

Riverina Presbytery Newsletter

April 2023



Greetings to all in the Riverina Presbytery

At the February Presbytery meeting, elections took place. Sadly, there was no nomination for Chairperson, Treasurer or Property Officer. When this happens, regulation 3.6.2(d) instructs the Moderator to appoint a Chairperson for the Presbytery. The Moderator appointed me because we are in the middle of a consultation that might see Riverina transition to a Partnership with the Synod.

As part of my role, I wish to establish a regular communication with all the congregations of the Riverina.

The Presbytery Standing Committee and Pastoral Relations Committee meets monthly. Each quarter, I plan to share with you key decisions and other information from those meetings that may be of interest. I also invite you to share any good news stories or key prayer requests so that we build a sense of community across the Presbytery.

Thank you

Earlier this year, I wrote to all congregations inviting confirmation of key office bearers and contact details. Thank you so much for your replies. It makes life so much easier when we can communicate effectively.

Regional Partnership Proposal

Following my initial letter in March 2023, the proposal for Riverina to join in Partnership with the Synod will come to the Presbytery meeting for decision on 17 June 2023. Presbytery will meet in the Wesley, Wagga Hall.

The partnership will be a work in progress as we transition to new processes and relationships.

Why Regional Partnership?

Shrinking resources in people, time, finances coupled with aging and weary leaders with no succession plan creates an unsustainable trajectory for rural presbyteries.

There is heart, faith and good will, but currently, there is little time or energy available to properly support congregations. If nothing changes, in five years, there may be little left to salvage.

What do we want:

To bring about a future that enables the energy of the Presbytery to support congregations/Uniting Christian communities in proclaiming the Good News and inviting people to follow Christ.

Proposed way forward:

To partner with Synod through joining Regional Partnership. This means that Synod will provide support for finance, property, compliance matters, and work with the Riverina in supporting the work of the Pastoral Relations Committee and Presbytery Standing Committee, so that what energy there is can be directed to being the active people of God in local communities. Synod can never do ministry and mission for you. Only the members of your congregations can do that. Our hope is that by providing support for other weighty responsibilities, you are freed to engage more fully in your local areas.

This will involve the Presbytery referring all regulatory powers to the Synod Standing Committee (SSC) through Regional Partnership. This will be chaired by me until the SSC appoint a permanent Regional Partnership Chairperson.

A Saltbush Regional Minister (Transitions) will be appointed as a shared role between Riverina Presbytery and Synod. This role will guide the congregations through the transitional process and ensure you have access to all new processes.

The five Riverina Reps will be invited attend the April regional Partnership meeting as a way of better understand what might be possible. For your information, those reps are: Jackie Stempel, George Thomas, Wendy Frazier, Stephen Trickett and Jen Lawlor.

Guiding principles:

- The Synod will not make a promise we aren't sure of keeping.
- Transparency of process is essential.
- Referring the regulatory responsibility of a Presbytery to Synod can only work when based on being in transparent relationships with accountable decision making that preserves the dignity and participation of each Presbytery.
- Regional Partnership is not designed to replicate the past but shape the future.
- All parties will need to think beyond themselves and their own preferences.
- There will be one Regional Partnership to which all participating presbyteries will belong.
- There must be a greater number of voting members from each participating Presbytery than Synod Reps on Regional Partnerships (Reg 3.7.2.e).
- Elected reps won't represent a congregation or an area, but the contribution of that person and the gifts and knowledge they will bring.
- Not everything is going to happen at the monthly RP meeting. It can provide high-level governance, but local mission work must continue at a local level.
- Significant resourcing for roles is essential. We understand the challenges and know how difficult that is, but we need to identify what is needed for this to flourish as a priority of the Synod into the future.

Pastoral Notes:

We celebrate with Coleambally as Michelle Brain is accredited as a lay Presider and Rae Collier is accredited as a Lay Preacher. We pray their time of study was rewarding and thank them for their willingness to serve.

We note the death of Brett Furner, originally from Coolamon. We send our love to his family and friends.

We also grieve the death of Loa Loseli from Griffith. Loa was deeply loved and is sorely missed.

Upcoming Events

- The Moderator Elect will be installed as Moderator on 14 September 2023, just before the Synod meets as a Council on 15 to 17 September 2023. If you would like to be nominated to attend, please contact Jackie Stempel: jackies@nswact.uca.org.au
- **PreachFest** is back in 2023. Join the Vital Leadership team from 1-3 November 2023 at locations in Sydney and Melbourne for a 3-day festival designed to enliven and inspire the art and vocation of preaching in Australia.

There is an online option for those who cannot attend in-person.

There will be further information released soon, including a speaker line up and venue information. Sign up using the link below to receive more info, including notification when tickets are available.

<https://ume.nswact.uca.org.au/calendar/preachfest-2023/>

- **Uniting Mission and Education** have a range of upcoming events that may be of interest. For more information, click on this link: <https://ume.nswact.uca.org.au/upcoming-events/>

Period of Discernment

Rev. Greer Hudson has been appointed to a 50% placement developing the Period of Discernment resource. For more information, please click on this link to read her bio in Insights. <https://www.insights.uca.org.au/discerning-your-call/>

If someone from your congregation is interested in discerning their vocation (not only for ordination), please contact Greer: GreerH@nswact.uca.org.au

This program may assist people wanting to better understand their gifts and skills and seeking ways to express their faith more fully in a range of ways – it should not determine ordination only.

Property Committee

A new Property Committee is being appointed with Paul Creek agreeing to act as Convenor for a further 12 months. If your region has a potential nominee to serve on this committee, please let Jackie Stempel know. JackieS@nswact.uca.org.au

Web Master

Rev. Keith Robinson has agreed to serve as our Webmaster for the duration of his placement. Keith will retire in October, so if you have changes to your website, please let Keith know: KeithR@nswact.uca.org.au

Combined Presbytery Gathering with Macquarie Darling Presbytery

The Saltbush team have invited the Riverina Presbytery to a combined gathering with Macquarie Darling Presbytery on Saturday 19 August in Cowra. We feel this would demonstrate a way of sharing as a wider church and build our relationships, while in the afternoon giving each Presbytery an opportunity to meet individually.

Cowra has ample space for such a time together, including both the hall and the church as spaces for each Presbytery to meet individually.

Hold the date as it promises to be a lot of fun and well as encouraging and informative.

Information Expo

The Regional Partnership is creating an online Expo for the people of the Far North Coast. We would love to invite the people of Riverina to participate as a way of better understanding the proposed partnership with Synod and have access to information sessions with representatives from key areas of the Synod with an opportunity for Q&A.

We are glad to offer 3 sessions in total, the dates in June 2023 are as follows:

Tuesday, 6 June - 2:00pm to 4:30pm - Property, IT and Risk & Compliance.

Wednesday, 7 June - 3:00pm to 4:00pm - Saltbush

Thursday 8 June - 2:00pm to 4:30pm - Effective Church Councils, Treasurer and Finance matters

Invitations will be sent to each congregation. If joining by Zoom is an issue, Kingsley Murphy can assist.

Kingsley is the Presbytery Services Manager. His role is to assist Congregations and Presbyteries in finding the right answers/solutions. KingsleyM@nswact.uca.org.au 0408 411 830.

Should you have specific questions or any Good News stories for inclusion in the next Newsletter, please email them to Regional Partnerships: regionalpartnerships@nswact.uca.org.au.

Bron

Rev. Bronwyn Murphy
Associate Secretary for the Synod of NSW and ACT
Interim Chair, Riverina Presbytery