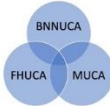




**Whitehorse
Uniting
Cluster**

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



Cluster News October 2021

Welcome to the October Cluster News

After another month of restrictions, we can now look forward to the freedom of seeing family and friends in our own homes as well as meeting at cafes and restaurants. Retail traders are opening again so we give thanks for these signs of recovery. Our thoughts will still be with those for whom the lockdowns have meant financial strain, hardship or loss of a business so the missional work of all churches continues to be greatly needed and a vital part of the recovery.

In this issue you will meet 2 more members of the Regional Council, Elaine Hewson from Blackburn North/Nunawading and Lynne Rosenthal from Mountview. We hope these profiles will help you get to know the members on the Regional Council a little better.

Contributions to Cluster News can be sent to lyne.rosenthal@wuc.victas.uca.org.au or a member of your own church council.

Regional Council Update

During the month of October, the ministry team finalised the Survey which has been distributed to everyone to help the team understand which Worship Resources will be most needed when we return to worship in person. We now need your feedback to respond with the most appropriate ongoing worship program.


This month our ministry team also wanted to create an opportunity for people to return to the church for a short time before we resume normal worship services, just to become familiar again with our worship spaces. Two churches were open this week for an hour on various days for quiet contemplation and all 3 will be open during the first week of November as indicated in the 'Liturgy of Unlocking' notice in this issue.

Our first formal step in the journey to forming a Cluster is for each congregation to decide that it wants to become a single Cluster congregation worshipping at the three existing Church sites. In many ways it may feel as though we have already taken this step as we are sharing a ministry team and many aspects of worship together. However, technically, for us to become a single entity, each congregation needs to be disbanded in order to create a new Cluster congregation. When a new Cluster congregation is recognised by Presbytery, we can form a joint church council and address, as one, every issue of ministry, finance and property affecting the Cluster as a whole, rather than discuss the same issues at 4 different councils.

Naturally, there will need to be plenty of information provided and questions answered before an informed decision can be made by each congregation. Representatives from each congregation are already working together on the Regional Council but, technically, congregation meetings need to be held to take the step of forming a single congregation.

With the exciting news that we can meet in person again, we can really plan to get on with the process with confidence. Last week our 3 church councils approved a proposal to engage a consultant to help us through this process, a person familiar with our situation and who comes well recommended. With fresh eyes, he will help us to identify what might be missing in our understanding of what it means to become one. He will help us to build a firm foundation and confidently keep moving on our journey to becoming one body.

The Regional Council continues to work each month to address ministry matters, preparing for in-person worship, mission and outreach activities, worship resources, administrative processes to assist communication across the Cluster and reporting our progress to Presbytery.



LITURGY OF UNLOCKING

FOREST HILL 11 AM. 25/10 & 1/11
MOUNTVIEW 2 PM. 27/10 & 3/11
BNNUC 12:30 PM. 4/11

BUILDINGS WILL BE OPEN FOR AN HOUR. LIMIT OF 20 FULLY VACCINATED PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH AT A TIME. LITURGY IS SELF GUIDED AND TAKES 15 MINUTES.

PLEASE FOLLOW CHO REGULATIONS AND PROVIDE PROOF OF VACCINATION

A letter from our Ministers

Rev Peter Cannon

I write this at a time of transition. After a week of easing COVID restrictions, we are coming up to the end of a long journey with even more easing, looking forward to a longer period of a “vaccinated economy”.

What this will look like, none of us really knows. We know what has been, well our perspective of the last couple of years at least (and that will vary depending on our circumstances). Still, it has been a period of constant change, learning and stress. We may be able to guess a little of the future, but it still remains an uncertainty.

At such times we can grab a hold of anything and everything we can that reconnects us to our past. We feel that such connections help stabilize our lives in unsettled times. We are able to focus on one or two things rather than many new things. Too many new things can flood and overwhelm us.

With the easing of restrictions, we can try to recapture what we had before. However, times have changed. We have changed. Those around us have changed. The move exploring a cluster brings change. Trying to reimpose the old just will not work – the proverb Jesus quoted of putting new wine into old wineskins comes to mind. Same old, same old just doesn’t cut it. We are in a new era.

One thing the COVID lockdown has given us is time to think. So much of life previously had been a rush. Now as we loosen up the bonds, it is important to take that ability to pause and think with us. This invites us to take time to pray, be still and notice what matters.

Yes, another thing this unprecedented era has gifted us is an awareness of what really matters. Economics, income generation and self-interest dictated so much

of life previously. Now we know friends, family, community, faith and health are at the core.

In being pushed into learning new things, geography has shrunk. Many have discovered technology can assist to connect in ways never taken seriously. Video calls, meetings and conferences are commonplace. We have become more creative in our worship presentation and community life so that those who cannot join us in person can remain part of us.

We have been able to experience events and life in new ways. People from around the world have gifted us with music, worship, insights and ideas. Generosity of spirit has been demonstrated by so many.

So what do we make of all this? We cannot ignore the struggles and grief. Neither can we throw out the good and new.

One thing the Scriptures remind us is that the Spirit of God is always with us. Yet it is also leading the way. It invites us into new spaces and times so that life can be given and love known.

We are invited to share in this ministry and mission of grace and hope. We are encouraged to look for ways God is moving and then participate in God’s mission and ministry of compassion.

Coming together as a Cluster offers us ways to support, encourage and share gifts of ministry. Together we can move with generosity of Spirit while sharing our stories. I look forward to hearing more of your stories and sharing further with you in ministry and mission in the coming years together.

Regional Council member

Lynne Rosenthal



I was born in Mitcham and instantly became part of the Mitcham Methodist church then situated in Mitcham Road. It was a vibrant, busy congregation and my parents and grandparents were very involved in the

church community. I guess you could say I've never left. We had a huge Sunday School and youth group back then as well as several netball teams and a roster of parents to transport us to play other church teams in the area on Saturdays. It was a lot of fun and lifelong friendships were made.

My working life, as a stenographer, began in a shipping company in Melbourne, then 2 years living in London, working and travelling, and in more recent years, working in 2 different Christian schools. I am retired now but by still using those administrative skills in a voluntary capacity, I'm hoping to keep the brain cells alive for a little longer. I feel I was 'placed' in those schools at the right time in my life to nurture my faith and I was very fortunate to work with some wonderful people.

My husband, Bob, and I have 2 adult children who also live in Melbourne, one married, the other single, and we're blessed to be part of their lives. My hobbies are playing netball, cycling, gardening and riding my motorcycle with my husband and many of our friends. It's exhilarating and a wonderful escape from time at the desk.

Functions of the Regional Council

The following excerpt forms part of the 'Proposal for Whitehorse Cluster' document dated 7th October 2020 and may help to explain the work of the Regional Council members.

'The primary function of the Regional Council is to ensure the financing, support, and oversight of the Ministry Team. The Church Councils agree to the Cluster Regional Council having the following functions and authority:

- To oversee, coordinate, and support the Ministry Team administratively and pastorally
- To act as an effective bridge between the three congregations and the Ministry Team
- To determine the financial contribution from each Congregation to fund the Ministry Team, taking into account differences in fractional appointment, lay or ordained, and manse availability
- To coordinate the delivery of worship to each congregation and regular combined worship
- To encourage and coordinate combined Mission activities of the congregations
- To build up and foster relationships between all three congregations

- To encourage the process of bringing the congregations towards a single entity, and
- To enhance good communication both within the team and between the team and the congregations.'

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. We will provide more information next issue.

- Monthly newsletter from the U.C. Justice and International Mission Cluster (jim@victas.org.au). This can be read on line or you can receive a mailed copy which includes issues papers with suggestions for action such as letter writing. They sometimes include post cards to be signed and mailed to relevant decision makers. The issues information is also available online.
- The website called change.org is a site where anyone can start a petition about an issue or injustice they think needs to be dealt with by those in authority who can make a difference. A wide range of issues is represented and you choose what you will support with a signature, and a donation if you wish. Many of these petitions collect thousands of signatures and have been responsible for those in authority acting to make significant changes.
- GetUp is an independent organisation with a million members united by a belief in fairness, compassion and courage. It is fighting for a fair, flourishing and just Australia. It has a central team of experienced campaigners. It provides information about issues which need addressing and ways in which to do that. www.getup.org.au

COVID Vaccination Certificate

When we return to worship in our churches, we will all be required to provide evidence of being fully vaccinated, such as the Services Victoria QR check-in on a phone, or else by carrying a copy of an official vaccination certificate; or else a medical exemption certificate if you are medically unable to be vaccinated. This formality will take a few more minutes on arrival, however, once we have a record of you providing proof of vaccination, it won't be necessary for you to do this every week.

Regional Council member

Elaine Hewson



My love for God was born where I was born...in Charlton, during the war years. I think my parents' unconditional love for me made it easy for me to believe in a loving God, the God of Jesus. On our return to the big smoke, our involvement with the Methodist church continued at Blackburn and then with the fledgling, newly formed, bursting-at-the-seams Blackburn North Methodist church. These congregations nurtured my faith in my childhood and teen years.

My Nursing and Midwifery training began 40 years of a most wonderfully rewarding profession. Following marriage to Winston (at BNMC) and 5 years living at Melton, we returned to Blackburn North where our family was so blessed with wonderful Ministers, friends, Sunday School and Youth leaders both before and after the birth of the Uniting Church. I enjoyed teaching in the Sunday school and Winston's leadership roles continued up to his death in 2008.

Our 5 children married in these years and, with our 15 grandchildren, are scattered from Adelaide to regional Victoria to nearer to me. We are hoping/planning to be all together at Christmas.

Change is a certainty in life!! and in 2012 Blackburn North/Nunawading Uniting Church was formed and now we are moving to a new exciting opportunity to work and witness together with our neighbouring congregations as the Whitehorse Uniting Cluster.

"Through all the changing scenes of life", Emmanuel!
God with us! The best of all!

Worship Resources

into the future

The ministry team is looking forward to reading your response to the Survey recently sent to you. Your answers will help our ministers to determine which Worship Resources are used more frequently and most likely to be required as we move back into worshipping together in church.

The link to the survey is here:

https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=JajJ_1lfBEGpLkWJtLVB4TjxdK93tUFGgYk0FIYLzldUNTFZWTI3MjFFSjhTTIZMRjFFMUJZMFhWTC4u

If you are receiving this Cluster News in paper form from a friend, we feel sure your Pastoral Partner or Pastoral Contact will be able to help you with your response to the Survey.

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,
lynne.rosenthal@wuc.victas.uca.org.au

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