



The River of Life



The Uniting Church in Australia
LODDON MALLEE PRESBYTERY

August 2024 Edition

Celebrating the 47th Anniversary of the Uniting Church with UCCOS

The Uniting Church Congregations of Sunraysia (UCCOS) - Irymple, Merbein, Mildura, RedCliffs, Wentworth/Dareton Co-operating Parish, joined together at Merbein on June 30th to celebrate the 47th Anniversary of the Uniting Church in a worship service focused on 'Unity in Diversity'.

More than 70 members, led by Rev. Jacob Yang, participated and shared in a variety of ways. The music and message proved a great combination, thanks to our uplifting singing led by Merbein's talented, young pianist and also the beautiful Tongan choir.

Following worship we moved to the hall for a little more singing (especially Happy Birthday). Pastor Kevin Kirirua and his family lit the candles on the very large (and delicious) cream sponge, fanned out the flames and cut the cake. Great fellowship accompanied the morning tea that followed.



A combined service is a feature of UCCOS worship on every 5th Sunday. We look forward to September 29th and discovering who and where this next event will be hosted.

Lyn Adams



TO HOPE AND ACT WITH CREATION

SEASON OF CREATION 2024

The firstfruits of hope
(Rom 8:19-25)

Season of Creation 2024

Throughout the month of September, Christians across the world will celebrate the Season of Creation, an annual invitation to pray and reflect on our shared call to care for the earth - our common home and the blessed, beloved creation of God.

The Season of Creation takes place from 1st of September (World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation) to 4th of October (Feast of St. Francis of Assisi) under the 2024 international theme, 'Hope and act with creation'. The symbol, 'The first fruits of hope', is inspired by Romans 8:19-25 and the biblical image of Earth as a mother groaning as in childbirth.

Resources can be found here: <https://uniting.church/season-of-creation-2024/>

Listening Posts in Mount Alexander Shire

The Social Justice group of the Castlemaine parish held Listening Posts during events in three different towns, Castlemaine, and the smaller towns of Maldon and Harcourt. We asked people to tell us what they love about their town, and what they think needs to change.

Although similar topics were addressed at each town, the comments had a local emphasis. We were able to pass these sets of comments on to the relevant Shire Councillors, and received a particularly interested response from the Mayor, Cr Driscoll.

As a Social Justice group, we are keen to find out where we can help. In many cases it is a matter of supporting groups who are already active in an area, such as reducing emissions or trying to reduce homelessness.

We held a Listening Post at the **Castlemaine Community Lunch**. We set out sticky note pads and pens on the tables, and folk put their completed notes on a whiteboard.

Many contributed thoughts about what could be improved in the town; a few also stated what they appreciate. Ideas ranged from poetic to potholes, while there was a strong message that they would like the listening post to happen again, often.

People appreciate the huge trees and various spaces around town.

One commented that community lunches in the various towns are 'amazing'. Others requested a drop-in centre where they can relax, make a cup

of tea, meet new people.

At the **Maldon Market** we had many interesting conversations with plenty of likes interspersed with aspects needing change.

Residents particularly appreciate the historic buildings, and heritage value of the town, in particular its National Trust classification. They love the many gatherings bringing community and visitors together.

But visually the townscape needs tidying up. Bins for rubbish and recycling were mentioned at least four times.

Personalised comments online should be avoided.

B-double trucks need to be re-routed, rather than driving through the town centre. Clydesdales clopping along the main street is part of Maldon's historical significance, and they hope it can continue.

In **Harcourt** we set up our post on a rather rainy day in winter, and gleaned comments from the valiant souls who attended. They expressed appreciation of the Harcourt environment (including kangaroos), the community, events such as Applefest and Gather Harcourt, and the Heritage Centre museum and activities.

A visitor who is an information specialist inspired the Heritage Centre volunteers to publish the digital archives on the Victorian Heritage database, to make them known and accessible to the wider public

As in Maldon, suggestions were made about traffic and transport – bike paths, bus timetable, train station, keeping big trucks out of town.

There was a lot of concern for gathering places – childproof fence around the playground, a stage in the park, more indigenous trees, and opening the Heritage Centre for tourists at weekends.

The topics which came up in all three places fall under the same headings – pride in the town, improvements to facilities, traffic and access, the natural environment, community welfare and gatherings. There was one difference in that the smaller towns felt left out, because the Shire Council is rather Castlemaine-centric. There seemed to be greater community spirit at these more festive events than community



lunch, with a greater diversity of people attending.

We know that bringing about the changes desired may take concerted lobbying from the residents, and not all are relevant to the Shire Council. However, we hope we have shone light

on a number of issues, both for the townspeople and for Council.

Our Social Justice group is listening and observing to see what is needed, and we do what we can, as we can.

Solway Nuttin

Messy Prayers - Uniting in Prayer 2024

This year, Uniting Church congregations were again invited to join in Prayer for 35 days between Pentecost and the anniversary of the UCA. At Eaglehawk Uniting Church (EUC) we took up that challenge.

On Sunday 2nd June, not quite half way through that time, our regular FOCUS service used some of the resources provided by the Act2 Project Unit and the Assembly Transforming Worship Circle. This included some prayers, images, and maintained a FOCUS on the upcoming Assembly theme - "Threads of Love: Weaving Christ's Love Across Cultures and Boundaries".

After having time to reflect on God woven as three in one; Prayer across the ages by the Prophets, Jesus, and new Christians in their support for each other; how we are woven into both a Christian a messy and a community; how the Love of God leads us to respond with prayer and action.

The congregation was then presented with pieces of ribbon and invited to write a short

prayer on a ribbon. These were collected and placed on a table - a messy pile of ribbon with single prayers - that as any craft person knows, doesn't look very inviting and runs the risk of being thrown in the rubbish.

But that was not the end! We were reminded that God accepts our prayers, no matter how messy or long or short, and knows just how to weave them together with Love for the very best for all of us. And that is exactly what was attempted during morning tea after the service. The end result, as everything is that God has a hand in, was even more amazing and beautiful than any of us could have imagined. Is that surprising? Not when God has a plan...

*Merrill Cole – FOCUS Service Coordinator
(Eaglehawk Uniting Church)*

<https://www.eaglehawk.unitingchurch.org.au/>

or

<https://www.facebook.com/eaglehawkunitingchurch>



← Merrill & Ken with partly woven prayer ribbons (photo by John Taylor)

→ EUC's Messy Prayers - woven as Threads of Love (photo by Merrill Cole)



History of Gunbower Uniting Church

Methodist church services were first held in Gunbower in 1910. During Rev. Lee's ministry a decision was made to commence the building of a Methodist church. Mr. Jim Hare recalls those early years when his parents were active members of this church giving assistance to the establishment of the building. Mr. Hare transported the altar rail and lectern, which was made by Harry Gibbard of Cohuna. Mr. George Watson and Mr. David Brown of Gunbower completed the church building in 1914.

During the First World War district Red Cross workers brought their sewing machines on working bee days to the church where clothing for soldiers was made and packed for transport in wool bales.

The Gunbower church has been part of the Cohuna Parish with ministers conducting the services at Gunbower and Patho.

In 1949 the inaugural meeting of the Methodist Ladies' Guild was convened by Rev. Collett with Mesdames N. McGillivray, R. McGillivray, R. Hill, W. Woodward, R. McGregor and P. Goynes being present. The Guild continued to function with garden parties, street stalls, fashion parades and dinners. Annual Christmas dinners were held by the shared Ministry team after the guild was disbanded with the last one in 2023.

Sunday school classes have been held in the church. In 1955 the Guild decorated the church for the wedding of Miss Betty Watson and made a presentation of a bible in recognition of her services to the Sunday school.

In 1964 a Church Jubilee celebration service as held at Gunbower followed by afternoon tea at the Memorial Hall Supper room.

In 1973 the Guild suffered the loss of their loyal and dedicated member Mrs. Edna Willingham who had been President and organist for many years. In 1974 the church celebrated its Silver Jubilee with a social afternoon held at the church.

In January 1974 the Methodist and the Presbyterian churches of Cohuna, Leitchville, Gunbower and Patho voted to become known



as the Cohuna Uniting Parish. Gunbower Methodist church became known as the Gunbower- Patho Uniting Parish and services were then held in conjunction with the church at Patho. Previously services were held week about. A combined service was then held on the first Sunday of the month at Patho and the third Sunday at Gunbower.

The following ministers have served Gunbower Rev. Guy, Lovell, Hartshorn, Roberts, Boundy, McCraw, Nye, Collett, Griffiths, Know, Goodwin, Asplin, Jock McOrist. Later ministers included Rev. C. Painter, El Kingma, Richard Martin.

As church congregations started to decline in number a decision was made for the Anglican and Uniting churches to combine services. In 1997 Rev. Clive Cook was appointed to lead both churches to this end. A Lay ministry (later changed to shared) team was appointed to take services etc. This was successful for some years. Other ministers followed including Brian Morgan and Arthur Kendall, Alan Nightingale and Bronwyn Jones. The Gunbower Anglican and Uniting churches still combine services today. The Anglican church has a minister once a month and the Uniting church Shared Ministry Team (SMT) take services twice a month. Our Treasurer and SMT member Mrs. Elaine Brereton sadly passed away in 2023.

For many years members of our congregation taught Religious Education at the Gunbower Primary School and presented Grade 6 pupils with a bible at the end of the Primary school year. This presentation was made at our Carol service held in the church and then on hot

nights in the Memorial Hall supper room (with air conditioning). The carol service was looked forward to by everyone and often the school children performed.

Our loyal member and organist Mrs. Nance Dickinson sadly passed away in 2012. Since then, we have used a computer and television for music (not quite the same).

In the 1970's the spare block was sold in order to pay for the bitumen road in front of the church. Members also paid for cladding the church with vinyl weatherboards. The ceiling in

the church was replaced around eight years ago. A kitchen in a cupboard was installed in the early 2000's.

The last wedding has between Noel Gundry and Mandy Ayres in 1988 and the last baptism was of an adult woman was in March 2023.

The Gunbower Uniting church is over 100 years old and it will be very sad to see it closed. It has been a visible sign of God's presence in the community. And an important part of the township.

Written by Dawn Miller.

The Closing service for Gunbower Uniting Church was held on Sunday 7th of July 2024. The service was led by Pastor Carol Boyce and Rev Gordon Wild and members of the Cohuna Uniting church travelled over to offer support. While it was a time of sadness, there was a sense of celebration and joy for the beautiful life of this beloved church and its members. Here are some photos of the service taken by Rev Gordon Wild.



←The symbols of faith: Bible, Hymn Book, Vase of Flowers, Teacup, Communion Items and candle.



↑ All those gathered for the service

↓The symbols of faith are carried out of the church.



↓ The doors are locked for the final time.



Sharing the Good News – Southern Mallee Co-Op



As part of our outreach into the community, the Southern Mallee Co-Operative Parish has window displays in Rainbow and Hopetoun, with a different theme each month. The family -friendly “Come & C-Church” has created the window displays for the last couple of months. With the theme of Pentecost from May, a kite shows us the Holy Spirit **5 Christian Aspects of a kite -**

1. The cross is the beginning of the Christian life.
2. A tail keeps the kite stable. The Word of God (Bible) helps keep us stable.
3. A Kite’s covering catches the wind. Jesus covers all our sin and debt.
4. A kite needs an anchor. Jesus Christ is our anchor.
5. God fills people with the Holy Spirit and uses us as hands and feet in the world. In filling us and lifting us up, God helps us to do things we cannot do in our own strength. (see photo ↑)



*The following photo shows the Fruits of the Spirit. ↑
Rev Susan Pearse*

‘O’ For Thanksgiving!



Reaching decade milestones is significant, and the Hopetoun Congregation of the Southern Mallee Co-Operative Parish has seven special ‘O’ highlights.

Milestones include:

Two couples reaching 70 years of marriage -Norrie & Lois Poulton, and Jean & Wilf Webster.

Two 90th Birthdays Jean Webster and Clive Wooding.

Three 80th Birthdays- Noel Carra, Gwen Malcolm, Kevin Mill, we wanted to do something special.

So the congregation invited the community members to attend and a local lady who was 70 came and joined the celebrations, which included a special service of

Thanksgiving, planting a shrub and a special meal with celebration cake. Sharing these occasions reminds us of the joy of community and doing things together it has been a great opportunity for those present to be able to share in that way.

A nice touch was that the plant was planted on National Tree Day, July 28th, blessing the planet as well as all who came and gave thanks to God for such joyous achievements.

Rev Susan Pearse



Our Treasure Kaye to Retire

No, I didn't miss the "R" on the end of the word. Kaye Penny has been our Presbytery Treasurer for the past 5 years and has truly been a treasure in the service she has provided. She will finish in that role at the beginning of 2025, so the quest to address this responsibility into the future has begun.

What are the tasks of the Presbytery Treasurer?

- ◆ Paying monthly accounts and any other expenses that arise.
- ◆ Keeping finances under control, including investments
- ◆ Complete forms for Annual Leave / Sick Leave etc. and employment of new Presbytery Ministers and/or Administration.
- ◆ At the end of the month, all transactions are entered on MYOB, reconcile the Bank Account and prepare Financial Report for the Presbytery in Council and Standing Committee Meetings.
- ◆ The MYOB Financial program is an easy program to operate which is recommended by UCA.
- ◆ The Treasurer is part of a team as an ex officio member of the Presbytery Standing Committee and Executive.

What other responsibilities does the Treasurer have?

- ◆ The biggest task is the preparation of the End of Year Financial Reports which are presented at the Presbytery in Council Annual Meeting in February. These reports need to be approved and then audited by the Presbytery's Auditor.

- ◆ Other reports for completion during the year are the Financial Commitment sent out by Synod and the ACNC report in June.

How much time does it require?

- ◆ This is flexible, but it can be approximately 2 hours per week, depending on the business at hand.

What skills and experience are needed?

- ◆ It is helpful, but not completely essential, to have some financial experience. Kaye was a Business Manager in a school for many years, and this allowed her to understand the financial workings involved.
- ◆ The Treasurer is responsible to the Presbytery Minister Administration but as this position is vacant at present, Kaye has had to attend online monthly meetings with Property Services and Missional and Property Grants at Synod.
- ◆ Some understanding of the UCA would be a helpful tool.
- ◆ Kaye comments that "If in doubt it's better to ask questions than to make a wrong decision."

Kaye, a member of the Powlett Plains congregation, has been a most helpful and obliging Treasurer and has willingly shared her time and gifts with the church. We wish her and Ian many more happy years of retirement.

Over the coming months, we'll be making decisions about the leadership of the presbytery for the next 3 years or so, including the role of the Treasurer and other financial responsibilities.

Volunteer as an English-language mentor at Pilgrim Theological College

Pilgrim Theological College is looking for volunteer English-language mentors to help students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds succeed in their theology and ministry studies. Mentors who work with students for a year may audit a unit of study of their choice for free (value \$400).

If you have a degree in teaching EAL/D, TESOL, or secondary school humanities, or a qualification in communications or linguistics, please consider giving an hour a fortnight, online or in person, to work with a student in need.

Contact the Academic Dean, Dr Kerrie Handasyde, to enquire further. kerrie.handasyde@pilgrim.edu.au

Acknowledgement of Country

The Presbytery of Loddon Mallee pays respect to the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters where we gather and worship. They were the first inhabitants of these places from time beyond remembering. We pay our respects to their elder's past, present, and emerging and to all descendants who have cared for these lands since creation. We honour them for their custodianship of the land on which we gather and worship.

Want to get the River of Life via Email?

We are always looking at ways we can reduce our use of paper so don't forget to let us know if you would like to get the River of Life via email! If you need to still receive paper copies both for yourself or your congregation, contact the Presbytery Office Impresbytery@lm.victas.uca.org.au so we can ensure this happens and keep us updated on how many copies you require in 2024.

Social Media Corner



We have our own private group on Facebook. This is a great place to catch up on Presbytery news, between editions of "The River of Life". Invite your friends to join (Please note this is a closed group).

Search for "Loddon Mallee Presbytery" or use the link:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2302440563408439/>

Cover Photo

The photo in the banner on the cover is from a series of photos taken of Mount Moliagul in different seasons and at different times of the day. These were taken by the Rev Gordon Wild in his travels throughout the Loddon Mallee Presbytery. These photos will now feature in each edition of The River of Life.

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NEXT EDITION—November 2024

Please write to the Presbytery Office by email or snail-mail and send us your contributions (Impresbytery@lm.victas.uca.org.au). This is a chance for you to share your news and happenings of what is happening across the Loddon Mallee Presbytery and the River of Life is all the richer for it! Please note that the cut-off date for article submissions is the 12th of November 2024.