

Regional Partnership: Riverina Presbytery Newsletter

September 2023



*The Regional Partnership is the Committee charged with oversight and responsibilities of the Riverina. We meet monthly and this Newsletter is a summary of the meeting held on **28 September 2023**.*

At each Regional Partnership meeting we begin our conversation with discussion around theology, the Church and then in prayer together. The Regional Partnership, as part of the practice of Saltbush, grounds our work and conversation within our faith rather than our faith within our work.

Regional Partnership Chairperson's Report

Greetings to the Congregations of the Riverina.

Synod 2023 is safely over! We have not been together in person since before Covid, so it was exciting, uplifting and challenging all at once. All proposals were approved, which gives shape to our Future Directions. An action plan will be released by the Synod setting out what our priorities are and what we can each do to contribute. I will ensure you get a copy as it comes to hand.

September saw a shorter meeting for Regional Partnership with Rev. Tim Jensen chairing it in my absence.

Strategic Mission, Education & Ministry Matters

- We approved a plan to review how we authorise lay leaders/ lay presiders.
- Rev. Keith Robinson placement has been extended to the end of January 2024. This will enable Keith to help Cootamundra welcome around 70 Meatworkers from Fiji. Church is a major part of their lives, so ensuring we include them in our worship is a wonderful, but weighty privilege.
- We invite your prayers as Rev Keith Robinson retires and Rev Yvonne Ghavalas concludes her placement with Wagga Pilgrim/Southern Region to join the Saltbush Team. This will leave Rev Geoff Wellington, Saltbush Regional Minister, as the only ordained Minister in the Riverina Presbytery.
- Thinking beyond traditional ministry placements will need creativity and initiative, so Regional Partnership invites your prayers (and any ideas you might have.)

Finance and Property Report

- Audit is finalised with no changes to any of the figures provided. A big thank you to George Thomas for his attention to detail and faithful commitment.
- The property report is a work in progress. Alfred Santos (Head of Property) and Catherine Major visited the presbytery last Friday and Saturday. Geoff Wellington and Paul Creek accompanied them for visits to Lockhart, Urana, The Rock and Uranquinty on the Friday. Geoff accompanied them for visits to Mangoplah, Holbrook, Culcairn, Walbundrie and Henty on the Saturday. We are thankful for Paul's help with property matters.

Risk Register / WHS update

Part of living in the 21st century is managing risks. We propose to create a combined risk register for FNC and Riverina and seek to mitigate each risk together. Geoff Wellington, Peter Overton, Bob Eather, Stephen Trickett, Kingsley Murphy and Guiselle Vargas have been asked to oversee this work on your behalf.

Presbytery Project and Placements for a Just Church:

Synod approved both proposals, so we are combining them. The Presbytery Project will look at how we resource Presbyteries and how we place ministers. We will have an update each month as to how the Presbytery Project develops.

Saltbush Ministry Team Update

- The Saltbush table at Synod was very popular. It was an important time to make connections and to meet those we have been in ministry with over the years. The few days saw much encouragement and networking.
- Our next gathering is in Lismore in December. We now have all the equipment for the audio space and to allow people to join by Zoom.
- Tim will be in Dubbo in a couple of weeks to take a service there and this coming week will be in Lismore as well.
- Mark has been on leave for 2 weeks.

Good News Stories

SYNOD 2023 by Jackie Stempel

Synod was at Katoomba this year.

It was great to catch up with old friends and to make new friends!

Also to finally meet and talk with the various synod staff, whom we meet on zoom, email or telephone with enquiries. These people are passionate about their work and were available to answer questions at their 'stall'.

The Riverina group split up and joined other synod members at table groups, which often gave a different perspective when discussing and discerning the various proposals. Future directions for the Synod especially with its relationship with the presbyteries was a major theme of discussions. These will continue into 2024 before proposals will be brought to synod 2025. (This is also being discussed at Assembly level).

On a local level, I was interested in the proposal from Wesley Mission regarding 'It's time to put pokies in their place' Residents in Murray and Wagga Wagga electorates need to encourage our independent members to continue their stance of supporting reform of the poker machine industry.

Technology played a greater part this Synod, with the Synod app. used for updates, agendas, proposals, etc and voting done by email.

The food provided for lunch, morning and afternoon teas was good and the 'coffee cart' was very popular for drinks throughout the day.

SYNOD 2023: Some brief thoughts from Jen Lawlor:

As a first-time attender at Synod I really didn't know what to expect so everything was new and mostly exciting.

It was lovely to have members of the Far North Coast recognise me and greet me while having tea at the Three Sisters before going back to the motel to watch the Moderator's induction on live stream. It was great to be able to meet in person, those we have only met on zoom before.

My first impression on Friday morning was just how many people already knew each other, conversation was lively. I just soaked in this congenial atmosphere. One thing that did strike me was that I hadn't seen as many clerical collars in one place at one time before!

For me, learning how Synod is run, the way in which everyone's opinions were received in a respectful manner and the table discussion were a highlight. I learnt so much.

With my background in education and music, it was inspiring to listen and participate in the music of Uniting Creative.

This year for me was a steep learning curve, but one that I have been very pleased to be a part of.

Please let me know if you have particular needs or if you have any good news stories to share. I would love to hear from you, please send to: regionalpartnership@nswact.uca.org.au

Blessings to you all.

Bron

Rev. Bronwyn Murphy
Associate Secretary for the Synod of NSW and ACT
On behalf of Regional Partnerships Committee