

Baptism for a dispersed community

by Jay Robinson, Murrumbeena Uniting Church

When Shaz Sturk first started coming to Murrumbeena Uniting Church, we welcomed them and the many faith conversations that ensued. One theme that we often came back to was baptism and what it meant. It became evident that Shaz wanted to declare belief in Christ with the community. We began to explore how we were going to make this happen through baptism.

Originally Easter Sunday was chosen as a great day to celebrate together. In fact, we had hoped the whole congregation would be given the opportunity to re-affirm their own baptisms that day. We had study sessions together for a few weeks, and then COVID-19 stepped in and everything changed.

Since March we have managed to continue our Sunday worship online together, as well as have morning tea over Zoom. But Shaz's baptism plans were put on hold, even though the questions and exploring did not stop.

Fast-forward to the beginning of stage 4 lockdown, Shaz moved from student accommodation at Monash, to stay with grandparents in Morwell. Each week Shaz has continued to join in to worship and morning tea online, and our connections have continued across nearly 150km. Shaz expressed a desire to make a public declaration of being a disciple of Christ, but also to become more deeply involved in the life of the congregation, including being able to participate fully in decision making. How could we conduct a baptism as a gathered community when we were meeting virtually?

After a conversation within the Tuesday Presbytery Zoom meeting, a telephone call to Jenny Gordon, Presbytery Minister in Gippsland, and then a conversation with Rev Joedy Meers, a plan was devised.

Rev Joedy Meers is currently providing supply ministry at Morwell Uniting and, as Gippsland is in only stage 3 restrictions, Joedy was able to visit Shaz at their grandparent's home.

Rather than Shaz watching the service from Murrumbeena, the church community was able to watch the service in Morwell as Joedy conducted the baptism.

The liturgy was shared between Jay Robinson and Youth and Young Adults Pastor Kelly Skilton, with Joedy Meers conducting the baptism. Songwriter Alison Campbell Rate led us in her own version of the Aaronic Blessing.

Questions were asked and answered, and the congregation committed to supporting Shaz and remaining a strong worshipping community as Shaz continues to grow to maturity in faith.

The ability for the congregation to gather in support of Shaz at this time of baptism and commitment was only possible through the technology of Zoom. Although it may not have been face-to-face, it was full of meaning and the presence of the Holy Spirit was felt as we gathered together as a community.

We look forward to celebrating more when we can gather together again in person.



Candlelight banner goes worldwide

ST ANDREW'S Berwick UC minister Rev Wendy Snook's renowned quilting skills have gone viral on social media. Wendy made this 'Candlelight' quilt, right, using machine appliqué (traced and cut by herself), with gold thread machine quilting, using a pattern by Pacific Rim Quilt Company, USA a few years ago.

She says: "It has become a beloved fixture at Christmas time in St Andrew's Berwick UCA, as it fits the Communion table and the ambience of the Carols by Candlelight services so well."

"Recently, I sent a photo of it being used at St Andrew's Berwick to the Pacific Rim Quilts designer with thanks for the design. The designer was delighted, and posted it onto the shop's Facebook and Instagram pages for world-wide viewing, and it resulted in much acclaim. The company sell a laser cut-kit version of the quilt in 2 colour-ways now, and customers are ordering more red and gold fabrics to duplicate this version of ours!"



Rediscovering baptism and communion

EVERY Wednesday night, over the past two months, Duncan Macleod and Anneke Oppewal hosted a group on Zoom to learn more about Uniting Church approaches to the sacraments.

Mat Pendle said, "We explored the liturgy of both sacraments, diving into the structure of services and also the language used. The emphasis on participating in the Catholic Church (the universal Church) is something that I find both comforting and encouraging. This allowed fascinated discussion about our different backgrounds and interactions with the sacraments of baptism and communion from the participants."

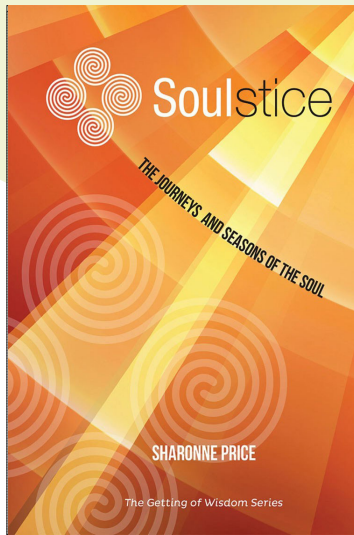
"We discovered again the vast and rich range of theology within the Uniting Church of Australia where the act of participating in the sacraments is a sacred and personal space."

Kelly Skilton said, "This has been an amazing time to uncover the liturgy and practices that are the foundation of the life of our church. Whether we were hoping to learn more of what it means to administer the sacraments, or we were wanting to grow our theology and understandings, these evenings allowed us to question, ponder and learn."

"We shared in communion together, and even carried out mock-baptisms that saw a lot of our teddy bears being welcomed into the wider catholic and apostolic church. Joking aside, we were able to finish the course with greater knowledge of our two sacraments – both of which connect with the traditions and new revelations of our faith in Jesus Christ."

"If you have the opportunity to participate in this course, I highly recommend it. It allows a deeper connection with something that is so closely held to our hearts," said Mat.





Support for North India

AS I'm hearing that mask-wearing may go on for up to a year I am wondering if readers would consider supporting local and international charity work by purchasing quality, double-layer, washable face masks - small and large sizes available.

ALL proceeds will go to support programs to help the homeless and hungry along with anti-domestic violence, gender empowerment and community health programs for women and children in India. As they're re-usable, environmentally friendly, washable and a NFP fundraiser the price is \$15 a mask or two for \$24 (plus postage). We will send out with any size donation, however.

Contact me with an email helen.beeby@gmail.com with colour and size preferences and I will respond directly with details.

Thank you for your support.

Helen Beeby

[facebook.com/womanandchildhealth](https://www.facebook.com/womanandchildhealth)

Spring Soulstice Webinar

We recently had Sharonne Price speaking on pastoral care with leaders across the Presbytery. On Friday September 18 we'll be back talking with Sharonne Price about insights from her book Soulstice.

Sharonne and Ian Price have been working together on how to connect with the "spiritual but not religious". The book Soulstice grew out of Sharonne's teaching in a Masters of Palliative Care Program where she was faced with the dilemma of communicating about things of the soul and connecting with human experience whilst skirting around the barriers of secular thinking.

On September 18th, Sharonne will walk us through the main premise of the book and together we'll consider the nature of our journey right now - its promise and threat - and anticipate what comes next for us. This will be an opportunity for personal reflection that will keep you thinking long after the session is over if past experience repeats.

A social worker by background, Sharonne spent most of her working life in palliative care in the earliest days of hospice and then in hospital chaplaincy, before being appointed to a Synod/Presbytery role in South Australia. She is a writer of poetry, hymns, studies (All will be well - a conversation with Julian of Norwich, and Following Hope) and Soulstice - The Journeys and Seasons of the Soul.

You can join in on the Zoom webinar on September 18, 10 - 11.30 am by clicking on this link: <http://bit.ly/ppesupport>

Copies of Sharonne's book available here:
<https://www.mediacomeducation.org.au/shop/soulstice>

Port Phillip East Presbytery Webinars

See other Port Phillip East Presbytery webinars online at <https://bit.ly/PPEPYoutube>

Bex Lewis on Discipleship in a Digital Age
Mary Hess on Digital Storytelling
Steve Taylor on Playful Faith Formation
Tanya Wittwer on Post Trauma care
Anneke Oppewal on Catching the Sleep Train
Sharonne Price on Pastoral Partnering.



Music and worship in a global pandemic



*A reflection and song on the celebration of God through music
by Peter Heazlewood, Coatesville Uniting Church*

IN CASE you hadn't noticed, we're currently in the middle of a global pandemic – a situation that has presented to the world significant challenges. Despite changed and challenging times, the worship of God continues – and always will – and part of that worship of course is through music. Like many other congregations, Coatesville Uniting Church in Bentleigh East has successfully established a process of holding live, weekly worship services through Zoom.

Planning, preparation and education has enabled our people to tune into weekly services... But what do we do about music? Like most places of Christian worship, music plays a huge role in our community. We are passionate about praising God through music of substance and do so with piano, guitar, strings, flute, organ drums and voice. Fairly early in the piece (prior to Stage 4 restrictions) we did quite a bit of work recording our band (including our organist) capturing significant contemporary, traditional and locally written songs we use as part of worship. These recordings are incorporated into our weekly online worship, complemented by words and visuals created Powerpoint. We currently have a roster of between 80 to 90 songs available to choose from.

We've been extremely lucky to get ahead of the game in this regard and post-Covid, it will be interesting to consider possibilities for the use of these processes to enhance the life of the church. We are happy to share our resources. Email Jeff Gardner for details: itadmin@ucappep.org

An important element in the life of our music team and the worshipping community in general is maintaining pastoral connections. As we continue through the requirements of social isolation, we are aware of the importance of our people remaining connected – even if it's only by phone or email. Those who don't connect online can do so via phone and are provided with weekly mail outs of song words for the upcoming week and other materials to ensure they don't miss out.

Editor's Note

AS music is such an important and stimulating element of most worship services we thought it would be a good idea to run a regular column about any musical ideas from within our congregations. We know there are some really talented musical folk out there. So send in any suggestions that worked well in your sacred spaces to newsbeat@ucappep.org and we'll share it across PPEP.



Members of the Coatesville music group perform in their Christmas in the Carpark event in 2019.

So, Coatesville sends greetings to all churches in the Presbytery and beyond. Music at Coatesville continues, as does live, vibrant worship. Beyond our congregation though, we join with many, rejoicing in the singing of songs and the writing and playing of words and music that glorifies God. This time of separation will come to a close and with it I expect an enriched, thankful, highly resilient and blessed community of Christ.

A final comment in relation to music - the worship of God through music doesn't depend on huge technologies, Sunday mornings, smart techies or hours of work from week to week. It doesn't rely on choirs, musicians and teams. The worship of God through music and song is as close as the songs in your heart or the whispered fragments of praise and reflection that you/we may find ourselves consciously or unconsciously offering to glorify God at any time or in any place.

Peter

Ajub Jahja admitted to Uniting Church

I was very pleased that my first ceremonial duty as Chairperson of the Presbytery was to conduct the *Service of Admission of a Minister of Another Denomination* for the Rev Ajub Jahja on 2 August.

Ajub is the Minister at St Andrew's Uniting Church, Gardiner, in Glen Iris. He was recognised as a Gereja Kristen Indonesia minister in 1995, and was ordained on 7 April 1997 at GKI Kayu Putih, Jakarta. Kaya Putih is an area of North Jakarta.

One of Ajub's many gifts is writing. He's written and published 47 books in Indonesia and is still actively doing so. As a memento of the Admission Service I was given his book '100 Renungan Hidup Berkemenangan' or '100 Reflections on life victorious'.

Ajub is also a consultant to a publishing company and leads many writing workshops.

Ajub was the Chair of the Assembly's 14th Indonesian National Conference which took place at St. Andrews in April 2019. He is still the Chair of the Indonesian Christian Conference. Ajub is a great addition to the ranks of Uniting Church Ministers.



Ajub's experiences in Australia led me to reflect on my experiences in Indonesia. My wife, Heather, and I lived in Jakarta from 1998 to 2001. We became members of the Jakarta Community Church (JCC) and I was the Chair of the



Tom Spurling
Presbytery Chair

Board in 2000 and 2001. The JCC is a multicultural, interdenominational and participatory community open to 'people of any nation, race or creed,' with services in English. Many members were expatriates looking to be members of a Christian community. A second group were families with an Indonesian married to an English speaker. The third were Indonesians whose understanding of Christianity had been learned in English and who wanted to worship in that language.

In our Presbytery there are at least 20 ministers whose first language is not English, and others who are fluent in more than one language that have lived, worked and ministered in non-Australian contexts. This gives us access to a rich cultural and linguistic variety of experiences and understanding. I hope that Ajub can continue to help us embrace the multi-cultural nature of our society.

Australia is a multi-lingual country and this CIA data represent language spoken at home (est. 2016): English 72.7%, Mandarin 2.5%, Arabic 1.4%, Cantonese 1.2%, Vietnamese 1.2%, Italian 1.2%, Greek 1%, other 14.8%, unspecified 6.5%.

People of Influence

THE Uniting Church Historical Society is to host an online (Zoom) meeting on Sunday, 27 September, starting at 2pm. The topic is "People of Influence" and will include talks by three people:

- Rev. Ian Higgins on the Rev. Dr Rollie Busch
- Dr Cheryl Griffin on "A Woman in the Parsonage", the story of her mother's experiences as the wife of a Methodist minister.
- Mr Robert Joynt on "George Beckett, Conference Evangelist"

To join the meeting, email robert.renton@bigpond.com before Friday 25 September, and the link will be sent to you.

Week of Prayer for Peace

World Council of Churches is calling for prayer and action in a World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel this week which includes the **International Day of Prayer for Peace on 21 September**, church organisations, congregations, and people of faith are encouraged to bear a common witness by participating in worship services, educational events, and acts of support in favour of peace and justice for Israelis and Palestinians. World week for Peace runs from 13 to 21 September with the theme of 'Creative Solidarity in Common Fragility'.

Download resources from <http://bit.ly/wccweekpeace>

Protecting the virtually vulnerable

WITH so many churches having rapidly increased their online engagement, the question has arisen regarding the extent to which the on-line safety of children and vulnerable people is being taken into account. Whilst much effort had been expended in ensuring physical church and program sites are safer, in many instances there has been relatively less conscious effort around on-line safety.

Victorian Council of Churches is organising Staying Connected, Doing Ministry Safely OnLine to help ministers, pastors, church council members, children & families ministry leaders and other program leaders to engage with experts around online safety for children and vulnerable people. Taking place on **Thursday September 10 at 5pm**, this 90 minute online workshop will focus on staying connected and practising ministry safely online during COVID 19.

Presentations will be by

- Liana Buchanan – Victoria's Principal Commissioner for Children and Young People
- Linda Franco – Senior Policy Advisor, Professional Standards Unit Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne
- Amanda Lincke – Child safe Consultant for the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne
- Mat Pendle – Children & Families Ministry at St. Andrew's Uniting Church, Berwick

Mat says: "I'm very excited to be part of 'Staying Connected'. The workshop will also include a Q & A session. Please register if you are in ministry serving children and young people. This event will be recorded and posted on the VCC website if you can't make the session.

To book click on: <http://bit.ly/ministrysafesept10>



UCA Youthful members at Assembly 2018

Voices of younger people

IN JULY 2019, the Synod passed a proposal that sought to identify ways of increasing the involvement of people under 50 in the service, leadership and shaping of the church.

The steering committee, comprising membership from presbyteries, has been guiding this process. A online survey, available in September, will be open to anyone under 50 years old in the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania. It will seek to identify issues, challenges and opportunities younger members of the UCA have experienced that have led and/or prevented them from exercising their gifts, voices and talents in the church. The data collected will inform the committee's report to the next Synod meeting in February 2021. Our Presbytery secretary Ian Firth will send the link out to be shared through your newsletters and other appropriate digital and social media channels.

If you have further questions contact Robin Yang directly at robin.yang@victas.uca.org.au or 0416 190 723.

Young Adults Gather Online

UCA President Dr Deidre Palmer has invited young adult leaders across the Uniting Church to join her online for an opportunity to connect and reflect on being Church at this time.

The video gatherings scheduled over the next few months are an opportunity to remain connected after COVID-19 has meant the cancellation of the National Young Adult Leaders Conference (NYALC) scheduled for January 2021.

The gatherings are open to all young leaders in the Uniting Church. Dr Palmer will be joined at each of the sessions by Assembly National Consultant Rev. Charissa Suli who was integral in planning the last NYALC gathering in Adelaide in January 2019.

The 90 minute gatherings of 15 people will provide an opportunity for young leaders to share their journey through COVID-19, to reflect on life and ministry, and how we continue being the Church at this time.

"We are living through very challenging and distressing circumstances in Australia and the pandemic continues to have devastating effects across the world. Through this, the Church has continued to be a community bearing witness to the love and compassion of Christ."

Gatherings have been held on Sunday 30 August and Thursday 3 September. The next gathering is on Monday 19 October at 7.30pm – 9.00pm EST, with more planned for November and December.

Register by emailing Neryl McCallum at NerylM@nat.uca.org.au

State champion speaker from Cornish

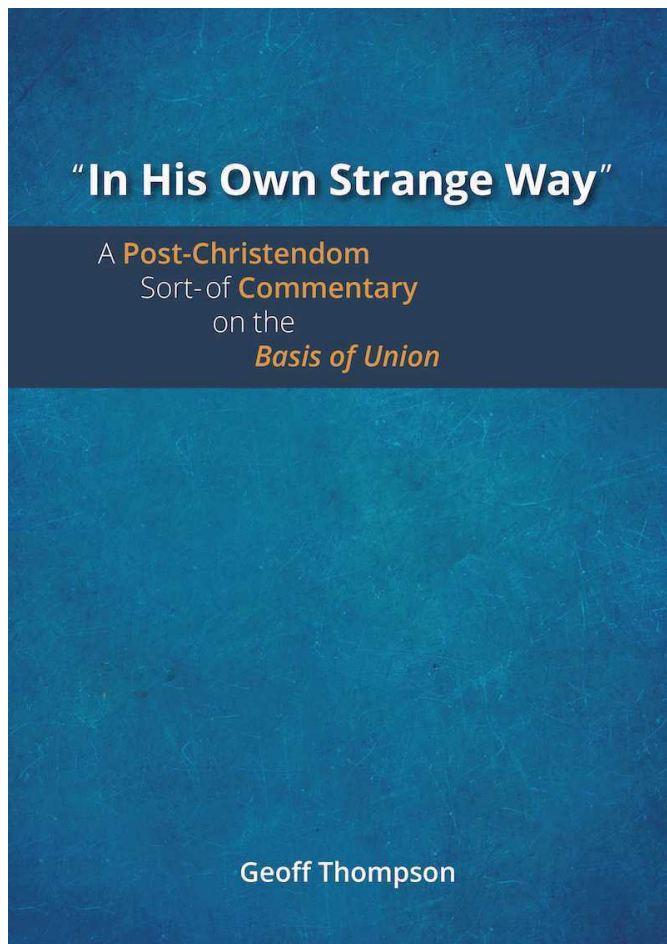
WHAT makes a good public speaker? Year 12 Cornish College student Tierney Khan can give you some ideas, having been named the Victorian State Champion in the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority's Plain English Speaking Awards.

Tierney progressed through several stages of the competition, which took her from an original field of around 200 competitors down to six finalists.

Reflecting on her success, Tierney believes it's important to be honest, to have something meaningful to say and to genuinely care about your subject. She says the key is to get the audience to understand and empathise with what you have to say, even if they can't directly relate to the topic. Tierney certainly achieved this in the finals, with one of the judges moved to tears with her prepared speech, 'Not another speech about feminism'!

Tierney has been invited to speak at The Wheeler Centre, a literary and publishing centre founded as part of Melbourne's bid to be a UNESCO Creative City of Literature. It is renowned as a leading institution for the art of conversation, and a champion of the transformative power of informed public discussion and debate.

Congratulations, Tierney!



Basis of Union here and now

reviewed by Ennis Macleod

It is always a useful thing to reexamine one's roots; to see what they say about what is happening with us today. That's what Geoff Thompson's 2018 'sort-of commentary' of the Basis of Union does.

Geoff's book is an engaging resource around which groups could dip into the Basis, and examine for themselves what realities and opportunities are opened up in the world of 2020, from a text that still has relevance today.

He examines what was established as the founding theology of the UCA and demonstrates its relevance to the post-Christendom world in which we find ourselves. An illuminating image he proposes is that the Basis is useful when we see it not as a map with defined routes to follow, but as a compass that provides directions in unfamiliar territory.

Each chapter examines the relevance of a section of the Basis to issues that arise in the post-Christendom world, with relevant questions and Bible passages to think about individually or as a group.

Buy the book online at <http://bit.ly/CTMStrangeWay>



In 1995, much-loved Barry Larkin was far from OK. His suicide left family and friends in deep grief and with endless questions. In 2009, his son Gavin Larkin chose to champion just one question to honour his father and to try and protect other families from the pain he endured. That question was "Are you OK?" This question sparked a campaign that would regularly ask RUOK? And give space to stop and hear the answers.

The message for R U OK?Day 2020 is: "There's more to say after R U OK?"

2020 has been a challenging year for everyone and circumstances have made it even more important for us all to stay connected and, for those who are able, be willing to support those around us. In the lead-up to R U OK?Day we'll help Australians know what to say when someone says they're not OK and guide them through how they can continue a conversation that could change a life. By knowing what to say you can help someone feel supported and access appropriate help long before they're in crisis, which can make a really positive difference to their life.

Rev Jay Robinson says: "This time in our lives is a time when we need to be asking everyone around us if they are ok. As we move through this pandemic and the restrictions associated with it a lot of those around are not ok. Thursday 10 September is a great opportunity to be showing the love of Christ, asking the question "R U OK?" and then stopping to continue the conversation."

www.ruok.org.au

Sleep as a spiritual practice

In the scriptures, and in our faith tradition, serenity, calm, and the ability to restfully sleep are associated with faith and trust. At the sleep seminar on the 21 August we explored how surrendering to sleep, allowing ourselves to descend into an unconscious state of being, and letting go of control, can be seen as a spiritual practice, an act of faith and trust.

In our hectic world, sleep is often regarded as an inconvenience, and a waste of valuable time. Sleep research tells us that this is an erroneous, and even dangerous, viewpoint. Studies have repeatedly shown that sleep is necessary to heal, sustain, and renew our bodies and minds. Paradoxically though, sometimes, the harder we try, the further sleep slips beyond our reach. Creating space for sleep, being ready to 'jump on the sleep train when it arrives' is a habit that needs preparation and practice.

For many, church attendance was a weekly practice that helped us to pause regularly and find calm and peace in a busy world, and open ourselves to God to be nurtured and healed. Many of us are missing our buildings because of the conditioned state of mind that we would naturally slip into whenever we gathered there. It is harder to recreate that same experience watching a video, or engaging on Zoom at home.

Likewise, it can be harder to find sleep in our currently unfamiliar living conditions. It is possible though, if we engage in active preparation, and consciously create space, slow down, take a couple of deep breaths, and prepare to open our hearts and souls. It will help sleep find us - something not unlike getting ready to open ourselves for a connection to the divine, for prayer, for contemplation and peace to come in a religious setting. Right now, while there aren't places to go outside, there may be places we can explore inside - spaces where calm and peace can be nurtured into a helpful context for both sleep and the healing presence of the divine to find us.

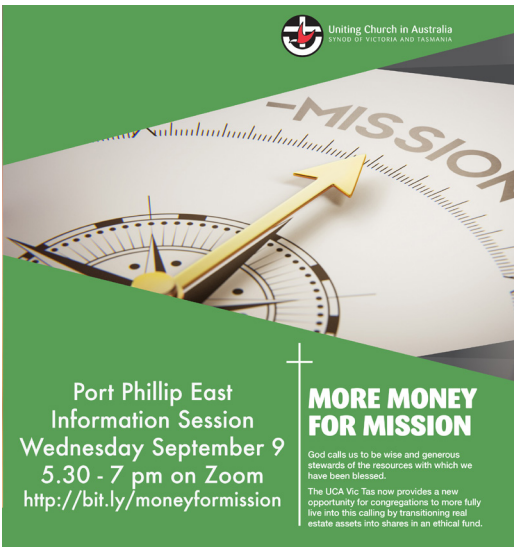
Here is a prayer by Reinhold Niebuhr, who lived through two world wars and several pandemics, to help to calm down and create space to rest.

*God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference.
Living one day at a time;
enjoying one moment at a time;
accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;
taking, as He did, this sinful world
as it is, not as I would have it;
trusting that He will make all things right
if I surrender to His Will;
that I may be reasonably happy in this life
and supremely happy with Him
forever in the next.
Amen*

Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971)



Anneke Oppewal
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Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

Port Phillip East
Information Session
Wednesday September 9
5.30 - 7 pm on Zoom
<http://bit.ly/moneyformission>

MORE MONEY FOR MISSION
God calls us to be wise and generous stewards of the resources with which we have been blessed.
The UCA Vic has now provides a new opportunity for congregations to more fully live into this calling by transitioning real estate assets into shares in an ethical fund.

Presbytery meeting dates

*** Postponed! Wednesday, September 30th, 7.30pm**

The next Presbytery in Council Zoom meeting will be held end of October/early November. Date TBC. A meeting link will be sent out in the weeks preceding.



Zoom Cafe Open

The current COVID19 crisis has brought its share of troubles, with the ever-changing levels of restriction we're experiencing, and the uncertainty we face about the months to come. Yet through this time we are discovering as a Presbytery that meeting online opens up new opportunities.

Our Presbytery committees are now meeting online, reducing travel time, and in most cases, reducing meeting time!

We've had the opportunity to host speakers from across the Presbytery, across the state borders, from the USA and NZ.

We're hosting webinar recordings on the Presbytery YouTube channel: <https://bit.ly/PPEPYoutube>

We'll be running a workshop on the Money for Mission program on September 9, 5.30 to 7 pm, on Zoom. <http://bit.ly/moneyformission>

We continue to provide the Zoom Cafe meeting every Tuesday and Friday, 10 am to 11 am, open to all who want to share and listen.

Click on this link to join in on Zoom: <http://bit.ly/ppesupport>

It's good to keep the connection alive.



Duncan Macleod
Presbytery Minister:
Team Leader
0439 828 718
pm-tl@ucappep.org

Presbytery Prayer Calendar September

September 6	Cranbourne Uniting Church	Ray McCluskey, Christine Marsh (Admin), Roy Snook (Food Truck)	Support for people in need
September 6	Hampton Park Uniting Church	Ric Holland, Jo Austin (Children, Families), Domestic Violence team	Support for women affected by domestic violence
September 13	Southern Mornington Peninsula Uniting Church (Rosebud)	Ian Stewart, Samantha Menzies (Community Support)	Preparing for opening of Murray Anderson Place House
September 20	Port Phillip East Presbytery Team	Tom Spurling, Cameron McAdam, Duncan Macleod, Craig Mitchell, Anneke Oppewal, Ian Firth, Jeff Gardner	Leadership in a time of crisis, preparing strategy for 2021
September 27	South Port Uniting Parish	Belinda Clear (Supply)	Preparing a profile for calling a minister.
September 27	Uniting South Port	Manager Michael Scott	Kindergarten, Goodwill Op Shop, Aged, Youth Support and more

If you would like to submit a news item for the Presbytery's monthly Newsbeat newsletter please send all articles and images to newsbeat@ucappep.org



The Port Phillip East Presbytery website is an exciting additional resource tool for communication across our churches, agencies, schools and communities. We welcome submissions to the website, Newsbeat and Facebook, but should advise that photographs may be used across all, unless instructed otherwise when submitted.

Visit the Presbytery website at www.ucappep.org and www.facebook.com/ucappep.org for news, events and more....