaming technologies to allow them to provide meaningful worship, and many are considering how this will impact their future life.

We are currently conducting a follow-up survey about online worship, so that we can learn what is, and then review, “best practice” in this area. If there is adequate response and interest, a workshop on this topic may be arranged.

As we start to contemplate what it will mean to resume face-to-face gatherings, it will be important to think about ways to continue to relate to those who have found on-line activity helpful and, in some cases, easier. Those with limited mobility, those separated by distance, those whose timetables mean that they need time-flexibility and those who enjoy the ability to participate in different types of worship from time to time are just some of the groups who have seen benefits from our recent activities in this area.

Chairperson	Lisa Carey	03 9857 1006	lisa.carey@pyy.victas.uca.org.au
Presbytery Ministers	Dan Wootton	03 9857 1000	dwootton@victas.uca.org.au
	Liz McMillan	0419 884 736	liz.mcmillan@victas.uca.org.au
	Sunny Chen	0423 273 813	pyy.pmc@victas.uca.org.au
Secretary	Geoffrey Grinton	03 9857 1003	pyy.secretary@victas.uca.org.au

Nevertheless, it will be important that we take a considered and rational approach to future planning. It is clear that in many cases the burden of preparing and producing an online worship service falls on a small number of people, and requirements for skills and technology are not always easily managed. There is already evidence of concern among some, ministers and other leaders, that an expectation of a resumption of physical services while maintaining online activity will impose additional and, in some cases, unrealistic burdens on those whose time is already fully occupied.

One thing that has become clear is that this change is showing people that it is not essential that a “congregation” needs to be defined in physical or geographic terms. Members of congregations are experiencing the freedom to join in worship that may be happening anywhere, and not just at the church which they have been used to attending. For some small congregations, this has brought a new sense of relief and freedom as members find an ability to change the way they relate to each other. It may no longer be necessary to carry the organisational burdens of a Church Council, property maintenance, or, indeed, the stresses associated with balancing the needs of financing a full or even a part-time ministry.

There could be a number of situations where a group of people, recognised perhaps as a Faith Community, are able to develop and maintain very effective and efficient arrangements for pastoral care of each other, but which rejoice in a new-found freedom to be part of a worshipping community (perhaps in a neighbouring suburb, or maybe far distant) which will welcome them as part of the diaspora. Maybe we could see the development of clusters of faith communities gathered around a larger congregation with a heart to reach out, love and care for the wider group, providing a physical space for activities which require it, and thereby ensure that we avoid the necessity for the current proliferation of unsustainable part-time placements.

We would welcome any responses and the reflections of your congregation about how you see congregational life over the next decade.

Presbytery Meeting

Attendance at Presbytery meetings has certainly increased since we have been using Zoom, and we are now planning for our next meeting which will be held this way on Saturday 28th November. More information about the meeting will be sent to members of Presbytery shortly.

An accommodation request

One of the final-year candidates under the oversight of Yarra Yarra Presbytery is in need of accommodation. If you are aware of a flat, house or unit which could be made available for rent to this candidate and his wife for a period of about twelve months, please contact the Presbytery Secretary.

Synod Vacancy on Finance Committee

The Finance Committee of the Victorian & Tasmanian Synod of the Uniting Church of Australia is looking for additional members. The following information comes from the Synod Nominations Committee.

We are looking for people with recognised financial qualifications such as accounting, commerce or a related business degree. Successful volunteers would also have membership of a recognised Australian professional accounting or auditing body, e.g. CPA, Institute of CA, etc. The gifts and skills volunteers would bring to the Finance Committee include experience in a sizable organisation of financial management practices, budgeting, planning and control. A knowledge of the UCA and its ethos would be advantageous. The Finance Committee is looking for a range of volunteers that can bring diversity to the committee through culture, gender and age. If you are interested in hearing more about this possibility please contact Rev Jay Robinson at jay@robinsonfamily.id.au for more details.

Presbytery Leadership – Committee positions

Information about Presbytery leadership roles and committee membership was sent recently to all members of Presbytery and to Church Councils, but the response has been minimal. Since a closing date of Monday 9th November was given, this is disappointing, and so we would encourage everyone to take this seriously. The bodies for which nominations are open include:

- Standing Committee
- Pastoral Relations Committee
- Resourcing Committee
- Ministry Formation Committee
- Lay Preachers Committee

A copy of the material is being circulated again with this newsletter, so please take it seriously, recalling that the presbytery is not “them”, but “us”, and so we each have a responsibility to ensure that these committees have a full and effective membership.

Synod 2021

Yarra Yarra Presbytery is able to appoint 23 lay and 23 ordained members of the Synod which will meet from 26th to 28th February 2021. We



We have also called for nominations for this important meeting, and responses are due by Friday 13th November. Once again, in the light of the low response to date, the relevant material has been attached to this newsletter again.

Church Council Secretaries are asked to discuss membership with Ministers in placement, and to think about others in your congregation who would be able to contribute to the wider Church through the Synod.

Christmas Bowl – Position vacant

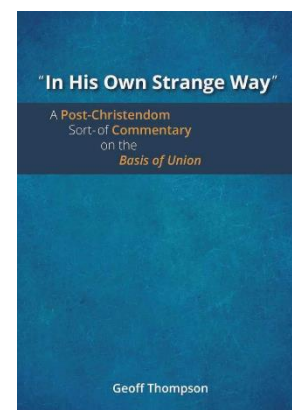
Act For Peace, the international aid agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia, are currently looking for someone who might be interested in taking up a 12-month contract to manage the Christmas Bowl for churches. It is a 3 days a week position and the person will have a real hand in shaping the Christmas Bowl for next year. While the office is located in Sydney, they are open to having someone working remotely.

You can find out more about the position at

<https://www.actforpeace.org.au/Take-action/Work-at-Act-for-Peace> and by clicking the Marketing Coordinator - Church Giving link, or by calling Andy Corkill on tel 04 1869 2114.

More on the Basis of Union

Geoff Thompson, Associate Professor Systematic Theology at the Pilgrim Theological College, has recently published a new “sort of commentary” on the Uniting Church Basis of Union. He examines what was established as the founding theology of the UCA and demonstrates its relevance to the post-Christendom world in which we find ourselves. An illuminating image he proposes is that the Basis is useful when we see it not as a map with defined routes to follow, but as a compass that provides directions in unfamiliar territory.



Each chapter of the book examines the relevance of a section of the Basis to issues that arise in the post-Christendom world, with easy to read summaries headed ‘Post-Christendom reality’ and ‘Post-Christendom

opportunity,' as well as relevant questions and Bible passages to think about individually or as a group.

The book is available through Mediacom and can be ordered online via [this link](#).

New Illuminating Faith resources

New [Illuminating Faith](#) resources for 2020 are now available. These include the completion of a packaging of [Yale University's online introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures](#), and [the complementary resources on the New Testament](#). Also available is a [new set of Advent meditations](#) for small groups, an [Advent study on the Song of Songs](#) released earlier, and a [new musical setting of the Advent 'O Antiphons'](#) for those interested in such things!

For more information , contact Craig Thompson at craig@christologia.net.

*If you have information that you wish to have distributed through this newsletter, please ensure that it is submitted by the start of the month in which the item is to appear. I plan to try to send newsletters out in the third week, so that means if your event occurs early in the month, you will need to have it submitted by the start of the **previous** month.*

The newsletter is sent to Church Council Secretaries and Presbytery members. If you should not be receiving it, please contact me at pyy.secretary@victas.uca.org.au with the name of your congregation and the name of the correct person.