



Issue 39
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THE VOICE OF THE UNITING CHURCH IN S.A.
FREE

New Times

April // May 2020



THERE ARE NO

WINNERS

I N W A R

PAGE 10

New Times

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Synod of South Australia

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PLACEMENTS NEWS

Placements finalised as at 5 February 2020

Rev Jesse Size (Deacon) to Para Hills UC from 1 May 2020.

Vacant placements

The following is the list of vacant (or soon to be vacant) approved placements:

PROFILES AVAILABLE –

Generate Presbytery

Flinders Congregations (0.6): Booleroo Centre UC / Booleroo Whim UC / Melrose UC / Wirrabara UC / Wilmington UC; Loxton UC / Renmark UC / Renmark West from 1 January 2020; Port Augusta UC (0.5)

Presbytery A

Plains Community Church (Joint Church of Christ/UCA) (0.4)

Presbytery B

Bridgewater UC (0.5)

Multiple Presbyteries

South West Fleurieu (0.5); Delamere UC (G), Range Road UC (G), Yankalilla UC (B)

PROFILES NOT YET AVAILABLE –

Presbytery A

The Grove UC (0.3)

Presbytery B

Aldinga UC, McLaren Vale UC (0.6) ; Newland UC (0.5); Seaford Ecumenical Mission (0.4) (Joint Church of Christ and UCA); Willunga UC (0.3)

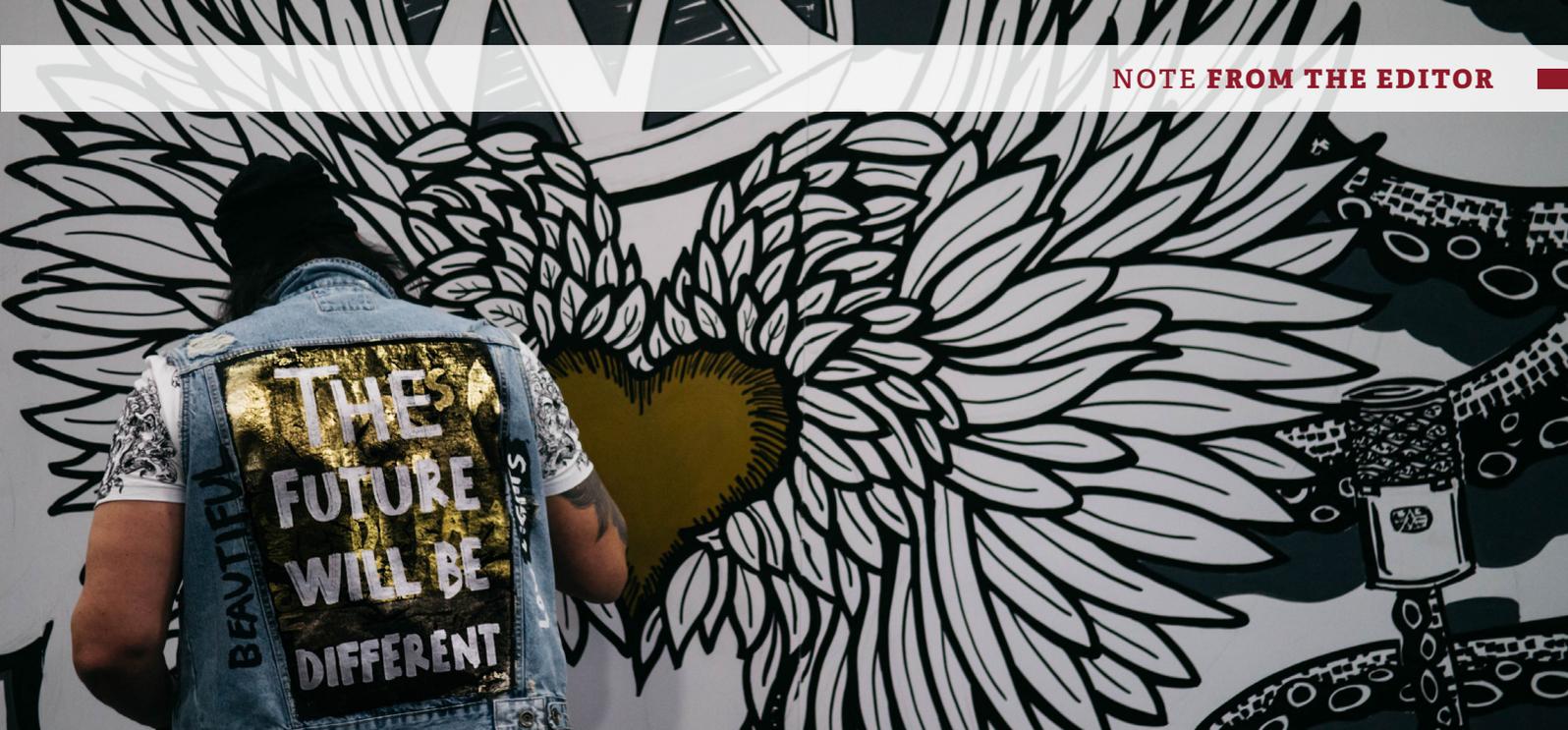
Multiple Presbyteries

Southern Yorke Peninsula

For more information about any of these placements, please visit sa.uca.org.au/pastoral-relations-mission-planning/placements-vacant-and-finalised

Cover details:

Rev Mark Dickens at the war memorial on Hallett Cove Beach. Read Mark's article on remembering ANZAC day on p10.



Angel in red

Photo: Jiroe from Unsplash

It was a simple tap on my shoulder. I cannot recall anything about him except that he was young, wore a red chequered shirt, and told me something so profound that I still often think about it.

His message was peculiar in its timing and its content. You see, normally I would have had my family with me. But I went to church on my own that day and I sat quietly crying in the pew. I had a husband in hospital, two small kids and was unsure about the future.

This young man had been sitting a few rows back. He strongly felt that God had a message for me through him so he approached me after the service. His message? That God wanted me to know that I was on a journey – had been for some time – and that I should not lose heart, as He was there with me every step of the way.

This stranger knew nothing about me or the roads I had travelled to be sitting in that pew on that particular Sunday. He had no knowledge about the trials and tribulations I had faced, or the joys and victories I had experienced.

That was six years ago.

Six years ago I didn't know what God's plan was for me. I still don't quite know. But I am sure of this: since then, I have not only been on an epic journey – geographically, emotionally, financially and physically, but spiritually too. God has been working in my life in ways I could only recognise once I looked back at the key moments and decisions that marked the way.

I would like to believe that I have grown a great deal in my faith since that day. I do believe that my employment at the Uniting Church SA Synod Office (and Uniting College before that) was not accidental but indeed all part of that journey. And some part of me believes that this young messenger was a bona fide angel – I had never seen him at church (or anywhere else) before or after that particular Sunday.

My time as *New Times* Editor has come to an end – once again a life moment I had not foreseen. It comes at a time where the world has gone a bit crazy with fear over a new virus. Unprecedented lockdowns of borders, public gatherings and face-to-face social interactions may just be the spark to a new future where some of our former ways of doing everyday activities will change forever. No one knows exactly what the future holds, but it may just be slightly different than what we are used to.

Whatever happens, I believe this chapter is just one leg of the journey that God has laid out for me, and perhaps for you. We are a pilgrim people after all. Ever on a journey closer to Him.

May there be some angels on your journey too. ■

Petronella Lowies

PS: I wish to thank every reader for their support during the time that I had been editor. I will always treasure the experience and the many kind words of encouragement I had received. May God bless you and keep you.

Where the **Stillpoint** Meets the **Flame!**

You are invited to join a small community at Nunyara from
Fri, July 17 to Sun, July 19

to give prayerful time to this theme under the guidance of

Rev Joan Wright Howie with a team of spiritual directors.

Joan and team have a passion for rediscovering the spiritual in religion

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A reason to live with great expectation

I am now four months into my term as Moderator and I am often asked "How is it going?" and "Is it what you expected?" My response is often along the lines of, "I am not sure what I expected!" This is a response echoed by many who are in new and unusual circumstances, as they recover from circumstances that have drastically changed their lives.

These are lives changed by the fires over the period now referred to as "Black Summer" because of the extended period in which over 12 million hectares of our country turned black, burned by the devastating fires.

For much of history Good Friday was known as Black Friday, because according to the account recorded in Mark's gospel, the world went dark at the moment when Jesus died on the cross. It is easy to see only darkness in death, or only despair when tragedy strikes and all hope seems lost. Those who loved and followed Jesus at the time must have felt a huge sense of loss and hopelessness. In our own lives, in the midst of conflict, violence, suffering, poverty and death, we can find it hard to see a way through. It can sometimes seem like our world is trapped in Black Friday.

Events to highlight change

I recently attended two local events that highlighted some of these feelings. Firstly, at an International Women's Day Breakfast with the theme "Each for equal", Rhane Tsetsakos, an Adnyamathanha woman and member of Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress, spoke on the disadvantages and inequalities that being female, aboriginal and dependent on dialysis impose on her life. She also talked about the appetite for change and the actions we can all take to bring a glimmer of hope into the lives of people who are disadvantaged.

Secondly, at a World Day of Prayer gathering, those present learned of the despair felt in Zimbabwe, particularly among women. Zimbabwe has an unstable economy and one of the lowest life expectancies in the world, leaving many impoverished and unwell. We were challenged to consider how we might bring hope to their situation, and those of other developing countries. This is especially challenging when we now consider the potential impact that devastating illnesses, such as the new coronavirus, might bring to regions without the infrastructure or resources to deal with them.

Affirming our hope

At Easter, we affirm our hope: "Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!" We affirm our hope in God who is with us even in the darkest times. We affirm our hope for a world in which conflict, oppression and inequality have no place. We affirm our hope in a world where peace



At Easter we affirm our hope in God who is with us even in the darkest times. We affirm our hope for a world in which conflict, oppression and inequality have no place.

will reign, a world governed by justice, by grace, and by love. We affirm our hope in a world where differences such as race, culture, gender, class and religion will no longer divide us. We commit ourselves to living as an Easter people, whose lives reflect this new world of hope and love.

This Easter, may your connections with God, with each other, and with your community,

bring you enduring hope in the risen Christ, so that you might in turn bring hope to others.

This is truly a reason to live with great expectation!

I invite you to make the following "Easter Affirmation" your Easter prayer. ■

Blessings,

Bronte Wilson

"An Easter Affirmation"

Hope is stronger than memory.

Salvation is stronger than sin.

Forgiveness is stronger than bitterness.

Reconciliation is stronger than hatred.

Resurrection is stronger than crucifixion.

Light is stronger than darkness.

The empty tomb is stronger than the bloodied cross.

The risen Lord is stronger than the dead Jesus.

Easter is stronger than Good Friday.

We are an Easter people.

We are a people of hope.

We are a people of the empty tomb,

the risen Lord, the new life in Christ.

(United Methodist Church)

An Engagement Ministry Centre for the Synod

Discernment is a spiritual practice embraced by the church to help us consider the why, who, how, and where of what God might be doing. The practice of discovering God's mission and purpose is both 'urgent and important'. During this liturgical season of Lent we are once again being invited to develop a posture of openness to where God might be leading us.

Late last year we embarked on a process to review the Synod Communications and Events Team. The Review was triggered by staff movement, the declining number of Synod events to be managed and the growing number of questions around how the Church speaks to itself and between its councils, and how we as the Church choose to speak into the wider community, a voice the wider community deems largely irrelevant at this time.

An important part of the review process is to take an opportunity to sincerely thank the members of the Communications and Events Team. They have continued to work hard and to faithfully serve the Synod during a time of uncertainty and transition. I would also like to thank the Review Group, who have given focused attention to a complex task in a relatively short timeframe.



The Engagement Ministry Centre (EMC) will enable a more agile team to offer contemporary resources.

The process of change

There were five steps in the review process and I thank those of you who took the time to respond to the survey. My report and its recommendations went to the February meeting of the Synod Standing Committee.

The recommendations enable us to restructure the Communications and Events Team by:

- Establishing an 'Engagement Ministry Centre' to undertake communications work
- Creating two new positions: an Executive Officer, Engagement, and an Engagement Coordinator and

Communications Support Officer, whilst retaining the existing Graphics and Digital Design position

- Dissolve the positions of *New Times* editor and Communications Officer, and Congregations Website Officer
- Separate Events from Communications
- Create two 0.4 FTE Events Coordinator positions – one based at Brooklyn Park, working with the College community, including Mission Resourcing, and the other to work at the Pirie St office.

The Engagement Ministry Centre (EMC) will enable a more agile team to offer contemporary resources, engaging all aspects of the Church in strategic and visionary conversations on matters of importance to the life and witness of the Uniting Church. The EMC will continue to produce print and electronic copies of the *New Times*, a regular E-news, and manage the Synod and Congregational websites. The EMC will also develop policy and procedures around the future use of social media and explore dynamic and effective ways of engaging the Church and wider community.

We're recruiting!

Please join with me in praying for the recruitment process and the creative task of bringing a new team together. The two new positions will be advertised during March 2020 and we hope appointments will be made in April.

In April we will also turn our attention to the journey of creating the Synod's new Strategic Plan. A working group is being established and conversations with congregations, councils, committees, presbyteries, agencies and schools are being set up. I am very much looking forward to travelling around the Synod and helping to facilitate a series of conversations that will enable us to discern God's will and the Synod's focus, for the next three to five years.

May God continue to bless all that you do in the name of Christ. ■

Rev Felicity Amery



Caption: The Communications and Events team, who will be replaced by an Engagement Ministry Centre: Evangeline McAllen, Winaya Kamaputri, Petronella Lowies, Clair Halkias and Thaddeus Brady.

Ministry in the COVID-19 Hot Zone

As you read this we are well into the worldwide spread of COVID-19, or the novel Coronavirus as it first became known. It's a fast-spreading disease that can be deadly, especially for those who are elderly or immuno-compromised as a result of a pre-existing condition (such as diabetes, cancer, organ transplant or pneumonia).

At the start of the outbreak Northern Sydney was one of the areas in Australia that was particularly affected by the virus. It became the country's first COVID-19 Hot Zone.

The birth of a Hot Zone

On 3 March, a 95-year-old resident of the Dorothy Henderson Lodge aged care facility at Macquarie Park became the first person who contracted the virus in Australia to die of the disease.

One week later, an 82-year-old man from the same facility passed away as well. Both residents tested positive for the COVID-19 virus after coming in contact with an aged care worker.

Less than two kilometres away, Epping Boys High was the first Australian school to close after a 16-year-old student tested positive. The school later re-opened, but 69 students and staff who had close contact with the teenager went into self-isolation for 14 days.

A further positive test on a doctor at nearby Ryde Hospital had one doctor at the hospital suggesting that Sydney's major population centres should be quarantined to prevent the spread of the virus. ABC News even made an explainer video, and a 'Hot Zone' was born.

“When I was in self-isolation, you Facetimed me’, might be the modern Gospel equivalent (of Matthew 25:36)!”

A church affected

Even this early in the growing pandemic, the effects of the public health response were felt at Epping Uniting Church.

The Church Office closed because the Assistant had to self-isolate after being in contact with the Epping Boys' student.

According to Epping UC's Minister Rev Greg Woolnough, his congregation responded positively to the challenge.

“We've got pre-cut bread for our next Communion service and I've changed my plans for Maundy Thursday in Holy Week,” says Greg. “We were going to do a hand-washing service. We've changed that to a hand-sanitising service.”

Some community activities at Epping UC have been postponed. Greg says he's determined to keep in touch with people, even if they are self-isolating or avoiding coming to Church.

“We live in a day and age when we can keep the lines of communication open to deliver pastoral care,” says Greg. “We will be channelling the spirit of Matthew 25:36 but still taking all the precautions to prevent transmission.”

He quips: “When I was in self-isolation, you Facetimed me’, might be the modern Gospel equivalent!”

A local focus

In South Australia Wayne Booth, the Synod of SA Workplace Health and Safety Coordinator, prepared a resource for congregations in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. It was distributed to all Congregations and Presbyteries in mid-March and is available on the Synod website at sa.uca.org.au.

CoroUniting's Children, Families and Community Pastor David Buxton wrote a resource for parents and the leaders of children's ministries called 'Talking with kids about coronavirus'.

“With the continuing spread of the virus and with the government starting to place restrictions on some people attending school, many of our kids may well be feeling anxious and stressed, especially with the media-saturated society in which we live,” says David. “There is much that we don't know about the virus. However, we can help our kids feel safe and as people of faith we can point them to Jesus.”

David's resource is available on the CoroUniting website: corouniting.org/resources/talking-with-kids-about-coronavirus.

Read more about the SA Synod's response to the outbreak, as well as where to access more resources and information for congregations, on p7 of this edition of *New Times*.

This article has been adapted from the original, which was published by the UCA Assembly on 12 March 2020: assembly.uca.org.au/news. ■



Left: Epping Uniting Church has since suspended all their worship/activities.

Photo: Epping Uniting Church

COVID-19 and the church's activities

We are in the grip of a global pandemic. Government regulations and our calling to serve our communities with love and care, are having a severe impact on how we seek to be the church. The arrangements we make to keep the most vulnerable in our communities safe from harm will likely be implemented for several months.

The situation changes daily. Your first point of contact for information on how the church is impacted should be the SA Synod's website (where continuous updates are posted), your Presbytery or your local congregation's church council.

Here is some important information that all members of the Uniting Church in South Australia should know:

- **As of 23 March, worship services in churches have been suspended.** This also has implications for weddings, funerals and other gatherings. The Synod of SA recognises that both worship and pastoral care are essential. We therefore encourage congregations to worship in new and creative ways that still comply with Government regulations.

- We would like to encourage you to watch/listen to video/audio recordings of worship or to join live streaming events of your own or other congregations' services (through Facebook Live or other methods).

- Use printed copies of services provided by your congregation if available.
- Please be creative and innovative in how you continue with worship practices and keep maintaining high levels of personal and communal hygiene.

- **Please stay connected and check on one another.** Now more than ever, your fellow church members may be in need of pastoral care, even if that happens in the form of a phone call, text message or other social media outreach method.
- While we understand that we have a Christian imperative to keep providing assistance within our communities, especially in times of crisis, **we also need to minimise the risk that we ourselves may pose in transmitting disease** to those community members, especially the vulnerable.
- Please be mindful of actions necessary to mitigate the spread of this virus. There are plenty of advice available particularly on the Department of Health's website (health.gov.au/news/health-alerts), as well as SA Health: sahealth.sa.gov.au/COVID2019. Please practice physical distancing, social solidarity, and avoid gatherings of people.
- The Synod Office and Brooklyn Park Campus have taken precautionary steps. Until further notice the Brooklyn Park Campus building is closed but students can still access learning online. The Synod Staff's presence in the office are rostered to minimise physical contact and no visitors are accepted. We will



Find updates, information, suggestions, advice, lists of congregations who are sharing resources or are livestreaming worship services, prayers and other resources on the Synod website.

however continue to provide the same service as usual to all our congregations and Presbyteries.

We lament the consequences of the restrictions imposed, the plans and opportunities that must be postponed and the disruption to the normal order of things. Remember, the church doors may be closed for now, but YOU, not the building, are the church.

The SA Synod has compiled a number of resources that can assist congregations and organisations during these times. Find updates, information, suggestions, advice, lists of congregations who are sharing resources or are livestreaming worship services, prayers and other resources on the Synod website: sa.uca.org.au/uniting-church-media-release/covid-19-update.

For more information please contact the SA Synod office on 8236 4217. ■

Quick ideas:



Connect with one another using the phone or online media. Ask others for help if you don't know how to access live streaming videos or podcasts.



Share the links of your congregation's live stream on social media and perhaps tag some old friends you have not talked to in a while.



Maintain your levels of financial giving.



Continue to pray for those who are vulnerable and marginalised at this time.



Rather than using the Easter postcards to invite the community to an Easter service, use it to reach out and remind them that someone from the church is thinking of them.





A Good Friday for a wedding



I've been asked to conduct a wedding on Good Friday next year. I know the couple well and feel

honoured to be invited to take on this role at such an important moment in their life together. But, Good Friday? That's not what I usually think of as an "Easter bride".

We have a history of anxiety in Australia about what you can and can't do on Good Friday. That's curious, given that Good Friday isn't even a public holiday in some "Christian countries", just a normal Friday for normal activities. So the bride was a bit tentative about asking. She presumed it would be a problem for me to be involved in a wedding on such a key day in the Christian calendar: the day we remember Jesus' suffering and death.

I said to them that if I was, say, a Catholic priest it might be a problem for me to conduct a wedding on Good Friday. But, as a Protestant minister, it would be fine. "That's what I told her", the groom said, "Not the Protestant thing, but that you'd be fine with it."

The Protestant thing

It was nice to see that I'm still the person they know me to be even when I'm in role as a minister. But I felt a bit sorry they seemed not to know about 'the Protestant thing'. It's not that the Protestant thing is better than the Catholic, Orthodox or Pentecostal 'thing', but that there's something special here that I'd love them to know about. It's the life-changing knowledge that we can never



...in many parts of the Protestant movement the Christian calendar of compulsory feasts and fasts was one of the things that needed to be 'junked' – things such as Lent and Holy Week, including Good Friday."

become friends of God by doing the "works of the law" (Galatians 3:10), still less by non-biblical practices and observances made up by people (Colossians 3:20-23). But we do become God's children by grace, trusting in the cosmic revolution of Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection (Romans 8:1-17). It's why I'm happy to conduct their wedding on Good Friday.

Right or wrong, the judgement of the Protestant movement of the 16th century was that the church had buried the elegant simplicity of that biblical Gospel under an accumulation of religious hierarchies, rules, observances and art. Take 'angels', for example. In a lovely essay, Diarmaid MacCulloch describes the way a valid but minor biblical theme was turned into an unimaginably elaborate system of thought and practice as the Christian movement adapted itself to multiple contexts over hundreds of generations.

Eventually, the immediacy of relationship with God in Christ through the Spirit (Romans 8:15-16) was replaced by an impenetrable maze of Saints, Angels and Archangels, each with their own personalities, roles and expectations. Seeing this, the Protestant movement saw one of its main tasks to be, as MacCulloch put it, "sorting out from two thousand years of religious experience what should be valued, and what should be junked".

And in many parts of the Protestant movement the Christian calendar of compulsory feasts and fasts was one of the things that needed to be 'junked' – things such as Lent and Holy Week, including Good Friday. So, although like most recent generations of Protestants I've come to value many aspects of that 'junked' heritage, I'm still entirely free to



Caption: On Good Friday 2016 the Central Districts football team played against North Adelaide in the Round 1 match on Elizabeth Oval. Members of Playford Uniting Church and other congregations in the Northern suburbs met them there.

conduct a wedding on Good Friday. And I've got a whole year to work out how to tell them why.

Good Friday Footy?

So, if a wedding's OK on Good Friday, why all that fuss about footy? It was only after a lot of public debate that football fixtures began to include matches on Good Friday. The AFL had their first games on Good Friday in 2017, but the SANFL took that step earlier, in 2012.

Some church leaders protested against the shift in policy. According to *Eternity News*, an assistant bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne said, "It is not fair – it requires faithful fans, players, club staff and media to make choices that are not fair on them." He said, "People who love footy are really conflicted".

It's important to note that he didn't say it was "blasphemous" or "irreligious" to schedule a fixture on Good Friday. Just that it wasn't "fair" to the minority of footy stakeholders who were practising Christians and for whom that day was spiritually important. It was just one more thing that would make it a little bit harder for Christian people to be refreshed in their religious and spiritual identity.

On the other hand, you may remember the example set by Playford Uniting Church and other northern suburbs congregations. They decided that if the game was going ahead at Elizabeth Oval on Good Friday, they ought to be there – not to protest, but to bless the community. They wore t-shirts with the message "Have a really GOOD Friday", distributed delicious hot cross buns, and were ready to talk to anyone who

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So, if a wedding's OK on Good Friday, why all that fuss about footy?

wanted to know why Easter matters so much to them.

Rev Pete Riggs, the minister at Playford Uniting Church said, "Christians gathering with others on Good Friday was a wonderful expression that Jesus came for the whole world – not just Christians." The fact that the game was being played on Good Friday was effectively an invitation to Christian people to be present and visible in the community at Elizabeth Oval, as a blessing.

The post-Christendom thing

In the background of this controversy over footy fixtures is the fact of being a "post-Christendom" society. There are relics of the time when Christianity, and Protestant Christianity at that, dominated Australian society – such as all those grand, historic church buildings scattered throughout the centres of our cities and towns, or the public holidays preserved for Easter and Christmas. At the same time we recognise that Christian churches are now minorities, in what sociologists describe as a "superdiversity" of minority faiths and denominations in Australia.

There are two things here. There's 'the Protestant thing' that subordinates old religious practices to the supreme value of knowing that, "The whole work of salvation

is effected by the sovereign grace of God alone" (Basis of Union paragraph 3). And there's the 'post-Christendom' thing that encourages us not to cling to all religious privileges, but to explore new ways to flourish as Christian minorities within a secular society – and to bless it.

It's an exciting time to be asked to conduct a wedding on Good Friday. ■

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Rev Prof Andrew Dutney is the Principal of Uniting College for Leadership and Theology. He is a Past President of the National Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia and teaches Systematic Theology within the Adelaide College of Divinity and Flinders University.

There are no winners in war

Rev Mark Dickens



Caption: Rev Mark Dickens at the War Memorial at Hallett Cove Beach, which he dedicated at its opening on the eve of Anzac Day, 2015.

Photo: Petronella Lowies

Ask a group of Year 6 boys at Prince Alfred College if it is important to remember Anzac Day, and the answer is a resounding 'Yes'. I recently posed this question in an email to the Preparatory School Captains to solicit their individual responses as I collected my own thoughts in consideration of what to write for this article. My subsequent question, 'Why do you think this?' gave them opportunity to express their thoughts, which included notions of risk, sacrifice, lives lost, protection and peace.

Marking the landing of Australian and New Zealand soldiers on the Gallipoli Peninsula on the morning of 25 April 1915, the name Anzac Day had been officially given by the time of the first anniversary. The Gallipoli campaign exacted a significant toll on both sides of the battle lines over a period of eight months. Over 8,000 Australian soldiers were killed. It was the first major military action which involved Australian and New Zealand troops during the First World War. The day came to be one on which all those who died throughout the war were remembered.

With the passage of time, Anzac Day has come to serve as the occasion to commemorate the lives of Australians killed in all military operations since, both in wartime and during peacekeeping operations.

Celebrate or commemorate?

I also asked the boys whether we should approach and recognise the day as a celebration or commemoration. Their responses surprised me. Perhaps it was the way I asked the question. For reasons not too dissimilar from one another, they essentially said

'both'. Maybe I would have received a different response, had I asked Year 12s the same question.

Is this something you have stopped to consider?

I have long approached Anzac Day as one to be commemorated rather than celebrated.

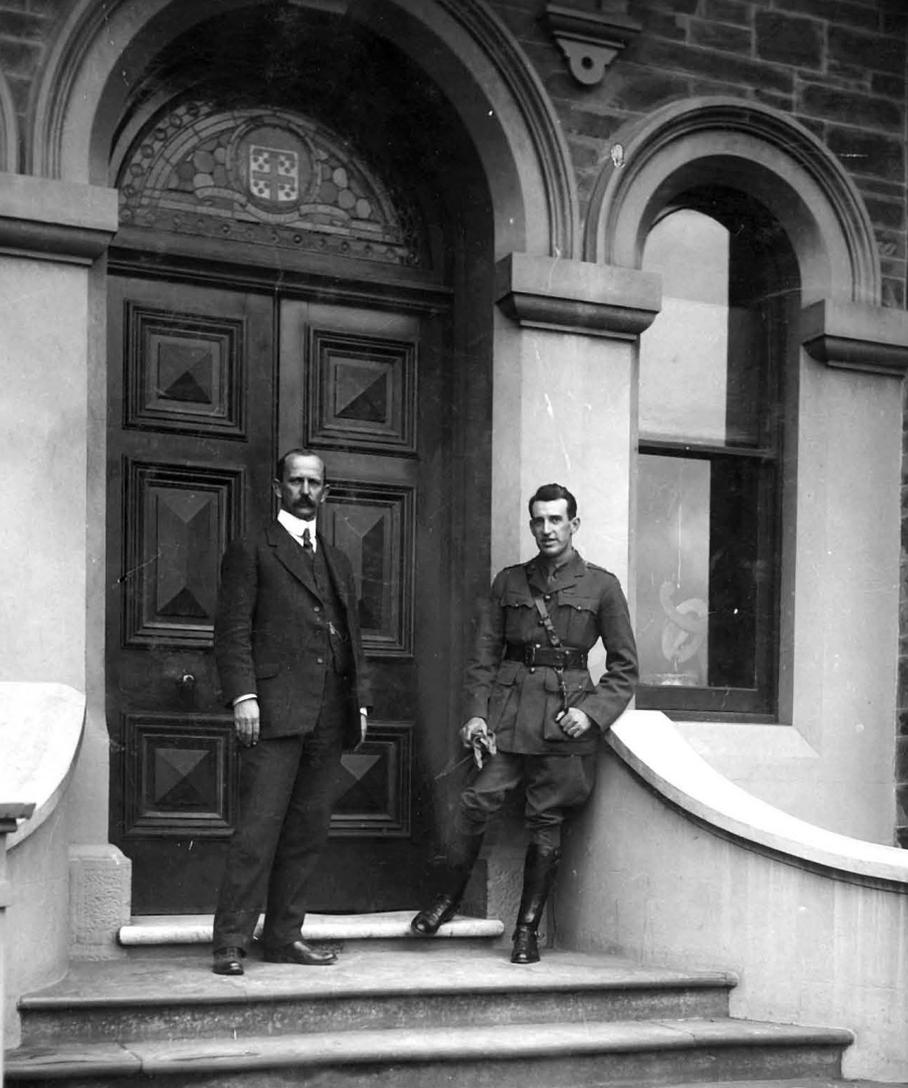
The day draws people into contemplation of the actions of those who served, the conditions and environments they found themselves in, and remembering those who died. It is not about celebrating war, or its victors.

“The cost (of war) is not counted by simply totalling the number of people killed, or adding in those wounded in action. There are unseen wounds that lie within the psyche of many of those who return.

In my mind, there are no winners in war. Invariably, each 'side' is left to count the cost once the weapons of war have fallen silent.

The cost is not counted by simply totalling the number of people killed, or adding in those wounded in action. There are unseen wounds that lie within the psyche of many of those who return. Now

and again, often after discharge, these become visible and named: depression, anxiety, moral injury, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury. There is nothing to celebrate in that.



“
With the passage of time, Anzac Day has come to serve as the occasion to commemorate the lives of Australians killed in all military operations since, both in wartime and during peacekeeping operations.

Left: Victoria Cross recipient Hugo Throssell visited his alma mater Prince Alfred College post-war in 1916. Here he is with the headmaster, WR Bayly.

Prince Alfred College counting the cost

Prince Alfred College has its own connections to the Gallipoli campaign with a number of Old Scholars serving throughout. Sadly, there were many who were counted among those killed or wounded in action. The school's history records that, in morning assemblies, students listened to the reading of the names of those who were the most recently killed on the battlefield. A sobering experience indeed. Some of those so named had only been a year or two out of the College.

At Gallipoli one Old Scholar in particular figured prominently. Hugo Vivian Hope Throssell (PAC 1896–1902). His story, however, is testament to the cost encountered after the war was over.

A boarder from Western Australia, Throssell excelled in sport at school and was no slouch academically. Returning to WA after school, come wartime he and his older brother, Eric, enlisted to serve with the 10th Light Horse. The two brothers, along with another two brothers from WA, Ross and Lindsay Chipper, also PAC Old Scholars, found themselves on the frontline.

Following a forward thrust on 7 August 1915, the Chipper brothers were killed in action, while Eric Throssell was wounded in action, having been shot in the lung. Hugo remained unscathed. Three weeks later, in another advance forward, Hugo Throssell found himself in the thick of an engagement. His actions in this were nothing but fearless and heroic, especially considering he had taken hits to his back and neck during the firefight. Seven weeks later, Throssell was awarded the Victoria Cross, the highest award for gallantry in the face of the enemy.

Post-war realities

With such recognition, one could argue Throssell's wartime achievement is worthy of celebration. A return to PAC in 1916 saw him treated as a hero. However, for Throssell himself, this became the furthest thing from his mind and was not his reality.

Post-war, Throssell became an outspoken opponent of war, declaring its futility. It is said that he claimed that the suffering he had seen in and through war had made him a socialist. What were described as his very public opinions put him offside with a good number of people. The sad ending to the story of Throssell is in the recording of his death by suicide in 1933, aged 49. Again, there is no celebration in that.

Without doubt, when 25 April comes around there are many, young and old alike, who take the time to pause and remember those whose lives have been lost in war. At the same time we remember, too, the effects of war on those who return.

As Christians we are called to be people of peace. Sadly, history reminds us that conflicts and war have punctuated world affairs throughout the ages. As we commemorate Anzac Day, it is my prayer that we continue to strive for peace and justice, holding on to the hope that weapons of war may sound no more.

Rev Mark Dickens is currently in placement as the Chaplain at Prince Alfred College. He is also an Australian Army Reserves Chaplain with 13 years of service. ■

Outcomes not promises the key to Closing the Gap

Leaders of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC), the Uniting Church and UnitingCare Australia have described as a lamentable failure the revelation that Australia will not meet most of its Closing the Gap targets, while at the same time welcoming the Federal Government's promise of a more inclusive approach to First Peoples' issues.

Uniting Church President Dr Deidre Palmer has joined UAICC National President Rev Garry Dronfield and UnitingCare Australia National Director Claerwen Little in lamenting the Closing the Gap report as "a serious humanitarian crisis".

Prime Minister Scott Morrison launched the 12th annual Closing the Gap report in Federal Parliament on Wednesday 12 February. In his address to Parliament Mr Morrison made clear that five of the seven Closing the Gap targets were not on track nor would they be met in the expected time frame.

The five missed targets are: halving the gap in child mortality, closing the gap

in school attendance, halving the gap in child literacy and numeracy, halving the gap in employment, and closing the gap in life expectancy within a generation. The two targets that remain on-track are: halving the gap in Year 12 attainment and having 95 per cent of Indigenous four-year-olds enrolled in early childhood education by 2025.

Mr Morrison also flagged a new approach by the Government, one which he said would focus on 'true partnership' with First Peoples,

“It is disappointing that after 12 years of Closing the Gap, First Australians still remain the most disadvantaged of all Australians.

on giving back responsibility, on listening and empowering. However, he said there would be no change to the Government's policy in relation to First Peoples' request for a 'voice to the Federal Parliament'.

Garry commented: "It is disappointing that after 12 years of Closing the Gap, First Australians still remain the most

disadvantaged of all Australians. The child mortality rates are far too high and life expectancy of Aboriginal people in our country is far too low, and the Government needs to do more to address this fundamental injustice. We intend to hold the Prime Minister to his word about partnership and listening, and we expect better outcomes for our people."

Deidre said that the human cost of the status quo is unacceptable. "Much

deeper and more sustained efforts are required if real reform and lasting change are to be achieved."

Claerwen said that for actual progress to occur, there would need to be some fundamental shifts in policy and practice.

"Important inroads have been made over the past year in the decision-making structures and processes regarding Closing the Gap, and we commend the shift in the way governments are working with First Peoples," she said.

"The formal agreement with the Coalition of Peaks and the Federal Government's support for the Priority Reforms they have developed are positive steps, but meaningful and lasting change will require translating the priorities identified by First Peoples into tangible and properly funded actions."

Claerwen continued: "If we are going to bridge the gaps in outcomes, it is vital the Federal Government works with First Peoples in a genuine partnership across all key areas of policy, including health, justice, employment, housing, disability, and children and families."

Deidre agrees. "While we welcome the Prime Minister's commitment to 'do things differently' and based on a 'true partnership' with First Peoples, there appears to be a continuing reliance on top-down measures in other areas of policy making. These include the proposed expansion of the cashless debit card, the Government's refusal to contemplate a Voice to Parliament, and the continuation of punitive interventions that disproportionately target unemployed First Peoples in remote areas, such as the Community Development Program.

"After more than ten years of Closing the Gap, it is time to turn rhetoric into real action that empowers First Peoples and delivers lasting benefits," she said.

The original version of this article was published on the UCA Assembly's website (assembly.uca.org.au) on 12 February 2020. ■



Above: Dr Deidre Palmer joined UAICC members at Leprena Centre at Glenorchy, Tasmania, at the time when the Government's report on Closing the Gap was announced.

Photo: UAICC Leprena Centre

National Sorry Day

“Why should I be sorry?”

Tarlee Leonardis

Twenty-five years ago an inquiry commenced into the forced separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families. Two years later the *Bringing Them Home* Report was published.

The Report made fifty-four recommendations acknowledging suffering of the Stolen Generation children and their families. Recommendation 7A advocated for a national ‘Sorry Day’ to be observed annually, commemorating the history of forcible removals and its effects. Subsequently, National Sorry Day has continued annually on 26 May.

My mother was an Aboriginal child, forcibly removed from her birth family. Second People will often ask me about National Sorry Day. The prominent question is, “Why should I be sorry?”

From my perspective the word sorry is an empathetic response to grief, similar to saying at a funeral, “I am sorry for your loss.” Sorry is also a word many First People associate with laying to rest loved ones such as ‘Sorry Business’. For many First People grief leads to spiritual loss.

The *Bringing Them Home* Report constantly acknowledged spiritual loss. National Sorry Day creates a space to acknowledge as well as to heal from

cultural and spiritual loss. As First and Second People, we can journey into this space together.

“**...the word sorry is an empathetic response to grief**”

Along with observing National Sorry Day, congregations can also celebrate Reconciliation Sunday on 31 May. This year Reconciliation Sunday is on the Day of Pentecost. The Letter to the Corinthians reading for the day, 1 Corinthians 12:3-13, talks about spiritual gifts.

This reading suits the reconciliation theme. It teaches us that spiritual gifts are unique and all equally valuable. Most importantly, one Spirit distributes all of these gifts. This National Sorry Day and Reconciliation Sunday the passage can empower us to acknowledge the deep hurt of forced separation. At the same time, it can encourage us to contribute our unique spiritual gifts to reconciliation.

Resources for Reconciliation Sunday will soon be available on the UCA South Australia Synod website at sa.uca.org.au/covenanting/c-resources/reconciliation-sunday-resources.

Tarlee Leonardis is the Covenanting and International Mission Officer within the Synod’s Mission Resourcing Team. ■



Caption: Ex Moderator Rev Sue Ellis visited the Oodnadatta Faith Community last year during the Anzac Day weekend.

Pilgrimage of Healing – equipping Congress youth

Since seven young adults from Port Augusta participated in a Period of Discernment weekend two years ago, Congress in SA has been on a journey to help Congress youth and young adults to grow in their faith and discipleship. Last year Chelsea Size was employed as Training and Formation Coordinator for the UAICC in SA. Within her role, she provides mentoring and pastoral guidance for Congress participants to develop as well as explore their sense of call and gain skills and knowledge through studying at Uniting College, either on campus or online.

In addition to study and online courses, there is a need for funding so that younger and emerging leaders can gather together to strengthen their discipleship and faith formation.

Chelsea says, “Equipping Congress youth and young adults ensures sustainable leadership, and the vitality of the church and Congress into the future.”

The annual Pilgrimage of Healing during Reconciliation Week gives an opportunity for churches and groups to support this exciting training and formation program.

Your support will assist Congress youth and young adults to come together to learn in culturally appropriate ways about leadership and discipleship.

The Pilgrimage of Healing operates every year in Reconciliation Week from 27 May to 3 June. For more information about this year’s Pilgrimage please contact Ian Dempster by email: idedpster@sa.uaicc.org.au. ■



Photo: President of Resthaven's Board, Mark Porter, and retiring Resthaven CEO, Richard Hearn, cuts the cake at the official launch of the organisation's 85th anniversary celebrations at Resthaven Head Office on 20 February.

Some things change, and some stay the same

In 2020, Resthaven celebrates 85 years of service to older people and their carers – and what an 85 years it has been.

Resthaven CEO, Richard Hearn, says, "In this, Resthaven's 85th anniversary year, we reflect on how many things have changed over the years. However, our commitment to supporting older people and their carers has never wavered. We stay true to the original vision of our founders."

It is easy to forget that in the early years of South Australia's settlement, there was no government welfare support. Services for the elderly were very limited, and many relied on Christian charity to survive.

From the beginning

"That is why it is remarkable, that during the Great Depression the Methodist Church embarked on a new Home Mission, and called it 'Rest haven', " continues Richard. "The name was chosen as it evoked feelings of 'safety, serenity and rest in life's eventide'. Now, in 2020, the meaning behind the name 'Rest Haven' still applies."

Today, Resthaven has grown to a workforce of 2,500 employees and around 500 volunteers, supporting twelve residential aged care homes, six co-located with retirement living, as well as providing in-home care and support for around 10,000 people through their Community Services.

Richard reflects: "A key attribute of our evolution during these 85 years is the increasing diversity of people who invite us to work with them in their homes and in our homes. This diversity is also reflected in our staff and volunteers. We all share common values in the important work we do."

Resthaven will celebrate the high quality services they provide with 85th anniversary events and activities across their sites throughout the year.

Resthaven will celebrate the high quality services they provide with 85th anniversary events and activities across their sites throughout the year.

One of these will be the launch of their updated history book by noted historian, Rob Linn, in October 2020. It was last published for the 75th anniversary in 2010.

"The new history book will feature developments over the past ten years, which includes the commissioning and opening of three new residential aged care homes – Resthaven Mount Gambier (2011), Port Elliot (2015), and our newest site at Aberfoyle Park, which opened in 2018. Our purpose-built head office at Wayville also opened in 2015, and services for people living in the community continue to grow exponentially."

A big decision

Richard continues: "As we reflect on our rich history, we also look towards the future. It is with this in mind that I made the decision to retire this year, after almost 35 years with Resthaven, and in my 27th year as CEO.

"Whilst this is a big decision to make, it is important to me that this process does not in any way deflect attention from the good and important work of Resthaven, in serving those people who

invite us into their lives each and every day.

"I greatly admire and respect the caring and dedicated work of all our staff and volunteers who are at the heart of Resthaven in their many and varied roles."

He concludes: "In Resthaven's 85th anniversary year, we honour our history, celebrate our current achievements, and look forward to a bright future."

Resthaven is an organisation associated with the Uniting Church. For more information, call 8373 9000. ■

Joyful fellowship builds community in Christ

Charissa Suli

More than 300 Fijian members of the UCA gathered in joyful fellowship for the Uniting Church's 2020 Fiji National Conference (FNC) from 6-10 February in Adelaide.

Delegates from across Australia travelled to the conference held at Brougham Place Uniting Church and Lincoln College, bringing together those who identify with Fijian culture in the Uniting Church to celebrate their culture and nourish their faith.

Over four days, participants were invited to unpack the theme, "Created in the Image of God, who am I?"

Special guests included Rev Dr Epineri Vakadewalosa, President of the Methodist Church in Fiji and Rotuma, and his wife Titilia, who attended the whole conference along with UCA President Dr Deidre Palmer.

Both Presidents, Moderator of the SA Synod Mr Bronte Wilson and Indigenous Kurna Elder Mr Frank Wangutya Wangangeen were traditionally welcomed with a Kava Ceremony.

Throughout the conference there were respectful and intentionally intergenerational conversations giving life to all. There was a Fijian Choir Competition with some amazing performances from communities across the country featuring all generations as well as several powerful sermons.



Kurna Nations Elder Uncle Frank Wangutya Wangangeen, South Australian Moderator Mr Bronte Wilson, UCA Assembly President Dr Deidre Palmer and President of the Methodist Church of Fiji and Rotuma Rev Dr Epineri Vakadewavosa and his wife, Mrs Titilia Vakadewavosa.

A highlight of the program was a conversation led by the young people on the issues of anxiety, depression and mental health as significant problems faced by the Second Generation within their communities today.

Deidre also commissioned the newly elected office bearers who will lead the conference over the next two years.

Article shortened from original that was published on the UCA Assembly's website (assembly.uca.org.au) on 12 February 2020. ■

75% of our properties surveyed

The Property Review project involves a visit to every Uniting Church congregation in South Australia, focussing on helping congregations to provide safe places for their congregants and members. It particularly looks at safety of buildings, asbestos management, accessibility, electrical safety and fire safety.

As of 16 March 2020, 201 of our 269 congregations (75%) have been visited by John Fong, Synod of SA Buildings Officer. We wish to express our immense gratitude to all of the people who have hosted John so far. John thinks he has the best job, as he gets to meet everyone on his travels!

John anticipates to complete his visits by mid-May, after which the SA Synods focus turns to production of congregation-specific reports. Each congregation will receive

a tailored report outlining all the required actions to bring buildings to a satisfactory safety level, and to comply with government regulations.

Additionally, the report will contain a recommended annual amount which should be set aside for building management and maintenance. A final report, which collates all of the site visit findings, will be presented at the SA Synod meeting in October.

If you would like more information on the Property Review process or have specific questions, please send an email to propertyreview@sa.uca.org.au. ■



Hope Valley Church: Where belonging is just the beginning

New Times talked to Rev Kynan Brookes from Hope Valley Church in Adelaide's North East. This congregation's ministry team has worked hard to create a place where believers can experience personal encounters with the living God alongside the challenges and joys of life and ministry.

Hope Valley Church is growing. How is this happening and to what do you attribute this growth?

God's idea of the church was unity through new life in Christ, hope as the basis for their vibrancy, and transformation as their inspiration.

Through ministry experience I have realised that it takes years of sustained work and consistent direction for this type of community to emerge under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. In saying this, you can't go past having a strong and aligned leadership team working together as well as a congregation open to new people and growing in Christ. This is directed by vision and systems on integration and discipleship.

In 2019, Hope Valley Church baptised and reaffirmed the baptism of freshly redeemed people more than in any other year. We also invited people to grow into living generously and to experience the joy of giving. This has culminated in our congregation clearing its remaining debt after 10 years of budgeting in repayments and running specific gift campaigns that emphasised mission.

With the first 10% of two gift campaigns, Hope Valley Church established the Hope Foundation. This Foundation exists to assist mission initiatives and has supported over 60 people since its inception.

“
...it takes years of sustained work and consistent direction for this type of community to emerge under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

What does it mean to be a Resourcing Congregation for the Uniting Church in SA?

Hope Valley Church has been resourcing the Uniting Church in the areas of leadership, culture and church development for over two years now. This role was shaped to enable churches to share resources and to pragmatically learn together. In 2020, Hope Valley will continue to provide workshops, conferences, leadership groups, consultancy and resource a network of churches.

Resources for churches within the network are available on the Hope Valley Church website and in social media groups. Previous workshops have covered topics such as communications, governance, group work, church administration and leadership.

Conferences on offer in 2020 will be, for the first time, a Women's Conference held on Saturday 16 May and for the fourth year, The Global Leadership Summit held on 15-16 October.

What initiatives are you most excited about?

Casting our eyes to the horizon, we are excited about releasing an extensive mentoring program that will pair up passionate, mature, Spirit-filled believers with primarily young people growing in their faith.



Caption: Christmas Eve 2019 at Hope Valley Church.

The mentoring program and resource will be available for other churches once we are confident in the method and content. Hope Valley Church will continue to release interns for ministry and we are exploring the use of recreational activities such as basketball to extend our outreach connections.

For more information regarding the ministries and life of Hope Valley Church see their website (hopevalleychurch.com.au) or call the church on **8396 0788** and ask to speak with one of the ministry team. ■

Below: Anastasia, Gemma, Tina, Charlotte, Zoe and Belle are members of Hope Valley Church's growing Youth population.





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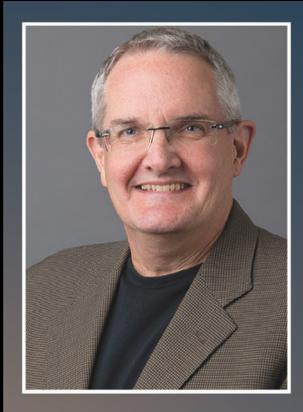
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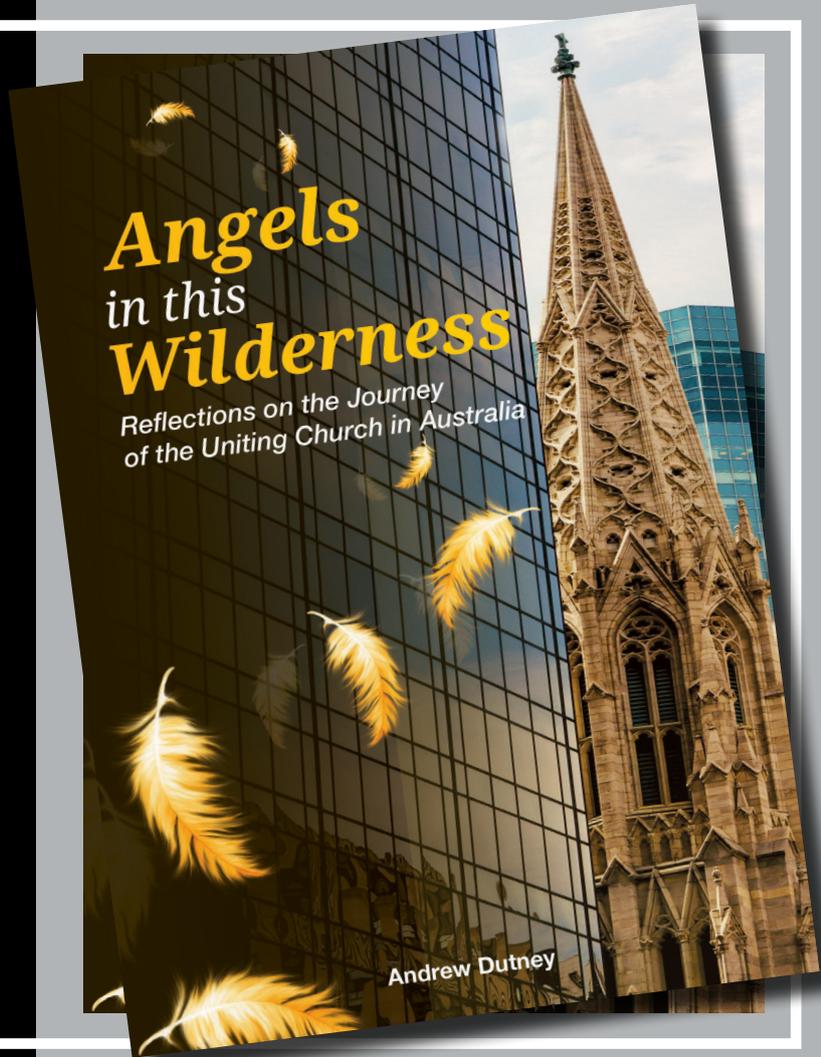
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Angels in this Wilderness

Reverend Professor Andrew Dutney has served the Uniting Church in Australia over several decades. His new book draws from his relationships and experiences in exploring how we can use the past to partner with God in the beautiful future of the Uniting movement.



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In these uncertain times

Christy Capper

Uncertainty is hard. As I sit to write, I am uncertain of what will be uncertain when this edition of the *New Times* comes out.

It seems like 2020 has been full of uncertainty so far. At the beginning of the year we faced bushfires, and we were uncertain in the face of these fires around the country. For a while we have been uncertain about when we might see rain on the parched land and water in our rivers. As I write, there is uncertainty about how COVID-19 may impact us.

We are wondering if we should cancel travel plans, if we should stock up on basic items, if toilet paper will ever remain in stock. I don't know where we will be when you read these words. Perhaps the questions will be around whether we can afford to keep on an employee. Perhaps it will be whether we can work from home or if our super is going to survive the downturn in the economy. Uncertainty causes stress; it's not a nice feeling. It feels as though the ground under our feet is shifting, as though everything is suddenly out of control.

Uncertainty, a lack of control, shifting grounds – these are not ideal for us as people. In his book *Sources of the Self*, Charles Taylor explains that identity is related to orientation – knowing where we are allows us to understand who we are.

We like to know how we fit and where we fit. In times of uncertainty, it can be easy to feel as though we are beginning to lose ourselves. Taylor also emphasises, as do many theologians, the importance of relationships with others in forming and maintaining our identity.

“**Being a community, laughing together, crying together, sharing our load, sharing our resources can help us to face times of uncertainty.**”

Community is important to us as humans. We need one another. In times of uncertainty, it is easy to look out only for oneself, to focus on me and my needs.

However, we are people formed in the image of a Trinitarian God: people created in the image of a God who is community, and we need community ourselves. It may be that our movements are or become limited: no work, no school, no church, no group hobbies. But community and relationships are still important and we can use technology to help us, using the phone or social media to check on those who might be lonely.



Being a community, laughing together, crying together, sharing our load, sharing our resources can help us to face times of uncertainty.

Of course, we also remember that the disciples, and even Jesus, faced uncertainty and stress.

We remember Christ in the Garden under exceptional levels of stress, the uncertainty of the disciples as they saw Jesus arrested and then crucified. However, that was not the end of their story, and it is not the end of ours.

In times of uncertainty, we remember the hope that we have in Christ, the promise of resurrection, the hope of restoration and renewal. This Easter, as we celebrate together or apart, let us remind ourselves that we have this hope in God, God who is the rock, the firm foundation, and let us share this hope with those with whom we share these uncertain times. ■

Rev Dr Christy Capper is an ordained minister in the Anglican Church. She is the Vice-Principal & Director of Missiology with Uniting College.

Below: Rev Dr Christy Capper, Rev Dr Vicky Balabanski and Dr Tanya Wittwer explore the “laughing together” aspect of being community at the Adelaide College of Divinity’s 2019 Graduation Ceremony.

Photo: Alyssum Jade Photography



This year's Moderator's Easter Message was filmed in the hills behind Lobethal, at the same tree where Moderator Bronte Wilson took the picture which features on the Easter postcards and other Easter resources. Since then a great deal of new growth has sprouted from the tree and its surroundings, illustrating the hope of Easter. In this photo Winaya Kamaputri from the Synod Communications Team handles the camera while helper-for-the-day Jacques-Louis Lowies holds the teleprompter. Look out for the video showing in your local congregation or find it on the Synod website here: sa.uca.org.au/easter-2020



Photo: Petronella Lowies



Photo: Jenny Esots

The Fleurieu community held a special World Day of Prayer event in Bethany Hall, Willunga on Friday 6 March. Catering tables were laden with, among other delicacies, sweet potato scones, corn bread and honey and carrot cakes. Those who attended learned more about what life is currently like in Zimbabwe (this year's host country for the World Day of Prayer), where 70% of people live in poverty with a low life expectancy, even though they have a high literacy rate. Robyn Clothier led the guided meditation and an offering was taken up for church partners in Zimbabwe.

Women from the Synod of SA, Uniting College and Uniting Communities gathered for a special Women's Day breakfast on Friday 6 March at Luigi's, the in-house delicatessen at U City. UAICC member Rhanee Tsetsakos spoke on the disadvantages and inequalities that being female, Aboriginal and dependent on dialysis impose on her life. The theme for the internationally celebrated Women's Day was *Each for Equal* and highlighted the fact that female inequality is a problem that everyone can help overcome. Moderator Bronte Wilson hosted the breakfast and the group was joined by UCA President Dr Deidre Palmer.



Photo: Julianne Rogers

For Lent these talented writers produced a Lent Resource called *We will rise: rising from the ashes to a new beginning*. The book was launched by ex-Moderator Rev Sue Ellis and took place on Friday 14 February at Balhannah Uniting Church. Pictured (from left) are Wendy Perkins, Rev Cheryl Wilson, Bronte Wilson, Rev Sue Ellis, Rob Ellis, Bindy Taylor, Marianne Musgrove and Rev Matt Curnow. The devotional book is still available from Mediacom Education through their website (mediacom.org.au) and part of the proceeds goes to the SA Government Bushfire Relief fund and the Uniting Church in SA Bushfire Relief fund.



Photo: Mark Hewitt



Liz Sampson, Damien Pearce, Marg Sawyer, Sharon Ashford, Vicki Jacobs, Jen Harvie and Shaun Patrick are all volunteers at Uniting Country SA who, since November last year, have helped to provide assistance at Emergency Relief and Recovery Centres in Stansbury, Minlaton, Mt Barker, Kingscote, Lobethal and Parndana. There were over 45 Uniting Country SA staff members who put their hands up to volunteer at these Centres, many of whom cancelled holiday plans, in order to care for people who had been displaced and suffering because of the bushfire emergencies.

Pancake Day ambassador Rebecca Morse from 10 News First joined Penny Pancake and students at Annesley Junior School for a great kick off to the UnitingCare pancake season. Over one hundred churches, schools, businesses and community groups have been having Pancake Day fundraisers to support UnitingCare organisations in SA. These funds might help get a back-to-school pack for a young student, a family setting up a new home safe from domestic violence, or maybe a young couple getting a food parcel.



Photo: Julianne Rogers

Do you have a photo of your event that you would like to see featured here? If so, please send it to us along with a description of what happened, where it happened, and who is in the picture. We can only print high resolution photographs sent as attachments to newtimes@sa.uca.org.au. Keep them coming!



Uniting Church in Australia
Assembly

Uniting Church in Australia President, Dr Deidre Palmer, offered this prayer in regards to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A PRAYER FOR COMPASSION, WISDOM AND STRENGTH

Loving and compassionate God,

You call us to love our neighbours and to be bearers of your hope and grace in our world.

Expand our hearts and vision to respond with compassion to those around us, who are struggling in this time of uncertainty, anxiety, grief and suffering.

Give wisdom and strength to our health workers, and government officials, as they provide leadership in bringing our country through this crisis.

We bring before you and into our hearts and minds:

- Those whose work and income are uncertain
- Those who are isolated
- Those who are fearful of an unknown future
- Those who live in situations of domestic violence, and whose isolation increases the control of their violent partners
- Those who are homeless, and all those who offer them support and care
- Those who are involved in aged care – our agency leaders, staff and residents and their loved ones
- Businesses whose futures are uncertain – their leaders and staff
- School staff and students
- Those with health conditions that put them at greater risk

Give wisdom and care-filled discernment to all our Church leaders – our Councils, and local congregations, as we seek to creatively live out our worship, witness and service in ways that offer Christ’s life-giving love and presence.

Strengthen and sustain us to be your people – shaped by your abundant grace, bearers of your generosity and overflowing love.

Through Christ our Light and Hope, we pray,

Amen.

Deidre Palmer
President
Uniting Church in Australia
Assembly

UPCOMING EVENTS

In the interest of encouraging physical distancing (but social solidarity) no diary events have been published. Most of the planned activities that were advertised on the SA Synod's Upcoming Events page had been cancelled at the time of going to print. Please check with organisers for updates on cancellations of those events still showing here: sa.uca.org.au/events/upcoming-events-list.



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Morialta Charitable Trust Fund has been supporting disadvantaged children, young people and their families in South Australia through its annual program of distributions for 40 years. To enable the Fund to continue this support through community organisations in South Australia, Morialta Charitable Trust Fund seeks donations from the public. Donations of \$2 and above are tax deductible and can be forwarded to the Morialta Charitable Trust Fund at **PO Box 92, Crafers SA 5152.**

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The Bible says ... but what does it mean?



There are passages in the Bible which can be difficult to understand or interpret. In each edition, *New Times* will pose a question and focus on one such text, with a theological response to it. Blackwood Uniting Church's Rev Dr Malcolm McArthur explores the deceptively simple text of Matthew 7:7.

Question: Scripture tells us that we will receive what we ask for. But that is not necessarily the case, is it?

Matthew 7:7 [NIV]
7 "Ask and you will receive..."

Rev Dr Malcolm McArthur answered:

Do these words fit Jesus' experience in the garden (Matthew 26: 29)? Maybe these words don't fit our own experience. Some outcome that we've desperately wanted has not come though we've really prayed hard. We were not casual, we were in earnest, yet nothing happened.

Jesus speaks of 'asking, seeking, knocking,' or as Barclay* translates this: "Keep on Asking". But that's more than hard.

As a war-time child, I prayed for my father to come home, three years later I was summoned to the Boarding School Head's office to be told he was dead. It was far harder for my mother, a person of deep faith who was almost broken by those three years of uncertainty. There are no clichéd answers.

Are our prayers mostly about asking when we are desperate? There is no record that the other twelve in that garden were later free of illness, rolling in wealth, or politically successful. The God revealed in Jesus is not like a Greek god who occasionally intervenes, but a Spirit engaged in this planet of ours. WW1 Padre Studdert Kennedy called God "The Suffering God" who feels our hurts and cries "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" That was a prayer too.

The subtlety behind Jesus' words is reflected in the verse immediately before verse 7: -- 'do not throw your pearls in front of pigs, they will only trample them underfoot'. These words are not about a gospel of success as promised by some evangelists on American airwaves. The gospel is deeper and simpler than that.

See where this passage ends (7:12): 'Do for others what you want them to do for you: this is the meaning of the Law of Moses and the teaching of the prophets.' Holy Week reminds us that deep prayer is not self-seeking but about reaching out!

Maybe our *prayings* should be less *askings*, less longings for intervention in our world, more acceptance. Prayer is more responding than requiring, more about listening than talking.

A simple prayer is "Thank you God". Prayer is about sharing gratitude and wonderings: naming our hopes as well as our hurts.

The former Primitive Methodist chapel in Mintaro is now re-consecrated as a sacred space of spiritual healing for those who have suffered church abuse, where people can face naming the person or system responsible for abuse suffered, and burn that story. Prayers at Easter can be about releasing, letting go, like Leunig's** prayer:-

Let it go, let it out
Let it all unravel;
Let it free and it will be
A path on which to travel.

* William Barclay's *Daily Study Bible*

** Michael Leunig: *Let it Go* (leunig.com.au/works/poems) ■

The Bible Says ... is an initiative by the Uniting College for Leadership and Theology. If you have a question about a difficult text in the Bible, please contact Dr Vicky Balabanski by email: vbalabanski@unitingcollege.edu.au





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