

A Message from the Presbytery Chair

Following the meeting of the Presbytery (10 May 2022), the various committees of the Presbytery have met and continue to consider how to best address the concerns raised about support for struggling congregations. The question of support for congregations and ministers has been front and centre for the PRC and Standing Committee and has framed much of the work for these committees over the past years. The Presbytery continues to provide support through the office with business, property, IT support provided by the Business Manager and Treasurer. Ministry & mission planning and congregational development as well as support for ministers are provided by the Mission & Leadership Presbytery Minister. The extent of support provided by the Presbytery has been limited due to the inability to fill the Pastoral Relations Presbytery Minister position.

It was pleasing to see at the June meeting of the Standing Committee the number of congregations looking toward the future, with four congregations applying for funding with the NSW Government Community Development Program.

The Presbytery has also been successful in its application to the Synod Growth Fund, receiving 75% of the funds requested for the “GRP Emerging Generation Movement” project. Below is a short description of the project:

“In alignment with the Synod future directions, and its own Mission, Vision and Strategic Plan, the Georges River Presbytery has been working hard over the past two years identifying congregations that have the potential to develop into growing Lighthouse churches with thriving first-third of life ministries. Georges River Presbytery has also established the “Living Streams in Christ” first third of life working group. This group is tasked with building the first third of life movement throughout the Presbytery.

The project is to initiate the first stage of thriving first third of life ministries across the Congregations of the Presbytery. As part of this, the project will identify and develop leaders who are disciple-makers who have a broader vision beyond their local congregation.

In partnership with Presbytery and Congregations, the funds will be used to establish and resource the first three workers in this key change project of the Presbytery.”

Please continue to pray for the congregations and ministers of the presbytery in their efforts to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to the world around them.

Simon Lee
GRP Presbytery Chair



A Message from the Pastoral Relation Supply Presbytery Minister

Throughout my Christian journey, I have often found encouragement and great blessing in the words of the Psalmist.

One such example is what we find in Psalm 32.

*Blessed is the one
whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.*

*Blessed is the one
whose sin the Lord does not count against them
and in whose spirit is no deceit.*

*When I kept silent,
my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long.*

*For day and night
your hand was heavy on me;
my strength was sapped
as in the heat of summer.*

*Then I acknowledged my sin to you
and did not cover up my iniquity.*

*I said, "I will confess
my transgressions to the Lord."
And you forgave
the guilt of my sin*

In reflecting on this, Timothy Keller wrote:

Many insist that guilt is an imposition of society or religion, that people can define right and wrong for themselves. Nonetheless we have a sense of condemnation, of not being as we ought, that we can't shake. The liberation of forgiveness starts with honesty. It is only when we uncover and admit our sin (verse 5) that God is willing to cover it (verse 1). That is, he removes our objective guilt so it can't bring us into punishment (verse 5) and he removes our subjective shame so we don't remain in inner anguish (verse 3 & 4)

The happiest people in the world are those who not only know they need to be deeply forgiven but also have experienced it.

Prayer

Father, as great as my sins are, it is a great and additional sin to refuse to rest in your grace and accept your pardon. Give me the blessedness and release of knowing I am completely, absolutely, freely forgiven through Jesus. Amen

Grace and peace as you share the life changing truths of the Christ!

Graham Olsen



A Message from the Mission and Leadership Presbytery Minister

Some recent American research have found that the tenure of Ministers and Pastors has been decreasing for some time and the problem accelerated in the last two years during the pandemic. There is no doubt that a familiar picture is happening here in Australia where similar pressures are affecting our Ministry Agents in the UCA and indeed our Presbytery. This phenomenon is affecting all leaders at every level within the church.

Unfortunately, Ministry Agents often feel isolated and/or under-resourced to deal with the challenges of ministering in a morphing secular society exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Ministering from an isolated context for over two years is immensely stressful. And one massive consequence of these restrictions and isolation is loneliness. Loneliness does not only affect members of the congregation, but it also affects Ministers/leaders and pastoral practitioners. We are all human beings and the role of the Minister affect their families too. Many Ministry Agents do not take time off that we need or are owed because we think there is nobody else. I am often guilty of adopting such thought, but rest is important. We all need to be mindful and practise selfcare. It is essential for all concerned.

It is difficult to engage or even think about mission in times of lockdown. And many do feel inadequate because restrictions have prevented them from their routines and attending to their calling. We acknowledge the low numbers of potential leaders in our congregations, but I encourage all to try sharing the weight of responsibility. We are called to prepare God's people for works of service and thus help relieve those who carry the most responsibility.

We knew that during lockdown the numbers and capacity of our congregations will be detrimentally affected. Naturally, many are not very optimistic about the future of their congregations. However, be that as it may, God is not finished with us yet. Like so many in past calamities, people generally become more aware of their mortality and thus begins to explore faith and spirituality more deeply. There are so many in our communities who need love and care, they are vulnerable. Although it is not easy ministering from the context of vulnerability, we are reminded of Jesus who is the 'wounded healer.'

Like congregations, Presbytery also struggled with capacity adjusting to changes as well as achieving the aspirations in the Mission, Vision, and Strategic Plan (MVSP). However, we are grateful because God is ever present, guiding us to adjust to this 'new normal.' There is an opportunity now to reimagine what the church should look like post-covid and into the future. It is also an opportunity for us, as Presbytery, to reflect on our MVSP and focus on key strategic areas. A half-day Presbytery Mission Retreat is planned for the 27th of August 2022 to refocus on some of these key areas.

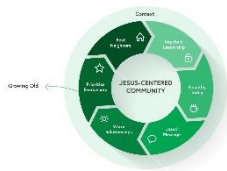
In the past few months, we have begun mission planning with Menai-Illawong UC, Greenacre UC, Sutherland UC, Jannali UC, and Gymea-Miranda congregations. These planning sessions have led these congregations to re-focus and rebuild as we learn to live with the Covid-19 pandemic. There is no one-size-fit-all approach. We have an overarching Presbytery Mission, Vision and Strategic Plan and I encourage these congregations to consider the undergirding Presbytery vision of "...*healthy growing congregations... known for passionately pursuing the mission of Jesus*" as they discern their own plans to address their unique contexts.



We are reminded that every healthy growing church focuses outwards. In the last few decades, as alluded to in the Morgan Report, most declining mainline congregations have lost their zeal for getting the Gospel into the ears of those who need to hear it. To radically change the declining trajectory, we need not only to accept change but become proactive and intentional in the changing process. As mentioned earlier, God is not finished with us yet. As we empty ourselves of fear and surrender to God's infilling Spirit, we can still be used by God as agents of change and transformation in our communities.

One of GRP's core strategic areas of focus is investing in young leaders, encouraging and developing collaboration among the emerging generations within the Presbytery and across the Synod. The Living Streams in Christ (LSiC) who started a Presbytery wide movement has slowed in recent months. I encourage congregations to connect and offer support to LSiC by praying for them, encouraging your young leaders/mentors to join the group. This cohort of mentors and leaders are critical in developing the mission with the emerging generations.

Recent events:



'Growing Young' workshop was held at Jannali UC earlier in April. We are grateful to 'Pulse' from UME who introduced the program to members of congregations who wanted to intentionally grow ministries with children, youths, and young adults (first third of life).

'Safe Church' Workshop was held at Jannali UC on the 25th of June. The training was well attended, and most congregations were represented. We will be advising about another course should it be offered and hosted by another Presbytery. It is essential for representatives of every congregation to attend and participate. The alternative for those who missed out is to attend a course run by the Baptist Church <https://creatingsafespaces.org.au/> or Anglican Church <https://safeministry.training/>; if you do, please let the Synod Safe Church Unit know by sending in the details and a copy of your Certificate to safechurch@nswact.uca.org.au.

Upcoming Events and Training:

'Fundamentals of Transitional Ministry'

This is a 3-day program designed to give participants an introduction to the key concepts and practices of ministering with congregations and agencies in times of transition. 6th – 8th July, Centre for Ministry, North Parramatta. E-mail: umeinfo@nswact.uca.org.au Ph: 02 8838 8912 / 02 8838 8946.

'Growing Young' follow up

This program will take place on the 16th of July at Jannali (venue TBC). I encourage those who attended the first workshop to join and share their progress thus far and those who missed the first one to learn about this exciting plan. Contact the Office should you need more information.

'Out of the Box' Missional Conference, 29th – 30th July,

Centre for Ministry, North Parramatta. We challenge participants to approach ministry and mission in fresh and exciting ways and **equip you with the latest and greatest missional tools to take to your own contexts** and continue to explore and grow your congregation.





'YouLead Young Adults Camp', 30th – 31st July (18 – 35 age group).

The focus will be on how we live and grow in a post lock-down world. There will be guest speakers and presenters talking on everything from running devotions to advocating in climate change, music ministry, sports ministry and interfaith dialogue. The camp is sponsored by the Synod, so it only costs \$60 for the weekend. If you need additional help why not ask your congregation to sponsor you or reach out to Pulse. Contact Rev Karen Mitchell-Lambert for more information

KarenML@nswact.uca.org.au

Soul Care Conference 2022

Rediscover and reimagine pastoral care at the first Soul Care Conference. Led by Uniting and the Synod of NSW & ACT, the Soul Care conference is 3 days focusing on pastoral care and leading edge thinking exploring areas such as chaplaincy, supervision, community outreach, disaster recovery, grief, trauma and mental health.

Come along to listen to inspiring keynote speakers John Brogden, Rev. Graeme Tutt and Dr Deirdre Palmer, as well as lots of plenary speakers, workshop sessions, panel discussions and much more! Visit soulcare.uca.org.au for more information and to purchase your tickets!



**Rediscover and reimagine
pastoral care at Soul Care**

31 AUGUST - 2 SEPTEMBER 2022 | WESLEY CONFERENCE CENTRE, SYDNEY
Visit soulcare.uca.org.au or contact soulcare@nswact.uca.org.au

TICKETS ON SALE NOW!



Uniting

Presbytery Workshop

Tuesday 19 July at 7:30pm by Zoom: Synod Risk Team will discuss and answer your questions on Work Health Safety and Volunteer Policies. Register your interest at admin.grp@nswact.uca.org.au.

Rev Dr Matagi Jessop Vilitama, Mission and Leadership Minister



Good News in GRP

Action on Climate Change

In the lead-up to the recent Federal election, and as part of the Synod's Uniting Climate Action Network (UCAN) strategy, a group of Uniting Church members who are residents of the Hughes electorate met several of the local candidates to share our concerns about climate change and the need for more political action to address this, particularly at a Federal level. Karen Russell (Engadine UC), Rev 'Oto Faiva (Sutherland UC), Brian Sowerby, Sigrid Hall and Gillian Minto (all Gymea-Miranda UC) managed to have coffee and a chat with the two Independents (Linda Seymour and Georgia Steele), the Labor candidate (Riley Campbell) and the ultimately successful Liberal candidate, Jenny Ware. Our then-MP, Craig Kelly, did not respond to a request for a meeting.

It was an interesting and enjoyable experience to meet these candidates and share our views and concerns in an informal setting. Action on climate change was a major issue for both Independents who spoke freely about their commitment to change and although both the Labor and Liberal representatives shared many of our concerns, they both largely restricted their comments to their respective parties' positions on the issue.

Engaging with politicians can be daunting, but for us – partly thanks to online training sessions with UCAN – it was a positive experience which gave us valuable opportunities to make our views known to our representatives and to get to know them a little as people, not just as candidates



Please share your Good News with the rest of Presbytery. Send your story to admin.grp@nswact.uca.org.au



GRP Meetings

Dates for 2022

- Half-day Presbytery Mission Retreat 27 August 2022

Presbytery Meetings:

16 August
15 November

Standing Committee:

Held on the second Tuesday each month at the Presbytery Office or by Zoom at 4:30 pm.

12 July 2022
09 August 2022
13 September 2022
11 October 2022
08 November 2022
13 December 2022

Pastoral Relations Committee:

Meets on the 1st Tuesday each month at 4:30 pm.

Hybrid meeting Zoom and on-site at the GRP Office

2 August
6 September
4 October
1 November
6 December

Property Committee:

Held on the last Thursday each month at 4.30pm at the Presbytery Office or by Zoom.

28 July 2022
25 August 2022
29 September 2022
27 October 2022
24 November 2022

