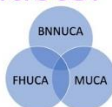




Whitehorse
Uniting
Cluster

The Uniting Church in Australia
Congregations of: Blackburn
North / Nunawading; Forest Hill;
and Mountview (Mitcham);
in a shared ministry together



Cluster News

November 2021

Welcome to the November Cluster News

What a treat it has been to meet in person again for worship this month. While some of us have been keen to embrace returning to worship, we understand that it is not so easy for others. We are navigating a path we've not travelled before so it is ok for us to reach the zone of 'feeling comfortable' at a different time to someone else.

We're grateful to the ministry team for the continuation of our worship resources as they help to keep us all connected, particularly with those at home. As we enter the Advent season, we will explore what our common experience of Christmas/Advent is. It is the wonderful anticipation of the birthing of hope in the form of Jesus that allows us to begin new conversations, new relationships and new and unified visions of our future as people of faith.



In this issue you will meet another member of the Regional Council, Julie Hawkey, from the Forest Hill congregation, thank you Julie. Following a request from me (Lynne Rosenthal), Daniel Jackson very kindly provided his thoughts about how lockdown affected him, thanks Daniel.

Contributions to Cluster News can be sent to lynnerosenthal@gmail.com or a member of your own church council.

Regional Council Update

We've had much to celebrate this month as we move about more freely, attending worship together and seeing family and friends. We appear to be adapting well, signing in with QR codes and recording vaccination details. We extend our thanks to those monitoring these requirements and to all members for their understanding as we comply with directives.

We are absolutely thrilled to confirm that Rev Pete Rivett has been told he **will** become part of the Uniting Church but no further details about the timeline are known at this time. We share Pete's excitement, relief even, and hope that the process moves quickly to give Pete and his family more certainty.

In the October Cluster News we advised that a consultant will help us through the process of forming a cluster. On 16th November a steering team, comprising most members of the Regional Council, met with Phil McCredden from Ecclesia Leadership to confirm our acceptance of his Stage One Proposal and timeline for achieving milestones in that process. Phil has already met with various people from each congregation and, prior to Christmas, he will meet with church councils and the ministry team. As we move through the process, Phil will also meet regularly with the steering team. Towards the end of January a survey will be circulated to everyone to help us determine how we are all travelling on our journey. In the first quarter of 2022, workshops will be held with the congregations. We are looking forward to opportunities for all of us to share our history, listen to each other, and share insights as we take these steps in our journey together.

The ministers were grateful to receive your Survey responses, thank you, which helped them to decide which worship resources would continue when Zoom worship ceased. It is very obvious that all the resources are widely used and appreciated and the intention at this time is for them to continue. With the Christmas Season upon us, much discussion at the November Regional Council meeting related to planning for

Advent activities, Christmas services, combined worship and a preaching roster to take us into the New Year. From February 2022, ministers will preach at one church for at least 3 weeks to provide more opportunity for everyone to get to know each other and build relationships. All 3 churches have also been trying to schedule congregation meetings in the short time remaining before the end of the year – being unable to meet in person certainly curtailed many of our usual activities.

Our ministers will take a well-earned break in the New Year. Rev Peter Cannon will take leave from 9th to 16th January, Rev Pete Rivett will take leave from 10th to 23rd January and Rev Tina Lyndon Ng from 17th to 24th January.

The positions of Chairman (Rob Jackson) and Secretary (Lynne Rosenthal) of Regional Council cease at the end of the year as these positions are one year appointments. Both Rob and Lynne are members of the Mountview congregation. Their replacements will be advised when known.

Julie Hawkey has gathered information about groups which exist in our churches to establish where overlaps occur. This will enable us to share information or collaborate to enhance mission work or other activities together. Julie will be coordinating some opportunities for us all to interact socially, now that we are able to do so. One group already working closely together is Mission and Outreach and we hope to bring you a report from the group next month. The editors of each weekly newsletter finally met in person, together with the ministry team, on 17th November to discuss ways to collaborate or streamline communication with our congregations. It was lovely to put names and faces together. Finally, it feels as though we're turning a corner!

Regional Council member Julie Hawkey



Julie has been a member of the Forest Hill UC and the former Mt Pleasant, since 1971 when she and Daryl moved to their first home in Vermont. She grew up on a farm in a very beautiful valley in north-west Tasmania and came to live in Melbourne after her marriage. Julie was a part of the Methodist Church from an early age as her parents and older siblings all had roles within the local congregation. Prior to retirement, Julie's career was in education, particularly in teaching English as a second language. After working in primary schools in Tasmania and Victoria, she was employed by AMES, teaching in community programs and then in various factories and company training sites. As a coordinator in the industry program, she was involved in setting up training programs, supporting field staff and liaising with companies. Retirement has proved to be a busy time but rewarding, enabling her to spend time with her family. Gardening is both a great love and lots of work as she and her husband have a large garden to care for. Julie considers herself fortunate to have been able to travel to other countries and, until last year, each year brought a new adventure. Currently she is the Chairperson/Secretary of the Forest Hill Church Council. Her involvement includes the Pastoral Care Ministry Group, a Kids Hope Mentor as well as carrying out duties on various rosters.

A letter from our Ministers Rev Pete Rivett

Firstly, on behalf of the Ministry Team, I would like to say well done. Well done on 18 months of COVID uncertainty, well done on 6 months of intentional Clustering, and well done on our re-emergence into post-lockdown COVID reality.

One of the main questions that continually comes up in discussion within the Christian community is "What is the Future of the Church?"

This question is pertinent to not just the Whitehorse Cluster, but into the Uniting Church and the world-wide Church at large.

When I ponder this question, I am provoked by the author Simon Sinek who asks "Why does your organization exist?" He uses business speak, but the principle stays the same.

WHY is the purpose, cause or belief, it is why your organization/community exists.

HOW is about how we organize ourselves and enrich ourselves to express WHY we exist.

WHAT is what we are doing now to live out or WHY, empowered by HOW we are organized. WHAT we do, is the proof of WHY exist.

These are the questions that will underpin the future of the Church at large, as well as our emerging cluster.

This is an exciting time! When was the last time our congregations articulated the very deepest understanding of WHY our church exists?

The Regional Council is implementing a program to facilitate these questions of identity. This is a sacred practice and expression of faithful community that will have implications for not only today, but for future generations.

I look forward to the deep listening, story-telling and passion as we explore our future together.

Social Justice

There are many ways for us to express a view or take action in response to social injustice and a number of organisations provide ways for you to engage or support a particular view or cause if you wish. Some suggestions are:

- Uniting Coffee Cup Challenge is running from International Coffee Day on 1st October 2021 to Pancake Day 1st March 2022. People put aside the cost of a cup of coffee each week to raise funds to support people experiencing crisis, vulnerability and disadvantage.
- Asylum Seeker Resource Centre provides a range of support services for people seeking asylum. There are numerous ways to help, including participation in campaigns such as phone calls to politicians. See asrc.org.au
- There are many opportunities to support environmental causes including support for wildlife. As well as through GetUp and change.org, these include Humane Society International, Animals Australia, Animals Asia, Worldwide Fund for Nature, International Fund for Animal Welfare, the Wilderness Society and Wires Animal Rescue, to name just a few.

Lockdown observations

I have never been one who likes to socialise much, so when pandemic-alleviating restrictions were put in place requiring us to stay at home, I was not concerned and adjusted easily. After all, there were many things I

liked to do at home that could continue unabated, such as work on mathematical problems and build with Lego. Still, other things changed: some for better, some for worse.

My job (not something I chased after, but something I fell into) is to lead undergraduate mathematics tutorials at Monash University. I remember having one meeting in March 2020 for a subject I hadn't taught before with many interesting ideas about new things that the teaching staff would do that semester, only for them to end up moot as we transitioned to online teaching. One reason I'd asked to teach that subject was because I knew that assignment marking was done online and I wanted to see how efficient that was. Little did I know that that would be the norm for all subjects from then on! I quickly adapted to the new technology and classes ran quite similarly to previous semesters, but I missed the ease of walking around a classroom and quickly being able to see what each group of students was up to. It was no doubt tougher for the students to have reduced social interactions. Mostly they have been randomly allocated to breakout rooms; some were very quiet with video off, but others clicked really well which was nice to see.

Working from home meant zero travel time, which was particularly nice for 8am starts. However, my fitness is built on riding 27km to uni and back most days and I was sad to lose this as well as regular bootcamp, futsal (indoor soccer), and parkrun (5km social runs). By far the most common reason I left home during lockdowns was for exercise. I found motivation from the restrictions on time away and distance from home. Before the 5km radius was finally lifted, I managed to circumnavigate my 5km circle in under 2 hours on my bike, which was 50km all up including the radial lines home. (For those wondering why it's not closer to $5+10*\pi+5 \sim 41\text{km}$, a lot of the circle was on the grid of our roads with the remainder on windy bike paths, so a better approximation is a square of width 10km: $5+10*4+5 = 50\text{km}$.) Lockdown also gave me the opportunity to enter Sydney's 14km City2Surf run virtually, which I was very pleased to be able to do in under one hour, albeit on a flatter course. One day I want to try it for real.

The fortnightly Bible study Monday Night Group continued through lockdown. While we certainly missed seeing each other in person, particularly as babies were born or growing up, meeting online also had its benefits. The group has become geographically spread out and Zoom allowed everyone to join in from anywhere, so it was great to catch up with those who couldn't regularly make it. Running the church's children group MUGGs was challenging; we made the most of the opportunities we had between lockdowns,

and thankfully we were able to complete filming for our 2021 video project in contiguous weeks. Editing will continue next year.

There are a few things I'm thankful for over this time. In 2020 I was casually employed at Monash and many others had little to no work in the absence of international students, but I was given plenty to teach and am now more permanently employed in a part-time position. Being able to run, walk, or cycle with one other person was super beneficial to me. The extra time made it easier to continue my 2019 goals of reading the entire Bible (completed in about a year by September 2020), learning French, and reading more books (88 since lockdowns began). I'm very thankful I went on holiday to Europe in mid-2019. I was lucky to make a friend who introduced me to a new activity: a type of indoor rock climbing called bouldering. It's physically challenging for me (it relies more on arm than leg strength) and the gyms are a friendly, social environment.

I'll even miss some things about lockdown! I liked not feeling guilty for spending time inside alone, as this was to everyone's benefit. If masks are no longer required while shopping I'll miss being able to talk to myself without worrying about being seen.

As much as I try to keep to myself, I do miss the random interactions that can happen just walking around at work. One thing I've taken from the restrictions in the last two years is that there is such a thing as not enough socialisation for me. When someone asked me if I wanted to do something, typically I would say 'no'. Now, that's invariably becoming 'yes'.

Daniel Jackson, Mountview Uniting Church.

Reaching Out

Forest Hill Uniting Op Shop

All the hard work has been worth it and the Forest Hill Uniting Op Shop, which looks brand new, opens on Tuesday 30th November 2021 at 9.30am – only nine months late due to COVID.

We have about sixty volunteers eager to serve you and there are many beautiful Christmas presents available as well as summer clothing for men, women, children and babies. There are toys for the children and remember all sales proceeds, less only electricity, go to charitable causes locally, state-wide, nationally and to small international Christian efforts. When you visit, you will need to wear a mask, check in on your phone,

or sign in and show your double vax certificate. A special thank you is due to those who have spent many hours helping to prepare the Op Shop and restocking it, especially the members of the Op Shop committee.



Centre 81 Christmas Hampers

Volunteers at Mountview's Centre 81 will be preparing Christmas hampers over two days, 16 & 17 December 2021. If anyone has donations of Christmas fare for the hampers, you are welcome to deliver items to Centre 81 on Tuesdays & Fridays, between 10.00 a.m. & 12.00 noon. We are located at 81 Doncaster East Road, Mitcham. If you would like your items collected from your home, please call Jill Kidd on 0412 110 388 or 9874 3594 to arrange a suitable time.

The Committee at Centre 81 thanks you for all your support and encouragement, during a year that has been difficult for all of us.

Whitehorse Churches Care News from Kerryn Pell

I have recently had a conversation with Brad Byrne who is the Transport Services Volunteer Coordinator for Eastern Volunteers. They provide transport for folk needing to get to appointments, do their shopping, attend social activities etc. They have seen a drop off in the number of drivers on their books, but an increase in demand (not surprisingly as things open up). As a result, they are looking for **volunteer drivers**. Their key requirements are:

- Full licence with a good record (vehicles are provided)
- Able bodied (e.g. to fold up walkers and put them in vehicle)
- Fully vaccinated
- Willingness to undertake Eastern Volunteers training
- 1/2day-1 day commitment per week
- 6-12 month commitment is preferred
- Contact Brad: brad.byrne@easternvolunteers.org.au or 9870 7822 for more information.

You can watch a short video about the program here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vWtgKZLtPSA>

This is a great way to connect with folk in the community and make a really significant contribution to their lives.

Kids Hope Corner – Forest Hill

Sadly, mentors are not able to meet with their Kids again this year. Especially sad as four of the kids graduate and will be off to secondary school next year. These special relationships have built up over a number of years. Your prayerful thoughts for kids and mentors will help!

Our Team is putting Christmas hampers together for our six Kids Hope families. They need these more than ever this year, after the impact of COVID-19 on already difficult circumstances. You could help by bringing food or a food voucher on Sunday 5th December, or giving them to Corry by December 8th. Blackburn North/Nunawading and Mountview members who may wish to help can contact Corry on 0421 195 524. Thank you for your support.

Experience Advent differently

What is 'Visio Divina'? A google search reveals: 'Visio Divina is translated as "divine seeing". It is related to the prayer form Lectio Divina (divine reading), but instead of Scripture, this form of prayer uses visual elements to help set your mind on prayer. It **allows God to speak into your heart through the image.**'

Rev Pete invites us to add a new dimension to Advent this year by undertaking a series of reflective readings and artworks to engage deeply in the Advent experience.

Dates and times for Visio Divina
at Blackburn North/Nunawading and on SWAY
are below. Let the experience begin:

Thursdays, 2nd, 9th, 16th and 23rd December
at 10.30 a.m.

Come away from the din. Come away to the quiet fields, over which the great sky stretches, and where, between us and the stars, there lies but silence; and there, in the stillness let us listen to the voice that is speaking within us.

Whitehorse Regional Council membership

Blackburn North/Nunawading Uniting

Elaine Hewson 0425 709 089

Anne Smith 9899 1932

George Manuofetoa 0404 884 140

Forest Hill Uniting

Daryl Hawkey 0419 607 085

Julie Hawkey 0488 460 875

Joy Williams 0402 491 013

Mountview Uniting Mitcham

Rob Jackson (Chairman) 0413 599 047

Lynne Rosenthal (Secretary) 0415 286 855

David Rowe 0411 268 680

Ministry Team

Rev Peter Cannon

Rev Tina Lyndon Ng

Rev Pete Rivett

We hope you find the Newsletter helpful and of interest and we invite you to contribute items if you wish by sending them to your Church Council member or the Regional Council Secretary, lynnerosenthal@gmail.com

The Regional Council members meet on the second Thursday of every month.