

Regional Partnership: Riverina Presbytery Newsletter

October 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 **9 October 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.

Message from the Chair, Regional Partnership

Thank you all for your ministry in your communities, and the Congregations in which you gather. As I begin my role in the Chair of Regional Partnerships, I am particularly thankful for the way in which we are seeking to navigate this challenging season.

The image of the Pilgrim People is one which illuminates much of the history of the Uniting Church, and in a world which has moved from paper maps to mobile phones and online navigation, as disciples we need to be able to understand our terrain, and the direction in which we are heading. It does not suffice to refer only to the old maps – there have been earthquakes, wind, fire and flood, and the ground has shifted. Rural communities understand the difficulties of the seasons, and how to adapt – Regional Partnerships are one indication of that.

I am honoured to have served almost my entire ministry in rural and regional communities and am thankful for the people who have discipled me along the way. One of those people is Rev. Bron Murphy; as Bron hands the role of Chair onto me, I give thanks to God for the way she has shaped and led the Regional Partnerships, equipping communities and individuals for mission and ministry.

In the days ahead, we will continue to ask what we need to leave behind, and what we will need to pick up for the journey before us. May you discern where and how God is continuing to call you, how Jesus' life, death and resurrection will shape your ministry and, how the Spirit is guiding (and urging) you in the direction of hope and resurrection.

Minute of Appreciation - Rev. Bronwyn Murphy, previous Chair, Regional Partnership

Simon thanked Bronwyn for her leadership, care, creativity, wisdom, courage and advocacy.

Conversation with Coleambally Congregation (No congregation from FNC was available)

Rae Collier was welcomed to the meeting and invited to provide the following update from Coleambally congregation:

- Coleambally was established in the 1950's. It is a small town focussed on irrigation and farming. The closest large community is Griffith (approx. 50mins) and Leeton (approx. 30-40 mins).
- Messy church was going well with 10-12 kids attending but is now in a bit of a lull with difficulty getting children from the community to attend.

- Most Sundays see an intergenerational service with a spot dedicated to children.
- We feel blessed to have 3 lay preachers to share the load.
- Every fourth service is more casual where various people contribute a devotion or prayer and sing hymns.
- We have an elderly congregation that is shrinking, and we are at a bit of a standstill about what to do at the moment.
- Our aspiration would be to try and get kids ministry running again. We used to have kids camp out from all surrounding churches and that was a success, but we no longer have the peoplepower. It was suggested that Pulse may be able to provide resource and mentoring.
- There is an intergenerational service with a spot dedicated to kids.
- The 7-day Adventists use our Church property on Saturday, we also have Catholic and Anglican churches. On occasion we have an ecumenical service with the Anglicans which helps boost our numbers.
- As lay leaders we do the best in nourishing the congregation as best we can, but where do the leaders get our nourishment without a minister?
- Sermon preparation is time consuming. Saltbush has been amazing, and we use their offerings at leave once a month if not more. It would be good to have contacts for extra resources.
- Ben Gilmour noted that he has organized a meeting regarding a resource website to help lay leaders and early formation ministers and asked if there was any interest in collaborating.

Closure of Ardlethan Uniting Church

The Regional Partnership noted the closure of Ardlethan Uniting Church and gave thanks to God for the faithful service and witness over many generations in the Ardlethan congregation prior and since union and we acknowledge the mission and ministry in that space.

Synod 2025

Transforming Communities is the theme for Synod 2025. Dates are 11-13 July 2025. The venue is the Western Sydney conference Centre, Penrith. For more information, please refer the Synod 2025 webpage via this link: <https://www.nswact.uca.org.au/events/synod-in-session-2025/>

Regional Partnership - Independent Review Transition Team

A transition team has been appointed arising from the Independent Review and that consists of Matthew Trounce, Stephen Trickett and Karyn Burchell-Thomas to implement the recommendations from the Regional Partnership Independent Review.

Saltbush Team Update

The next Saltbush gathering for the Far North Coast will be held at Yamba on Saturday 30th November 2024.

Riverina will host a Saltbush gathering on Saturday 1st March 2025 (Location to be announced).

We have had two Cafe's with the theme of Famished or Full, parts of which will be used in our soon to be published Salt in the Wound study of Jacob.

Rumination's Spring/Summer edition will be out in a couple of weeks: the theme for this one is **Promise**.

Yvonne Ghavalas went to Cowra recently for a small is Beautiful gathering. As well as visiting rural communities in the Hunter. Attending Muswellbrook for a Saltbush information exploration as well as an induction.

Natasha He took a group of young people to the Pulse camp and is recovering from a big weekend of Island Night Dinner hosted by the Tongan community in Dubbo and surrounds, that attracted people from as far



away as Orange. Over two hundred people attended largely Pasifika, many not connected with the church but found out through social media.

Tim Jensen has been connecting with MNC congregations and will be visiting in a few weeks to talk about all things Saltbush and UME.

On Monday 21 October, we are starting a zoom lectionary group for leaders and anyone who is interested to explore the readings for the following Sunday.

In two weeks, the Saltbush team are heading to Dubbo for the Candidates Rural Experience.

If you do not get the Saltbush emails and invitations and would like to do so, or for further information on any of the above, please email us at: saltbush@nswact.uca.org.au

Elections to Regional Partnership

Elections are due for the Riverina membership on the Regional Partnership Committee. Two vacancies exist.

The process and nominations forms (attached) will be emailed to all congregations. The written ballot will be held at the Saltbush gathering on 1st March 2025.

Please proactively and prayerfully nominate people you think would represent you well. Current reps still have another twelve months to serve: Jackie Strempel, Jen Lawlor and George Thomas.

Ministry Resources

Should you be looking for support in preparing worship/preaching, please find attached a list of possible sites that may help you.

The Vital Leadership team are working on a broader resource. When it is ready, we will circulate for your information.

Good News Stories

Thanksgiving and Closure Service - Ardlethan Uniting Church

A service of Thanksgiving and Closure was held at Ardlethan Uniting Church on Sunday 29th September 2024.

Members of the congregation were joined by former members of the congregation and friends from Barellan, Aria Park, Coolamon, Darlington Point, Leeton, Lockhart and Wagga Wagga for the service.

The service was led by Rev. Geoff Wellington, Saltbush Regional Minister for the Riverina.

Neville Gillett gave a brief history and reminisced of the congregation, including that the congregation began as an outpost of Narrandera Presbyterian Church 130 years ago.

The congregation gave thanks to their loyal and faithful forebears who worshipped and shared their faith locally and in the wider community.

With sadness and tears the local congregation filed out of the church for the last time. We pray God's blessings on our friends at Ardlethan as they begin a new phase of their faith's journey.

A shared lunch in the hall followed with shared memories and laughter

Jackie Strempel



Photo: Ardlethan Uniting Church - Thanksgiving and Closure Service

Update from the Co-ordinator of Hospital Visitors from Wagga Pilgrim and Wagga Wesley Uniting Churches

While procedures for denominational listing and visitor permission have been cordially agreed with senior staff at Riverina Calvary, we are finding there is an ongoing gap between practice and procedure. Patients who transfer between a public hospital (e.g. Griffith, Narrandera, Wagga, inpatient or Emergency Department) and Calvary Hospital are being excluded from receiving pastoral visits from team members (unless family or friends inform us) because they haven't been asked their wishes. Therefore, due to privacy constraints, their names are not included when we come to reception and request our UCA list for visits.

We find it disheartening to miss out seeing patients, particularly those from outside Wagga, whose family and friends may be unable to attend regularly due to distance and work/family commitments.

We know what a difference our visits make, from appreciative comments on the day and from the positive feedback we receive, often many months later.

So, please, if you transfer from a public hospital to Calvary, ask the nursing staff or admission staff to document that you are a member of the Uniting Church and that you give permission for a pastoral visit, then when we ask at reception for our UCA list of patients for visiting, your name will be on it!

Otherwise, please contact me, Marilyn Walter on mgwalter@tpg.com.au or mobile 0447262802 to let me know if you're in Calvary and would like a visit.

We are very understanding, if you don't feel like talking with us when we come to your door, that's ok, we will head off to our next patient.

Marilyn Walter

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

Blessings to you all.

Rev. Simon Hansford
Chairperson, Regional Partnership

Nomination Form and Ballot Guide

For Regional Partnership Committee: Riverina

Ballot Guide:

The role of being a leader on Regional Partnership is to exercise your gifts of leadership and vision as part of a broad church in changing times. The Regional Partnership meets once a month. The task of the Regional Partnership is ultimately to give priority in its life to building up congregations in faith and love, sustaining members in hope, and leading congregations (both existing and new forms or gathering) to a fuller participation in Christ's mission in the world. As the Church determines its future resourcing needs, the Committee will also support and guide the Riverina Congregations through any required transition.

It is necessary that nominations for leaders on the Regional Partnership be for people who have gifts for this role, have been a part of the Uniting Church for a reasonable period of time, and so understand the polity and processes of the church. The Regional Partnership should also reflect the diversity of our church in age, gender, and culture.

We are seeking to **discern through prayer and thought** those who have the gifts and graces to be a leader on the Regional Partnership with a vision for the future. If you **discern** that you would like to nominate a person then you need to put their name below, along with the gifts you believe they bring, and send this form to RegionalPartnership@nswact.uca.org.au by **Monday, 3rd February 2025**.

- You do not need to ask the person you nominate.
- You should not join with others to plan nominations.
- You should not be approached by others asking for you to nominate them.
- You are not able to nominate yourself.

If one person receives three or more nominations, that person will be approached and asked to consider their willingness to be on Regional Partnership. If they agree, then their name will go forward for election on **Saturday, 1st March 2025**. A person who accepts nomination and is elected to Regional Partnership serves for a two-year period, until 30th April 2027.

There are **2 vacancies** for the Regional Partnership from the **Riverina**.

Those who can vote on nominations to Regional Partnership are members of the Uniting Church in the **Riverina**.

Please take this request for nominations seriously, so as to best support and serve the congregations of the Riverina.

Regional Partnership from the Riverina

Nomination Form:

I would like to nominate:

Nominee Name and Contact Details:	
Name:	
Email:	
Phone:	

I believe the gifts this person would bring to the Regional Partnership are:

Rationale and Relevant Gifting / Skill Sets:

Name of Nominating Person:			
Signature:		Date:	

Synod Office only:

Region being nominated for:	Riverina
Starting on:	1st May 2025
Term:	2 Years, concluding 30th April 2027

Please send nomination form to RegionalPartnership@nswact.uca.org.au by **Monday, 3rdrd February 2025**.

Ministry Resources

Resources from within the Uniting Church

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

Alstonville Uniting Church (Services on YouTube):

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCaiq2VCejQn877Z7fPpQ0DQ>

Terrigal Uniting Church (Services on YouTube): <https://www.youtube.com/c/terrigalunitingchurch>

Geoff Stevenson emails his reflections, email him to be included on the email list:

geoff@pnpuca.org.au

Transforming Worship Circle (access to Assembly resources) [Worship- Uniting Church Australia](#)

Project Reconnect: [Project Reconnect- Small church? Just the right size!](#)

Rev. Geraldine Leonard (retired minister living in VicTas) has been providing liturgies and reflection to a number of folk in the Riverina at their request. Email Gereldine directly: gereldine1@gmail.com.

Some of her liturgies are available at: <https://www.warangaunitingchurches.net.au/worship-resources/>

Bill Loader's lectionary Resources: [Lectionary Resources](#)

John Squires- An Informed Faith has a lot of Lectionary Based reflection: [An Informed Faith- John T Squires](#)

[By the Well](#) is a Vic/Tas Synod Lectionary based podcast (leading up to each Sunday)

For a paid resource, Rev. Dr. Moira Laidlaw: <https://www.liturgiesonline.com.au/love-works>

Moira is a retired UCA Minister.

Resources from other Denominations/Countries

Thom Shuman is a Presbyterian minister in the USA, but his work is highly recommended, as he does an outstanding job integrating the lectionary readings for each week into a meaningful (more traditional) worship service: <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>

Working Preacher: [Home- Working Preacher](#) (US Based, but some Uniting Church Contributors appear from time to time- focused on lay working people who preach).

Worship Matters: [Worship Matters podcast](#), a United Methodist resource for all things preaching and worship (lay and ordained focused).

Gathering Worship: <https://gatheringworship.ca/> Resources for Worship Planners United Church of Canada.

Text Week: <http://www.textweek.com/>