

The Westerly



PWV & PPW Newsletter No.65 – December 2024



Advent to Action

Rev. Linley Liersch (PPW Presbytery eLM Minister)

Advent is here!

Sometimes we approach Advent as a historical event instead of a call to faithful action. Sometimes we treat Advent as though it is a proper noun instead of a verb, a doing word. We declare the good news that Israel's Messiah has come while our congregations are waiting to hear what that means for their present reality. ***Where is the hope, peace, love and joy now?***

*What does **hope** look like when it feels like cynicism has taken control of the public discourse?*

*How can we embrace **peace** without becoming passive in the face of injustice?*

*How do we embody **love** as in a world that is divided by war, racism, hate and greed?*

*Why is the gift of **joy** a necessity, and how can Christians be ambassadors of joy?*

Much like Israel in the decades leading up to the birth of Christ, your people are waiting for the good news to be born in their lives.

In Bethlehem last year the Evangelical Lutheran Church wanted to bring renewed meaning to the Christmas story so they set up the Christ's crib in the rubble of the Gaza war. The baby is also wrapped in a Palestinian 'keffiyeh'. "If Jesus were to be born today, he would be born under the rubble in Gaza," Isaac said in his sermon service on Dec. 23 in the West Bank. Isaac, a Palestinian Christian theologian, told the congregation that the "... the Christmas message is that Jesus, who miraculously survived a massacre, was "born among the occupied and marginalized. He is in solidarity with us in our pain and brokenness."



The real question for us is: **how will we as worship leaders make the story of Advent come alive in our preaching and preparing?** How can we help those who are longing for real hope and joy know that their waiting has not been in vain? How do we see God transform ordinary moments into powerful, subversive act of radical love.

As we sing "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel," we sing with transformed vision, seeing Jesus, our Emmanuel, in every person and God at work among us.

Advent to Action

Moderators Letter to Church Councils

Dear friends in Christ, (*This message has been sent on behalf of the Moderator to Church Council Secretaries and Ministers in Placement and copied to Presbytery Chairpersons and Presbytery Secretaries.*)

I am writing to you with information for all Uniting Church Councils in Victoria and Tasmania regarding the Faithful Futures Project.

Attached to the email (That went to your secretaries) you will find a letter to Church Councils and Ministers in Placement, with information about the **Faithful Futures Project and the Vision, Values and Goals for the Uniting Church across Victoria and Tasmania** as they have been discerned so far, working together across all presbyteries and the Synod.

Also attached is a single-page summary poster.

A ten-minute video summary is available [HERE](#). This link is also included in the attached letter.

After you have read the information, there is a short, **4 question survey** that you are invited to complete. That survey can be found [HERE](#), or by the link in the attached letter.

As we begin this new Christian year, may the grace, courage, and love of God be with you always,

David Fotheringham

Moderator

UNITING CHURCH VIC & TAS
DRAFT VISION, VALUES & GOALS

**Following Christ, walking together as First and Second Peoples,
seeking community, compassion and justice for all creation;**
Inclusive, diverse, seeking justice, journeying with Jesus

Coordinated Ministry Coordinated ministry and mission in each Local Government Area (or suitable equivalent), attentive to the life and needs of the local context, by 2030.	Respecting Country Every congregation will be able to tell some of the story of the Country in which it is located by the end of 2028, and be invited to develop local and appropriate ways to respond.	Intercultural Leadership By 2028, to: (a) be providing leaders of different cultural groups with appropriate formation and equipping; and (b) develop networks to support worship, witness and service among communities of diverse languages and cultures.	All-age Growth 80% of Local Government Areas (or equivalent) have at least one all-age community of faith that is interactive, diverse, inclusive and transformative by 2030.
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The Uniting Church is called to be a pilgrim people, participating in the movement of God. Presbyteries and the Synod have been engaging in a "Faithful Futures" Project discerning ministry and mission ahead. The VISION is widely recognised.
The VALUES have been distilled through the 2023 Synod meeting Working Groups. The GOALS have been developed through Bible study, survey, prayer and consultation. This poster shows the progress of this work, which is expected to be finalised in March 2025. Shared goals will help to relieve burdens and strengthen new mission opportunities as we follow Christ together.

For further information contact FaithfulFutures@victas.uca.org.au

November 2024

From the Editor: If you missed an edition of The Westerly see [Newsletters – Presbytery of Port Phillip West \(ucappw.org.au\)](#). Rev Linley Liersch Linley.Liersch@ppw.victas.uca.org.au.

Please click links or pictures for hyperlinks.

Next edition submissions 28th January 2024 .

Mental Health Matters

REV. FI BOTTCHE (DEACON—SUNSHINE MENTAL HEALTH CHAPLAIN)

As Advent and the liturgical new year begins, I often find myself contemplating the **fuzzy boundaries between birth, death and resurrection**. The question of what it means for Christians to wait for Jesus captures our imagination as we tell the story of His birth and long for the coming of His Kingdom.

We often witness birth and resurrection, both literal and metaphorical, in our ministries. And in the **mental health wards**, I have met “Jesus returned” many times! Each time there is a small (and cheeky) part of me that thinks “what if this one really IS Jesus!”

This year I find myself thinking more about how we are challenged to embody “**Jesus returned**” in our own lives and communities. How is Jesus birthed, or resurrected, within us? And could the beginning of His “second coming” be marked by our own transformation and embodiment into Christ-likeness?

If so, this period of anticipation must draw us into **radical action** such that we are participants in God’s Kingdom come. We are called in the birthing of Jesus to feed the hungry, welcome the stranger, clothe the poor and care for the sick and incarcerated. This is the Christmas spirit, the body of Christ.

Image: “Christ with Shopping Bags, Banksy, 2004”



What do the terms mission, discipleship, evangelism and service (diakonia) mean for the Uniting Church?

- How ought the Uniting Church in Australia best define the term ‘mission’ in light of our Covenant commitments?
- What is the relationship between God’s all-encompassing and cosmic mission and our own call to mission?
- How does the Uniting Church understand ‘discipleship’ and the ‘making and growing of disciples’?
- Does the term ‘evangelism’ still have currency and relevance to a Uniting Church audience?

These are the kinds of questions you might like to engage with in response to a new call for papers from the Act2 Project. <https://uniting.church/act2-call-for-papers/> Theological reflections from across the Uniting Church are being invited on the terms: mission, discipleship, evangelism and diaconal communities. Read more from Rev Erik Lennestål, Acting Act2 Project Lead.

A great range of reflections on the theological culture of the Uniting Church are already available from the Act2 webpage <https://act2uca.com/category/theological-culture/>

Lay Preacher Studies in 2025

Semester 1 /2 **Understanding the UCA** - 25 Feb to 30 June; 5 August to 17 Nov -

Semester 1 - **Exploring Theology in the UCA** -24 Feb to 26 May <https://victas.uca.org.au/exploring-theology-in-the-uca/>

Semester 2 - **Exploring Christology** -7 July to 22 September <https://victas.uca.org.au/exploring-christology/>

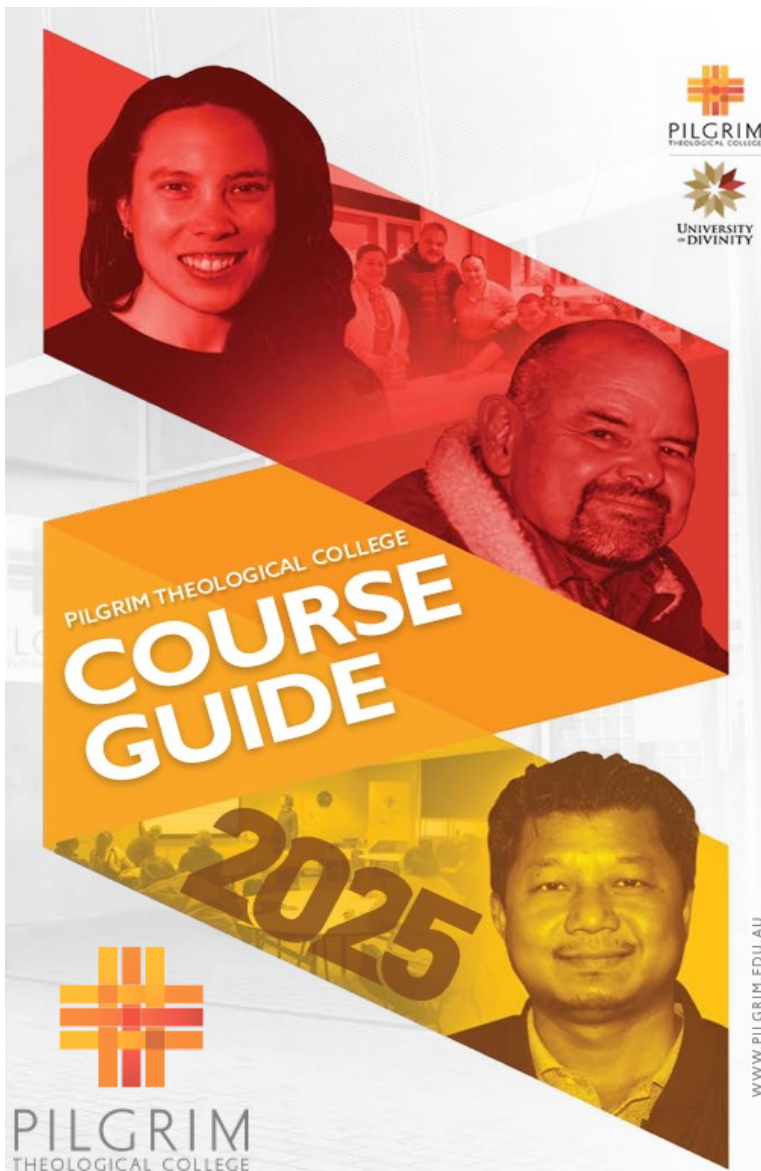
Semester 3 - **Exploring Preaching in the UCA** - 13 October to 24 November - \$30 <https://victas.uca.org.au/exploring-preaching-in-the-uca/>

Semester 1 - **Understanding the Lay Preachers Code of Ethics**—10 June to 24 June - \$20 <https://victas.uca.org.au/understanding-the-lay-preacher-code-of-ethics/>



For the first time **Pastoral Care** will be offered in the form of the Pastoral Partners Program

Contact: Lay Leadership Development Coordinator—
Mel Perkins Mel.Perkins@victas.uca.org.au



Contents

Welcome to the Pilgrim Theological College 2025 Course Guide

About our Courses

Summary of Units of Study

■ Field A - Humanities

■ Field B - Biblical Studies

■ Field C - Christian Thought and History

■ Field D - Theology: Mission and Ministry

■ Capstone

■ Specialisations

Feminist Theologies

Spiritual Care, Pastoral Care and Chaplaincy

■ Professional Supervision

■ Period of Discernment

■ Lay Leadership Development

■ Continuing Education

■ Uniting CPE - The John Paver Centre

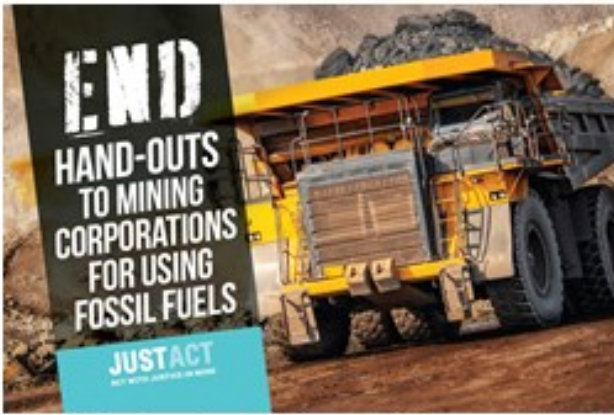
■ Library and Public Lectures

The Dalton McCaughey Library

Northey Lectures

■ Frequently Asked Questions

Stop Fuel Tax Credits



Name _____
 Address _____
 Dear Treasurer,
 I am deeply concerned that the Government continues to give up nearly \$10 billion in revenue annually to effectively prop-up the ongoing use of diesel fuel through the Fuel Tax Credit scheme.
 Such financial support for the use of fossil fuels runs counter to the necessary actions the Australian Government should be taking to address the harm caused by climate change. I am further concerned that some of the Fuel Tax Credits go to coal mining corporations to help reduce their mining costs.
 As a starting point, I ask your Government to cap the Fuel Tax Credit to \$50 million per group, which would only impact eight large mining corporations. Such a measure would encourage these corporations to use electric vehicles and reduce their use of diesel.
 Yours sincerely,
 Signature _____

AFFIX STAMP HERE

The Hon. Jim Chalmers MP
 Treasurer
 PO Box 10022
 House of Representatives
 Parliament House
 Canberra ACT 2600

Stop the funding of harmful tax credits impacting our climate. Send an advocacy postcard to Treasurer Jim Chalmers to the End handouts to mining corporations for using fossil fuels.

To order your 'Stop Fuel Tax Credits' postcards click [>HERE<](#) and complete the empty fields with your name, the quantity you need and your address. Or, e-mail us directly at JIM@vic-tas.uca.org.au with your address and the quantity needed.



Support Victorian Treaty

The First Peoples Assembly is inviting congregations to make a statement in support of the Treaty process in Victoria, to demonstrate to the Victorian Government that many Victorians continue to support the Treaty process. [Click to download](#)

DO YOU WANT TO SHARE THAT YOU CARE ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT?

The shirts look like this and come in sizes S to 5XL. They cost \$27 and they can be posted to you for whatever Australia Post charges. We can place an order once we have ten requests.

If you are interested, email Sue Strong on susanannestrong@hotmail.com




GIVE THE GIFT OF A
**VICTAS UC
 HISTORICAL SOCIETY
 GIFT SUBSCRIPTION**
 TO A CHURCH FRIEND OR FAMILY
 MEMBER THIS CHRISTMAS.

Here's how it works:
 1. Contact your friend,
 2. Fill in the Membership Form with the person's details noting your name as 'Gift Subscription', and post to:

The President
 30 Campbell's Road Portsea Vic. 3944
 enclosing a cheque for \$45
 (concession \$35), or using these bank account
 details; BSB 063-194 Account 10031138 Note as 'Gift'.

We will then send a welcome letter to the person, noting your gift. The Membership Form can be emailed to you by request, or downloaded using the QR code.
 Enquiries email: ken.barelli@bigpond.com



Acknowledgement of Country

Author: Professor Dr Anne Pattel-Gray

INTRODUCTION

An Acknowledgement of Country is an opportunity for non-Indigenous Australians to acknowledge First Nations peoples as the first peoples of the lands now called Australia, and to pay their respects to the Traditional Owners of the lands they are gathered on and/or live on. If Christians want to gain a greater understanding of Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country, please read Marcia Langton book titled, "The Welcome to Country Handbook" and for a Christian perspective, read Reverend Dr Canon Garry Deverell book titled, "Contemplating Country: More Gondwana Theology".

Imagine an Australia that embraces its First Nations peoples and values them, as they are the oldest living culture in the world. As First Nations peoples, we bring insights, wisdom, spirituality and an understanding of creation and our environment, that will, and can, transform our epistemology and way of thinking.

Imagine an Australia where truth is the foundation of our relationship, where God's righteousness is the ground on which we stand. Where Christians are called to serve the Will of God and through Jesus who demonstrates the cost of that call. Jesus didn't mix with the rich and powerful rulers, politicians or religious leaders but instead ministered amongst the poor, downtrodden, marginalised, the excluded people of this society. He didn't have wealth, nor did he accumulate great wealth but instead relied on the goodwill of people to feed him and give him shelter.

Jesus' life demonstrates where our alliance should be. We are called to address injustices and to rectify them, to repent, to seek forgiveness, to pay restitution for our wrongs and to transform from our sinful ways and to change. And, through this process, we gain a deeper understanding of the people we have sinned against. As we walk alongside each other, we learn and gain insights from each other, to build a better future built on justice, equity, respect and inclusion.

When I pray to my Creator Spirit, I pray for a world that sees our worth, and values the 110,000 years of knowledge that we bring.

An Australia, where the people are willing to share their power, wealth and privilege with us; instead of criminalising our children and investing in building bigger detention centres in which to incarcerate them. But in its place see value and worth in our children and invest in them to have opportunities, education and pride in their cultural identity.

I pray for restoration where we see each other's humanity rather than each other's race and differences; I pray for a time, where hardened hearts can be melted and empathy for my people flows freely; I pray for an Australia where our spiritual sovereignty is enshrined in law and Australia's First Nations take their rightful place.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY (LONG)

We would like to acknowledge the (name the Traditional Owners) of this land that we are gathered on today and we pay our respect to the Creator Spirit and their Ancestors and their descendants, Elders both past and present and to recognise all the First Nations peoples gathered here as we are humbled to be with you today. We affirm that the Creator Spirit was here long before we came, and you are created in the image of God, and you are children of God. You are blessed by the Creator Spirit and your spiritual knowledge will only enhance our Christian understanding of being one with creation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY (SHORT)

We would like to acknowledge the (name the Traditional Owners) of this land that we are gathered on today and to pay our respect to the Elders both past and present and recognise the leaders of tomorrow.



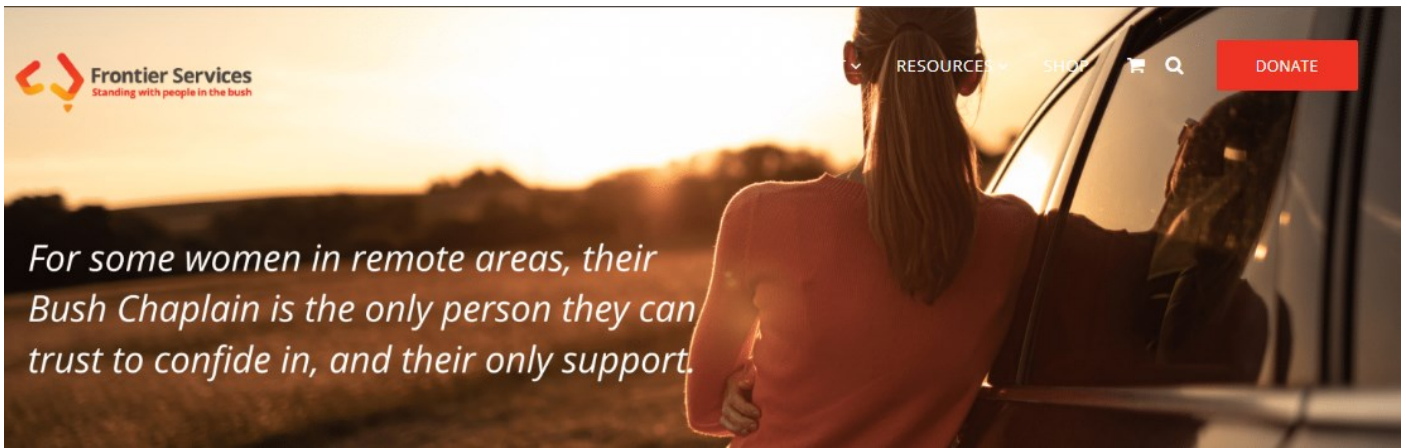


TOOLKIT

The Christmas Bowl 2024 Toolkit, with everything you need to run the Christmas Bowl in your church.



Worship Resources from Christ the King to Christmas day. Including prayers for Peace, candle lighting liturgies, Biblical reflections, Act for Peace stories from around the world and blessings. Activity Sheets. Ideas on how to make your own Christmas bowl. Posters. How to make donations. Ways to get involved!





Australian Birds (Mixed pack) – 10 pack

\$12.00



Christmas Stockings – 10 pack


\$12.00



Joy to the World – 10 pack

\$12.00

Calendar and
Lectionary



UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA
ASSEMBLY RESOURCING UNIT

Year C 2024 - 2025

‘The Uniting Church acknowledges that the Church has received the books of the Old and New Testaments as unique prophetic and apostolic testimony, in which it hears the Word of God and by which its faith and obedience are nourished and regulated ...’

The Uniting Church lays upon its members the serious duty of reading the Scriptures, [and] commits its ministers to preach from these ...’
Basis of Union (1992 Edition), paragraph 5



Events

6th December
12—1:30pm

Retired Ministers gathering @ Pascoe Vale RSL
Bookings: mark@dunn.id.au

Dec 6th
11– 7pm

Mooney Ponds Uniting Op-Shop Grand Opening
Puckle Street

Dec 24th
5-6

Community Family Carols @ Darebin North West
399A Murray Rd, Preston

Retired Minister's Gatherings—Pascoe Vale RSL

Venue: Pascoe Vale RSL, 40 Cumberland Rd Pascoe Vale 3044.

Time: 12:00 – till 13:30 Friday 6th Dec 2024

This is for those of us who are retired or in the process of retiring to have lunch together and share a little of the journey. We gather in an informal way to catch up on how everyone's going and what we're up to.

So if you're interested, can you please let me know your RSVP by email before 5pm Tuesday 20th February mark@dunn.id.au This is essential for a lunch booking.



Includes All-Age activities:

- Candle Wax painting
- Mary's heart
- Write your own Hymn of Praise
- Haiku Magnificat
- Prayers and Blessings
- Reduce Greenhouse reductions in what we eat in in Advent & Christmas
- Vegetarian recipes
- Christian Limitarianism: The case against extreme wealth
- Taking Action against Corruption
- Letter writing campaign Ideas
- Prayer for the true meaning of Christmas
- Zero Waste Christmas



Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA



JUSTACT
ACT WITH JUSTICE IN MIND



The Uniting Church in Australia
Synod of South Australia

Significant dates for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander People

As we begin the Christian year and celebrate our 30 years of Covenant in the UCA it is important for us to know as a Church what dates are important to Indigenous people. Church Councils & Social Justice Groups could think about how they might recognised these occasions with special worships, fundraising for causes, or times for prayer and reflection. Individually we can all pray for our first nations brothers and sisters, perhaps sending words of encouragement on historically significant days.

26th January	Survival Day Link
13th February	National Apology Day to Stolen Generations Survivors Link
21st March	Harmony Day—International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Link
15th April	Anniversary of Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody 1991 Link
21st March	National Close the Gap Day Link
26th May	National Sorry Day Link
27th May—3rd June	National Reconciliation Week Link
3rd June	Mabo Day Link
1st July	Coming of the Light—Torres Strait Islander day Link
6th—13th July	National NAIDOC Week—For Our Elders Link
4th August	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children’s Day Link
9th August	International Day of World Indigenous People Link
4th September	Indigenous Literacy Day Link