

# VIEWPOINT

Volume 2 Issue 4 Summer 2019

A quarterly magazine of THE CANBERRA REGION PRESBYTERY of The Uniting Church in Australia

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



## Celebrating Transition

articles and photos  
from around Canberra Region Presbytery





**Look around you, when you gather this coming Sunday for worship. What looks familiar?**

The people beside you? The person (or persons) out the front, leading worship? The pictures or plaques on the wall? And what sounds familiar? The music from organ, or piano, or guitar, or voice? The voices reading, the voices praying, the voices responding? What tastes familiar? Perhaps the plates of food and cups of drink available after worship?

And what looks different? New people, new images? What sounds different? New music, new voices? Or not too much at all?

Now, step outside into your local community. Recall what you see as you move around your community. What changes do you notice as you move around the shops, the streets, the parks? What things remain relentlessly the same?

Now, reflect on how much is still the same, and how much is quite different, in your church—and in your community.

How we, as church, respond to the changes that are taking place around us, and within us, is a critical issue.

How we respond to the inevitable changes and transitions that are taking place, is a key factor in our being faithful, as church, in the present time.

*John Squires*

## Celebrating Transitions:

*The theme of the November meeting of Presbytery is Celebrating Transitions. As people of faith, we know that at the heart of our faith sits a dynamic of transition that was lived out to the fullest by Jesus of Nazareth. The life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus—the story which we remember every Easter, which undergirds every Sunday gathering—this is a story of transition. We are called, as people of faith, to celebrate transitions.*

This year, much of my focus on ministry has been on transitions. Elizabeth and I have moved interstate. We have changed our place of residence (we are in a house that Presbytery has recently purchased) and we are both in new Ministry positions—Elizabeth, at Tuggeranong, and myself, at Queanbeyan. It has been, quite clearly, a time of transition for us.

Indeed, as a Presbytery, we are at a significant moment of transition, as leadership changes, ministers move on to new placements, and congregations consider new futures. As well, we look to a full complement in Presbytery staff in 2020, as I move into a fulltime role with Presbytery, alongside of a new colleague, **Andrew Smith**.

Life is always comprised of transitions. And how we deal with those transitions, is critical. Do we resent transition and change? Or do we celebrate transitions when they come?

All ministry, these days, is taking place in contexts where changes are afoot (or need to be afoot!), where transitions are taking place, where the ground seems to be shifting under our feet as we walk the pathway ahead of us. Every ministry context these days reflects our post-Christendom context, with a growing multifaith mix in society. We live in a world which has an increasingly vocal secularised or anti-faith element, where the church is both smaller than in its heyday, and also occupying a very different place in (or on the edges of) society. **We are all in a context of transition.**

### **Transitional Ministry**

Earlier this year, Elizabeth and I spent a week with a cohort of ministers who are undertaking training in the *Foundations of Transitional Ministry*, with a view to being accredited in *Intentional Interim Ministry (IIM)*. We were there as co-teachers in the course, along with Rob McFarlane, a colleague who has taught this course now for almost two decades. It was a rich experience of learning in community.



*John Squires and Elizabeth Raine*

# “into a strange and graceful ease ...”

Rev Dr John Squires Presbytery Minister—Wellbeing

## Prayer for reflection

One of the prayers included in the Intentional Interim Ministry (IIM) resources offered these words:

*Eternal God, lead me now out of the familiar setting of my doubts and fears, beyond my pride and my need to be secure, into a strange and graceful ease with my true proportions and yours ...*

The prayer is by Ted Loder, from his book *Guerillas of Grace* (1984). It is a fine prayer for all ministry practitioners to pray, on a regular basis, throughout their ministry.

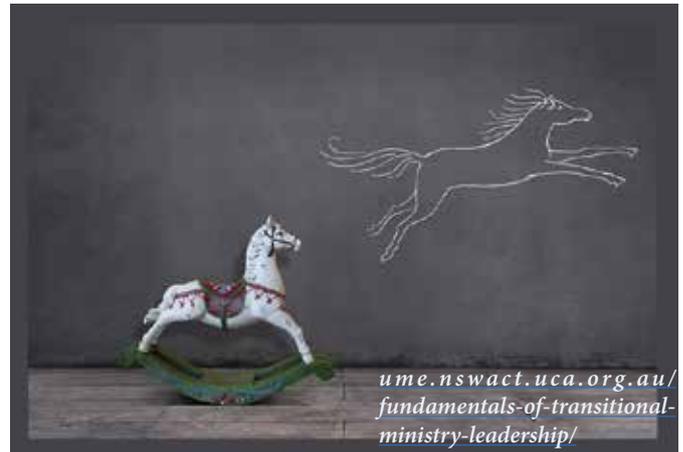
The prayer invites us to find our true selves in the midst of change and traction. It calls us to sit, at ease with ourselves, in new ways of being, working, and living. It is also a prayer that is most applicable for all in leadership within churches, whether they be ordained, commissioned, or appointed, to pray and meditate upon. Lead us out of the familiar and known. Lead us into a strange and graceful ease with ourselves. May it be so!

## Resources for church leadership

Alongside the prayer, the course offered many resources designed to help Ministers think about their ministry and work in ways that embrace transition. A number of these resources are also applicable to anyone who takes responsibility for pastoral care, proclamation of the Gospel, missional engagement, or loving and compassionate service, within their local community of faith. Each of these resources will help to equip all of us in faithful ministry within that context of transition.

## That in-between space

In a time of transition, people will find themselves in a *liminal space*, that in-between space, the place of not yet being where we hope to arrive at, still in a place where the last holds sway, but in a place of transition, of being not settled.



First, I note the **importance of story** for ministry, and especially for people engaged in transitional ministry. Story is what grounds our experiences in our lives. Story is the way that we make sense of the experiences we have in life. Story is how we share our deeper selves with others. And story is foundational to the whole dynamic of the Gospel calling and forming the Church, and the Church living out the Gospel as it takes part in the Mission of God.

Second, when we consider **leadership styles**, we need to be aware of the range of styles that exist, and discern what is most suited to a certain situation; what another style of leadership might offer in that situation. In the course, we used the story of Moses and Aaron, and the people of Israel, to connect leadership styles with scriptural reflections at various points.

Participants focussed on leadership for transition, leadership in the midst of turmoil, and the application of spiritual gifts to leadership positions. The figures of Moses and Aaron have some things to offer about each of these areas.

Within the church, it is important for us to grasp the way that our **core beliefs shape our primary values**. Our values manifest themselves in specific attitudes we foster, which then can be observed and experienced in tangible behaviours we undertake.

.../continued over



**Celebrating Transitions: “into a strange and graceful ease...”**

Drilling down through the levels, from the behaviours at the surface to the deepest level of primary values, is critical to the way that we interact with other people in the exercise of our ministries.

**Stories of conflict** are endemic throughout the church. Everyone in ministry *has* experienced conflict. Everyone in ministry *will* experience conflict in the foreseeable future, on into the distant future, as long as we are in ministry. The way that human beings interact will guarantee this. And transition provides a hotbed of potential conflicts, which need to be identified, and dealt with, appropriately.

It is vital for Ministers and Pastors, Officers of Congregations and Church Council members, to know how we operate in situations of conflict—both in situations of relative calm, and then on those occasions when a storm shift happens and we are thrust into the the middle of a conflict, with raging turbulence all around us.

Knowing how we operate, and what options there are for operating differently, in such situations, is an important learning to have.

Taking responsibility for the dynamics that are at work in conflict requires us to be determined not to ignore the conflict but to address the issues head on.

We need to deal with the conflict in ways that are *respectful*, not demonising or stereotyping the other party in the conflict. We ought to seek to invite *engagement* with others in the conflict, rather than scaring people off from a way to address it.

**Conflict resolution** should be both *constructive* (ensuring that more damage is not done through the process employed), and *productive* (moving to an outcome that is mutually acceptable for the parties involved). And we need to know ourselves, to know how we operate, in the midst of these situations. Transitions inevitably occur with associated conflicts. Knowing ourselves, and managing others, is critical to being able to navigate successfully through those conflicts.

Much of the course was premised upon the analysis of **systems**, and how churches work as systems. This is the final, and most challenging, dimension of working constructively in the situation of transition.

Strategic interventions into the system are central to providing effective leadership in ministry when transition is clearly at work.

To this effect, there are some wonderful stories contained in *Friedman’s Fables*, one of the creations of American rabbi, therapist, and ultimately management consultant, Edwin Friedman. “No living part of the system was unaffected by this action”, one story recounts. That is always the case in a situation of transition.

### **An abundance of possibilities**

A time of transition provides a wonderful opportunity for leaders to effect constructive change—if they are able to identify, plan, and implement a strategic intervention, encouraging people to let go of the past, and then committing together to follow on through the process, making sure that it sticks.

I hope you, like me, are seized with joy at the abundance of possibilities that lie before us in this time of transition.

I hope you will be able to enter into the theme of our Presbytery, that you will rejoice in Celebrating Transitions as you pray, *eternal God, lead me now out of the familiar setting of my doubts and fears, beyond my pride and my need to be secure, into a strange and graceful ease with my true proportions and yours ...*

**John Squires**

**Presbytery Minister—Wellbeing  
Canberra Region Presbytery**

You can read about the **Interim Ministry Network** at <https://imnedu.org>

**Details of the foundational training course** which is being offered later this year in NSW: <https://ume.nswact.uca.org.au/fundamentals-of-transitional-ministry-leadership/>

**John Squires’ blog:** An Informed Faith: <https://johntsquires.com/>

## **VIEWPOINT**



**NEXT ISSUE** - Articles and contributions **are due mid-Feb** in time for the Presbytery meeting 14 March. Please send to the Editor, Carolyn McAllister, [viewpoint@cruc.org.au](mailto:viewpoint@cruc.org.au) **Enquiries:** Co-Chairs John Williams 6254 3612 H Delia Quigley 0438 018 799

**THIS ISSUE** - **Cover photo:** *Alpine’ Cngregation’s Monday Soul Food Community Kitchen team Photo by Gordon Wilson*

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# Rev Andrew Smith accepts our call

*Following the issue of call at our Presbytery Meeting on 17 August 2019 we are delighted to announce the good news that Rev Andrew Smith has accepted our call to the placement in the Presbytery of Canberra Region as the Presbytery Minister – Congregational Futures. Andrew will take up his appointment on 1st February 2020.*



Andrew comes to us after a very successful congregational ministry of 13 years, forged around "Connecting with God and Community".

He sees the gospel as part of us; not a lake inside us but a river running out of us to others in word and deed. For Andrew it is also something we draw attention to and celebrate as it is found in the world. It is good news, life changing, risky and costly...it puts life right.

Andrew is keen to encourage people to make connections between what they do and why they do it. He is keen for people in the church to connect their faith to their activities of service so that their service is not just merely filling a roster position.

This has involved him fostering means by which individuals discover shared passions and pool their resources to engage together with the local community often using the principles of Asset Based Community Development.

Andrew has worked closely with Uniting Mission and Education (UME) in courses on *Courageous Congregations – Community Organising and Adaptive Change* in addition to *Insights* conferences on community development.

He is currently actively involved in *Mission Shaped Ministry* learning and training and will bring these resources and skills to our Presbytery congregations.

Andrew comes well equipped with deep experience of how congregations may foster and find new life and new futures. But he recognises that we are all on a pilgrim journey to build new and appropriate forms of Christian witness and Christian community into the future.

It is with much joy and rejoicing that we thank God and welcome Andrew to his role as Presbytery Minister-Congregation Futures.

**John Williams and Delia Quigley,  
Co-Chairs,  
Canberra Region Presbytery**

*Extracted from a letter circulated by our Co-Chairs in September 2019 and available at:*

<https://canberra.uca.org.au/presbytery-news/welcome-andrew-smith/>

## ONE BOOK ONE COMMUNITY

### *Bega/Tathra Congregations involved*

This photo with Rev Michael Palmer in the blue shirt, appears in the flyer promoting the current One Book One Community (OBOC) event in Bega, which says:



*You can join OBOC as an individual simply by reading our nominated book but the power of this event is in the sharing. Many local institutions and organisations are participating from companies and libraries and from streets to churches. Please contact us at [1book1community@gmail.com](mailto:1book1community@gmail.com) Discussion material and links to assist you in your enjoyment of the book will be provided. Our aim is to Read & Chat in January and conclude with a Meet the Author event in February.*

Michael is an Anglican Minister and part-time Bega Uniting Church Minister. Anglicare is one of the lead organisers of the event.

# Ministers' Retreat led by Sarah Bachelard



Photo by  
Neil Millar



David Stuart cracks a joke ...



Ministers of the Canberra Region Presbytery gathered at the [St Clement's Retreat and Conference Centre](#), Galong for the annual Retreat, this year from 27-30th October. **Sarah Bachelard** from the [Benedictus Community](#) now based in St Ninian's led our retreat in some quite wonderful ways, drawing on her rich experience in contemplative spirituality and faith journey.

Sarah used poetry from **John O'Donohue, Victoria Stafford, Christopher Fry, Max Reif, Lisa Jacobson and Michael Leunig** to help us understand in head, heart and hand where we are in our Christian leadership.



Minds were opened, new insights and vision gained and many found renewal and regeneration in purpose and in placement. Thank you Sarah Bachelard.

**John Williams, Presbytery Co-Chair.**



Photo by John Squires





# Celebrating transitions

## John Williams reflects

The Presbytery Ministers' Retreat was a special time for our ministry team.

It was an important time for me as I reflect on my three years as co-chair, which is coming to a conclusion.

[Sarah Bachelard](#) drew on a wide range of poetry that challenged us to consider our lives as individuals and as part of the Christian church in our changing times. The words of [Rainer Rilke](#) stayed with me as I ponder my transitions and those we celebrate across Presbytery ...

*“Here among the disappearing, in the realm of the transient.*

*Be a ringing glass that shatters as it rings.*

*Be, and at the same time, know what it is not to be”.*

I wonder if these words are significant to others.

We all know the Church is under great change and most of us are part of that change as we seek to be the person and the community God is calling. We are being called out.

I do believe that what some refer to as the “emerging church” is a movement of the Holy Spirit.

As Franciscan priest, teacher and author, [Fr Richard Rohr](#) writes: “No one is directing, controlling, or limiting this movement. We are just trying to listen together. It is happening almost in spite of all of us—which tells me the Spirit must be guiding.”

Richard Rohr goes on to identify four developments propelling this movement throughout Christianity:

**1. Our awareness is broadening**, recognizing that Jesus was clearly teaching nonviolence, simplicity of lifestyle, peacemaking, love of creation, and letting go of ego, both for individuals and groups.

More and more Christians are now acknowledging Jesus' radical social critique to the systems of domination, money, and power. In the past, most of Jesus' practical teaching was ignored. Instead we concentrated on private sinfulness and personal salvation for the next world.

**2. There is a common-sense** and growing recognition that Jesus was clearly concerned about the specific healing and transformation of real persons and human society “on earth as it is in heaven.”

**3. We are recovering the essential contemplative tradition** within Christianity, recognising again the centrality of contemplative and inner wisdom to stop and wait upon the Holy Spirit and the call of God upon us.

**4. Critical biblical scholarship** is occurring on a broad ecumenical level, especially honest historical and anthropological scholarship about Jesus as a Jew in the culture of his time. This leads us far beyond the liberal reductionism and the conservative fundamentalism that so often divides us and to me is a very unhelpful framing of the issues.

While these developments are adapted from Richard Rohr's book, “The Emerging Church: Beyond Fight or Flight”, it is my experience over the last three years that they describe well the transition we celebrate. I am seeing many folk across this Presbytery stepping out in response, I believe, to the workings of the Holy Spirit, to be the emerging Church; lay leadership listening to Holy Spirit.

I see small groups of four to ten committed people **experimenting with ways to connect and be part of the fabric of the community**; a safe trusted place to meet and know people are valued and worthy in their own right.

It's been a joy for me to see it happening in so many ways from Coast to Country and Capital. [Jindabyne](#), [Narooma](#) and [Tuggeranong](#) tell their story this Presbytery meeting. There are many more.

I also see congregations **working through division and conflicts** and emerging more strongly grounded in their faith and with a mission perspective that will drive transitions to become sanctuaries of inclusive love and compassion. There have been **many blessings** along the journey of the past three years but what I hold precious is the many experiences of sharing the experience of faith in the good news Jesus brings; to pray together, to listen and see evidence of the Holy Spirit working and transforming lives. I have seen people and leadership transformed.

So as we celebrate our transitions I am encouraged and see evidence that we are true to our calling to be a pilgrim people, always on the way to a promised goal. We do not have a continuing city but seek one to come. On the way Christ feeds us with the Word and Sacraments and the Gift of the Spirit in order that we do not lose the way.

*John Williams, Co-chair, Canberra Region Presbytery*



## Demonstrating love in action in Narooma

The Narooma congregation of Mt Dromedary Parish, while small in number, remains a force for good in the community.

Most members of the congregation are active participants in one or more of our three main outreach programs: the [Drop-In Centre](#) (DINC), [Monty's Place](#) and [Discovery Church](#) (DC) – an ecumenical youth group operating out of our premises, all of which engage with the community in different ways. Volunteers are members of our congregation and other denominations and many have no church affiliations at all.



### Monty's Place

#### The Spirit of Monty's

*Monty's Place* has provided a free community lunch every Wednesday for

the past six years in a café style environment with flowers on the tables, guest greeters, friendly wait staff, dedicated and skilful cooks and those who set up the hall and clean it up afterwards.

Volunteers love to be associated with this vibrant, caring place and have built up supportive relationships with each other and with our guests. The Uniting Church hall from which *Monty's* operates provides a safe venue for a wide spectrum of the community including the lonely, socially and financially disadvantaged and homeless.

For most of the past year an average of 75 sit down meals and 20 take away meals have been provided each week with numbers dropping when representatives of the First People are involved in activities elsewhere.

Funded by donations, *Monty's Place* operates under the UCA umbrella for insurance purposes but has been set up as an independent charity to enable donations to be tax deductible. In the early years, it was a struggle to make improvements and purchase equipment.



DINC, Uniting, local businesses and an anonymous donor provided financial and 'in kind' support but have now been joined by local service and sporting clubs, other community groups and individuals.

The latest project to extend the hall kitchen was funded in almost equal proportions by donations, contributions from Board and UCA members and a Stronger Community's Grant. Mt Dromedary also allocated funds under its Mission Plan 2018.

### Unoccupied manse re-purposed

It was a vision of the first *Monty's Place* Chair, Rev. David Oliphant, that any guests in need would also find assistance and support. He sought support of the Parish, DINC and Uniting to repurpose the unoccupied manse as a community centre.

Known as *The Charis Community Centre*, the former manse has provided space for Legal Aid, Community Housing, Eurobodalla Pathways, South East Women and Children's Services (SEWACS) and Anglicare to run Wednesday outreach programs in conjunction with *Monty's Place* as well as being utilised for other church activities and by local support groups.

Word about *Monty's Place* has spread in the community to such an extent that recently a homeless man, stranded in Narooma, was referred to us for help by the bus driver, who dropped him off here.

**Di White, Narooma Congregation.**



**Above:** Nancy Currey (centre), June Hemmingsen (one of our organists left) and Robin Scott-Charlton (Monty's Publicity Officer right) taken after the World Day of Prayer service earlier this year - from Di White.

**Right:** Some of the Leaders of Narooma Congregation caught on camera by Presbytery Co-Chair, John Williams,



## Drop-In Centre (DINC)

From humble beginnings in 1998, the DINC has developed into a 2-room Drop-in Centre and Op Shop open 5 days a week in Mid-Town Arcade in the central shopping area in Narooma. The staff of about 30 are volunteers and we have a committee of nine. Seven of our workers are working set hours to receive a benefit from Centrelink.

All goods received are donations from the community and holiday-makers passing through the area. These people often return each year to drop in books, jigsaws and clothes. They usually buy others in exchange.

A steady and growing stream of local customers enjoy the pleasant atmosphere of the centre.

**We're more than an Op-shop** as we invite people to have a cup of tea or coffee. If they wish to talk about any concerns, we have a comfortable lounge area where they can sit and talk in confidence. **Rev Barry Flanagan**, our church leader, comes in every Thursday morning to talk to people. We advertise this special time as *Prayer Time*. We have contact numbers for welfare organisations for people needing assistance. We also have an agreement with St Vincent de Paul Conference in Narooma for those who need money or food.

In return we give St Vinnies a donation of \$2000 each year. From our funds we have been able to give donations of approximately \$30,000 each year to organisations and individuals.

Recipients are usually in the local area and include: schools, pre-schools, sporting groups, rural fire brigades, particularly ones from small communities, mens' sheds, and community choir, two mothers starting a group to help families of children dependent on drugs and the children from a family whose house was burnt down.

When the church, or other churches in the Parish, or *Monty's* need money for repairs or to buy special equipment we have also helped out. Each year we help with the cost of Scripture materials used in schools in the area.

Occasionally we donate outside the community such as the people of Vanuatu some years ago, flood victims from the Lachlan Valley in Brisbane and Blaze Aid in times of bush fires and floods.

Our hard-working volunteers spend lots of energy trying to make our centre the cleanest and most welcoming place to search for a bargain or that "must have" item that has just turned up in someone else's throw out bag! We are very happy to receive positive feedback from many customers and visitors.

**Nancy Currey,**  
**[Narooma Congregation.](#)**



Aslings Beach, Eden.  
Eden Uniting Church helped make up the 'P'

# Called to be carers of the creation

**O**n Friday 20 September, about 1000 Uniting Church Members and Uniting staff across the Synod of NSW and the ACT gave support to the student led, Global Climate Strike.

We had a strong response from the Church in our local Presbytery – with more than 30 members joining the strike in Canberra, and up to 10 in each of the Moruya, Bega and Eden gatherings.

*We need to listen and learn from young people. It's their future that is at stake and their protests are genuine and informed and should not be ignored....They reflect the truth of God's calling for us to be carers of the creation.* The Moderator, Rev Simon Hansford

As a first time strike attendee, I found the experience quite emotional. Initially I felt quite out of place having never partaken in a public protest. The crowd was greatly varied, with many youth, a good number of younger children, and also significant numbers of mature attendees openly declaring their support for the youth and the cause.

As a Church in this space, we were noticed. One young woman came up to us (many of us donning the "Uniting for the Common Good" black t-shirts) and asked if we minded if she took our photo. After giving our permission, I asked if she was a member of the Church or why she wanted to have a photo of the group. She noted how significant she saw it that Churches had spoken out on Climate Change. And in particular, she felt that what the Uniting Church had said on Climate Change had really changed the discussion. She was pleased that Christians would speak out on such a matter and she saw the alignment of advocacy on Climate Change with our values and purpose. She noted that she wasn't a Christian herself, but she felt we were very right to be there and she was proud of the Church for doing so. I was quite moved by this conversation.

I was also moved by the many people who clapped and stood on their chairs at outside cafes to cheer us as we marched along Bunda Street. I was challenged by the very young carrying banners and partaking in the cries of the crowd – "What do we want? Action! When do we want it? Now!" Some were so young and I wondered how they could really understand the complexity of the issues branded across the very banners they carried.

The whole experience was powerful. Expect to see future events promoted in the Presbytery.

**Briony Griffiths**

**Church and Community Engagement Lead, Uniting.**



In Eden there were about 100 students and maybe a few more than this number of community members supporting them.

It was good to see Eden Uniting Church represented with three members and other congregations in Eden were there too. Our congregation had voted unanimously to support the environment.

Peter and Pam Skelton also had a daughter and two grandchildren there.

The picture on the far left is on Aslings Beach, Eden. Eden Uniting Church helped make up the letter, 'P'.

*Peter Skelton, [Eden Congregation](#)*



Top: The **Eden** photos are from Pam and Peter Skelton. Right: The Goulburn photo is from [Grace Faith Community's](#) Facebook page and looks like a



selfie (just) from Aimee Kent. Below Right: Members from [Moruya](#) and [Bateman's Bay](#) - photo courtesy of Terence Corkin (in the black t-shirt). The Canberra photos are from Delia Quigley and Briony Griffith. *Ed.*





## Symposium on Climate Emergency Towards a Sustainable Canberra

On the 2nd of October, Canberra City Uniting Church (CCUC) hosted a Symposium on Climate Emergency: Towards a Sustainable Canberra. Rev Paul Chalson, CCUC's Minister, offered a welcome which included an acknowledgement of traditional custodians and why the church is active in responding to the issue of climate change and in creation care generally. In his introduction Paul referred to past statements of the Uniting Church nationally: "The rights of nature and future generations" (1991) and "For the whole creation" (2018), as well as action the church has been involved with locally and beyond for creation care.



Over 80 people turned up to the Climate Emergency Symposium and all speakers gave informative and interesting presentations.

Using research, statistics and numerous graphs and tables, **Prof Mark Howden** (Chair of the Climate Change Institute, ANU) gave a grim picture of the future of our planet. Higher temperatures are already occurring and variability in the highs and lows of temperatures has doubled since 1900. We are to expect an increase in the intensity and duration of heatwaves and far more droughts, floods, fires and dust storms. All parts of Australia will be affected especially North Australia which will suffer from continual heat stress every day.

**Shane Rattenbury** (MLA and ACT Minister for Climate Change & Sustainability) was encouraging. The ACT has legislated emission reduction targets up to 2045. By next year all our electricity will be provided by non-fossil fuels and future targets will include: reducing gas usage, electric vehicles including buses and fire trucks, growing public transport and bike use, treating green waste more efficiently, increasing canopy cover and cool spaces, plus providing 'Community Zero Emissions' grants for businesses and organisations.

The four panelists (Anya Kahn, Ratu Manoa Rokotavaga, Anaseini Ulakai, Toni Hassan) thanked the ACT Government and Canberrans on the leadership role they were taking in Australia on combating climate change.

For Anya, as a young person, the future was 'scary'. Toni described the climate emergency as a colossal failure by world governments and emphasised the impact of climate disasters on people; for example, the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and depression suffered by many people after the Townsville floods. Emotional support and building resilience needs to be provided so that communities bounce back from adversity.

Many interesting questions were asked during Q&A. Problems raised included rapid global population growth, the incompatibility of our current economic system (based on consumption), and the frustration with the Commonwealth Government for not acknowledging the concern people have over climate change and their inability to address it in meaningful ways.

Blue Star Intercultural provided a great supper afterwards and many people stayed on to talk more about the issue. Finally, the Environment Group would like to express appreciation to all the speakers, panelists and also to members of Canberra City Uniting Church who assisted with the set up and clearing away of supper. Many thanks!

**Lynnette Atkinson,**  
**Environment Action Group**  
**Canberra City Uniting Church.**

**Supporters of the Symposium:** SEE-Change, Australian Religious Response to Climate Change, Canberra School Strike 4 Climate, Blue Star Intercultural Centre and Uniting Earth.



**W**e knew that **Rev Elizabeth Raine** would fit our call for a Minister who could challenge us to learn and grow as a congregation. Since joining us in December 2018, Elizabeth has certainly engaged us, educated us, grown us and encouraged us to work on ourselves and our mission and engagement.

**Challenges:** Church Council meetings now include plenty of added analysis, discernment and discussion about where we have been, who we are now, where we want to go and how we want to be seen in our community.

At each **Elders meeting** we work through a chapter of *Real Good Church, how our church came back from the dead, and yours can, too* by Rev. Molly Phinney Baskette, as we consider the pastoral engagement and spiritual growth of our congregation. The changes that TUC are transitioning through means processes are also being learned from [John Kotter's 8 Steps of Change Management](#) (easily found online) blended with Elizabeth's knowledge gained as a teacher of **Mission Shaped Ministry**.

## Celebrating our transitions

Tuggeranong Congregation

The Congregation has increased engagement in Midrash and Lectionary studies and in **undertaking a variety of activities to ensure spiritual growth and community engagement**. Previous activities are being re-shaped such as the 10.30am contemporary service now being led on a leadership rotation by a number of groups (meditation, praise, study) so the service is interactive and challenging. We are also transforming events - the annual Spring Fair is now a 'Renew, Reuse, Sustainability Festival'. Recent participation in a workshop arranged by *Interact Collaborations*, explored ways the church can engage with the local community and work for the common good across the Southside of Canberra. Tuggeranong is indeed a congregation under great change and transition and we welcome that change as we seek to be the Christians and community God is calling us to be.

*Delia Quigley, Tuggeranong Congregation*

## Understanding the Sacraments

is a course providing participants not only with a greater understanding of the practicalities in conducting the Uniting Church sacraments of Communion and Baptism, but also with an increased knowledge of the UCA Basis of Union and who we are as a Church. I recently also undertook the Synod Mission and Education courses on Presiding at Funerals and Presiding at Weddings. I can highly recommend all of these practical training programs as valuable for the development of Lay Presiders especially in congregations or faith communities that may have limited or no access to Ministers. *Delia Quigley*.



*Participants in the 2019 'Understanding the Sacraments' Course led by John Squires and Elizabeth Raine. See also John Squires blog for 20 June 2019 - [johntsquires.com/2019/06](http://johntsquires.com/2019/06)*

## Uniting Church Adult Fellowship (UCAF)

Nine Gatherings/Rallies in seven Presbyteries were held in 2019. At each of these events, **Appreciation Certificates** were presented to those over '80', '90' and four to over '100'. Below is a line-up of Canberra Region Presbytery recipients of the Certificates presented at the UCAF Rally on 2 April 2019 in Crookwell.



From 20-25 August 2019 **Janet Woodward, Chair of UCAF** (on the left) visited Canberra and interacted with many of our Fellowship communities and mission staff. Janet visited Amala Aged Care, St Columba's Safe Shelter, Canberra City's Early Morning centre, Gungahlin UC Food Pantry, Wesley Forrest Thursday Fellowship Group, St Ninian's Adult Fellowship and lunched with Kippax



staff. On the Sunday Janet attended the morning service at Weston Creek before being driven by Co-Chair Delia Quigley to Goulburn in time for the 'Your Worship' evening service and being hosted by Bronwyn and Bruce Guy.

A **big thank you** to all who extended such a warm welcome and hospitality.

*Presbytery Co-Chairs, Delia and John.*



# Dinner at the King's Table Jindabyne

**Alan and Lauris Harper**, from St Stephen's, Sydney, have been visiting Alpine UC for several years and always stay for about a month each year to assist us. Alan leads and preaches and Lauris takes the children's talk each Sunday. They are involved in all our ministry and outreach programs and Alan has written about Alpine for 'Insights'. Our congregation and community outreach are very blessed with their generous and loving presence. Jean Hayman.

**A**re you hungry? Are you cold? Are you simply lonely, thirsting for a sense of community? Are you a local? Or are you visiting town, or here for the "season", working in the tourist industry?

No matter. You are welcome at the Alpine Uniting Church [Soul Food Community Kitchen](#).

There's no doubt about it. Jindabyne is a tourist town – and not just during the ski season, although that's its busiest time. Increasingly, visitors are realising the summertime delights offered by the pristine and beautiful region to which Jindabyne is the gateway.



Profits from the Op Shop resource the Soul Food Community Kitchen.

Photo by Lauris Harper

Skiing and snow sports, and the industry that surrounds them, conjure up images of fairly well-heeled tourists, and indeed, there are plenty of restaurants, lodges and other types of accommodation in town to cater for the well-heeled. And plenty of shops too, with expensive equipment, clothing, souvenirs and other touristy "stuff". Their income is the lifeblood of the town.

But not everyone in town is well-heeled.



The Op Shop also has a supply of food, obtained from the Food Bank in Sydney.

Photo by Lauris Harper

Think of the casual workers who come to town at the beginning of the season. If jobs are not immediately available – or even during their first week of work, awaiting their first pay cheque – they can find themselves living pretty close to the edge.

Or think of the (usually young) ski enthusiasts, who arrive in town only to find its accommodation and food offerings simply beyond them.

And don't forget the locals. Jindabyne is not an inexpensive town in which to live, especially if you are dependent on the pension or other social security payments.



A large team of volunteers unpack, sort, price and sell the donated goods.

Photo by Lauris Harper

Hearing the call of Jesus to "feed my sheep", Alpine Uniting Church has responded to this need which is often hidden from sight by the glitz of the tourist trade.

Every Wednesday night, from about 6:00 pm onwards, a meal is served in the church hall, completely free of charge to all comers. And during the winter season, the scene is replicated on Monday nights.

So how is this possible? By the clever and sacrificial management of resources, and the volunteer labour of a whole team of people, both church members and others from the broader community.

For some years, the church has operated a highly successful [Op Shop](#), which is thoroughly supported by the community, both with donations and by purchases.

The [Op Shop](#) is voluntarily managed, and has a large team of volunteers who unpack, sort, price and sell the donated goods. The profits earned by this great team effort resource the Soul Food Community Kitchen, where a dedicated and very talented team of cooks prepare the meals every week.

The Op Shop also has a supply of food, obtained from the Food Bank in Sydney, which is made available, either at bargain prices or free of charge, to anyone in need.

And who comes to dinner? Locals and visitors, anything from thirty or so in the “off” season to a couple of hundred in the wintertime.

Some are hungry for food, some are simply hungry for a wholesome community, the joy of sitting at table with others in fellowship. And miraculously – literally! – the food has never run out!



**Alpine's Monday Soul  
Food Community  
Kitchen team**

Photo: Gordon Wilson

If you come – and the Alpine UC community hopes you will sometime – expect someone to extend a simple greeting to you, and a blessing, acknowledging that this is a work undertaken in the name of Jesus. And expect some from the church to sit among you, to engage you in conversation and, gently, to check that you're okay. Is there anything else that the church can do to help you and ensure you are safe and well-fed?

In so many works of the broader church, we gain a glimpse of the love and generosity of the gospel. They are certainly in evidence in Jindabyne, every week of the year.

*Alan Harper, for [Alpine Uniting Church](#).*



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the place to stay!"*

(Nambour Christian College, QLD)







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# Which Bible is best for Public Reading?

*with the growing number of people in our churches for whom English is a second language (ESL) ...*



Rev Ron Reeson

Learning, speaking and listening to a language that is not your “mother tongue” is not easy. I experienced this during ten years in Papua New Guinea.

With the growing number of people in our churches born overseas and for whom English is a second language (ESL), I have

been asking myself “Is the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), recommended for use by The Uniting Church, the best version for them to hear (and read)?”

Most people who attend church do not read the Bible. The only time they hear it is when it is read during a church service. It is important therefore that they understand what they are hearing. They may never come across it again.

Priority should be given to those for whom English is an acquired language when choosing which English version to read during church worship.

## Earlier versions

The English King James Version of the Bible (KJV), published in 1611 was, for over 250 years, the most widely read version at Protestant English services.

It is what can be called a “word-for-word” translation. It follows the form and grammar of the Hebrew and Greek text from which it was translated.

The KJV was followed by the Revised Version (RV), and the Revised Standard Version (RSV).

Then came the **New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)** in 1989, recommended for use by The Uniting Church.

It has the advantage of using inclusive language where the context warrants and sounds somewhat similar to those earlier versions which people are used to hearing.

However sometimes the NRSV’s words and word order are awkward because it is translated using the “word-for-word” approach. **If easy comprehension is important**, especially for speakers of acquired English, then there are better alternatives.

I suggest two:

## 1. Good News Bible (GNB)

In 1976 the American Bible Society published the Good News Bible. Later it was revised with inclusive language.

The beginnings of the Good News Bible can be traced to requests made by people in Africa and the Far East for a version of the Bible that was easier to read than the KJV.

In other words, its original target audience was people for whom English is a second language, like many in our congregations today. The GNB is written in simple, everyday language.

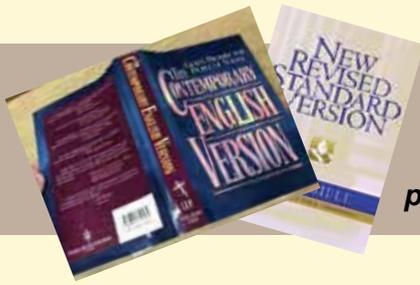
However its major difference was that it used a new translation theory which can be called “**thought-for-thought**” rather than “word-for-word”. It aimed to make the text as readable as possible for a modern audience. This translation method not only revolutionised Bible translation but established translation as an academic discipline in its own right.

## 2. Contemporary English Version (CEV)

The Bible Societies released the Contemporary English Version in 1995, also using jargon-free English. While this translation is sometimes perceived as a replacement for the GNB it was not intended as such.

The CEV is based on good scholarship. It is a simplified version of the Bible for children and adults with a lower literacy rate.

Before translation began much research was done on speech patterns used in books, magazines, newspapers and television, that is, on how English is read and heard. Further studies focused on children, people on the street, people not familiar with biblical concepts.



### Testing 'word for word' and 'thought for thought' translations.

***“ESL speakers were given three passages of Scripture, each about three verses long, from both the NRSV and CEV and asked: ‘Which passage is easier to read and understand?’ ... The results staggered me.”***

My good friend Basil Rebera, a retired Bible Society translation consultant, has solidly supported me in this exercise with technical advice and practical ideas. He told me “The word-for-word approach to translation no longer has support in the field of communication and translation.”

However this does not mean that the NRSV is not useful. It is certainly helpful for those wishing to make a detailed study of the Bible and have an understanding of how original Hebrew and Greek are structured. But it is not ideal for public reading.

Of course, this whole exercise implicitly reminds us to be more conscious of the words and vocabulary we use than ever before. Liturgies, sermons, prayers and notices should all be user-friendly.

The [Uniting Church Assembly Worship Working Group](#), while supporting the use of NRSV, says, “In a community whose members have different first languages, the use of simpler or plainer English texts can be a helpful way not only to help individuals encounter the word but also hear the word differently.” They recommend “the CEV for its scholarship and approach to translation” suggesting it is “helpful in settings with multiple language groups.”

The [English Bible Society](#) says that versions translated in the “thought-for-thought” style of the CEV are best for the public reading of Scripture.

## Conclusion

We are more than ever a multi-cultural society. The people who attend our churches are changing and that is good. My aim in this exercise is improving communication.

Changing the version of the Bible we use for public reading can be a practical way of giving expression to the Uniting Church ethos of “inclusivity”, in this case, ESL speakers and children.

I suggest the choice for public reading of the Bible should be between the Contemporary English Version and the Good News Bible, with CEV having the edge.

**Ron Reeson, Gungahlin Congregation**

## The thesis tested

The idea of exploring this subject I think grew out of my overseas experience together with the observation of the growing number of non-native English speakers attending services at Gungahlin Uniting congregation. I often wondered, “Do they understand what they are hearing?”

I presented the idea to Gungahlin’s Worship Committee and offered to test my thesis.

ESL speakers were given three passages of Scripture, each about three verses long, from both the NRSV and CEV and asked, “Which passage is easier to read and understand?”

Early in the process I formed the view that young children (primary age) should also be included.

The results staggered me. Of the ESL speakers 90% found the CEV easier to understand. Most of the ESL speakers do not speak English in the home.

All the children found the CEV easier to understand.

One ESL speaker said that she liked to learn more difficult words and improve her spoken English. She then added, “But when listening, or being spoken to, I prefer simpler English and slower speech.” I particularly resonated with that statement, remembering my own difficulties in trying “to hear” another language.

Earlier this year when the CEV was read in a number of services at Gungahlin my observation was that it appeared to be read more fluently and with more expression than when the NRSV was used. This is not surprising given that the CEV translation has tried to follow more closely the way people normally speak rather than the NRSV which follows more closely the word order of the original Bible languages. *(Rev) Ron Reeson*

# Wesley Canberra celebrates

The [ACT Organ School](#) based at [Wesley Uniting Church](#) in Forrest, is supported by the Wesley Music Foundation through the activities of the [Wesley Music Centre](#). It is part of the Church's outreach to the community through music. Students are in demand from churches in the ACT and beyond.

## Organ Scholars' success

Wesley Uniting Church in Canberra has bid farewell to its [Organ Scholar](#), **Jonathan Lee**, who is taking up a similar position at Hereford Cathedral in England. He played his last Service at Wesley on August 4th and then gave a recital to a packed church. At the Concert that afternoon entitled, "Prelude for a Traveller", Jonathan demonstrated all the skills he had acquired as a student at the ACT Organ School.

Another former Scholar is **Marko Sever**. After graduating from the NSW Conservatorium of Music, he went to the Royal Academy of Music, London for post graduate study and is now the Organ Scholar at St Alban's Abbey. Marko recently returned home to Canberra for a month's holiday and was warmly welcomed back to Wesley where he played for a service and then performed an afternoon recital called "Return of a Traveller".



Jonathan Lee (l) and Marko Sever (r) cutting the cake after Marko's recent recital. The cake was made by Jenny Dean, chair of the Wesley Music Foundation.

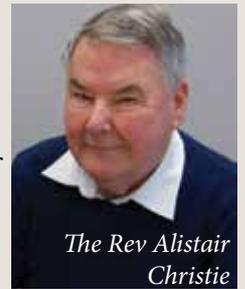
**Graeme Brown,**  
Wesley Congregation,  
Canberra Central Parish

As an ORGAN SCHOLAR, a young musician is employed by a cathedral, church or institution where regular choral services are held.

*Graeme explains:* ORGAN SCHOLARS are effectively apprentices learning the ropes. They might play for services, sing in the choir, take choir rehearsals or accompany any of the choirs based where they work. For example, Marko accompanies the St Alban's Abbey Girls' Choir. Both Jonathan and Marko are giving organ lessons to pupils of the schools attached to their respective Cathedrals.

## 50+ years of service

One Sunday in May the Wesley Congregation, Canberra explored the theme of God's call to all of us to be followers of Jesus, committed to living and serving the way of Christ. The Rev Gregor Henderson introduced this theme by celebrating **Rev Alistair Christie's 50+ years**



The Rev Alistair Christie

of ministry which, along with other Jubilarians, had also been recognised and celebrated at Synod 2019:

Alistair's service began as a student minister in Gosford in 1961, then in Nyngan and Mona Vale before being ordained. He was then minister in Bourke, Molong, East Belconnen and North Woden. He was Presbytery minister in Sydney North and from 2002-2004, Moderator of the Synod. Alistair was supplying in congregations and as Ex-Moderator, before retiring some 13 years ago.

But what that bare listing doesn't tell you is how well Alistair has served and led the church - his spiritual depth, his strength of faith, his Christian compassion, his wise preaching, his everyday prayerfulness, his pastoral caring, his ability to get on with a vast range of people, his wisdom and insight in resolving differences and conflicts, his consistent involvement in ecumenical organisations and activities - he is still President of the ACT Churches' Council.

And along the way he and his wife, Connie, who died 20 years ago, were key players in the establishment of the Greenhills Conference Centre and in the founding of the [Emmaus](#) and [Kairos](#) movements throughout Australia and Auckland. He's also had heavy involvement in many community groups, in recent years the [Retirement Villages Residents Associations](#) locally, territory-wise and nationally.

Alistair has been and is, a minister of the church who has given enormously distinguished service.

**Gregor Henderson AM**  
Wesley Congregation, Canberra Central Parish

# A voice in the wilderness

Listening to the Uluru Statement from the Heart

## Ecumenical Listening Group on Indigenous Spirituality

*Meet and greet and introduction.*

All are welcome to attend our first introductory meeting. Places are still available but are limited.

We will use the Anglican Board of Mission 8-part study on the Uluru Statement from the Heart, designed to help the church listen to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

Details about the study guide and downloads are at the website <https://www.abmission.org/resources> Click on 'current resources' and scroll down.

The listening group will include Anglican, Catholic and Uniting church members.

VENUE: St Vincent's Catholic Church, Orana Centre, 7 Bindel Street, Aranda

DATE: Thursday 14 November, 7:30pm for 8:00pm start

RSVP: Robert Tulip, Kippax Uniting Church, E: [rtulip2005@yahoo.com.au](mailto:rtulip2005@yahoo.com.au)

The great difficulty we have in listening to other people is a key theme in the **Bible Study: A Voice in the Wilderness: Listening to the Statement from the Heart.**

The Study, drawing from Biblical and contemporary sources, was written by Celia Kemp, Reconciliation Coordinator for the Anglican Board of Mission. It offers some powerful confronting messages and questions, inviting us to reflect on Australia's history and the grief and loss associated with colonisation, from Biblical, indigenous and our own various perspectives.

Members of the Uniting Church in the Canberra Presbytery will join with Anglicans and Catholics to work through this superb eight part study, trying to read the Bible through indigenous eyes and listen to aboriginal voices.

The study group will also meet local indigenous people; discussing cultural, political and spiritual identity.

**Robert Tulip, Kippax Congregation**



The Study's cover artwork is titled 'A Portrait of Australia With Important Bits Missing' by the Reverend Glenn Loughrey, illustrating how Australian history frequently misses out our rich indigenous cultural heritage.

*continuing from the previous page...*

## Two questions

After his address (left), Gregor Henderson asked Alistair the following questions.



*What for you has been the greatest privilege in being a minister?*

*And what for you has been the greatest challenge in being a minister?*

**We invite responses from anyone serving in ministry, for inclusion in future Viewpoints.**

**Please send to:**

**[viewpoint@cruc.org.au](mailto:viewpoint@cruc.org.au)**

## Living Church Synod 2019 Celebration of Ministry

*Canberra Region Presbytery Jubilarians*

*During the Celebration of Ministry at Synod this year,*

Rev Dr John Brown was recognized for **60** years service.

Rev Alistair Christie, Rev Ian Diamond and Rev Dr John Miller were recognised for **50** years service.

Rev David Thiem and Rev Noel Williams were recognised for **40** years service.

**CONGRATULATIONS!**

*John Williams and Delia Quigley, Co-Chairs, Canberra Region Presbytery*



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