



The River of Life



The Uniting Church in Australia
LODDON MALLEE PRESBYTERY

August 2023 Edition

Long Term Leadership

What does 68 years of leadership look like? Ask Graeme & Nola Smith and they will tell you! Inspired by the love and faithfulness of God, they have followed God's call on their lives, and together remain faithful to their Lord and Saviour, in love and service. Born and bred in the Rainbow District, Graeme first started volunteering in the then Presbyterian Church, joining his first committee at the age of 18. Before long, Graeme became Treasurer of the Wimmera District PFA, of which he also became President.

Graeme was elected as an Elder at the age of 24 and remained an Elder until his retirement in March 2023 – 62 years of continuous leadership in the Church! Over the years he has seen many changes, through union of the Churches in 1977, and the Baptist and Uniting Churches joining to create the Southern Mallee Co-Operative Parish 37 years ago.

Graeme's roles within the church have been many, and while he has retired from active leadership roles, seeking to hand over to those who follow, Graeme remains active in the Church, through helping lead worship at the church and the local Aged Care Services, ensuring the church is warm for all who enter, working in the grounds etc.

Like many in the Church, Graeme's leadership wasn't limited to the church, but had extensive community involvement. He was on the Rainbow Cemetery Trust for 50 years. Heavily involved in Sports Graeme filled roles in the Rainbow Football Club, of which he is a Life

Member, including Presbytery and Secretary. Golf was another area of interest where Graeme was heavily involved. He was on the School Council for 20 years at both Primary and Secondary levels and also remains involved in Politics.



Graeme had a rich heritage of faith through his parents, His faith, family, love of nature and farming sustained him as he and Nola raised 5 sons.

Nola also has been, and remains, heavily involved in the church and community. Nola worked in Nursing, becoming Director of Nursing at the local bush Nursing Hospital. Nola has been heavily involved in Voluntary work through the Church, took lead roles in both School Mother's Clubs, was Secretary of the infant Welfare, Steward at the Rainbow Agricultural Show, and is a Life Member of the Learning Group. Since retiring at the age of 65, Nola been heavily involved in co-ordinating the community Craft Shop, making all sorts of

delights to sell to the community. Other involvement includes the Hospital Committee, cooking, gardening, sharing eggs from her hens, caring for friends and neighbours as well as keeping up with family and friends.

The Southern Mallee Co-Operative Parish recognised Graeme's 68 years of Leadership in the church, with a presentation at the church service of a certificate on Sunday July 30, and flowers for Nola, where a combined Parish Service saw people from Rainbow and

Hopetoun, joining together in worship and a shared meal.

Nola and Graeme's lifelong love of God continues today. As Graeme, whose mother's lifestyle and strong faith influenced him so much, says "As I look at the world, the plants, the flowers; Where did they come from? It's a miracle world out there." For herself, Nola shares, "I always felt safe; a Presence with me. Faith is ongoing. Why would you want to give it away?"

Rev Susan Pearse

An open letter from Rev Will Pickett to the Presbytery of Loddon Mallee, Re: The Voice.

Dear Members of Loddon Mallee Presbytery

It seems like whenever I am listening to the media these days, I find myself shaking my head to myself at a lot of the negative information that is filling our minds about the Voice.

As an Aboriginal person it grieves me in my spirit that we (First Nations people) have the need to justify ourselves, yet again, about the way we want to be recognised, treated and identified in our own country of Australia.

What is it about the Voice?

The overwhelming majority of First Nations leaders and people support the proposal for a Voice that will enable us to make representations at the national level about legislation and policies that impact on us. As the Uluru Statement from the Heart says, ***in 1967 we were counted, now we seek to be heard.***

So far, I have listened to many people saying the Voice is not needed, or won't benefit Aboriginal people. Those advocating a no vote have a clever but misleading slogan: *if you don't know, vote no*. But there is lots we do and can know, and ignorance is no excuse!

The Voice gives us (First Nations people) an opportunity to give advice and speak into all of the issues that have arisen and that impact on us, since colonization and into the future. Making representations to those who legislate on our behalf is basic to how democracy works in our country. And to have a Voice that's written into the Australian Constitution means

our right to speak about the issues that impact on us cannot be dismissed. Government will be free to choose to act on the advice given or not: the Voice won't have any power of veto. All other groups will continue to make representations, as they do already.

As a First Nations person I have seen a lot of changes in Australia. I have experienced personally legislative laws that have affected myself and my family. Like so many Aboriginal people in Australia the Stolen Generation is one that have taken away the rights of my people. Here is a reminder of some of the issues that face us:

- High percentage of Deaths in Custody that is ongoing.
- High incarceration rate above other non-indigenous Australians.
- Education system that is still failing our next generation.
- Racism, increasing.
- Lower life expectancy than that other Australians people.
- Higher unemployment rate
- Inadequate housing, overcrowding.
- Limited access to health treatment.

(The list could go on and on...)

I don't believe the Voice will divide the nation. Instead, it will help heal the wound that already divides us.

When Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a genuine say in the design and delivery of policies, programs and services that

affect them, better life outcomes are achieved. It is possible to close the gap, as is happening in early childhood education and in rates of First Nations students completing year 12. In other areas where targets have not been met, there are positive signs that working together can accelerate progress and achieve better outcomes.

Being listened to, being respected and heard, matters. A recent (July 2023) report from the Australian Productivity Commission confirmed that where Aboriginal voices have a say and leadership is sought and respected, the gap is closing; where it is not, the gap is not closing. This is where the Voice comes in.

I believe personally, the Voice is so much needed, and I for one along with my family support the YES! Campaign one hundred percent.

I strongly encourage my sisters and brothers in Christ in the Loddon Mallee Presbytery to take time to read about the proposal for a Voice for themselves and trust God will help them to make a faithful and informed decision in the forthcoming referendum.

Regards
Rev William Pickett

PS: For information on the principles behind the Voice and its design, go to <https://voice.gov.au> or to Wikipedia: 2023 Australian Indigenous Voice referendum.

For a simple clear guide to the Voice to Parliament with all the detail you need, consider getting a hold of the guide written by Kerry O'Brien and Thomas Mayo.

'MultiSensory Worship' at Bendigo Central Congregation

Following the Covid-enforced suspension of 'Messy Church' during 2020, most child



participants did not return when a 'Covid-safe' version was re-commenced in 2021. Only 3 children (one school-age) were regularly participating in Sunday worship. Other children came occasionally with a grandparent. After much discussion and soul-searching, it was decided to trial 'MultiSensory Worship', as a different way of hopefully engaging all ages, but which would not be 'child-dependent' per se.

Over the past 18 months we have held 6 quarterly "MultiSensory Worship" services (in place of "traditional worship"), with significant positive feedback from participants of all ages.

In planning, we have not limited 'multisensory' to mean just the five senses, (i.e. touch, taste, hearing, sight, smell), but have tried to include multiple ways people can engage with and respond to a theme (reflecting the different ways people think and learn), such as verbal, visual,

musical, logical, drama/active/creative, sharing/discussion, individual reflection, logical/problem-solving, etc.



Hopefully this means all ages will also be accommodated.

To date the themes chosen have all been Lectionary-inspired. For “The Transfiguration” we built a mountain out of cushions, and



options included a meditation using 4 senses, and a personal reflection using a mirror. Pentecost included an action prayer, a meditation using feathers, and 50 balloons... For “The potter’s house”, everyone used clay throughout the service, reshaping it in different ways. Christmas options included handbell ringing and a multi-sensory reflective space using e.g. samples of gold, frankincense and myrrh. “Water from the rock” included a reflection using different kinds of rock, an audio-visual lamenting crumbled foundations, and activities using rocks. The UCA anniversary included



building a church out of shoe boxes which contained the gifts, skills, and everyday tasks we bring, and prayers as

we built up the UCA symbol.

Because our congregation continues to worship alternately on 2 sites, both of which have ‘cathedrals’ with fixed pews which are not appropriate for any informal activity, we have held all except one MSW in the halls, one of which has multiple meeting rooms enabling a

choice of activities. On the other site we remain together throughout the service, so our activities must be appropriate for everyone to engage in. All services have included at least one opportunity for being creative with hands.

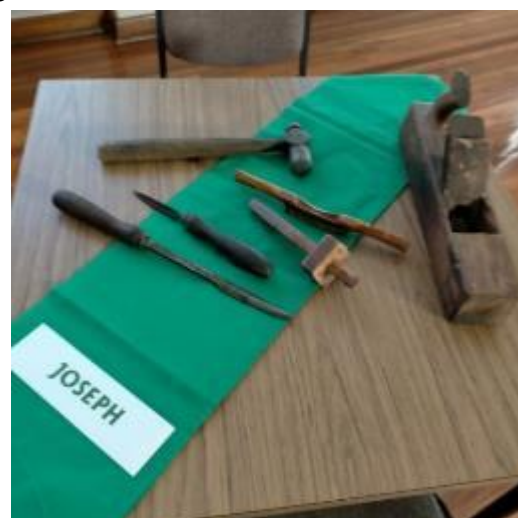
Some of our elderly people are not able, or choose not, to “move”. However, they have



been happy to participate in discussion/sharing tables, particularly with a briefed leader.

We have found that our school-age “occasional” children have been very happy to lead dramatic readings, drama, mime, etc, but must be “booked in advance”, as they lead very busy lives. (They read exceptionally well if rehearsed with the microphone...) Hopefully the participation of these older children is assisting them to grow their leadership skills and a broader understanding of what worship and the church might be about. It is certainly providing positive role-modelling for our younger children, and ‘warming the hearts’ of older members of the congregation.

If you would like to know more details of what we have done, and what we have learnt, please don’t hesitate to ask!



Judy Causon & Claire Lidgett

An Invitation from the Assembly Continuing Witness Task Group

At the 15th Assembly of the UCA in Melbourne in 2018, it was resolved to explore whether there were any contemporary confessions of faith from other Christian traditions which could be considered for use alongside the documents of our Reformation and Wesleyan traditions.

While the Basis of Union points us to the gospel by summarizing the story of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, in paragraph 11, it directs us to contemporary theological, literary, historical and scientific enquiry, ecumenical contexts and the communities in which the church is situated. It concludes with these words: *The Uniting Church thanks God for the **continuing witness** and service of evangelist, of scholar, of prophet and of martyr. It prays that it may be ready when occasion demands to confess the Lord in fresh words and deeds.*

An invitation is thus extended to read, reflect and discern the following three chosen documents and provide feedback to the Continuing Witness Task Group for presenting to the 17th UCA Assembly in 2024. Three documents have been selected and need to be read with the following questions in mind.

- Do we recognise the Gospel of Jesus Christ in these words?
- What helpful conversations could this document provoke in the Uniting Church?
- Do you think this document could lead to a fresh confession of Jesus in word and deed in the UCA?
Yes / No / Other _____
- Is there anything you would like to add to these reflections?

The documents are:

- The 1986 Confession of Belhar from South Africa; The Belhar Confession and accompanying letter are to be read together. Together they form a comprehensive call to unity in Christ. Despite the circumstances of the life and culture of the time, the plea for unity and grace through Jesus Christ is the foremost message. This document resonates

deeply with the call to justice within the UCA.

- Laudato si', the 2015 encyclical of Pope Francis; This document has an introduction linking the common thoughts of many Popes across the years to the need for a mindset to care for our environmental world. It is then divided into the six chapters of the encyclical of Pope Francis. Throughout there is the calling back to the gift of our home, the created world given to humanity. Recognition of the damage caused by greed, power and self-gratification leads to the importance of listening to indigenous people of the lands who have a deep understanding of custodianship.
- The 1999 Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, the product of Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue. Signed by both churches in 1999, it effectively resolved one of the key theological conflicts of the Reformation - the understanding of salvation. Through this agreement, centuries old controversies and misunderstandings were overcome. In the years since its signing, further texts expressing the agreement have been added from Methodist (2006), Anglican (2016) and Reformed (2017) Communion. In 2019 a consultation of these five Communion, meeting at Notre Dame University in the USA, produced the Notre Dame Consultation Statement for wider study and discernment.

The Loddon Mallee Presbytery Standing Committee encourage you to take the opportunity to engage with these documents and send your feedback to the Task Group.

You can read and add your answers to the questions on the Assembly Website: <https://uniting.church/continuing-witness-resources/>

Pastor Carol Boyce

EUC involvement in the 'Act 2 Uniting in Prayer' Month

Each month the Eaglehawk Uniting Church (EUC) has a FOCUS Service. This service is to hear from speakers about a Program external to our immediate commitment or hear more about an event or program relevant to our faith life.

Last year we shared in the Act2 Project of the UCA that commenced in 2020. We looked at the survey results to that point which identified the top issues needing action for the UCA to achieve the urgent change. So in June 2023 we revisited this information by participating in the whole of Church period of prayer and reflection between Pentecost 28th May and the 46th anniversary of the Uniting Church on 22nd June, to prepare ourselves to participate in the next phase.

The resources provided by the Act 2 group guided prayers, and the congregation participated in adaption of one of the interactive Intergenerational activities – 'Sticking Together'. Each person chose a piece of ribbon (representing the individual choices we make),

they then tied this to stick that was allocated to their seat (representing some things we don't have a choice about), and then brought these forward to place in a circle (the overlapping sticks indicating how we are bound together to support each other).

The final display reminds us that we are here together, with a commitment to put our LOVE into action, but that we will always have others around to lean on and to help us, even if we do feel like a thin twig that might break. The EUC motto was added below the circle – *'Striving to be like Jesus'*.

EUC will continue to pray for the life, witness and future of the Uniting Church within the context of the Act2 Project discernment about the future of our Church. We have and will continue to pray and reflect on our

past, and dream for our future as the Uniting Church.

If you'd like more information about EUC, find us on Facebook or go to our website:

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

Merrill Cole
Lay Preacher / FOCUS Service Coordinator

Loddon Mallee Chaplaincy Fund

If congregations or individuals would like to donate to the Loddon Mallee Chaplaincy Fund, please find the account information below.

Account Name: **Uniting Church in Australia Presbytery of Loddon Mallee**

BSB: **633000**

Account number: **132832148**

If donating by direct debit, please give your Church Name. If donating by cheque, please make it out to Uniting Church in Australia Presbytery of Loddon Mallee.

Charlton UC congregation Update

Though small, the Charlton UC congregation of 10-15 attendees is a dedicated group worshipping and working together.

We share with and attend the St. Martin's Anglican congregation on the first Sunday of the month at 9:00am, the second and third Sundays in the Uniting church at 10.00am and the fourth Sunday at 11.00am.

We celebrate Holy Communion on the second Sunday each month and have three Presiders and church members welcome folk at the door.

We share Fellowship over Morning Tea after worship, with a shared lunch on the fourth week and if there is a fifth Sunday in the month, a Cluster service is rotated between the four congregations of Boort, Charlton, Powlett Plains and Wedderburn.

Pastoral care and hospital visits are attended, and any special requests need to be brought to

the attention of members. With Covid restrictions, worship services at the Hostel were not possible and we will now arrange these with the "new normal" rules in place.

Several members lead worship with others included on the plan as readers and, if interested, are encouraged to bring the message of the day. We are fortunate to have a fulltime organist for which we are very grateful, and we also have recorded hymns and music if needed.

We hold an open market day four times a year which is great outreach to the community and is well supported, with monies donated then to needy causes.

Thank you to all who support us as we continue to bring God's messages to our faithful congregation.

Joy Freeman

Some physical, mental and spiritual perspectives on growing older

I am now 76 years of age, reasonably healthy, reasonably mobile and reasonably optimistic. I often hear my friends – and sometimes myself – say 'It's not much fun growing older, is it?' My response to them – and myself – is typically: 'I could do without the illness, aches and pains, but I'm grateful for my faith, and the accumulation of experiences, friends and perspectives aging has brought!'

I recently completed four weeks in hospital during which I had twenty days of radiotherapy for prostate cancer. A week in, I had my gallbladder removed because of a large gallstone and inflammation. The same battery of tests (MRI, CT scans and ultrasound) that revealed the gall bladder problems also showed that most of the pain in my left leg came, not from the osteoarthritis in my hip as had been supposed, but from a trapped nerve root at L4 in my sacral lumbar (lower spine). Medication is partially relieving the acute pain I had been experiencing for some months, but there is still quite a lot of discomfort. Less than a week after my discharge from hospital I had two large

fillings and a dental implant that took two days to stop bleeding. I've had so many injections, blood tests and PSA (prostate tests) in the past two or three months that at times my body has felt like a pin cushion! And I have been juggling so many issues in the same months that at times my mind has felt like spaghetti!

Yet there have been many compensations. I am blessed in my family and friendships, in my faith relationship with God in Christ and my church connections and wider community. Knowing I had a week of medical and dental appointments and tests immediately prior to my month in hospital, I decided to visit family and friends in South Australia and Warrnambool I'd not seen since before the beginning of the pandemic. I had eleven wonderful days reconnecting with people and places that meant a lot to me, a helpful prologue to the weeks that would follow. And I have been blessed in the care and professionalism of doctors, nurses and other staff in Bendigo and at the John Fawcner Private Hospital and ICON Cancer Centre in Moreland Road, Coburg. And my admission and discharge

from hospital were sandwiched between taking church services at Dunolly Uniting Church – a life-giving experience!

As I grow older, I find I increasingly recognise what Jung called synchronicity – the apparently meaningful relationship of circumstances that yet lack a causal connection. When I sent Katherine the Easter Day poem ‘Healing hands’ (*The River of Life*, May 2023, p. 10), I’d not yet had the PSA test that would trigger the tests and treatment that were to follow! There is something similar in the elements of balance that God brings – or sometimes invites us to bring - to our lives, summed up beautifully in a wonderful verse from the Psalms: ‘By day the LORD commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life’ (Psalm 42. 8, NRSV).

For me last year also held many echoes of both the synchronicity and balance I have experienced in recent months. Our Son Steve was concluding his twelve months of study in the UK on a Defence Forces scholarship just after mid-year and, like my daughter and her family just after me, I visited him at his home on the edge of the Cotswolds. He and I visited London (with front row seats for the Anzac Day Service in Westminster Abbey – and a smile from Princess Kate as she and William left afterward). We also drove to Edinburgh and the

Lake District, and across Europe. Little did any of us know that their Mum Dorothy would die a few months later. My parents died many years ago now, but the sense of loss continues, and the grief from the death of my wife of 34 years on November 30 (two days after my 76th birthday) is still very fresh. Although we had been separated for almost 18 years, we were still close friends.

As a semi-retired minister who often takes church services in aging congregations, I know experiences of grief and multiple health issues are common. Although I’ve never subscribed unreservedly to the ‘Pollyanna principle’ (the tendency of people to remember pleasant events more than unpleasant ones), I find there is an element of this – or at least of balance - inherent in my personal Christian faith. We do well to remember the many blessings God bestows on us. And in the midst of the reality of life’s hardships and struggles, griefs and pains, we are reminded that God is not a stranger to such experiences. My poem ‘Grief’ from 1999 concludes with the lines:

And yet I know that in my grief
I do not dwell apart,
for God has also suffered loss
and known a broken heart.

*(Rev) Christopher Venning
July 4, 2023*

Sammy Stamp Snippers

The UCAF Stamp Fund, better known as Sammy Stamp, coordinates the collection and sale of stamps to offer grants for mission and development work in Australia and overseas and is responsible to the UCAF Council. In 2019, Sammy Stamp reached a major milestone by exceeding \$1 million from stamp sales since it began in 1977.

Thanks to all the folk throughout this Presbytery who have saved and sent in their stamps for Sammy Stamps in Melbourne. Katherine Wall Dobson (Loddon Mallee Presbytery Administration Assistant) has brought many back from Presbytery in Council Meetings to the Stamp Snippers at Weeroona Uniting Church Bendigo. They have then cut them and sorted them for Melbourne.

Please keep **all** your used stamps as they raised nearly \$50,000 last year for charities – it costs you nothing!

Jeannette Boquest



An Invitation Can Lead to Where?

We can never underestimate an invitation and where it might lead. With the Induction in February of Rev Susan Pearse into ministry in the Southern Mallee Co-Operative Parish (a co-operation between the Baptist and Uniting Churches), invitations went out to all sorts of people and organisations. This included the local P-12 College.

While no-one from the College attended the Induction, Susan received a phone call inviting her to come to the College for a conversation. It transpired that they had an opening for a Chaplain. It was agreed that it was a conversation worth pursuing, and the practical implications of this then followed. A long and challenging process led to endorsement as a Chaplain, and Susan has begun one day per week as Chaplain to the Hopetoun school.

Why is this important? On the first day, three significant interactions were occurred – one with some students, one with a member of Staff and one with a Parent. We really can never underestimate an invitation and where it might lead!

Rev Susan Pearse

Nardoo Loddon Cluster Flood Contribution

Nestled in the northern Wimmera, the Nardoo Loddon Cluster embraces: Boort, with irrigation, dryland farming and the Boort lakes which have the world's greatest number of scar trees in any one place; Charlton, with feedlot, trotting complex, Driver Education Centre and the flood-prone Avoca River; Powlett Plains, with mixed farming and the mighty Loddon river winding through it; and Wedderburn, with eucalyptus museum, bush blocks, memories of the gold mining era and the Nardoo Creek flowing down from the Nardoo Hills. Not to mention a Uniting Church and congregation in each of these four centres.

According to the ABS a total of 264 people in three of these centres identify Uniting Church as their religion; this information was not available for the smaller Powlett Plains. Unfortunately, and this is a sign of the times we live in, our Church attendance figures do not reflect this figure.

Following the disastrous October 2022 Rochester floods, the Nardoo-Loddon Cluster Council looked at its own financial situation and commitments and decided that Rochester's needs were greater than its own. Contact was made with Kerry Gibson, secretary of Rochester Uniting Church Council, and the Cluster sent \$10,000.00 to them to be applied towards flood relief as they saw fit.

In acknowledging the Cluster's gift, Kerry said: "our Church building is totally out of action; we

are presently holding services in the hall and although our kitchen is unusable, a makeshift setup in the hall gives people fellowship time. The plan is to have a smaller meeting room in the hall and move worship into that space, so work can be undertaken on the main hall and the Church. Our great thanks to Nardoo Loddon Cluster for your financial and prayerful contribution (and) your caring and encouragement – that we are members of a wide community is greatly valued."

"You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God." 2 Corinthians 9.11-12.

Charlton, where my Joy and I have lived for the past 45 years (we came here for 12 months in 1978; we did not say which 12 months we came for, it has not arrived yet!) is, like Rochester, flood-prone. Charlton's record floods were in February 2011, we had earlier floods in late 2010 when Joy and I were in London; we went into an internet café, got onto Google and typed in: "Charlton Australia floods 2010"; the first thing which came up was: "Charlton Heston reading stories from the Bible about the great Floods"! Proof indeed that the Lord does move in mysterious ways!

Bill Freeman, Secretary, Nardoo Loddon Cluster

The ministry of a building

Presbytery staff recently moved into the new Presbytery Office at 25 Forest St, Bendigo, adjacent to the Forest Street church. Chairperson Libby Gregory led a blessing of the property at the beginning of the Pastoral Relations Committee on Tuesday, June 20, committing each room to its particular purpose. The group reflected briefly on the history of the property and its use as a practical outworking of the church's ministry, from its opening in the 1950's to the present.

Until 1955, the Minister at the then Wesley Methodist church had lived with his family in a manse on the opposite side of the street – a building which was later incorporated into the motel that is now on that site. The first family to live in the new manse were the Byards and over the following 30 or so years, a number of ministry families lived there, the last of them being Rod and Beth Horsfield and their children in the early 1980's.

The Wesley and St John's congregations came together to form the Forest Street UC in 1979, and a couple of years later it was decided that the former St John's manse in Wattle St would be retained as the minister's home and that 25 Forest St would become the site of the offices of the West Bendigo Parish and the Loddon Campaspe Presbytery. It also became a place where people came seeking assistance, and eventually the Bendigo Uniting Church Outreach (BUCO) service was formally established in 1994.

It wasn't long before the work of BUCO expanded to the point of requiring the full use of the building, so a new Presbytery Office was created in the foyer of the St Andrew's Hall. When changes were made to presbytery operations in 2008, the move was made to 90 Mollison St, a property attached to St Andrew's.

Meanwhile, the work of BUCO focussed mainly on providing emergency relief to hundreds of people every month. The Outreach Print Service operated from a tin shed at the back of the building and 25 Forest St was a hive of activity for most of the week, providing invaluable services to the community. In time, the locally

run agency became part of UnitingCare and then Uniting.

The disadvantage of turning a family home into offices or a welfare centre is that the internal layout is not really suited to the purpose. In 1996, the building and its contents suffered extensive damage in an arson attack. Although it was a distressing experience, the fire provided an opportunity to make changes to the interior layout. A work party led by the Rev Kerrie Graham refurbished the building, creating an environment better suited to the agency's work.

In 2021 Uniting made the decision to focus the emergency relief services at Kangaroo Flat and to cease operating from Forest St. For 18 months the tired building stood empty, waiting for its new role to be decided. When the proposed St Andrew's housing project was approved in 2022, we were informed that the development required the demolition of 90 Mollison St, so once again a new base was required for presbytery operations.

We sing "The church is not a building ...", but the buildings we use can be the places where important ministry happens. 25 Forest St has provided a home, where families and friends have gathered, ministers have provided counsel and written sermons. It has provided offices where colleagues met, shared concerns, laughed and prayed together, counselled and planned and necessary administrative tasks were carried out. It evolved into a place where, for close on 30 years, thousands of people were helped with food, clothing, pharmacy needs, utilities bills, household goods, supermarket and op shop vouchers, travel assistance, school expenses, Christmas gifts – as well as a listening ear, emotional support, love and care. This ministry was provided by many, many volunteers, some from the church and many from the wider community. It was supported by generous donations from a wide range of individuals, churches and community groups.

Now, 25 Forest St will once again be a place of ministry, where the mission, needs, wellbeing and interests of congregations throughout Loddon Mallee will be our focus. Once again

there will be decision-making, planning, conversation, laughter, fellowship, wise counsel, prayer and deep sharing.

We are grateful for the generosity and assistance of the Forest Street Property Committee who have created an attractive and comfortable space for our new office.

Judy Causon

A few of the “faces of 25 Forest St”, who provided a rich ministry of care for so many years.



Thank you!

The Loddon Mallee Presbytery Office would like to extend its heartfelt thanks to the Congregation members of Bendigo Central and Axedale Uniting Church for the care and support provided to us both in our old office in Mollison Street and our new office at 25 Forest Street. The time, work, and dedication you have put into restoring Forest Street is to be commended and is now being greatly enjoyed by those who use the building. It is wonderful to be settled in our new home now.

During the first meeting held in the office, Libby Gregory led the members of PRC around the rooms and led a series of prayers blessing the space and all who utilise it. It was a lovely way to begin the life of the Presbytery in the new location.

Please note that at present there is no office phone due to technical difficulties that arose with the move. We will let you know once we have one connected again.



Photo: The new Loddon Mallee Presbytery Office

Act2 Report

The much-anticipated Act2 Report has been released, emerging from one of the most comprehensive and ambitious direct consultation processes the Assembly has ever undertaken, drawing from a deep well of insight gathered through a six-month process. An intensive engagement phase will now run until the end of November. Check out the report and find opportunities you can engage and discern about the report and its options and directions as <https://www.act2uca.com/act2repo rt>

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 elders 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?

As mentioned previously we are continuing to look at ways we can transition where possible to paperless to help reduce our use of paper and save trees. 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 Impresbyter@lm.victas.uca.org.au so we can ensure this happens and keep us updated on how many copies you require in 2023.

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.

Presbytery Contact Information

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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 to unite our mission and connection and the River of Life is all the richer for it! Please note that the cut-off date for article submissions is the 14th of November 2023.