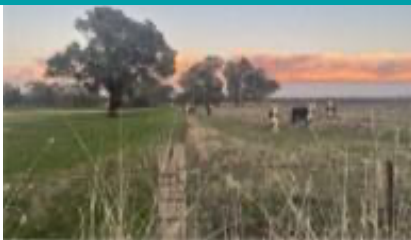


Regional Partnership: Riverina Presbytery Newsletter

August 2024



*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 **14 August 2024**.*

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.

Greetings to the people of the Riverina. The month has seen much action and one of the great joys was to welcome Junee (Riverina) and Maclean/Lawrence (Far North Coast) congregations to our meeting.

Conversation with Junee Congregation

Cheryl Carter, Jennifer Good and Jeff Windsor were welcomed to the meeting

Junee congregation provided an update that included:

- The Junee congregation is described as a small country town with small businesses and farming areas. We are a very welcoming and supportive community, we are serviced by a high school, 3 primary schools, 2-day cares, a pre-school, a hospital, an aged hostel and a facility for the aged - Lawson House. We also have a Correction centre here with 5 churches that work well together and service clubs.
- The wider community is very multicultural, with large volume of islanders on labour contract working at the local abattoir.
- Junee congregation is lay-led and very much like a family.
- Outlying little towns are Illabo and Eurongilly, and we service the 2 small country schools located there.
- It is a good town in terms of support for community activities. We raise a lot of money and are very supportive of the older people in the community and the long day care.
- Junee enjoys a variety of volunteers, but notes it is getting harder to get younger people into our services such as youth club and rotary.
- Junee try a variety of church outreach events but like most churches, the competing force of sport on the weekend, shopping etc. means that church is not a priority. It is a challenge, but they never give up.
- A wide variety of ecumenical volunteers teach SRE in schools and other outreach events such as Sunday school and Kids club.
- Junee has 5 denominations who all work together to support the district. Events include the men's breakfast program, kids club and SRE in the schools, services in the hostel and hospital long stay care, and the community Open Kitchen. The missional activity is busy and has its challenges, but we all pull together and work as a team to keep going.
- Junee find it difficult with lay leadership. They try to add variety and involve the kids in things like Messy Church. The Saltbush Service and Project Reconnect have been good resources.
- There are plans to rebuild the front heritage fence, and they are in the process of putting up a retaining wall and will landscape the front. Upgrading the electricity supply so an air conditioning can support the hall and the church.

- They have fenced in a children's play area and are looking to source a shade to get the kids outside and to use the space as a conduit to islanders in the town.

Regional Partnership will be in touch with some ideas for support for Junee and we invite your prayers of their faithful and energetic missional commitment

Conversation with Maclean Congregation (Far North Coast)

Maclean congregation provided an update that included:

- It is a nice place to live, with a strong community spirit. 11 denominations exist in Maclean alone.
- Maclean is a multi-centre congregation with approx. 70 people across the worshipping communities. An older congregation, but quite active. The ladies' group that is the one constant that has been here all the time, some since it first started in 1974.
- Maclean have opportunity for mission and outreach - especially if they re-develop/expand some of the local happenings.
- Their Op Shop is open 9am to 1pm every day of the week, and a foodbank that is run from a very small room for 4-hours, once a week. Both these could be developed and opened further with intentional relationship building.
- The Op Shop each quarter gives away 10% of their takings for that quarter and it has gone to various organisations including the food bank, the hospital ancillary, people in need and crossroad prison ministry.
- Peter Boughey plans to start a men's group reflecting on 'What would Jesus do.'
- There is a strong dream to build affordable accommodation on their spare land. This would require a partner. Maclean have spoken with Wesley Mission as a possible partner with no decisions made as yet.

Lawrence:

- Lawrence is Yaegl Country and is across the river from Maclean. Lawrence would like to use the Uniting Church building as a community church. Many young families are moving in, so the potential is strong. Peter is already planning 'Church Without Walls' at Christmas time. This will be an outdoor service on the riverbank. More contemporary services are being planned, so this is a space to watch.

Growth Fund Proposal Alstonville and Byron Shire

The Growth Fund Proposal for Alstonville and Byron Shire has been submitted. We pray it will be successful and result in a First Third of Life Worker. Please watch this video to learn more about the shared venture.

<https://youtu.be/LY4TqZwUbPI>

Regional Partnership Risk Register Committee Recommendations

Managing risk might not always be the most exciting agenda item, but it is vital. We received a fabulous report from Kingsley Murphy and Devin North.

Kingsley and Devin have had meetings with people on the ground in the FNC and Riverina, and that has given us a better understanding of what congregations are facing and what risks are evident for them.

We now have a competent Risk Register and will deal with 1 or 2 risks at each monthly meeting.

We thank the Risk Register working committee team: Geoff Wellington, Peter Overton, Bob Eather and Stephen Trickett.

Kingsley Murphy is retiring.

Minute of Appreciation - Kingsley Murphy

Bronwyn informed the meeting that Kingsley is retiring as at 29 August 2024, and that this would be his last Regional Partnership meeting. Mark Faulkner was asked to offer thanks to Kingsley.

Kingsley has been with the Synod now for over 10-years in various roles, starting at CFM as the Services Manager, moved across to Manage Naamaroo and was then asked to join the Synod team as the Presbytery Services Manager.

His heart has always been for the Rural Church and he has been extraordinary in his role.

Mark then thanked and spoke about Kingsley including the work he does that we may often take for granted. His encouraging presence in the work of the Regional Partnership has shaped a more relational way of working than we have had in the past. We are grateful for Kingsley's part in this. Kingsley brings calmness, integrity and clarity to processes and to the challenges we face - and with it he brings deep faith.

Other members shared their thanks and appreciation including how he empowered people about who to contact in the Synod as well as his wider work in the Church. Of particular value was his work during Covid, with regular updates and information regarding restrictions and the roll out of Zoom. That period helped transform the relationship between presbyteries, congregations and Synod and Kingsley was key in that transformation.

Kingsley thanked everyone and expressed how much he has enjoyed his time with Regional Partnership and being able to help people has been lifegiving. Mark prayed for Kingsley as he goes into this new stage of his life.

'May the ride ahead be fast and safe, filled with new opportunities.'

With sincere thanks from all of us at Regional Partnership. We will miss you.

Stewardship Levy Update - Riverina

It was approved that congregations who receive a Seeds of Growth Grant, should include it in the AFR as work of the wider church rather than income. The reason for this is that the money comes in for a specific purpose and goes straight out again. It should not be counted as congregational income.

Regional Partnership Review

The Regional Partnership Review report has been received and was presented to the Synod Standing Committee (SSC) on Friday, 16 August. From SSC's decisions, I will write a separate missive to share the affirming findings.

Saltbush Gathering

The Saltbush team have just led their annual retreat for Ministers/Deacons/Pastors and for 2025 in addition are planning on hosting a retreat for lay leaders within the life of the church.

The next Saltbush Gathering will be on Saturday 7th September in Coleambally, Riverina.

The Saltbush Gathering will be a time of Christian community with worship, hospitality and meals, conversation and challenge as part of exploring life and faith together.

Come along and invite others to also join in a time of fellowship together. You can join us online via Zoom - details here - but please still register.

<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/saltbush-gathering-coleambally-riverina-tickets-948649535297?aff=oddtcreator>

More news from Saltbush:

Over the coming months the Saltbush Team will be in ministry in diverse ways:

- Canberra Regional Presbytery with their UME dwelling days
- Leading a Small is Beautiful Gathering in Cowra with the Macquarie Darling Presbytery
- Preparing the next edition of Ruminations with the theme of Promises
- Cafés including Advent Café
- The Saltbush Gathering in FNC Region.

All the latest from Saltbush can be found on our website, including our Word Around the Bush as support for lay leaders in congregations.

<https://saltbushcommunity.uca.org.au/>

Good News Stories

17th Assembly 2024

Assembly theme “Threads of Love - Weaving Christ’s Love Across Cultures & Boundaries” was held at the Novotel in Parramatta from 11th to 16th July 2024.

Rev. Geoff Wellington and Jackie Stempel attended as representatives from the Riverina. Jackie Stempel provided these highlights:

Worship

On the first night we were bussed to St Stephen’s in Macquarie Street, for the Assembly Opening Service and Installation of the President (Rev Charissa Suli).

Worship began and ended each day. There was optional prayer at 8am, followed by worship consisting of hymns, prayers, Bible reading, teaching and table pair reflection. (I was fortunate to be paired with Rev Dr Paul Goh for one reflection before he was elected President Elect.)

Each day concluded with Theological reflection and closing prayers. We learnt the Tapestry song (Weave us Together) and the Body Prayer which were used at each session.

Friends

We were pleased to meet old friends and make new ones. I bring greetings to members of the presbytery from Nigel Hawken, Seini and Mosese Taufa, Liva Tukutama, Daniel Yang and Andrew Thornley.

Our previous Presbytery Secretary Annie Brophy and her husband Kyle Moffitt were recently ordained and are sharing a placement in Melbourne as they continue their studies.

Buddy Program

As this was my first time at Assembly, I was paired with Jay Robinson from Port Phillip Presbytery in Victoria. We met a number of times to discuss various issues.

Community Working Groups consisted of about 10 people with a leader and we discussed the Act2 proposals in depth. We were drawn from all synods of different backgrounds. We worked well together respecting each other and made suggestions which were sent to the facilitators, for further discussion the next day.

Celebrations

- 30th Anniversary of the Covenant with the UAICC;
- 30th Anniversary of the Manual for Meetings, where Dr Jill Tabart spoke;
- The Assembly also gave thanks to God for the work and witness of the National Council of Churches in Australia as it marks 30 years;
- In an emotional moment, Rev Sharon Hollis [moved a Minute of Appreciation](#) for the Uniting Church Adult Fellowship National Committee which has ended its ministry after 42 years.



Cato Lecture

Renowned Korean American theologian Rev Dr Grace Ji-Sun Kim delivered her [Cato Lecture](#) on Saturday night, issuing a challenge to image God in new ways. Her recent book, *How God became White*, Grace challenged members to reflect on how racism and 'white-ness' have shaped images of God for centuries.

Assembly Decisions:

1. Elections

- Rev Dr Paul Dongwan Goh from South Australia was elected as President Elect of Uniting Church in Australia.
- Mr Andrew Johnson was elected as Assembly General Secretary.

2. Act2

Link to Decision Summary [17th Assembly resolved on Act2](#).

3. Continuing Witness

Link to [Assembly recognises continuing witnesses](#)

4. Net Zero Emissions

Link to the work of the Assembly's Net Zero Emission Steering Group [proposal passed](#).

5. UAICC Proposals

Link to [2 proposals passed](#) from the UAICC which called for a redesign and revival of the Covenant.

In conclusion, if you have the opportunity to attend Assembly, I encourage and recommend that you do.

The 18th Assembly will be held in South Australia.

Jackie Strempel



Bob Eather, Jackie Strempel, Peter Overton, Geoff Wellington.



Jacki Strempel and Rev. Charissa Suli, President.



Jacki Stempel, Peter Overton, Natasha He, Geoff Wellington and Bob Eather.

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 Partnership Committee