



The River of Life

November 2025 Edition



The United Church in Australia
LODDON MALLEE PRESBYTERY

Induction of Rev Dec Janet Munro

The spirit of celebration filled the church.

Voices young and old chatted excitedly.

Albs and jackets mingled amidst church symbols and stained glass.

This was the Induction of Rev. Deacon Janet Munro as Minister of Eaglehawk Uniting Church.



Presbytery Chair Libby Gregory led the service. It included many members of the church, as well as Presbytery representatives. Clergy and lay leaders from other congregations attended as well.

Into this space we heard the call...

"We are drawn to the light of Christ, reflecting the God of awesome deeds, and the hope of all the ends of the earth. God's light and glory go on forever."

We worshiped in Song. We considered key symbols of the church. We heard God's Word unfolded by Rev. Grahame Pogue. We stood with Janet as she took her vows of office.

It led to this our Chair's joyful declaration:

"In the name of Jesus Christ, the sovereign Head of the church, and by the authority of the Presbytery of Loddon Mallee, we now declare the Rev Deacon Janet Munro to be inducted to serve as Minister in the Eaglehawk Uniting Church."



Our care and prayers are with Janet and her loved ones as she takes up this new stage of ministry. Welcome Janet, to the Loddon Mallee Presbytery!

*Rev Gordon Wild
Photos taken by Rev Gordon Wild at the
Induction service and the afternoon tea
afterwards.*

Loddon Mallee Presbytery UCAF Fellowship Day

Loddon Mallee UCAF Fellowship Day held on Monday, September 8th, at Weeroona UCA. Approximately 80 people attended,



representing 10 UCAF groups. Barbara Talbot, Convenor of the Weeroona group, was in the chair and welcomed all those attending. Opening devotion was led by Rev. Will Pickett. The flowers for remembrance, of those who have passed away in the last 12 months, were recognised with a daffodil.

David Castles was the morning speaker and shared about the building project at St. Andrew's church in Bendigo which will be for the homeless and those who want a safe place.

We all retired to enjoy a finger food lunch, provided by Weeroona UCAF. Many of those present enjoyed catching up with friends they hadn't seen for some time.

After lunch Barbara introduced the Ukulele group, Uniting Ukes, who gave a musical selection ending with Edelweiss as a sing-a-long, which was thoroughly enjoyed by



everyone. Then the afternoon speaker was introduced, James Nevein representing Frontier Services, which are celebrating their 113th birthday this year. James gave a short

history of Frontier Services, explaining it was first started by John Flynn who wanted to help people in the storms of life.

The offering and trading table enabled an amount of \$895 to be donated to the Shower Truck in Bendigo and Frontier Services. The Weeroona U.C.A.F. group had recently held a pop-up stall for Frontier Services, so the total donation to Frontier Services was \$1,615. James Nevein expressed his appreciation of the support to Frontier Services.



Barbara presented gifts to each of the speakers.

Rev Will Pickett gave a closing devotion, singing "The Servant Song" with his banjo.

A vote of thanks was given to Weeroona UCAF for all the work they had done in organising and catering for the day.

A light afternoon tea was offered to all members to conclude a most enjoyable and successful day.

*Peg Kearin,
Presbytery U.C.A.F. Committee.*

Music and Story, an Afternoon of Treasures

The most recent concert in the bi-annual series held at Harcourt Uniting Church revealed many treasures. Performers played, sang or talked, giving us musical treasures and thoughts. They contributed to an informal and sometimes impromptu atmosphere, and some audience participation.

The youngest performer was 8 years old; she played a piano duet with her dad and then sang to us. Some of the senior musicians were in their 80s, playing recorder, viola da gamba or singing. In between were some already very accomplished teenage or early twenties string players, and others whose age can remain their secret.



The program delighted us all. Compositions varied from those written before the baroque era and items by J S Bach through classical songs to songs from the 1930s to 1980s, including an invigorating jazzy number. A story about volunteering in Tonga 60 years ago added to the variety.

The final (unplanned) moment in the concert was an audience version of "Going Home" from Dvorak's New World Symphony, sung to 'aah'. The acoustic of the granite church lifted the sound perfectly.

Solway Nutting

Photo: Rev Sarah Tomilson (on the left) with all the performers

Making New and old Connections

Sunday 12th October 2025 saw a group of folk from the Weeroona Uniting Church, Bendigo, join us at Avoca for our weekly service. The group from Weeroona were visiting Avoca for their annual church camp and they joined the congregation for their Sunday worship.

Jan Watts from the Dunolly Uniting Church was our guest minister together with hubby Fred. They both love coming over to Avoca every two months even though both are in their eighties!

I had previous knowledge the group were coming because I'm currently secretary of the Avoca & District Historical Society, and they had reached out about some of them wanting to visit us at the old



Courthouse (c1859) so we were expecting them but did not know 'how many'.

So, it was a wonderful surprise when 10 of them arrived and amongst them was a neighbour from my former home of Woodstock West! it was so lovely catching up with what we were doing plus what our offspring were up to as well!

It was wonderful to make new connections and reconnect with old friends.

Jillian Hunter

Photo's taken by Lorraine McSween from Weeroona UC Bendigo of the lovely spread provided by the folk of Avoca UC.

Tanya's Chaplain Report

Season's Greetings to all who I serve as the Hospital Chaplain. This year has been a year of ups and downs. Firstly, I completed my Master of Theological Studies and was looking forward to graduating but unfortunately while on holidays I did my back and was unable to attend. But I do have my Master certificate.

This year I have visited a number of patients with varying issues and from a number of faith traditions or of no faith. I have met people where they are at providing a listening presence, emotional support, ritual, music and other resources as required.

I really enjoy hearing feedback about my encounters from patients, family members or staff, it lifts my spirits. I love my job it is my passion. I get blessed often as well from the patients, with their kind words or prayers for me.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your support whether

financially, messages, cards, emails or prayers they are greatly appreciated and I know that I am well supported by the Presbytery.

I pray that everyone has a Merry and Safe Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Blessings, Tanya Dunbar - Hospital Chaplain.



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.

VCC Emergencies Ministry Volunteers

VCC Emergencies Ministry stands as a diverse, interfaith and multicultural organisation made up of dedicated volunteers from various faith backgrounds. Volunteers are only called out when requested by state or local governments during an emergency. You may find them at Emergency Relief Centres, Recovers Centres, providing outreach visits, etc, where they assist in providing personal support, psychological first aid and emotional and spiritual care. All volunteers are trained to be a calm and compassionate presence.

The Bendigo and wider community branch of VCC Emergency Ministries are having a



recruitment drive for Volunteers at the moment. They have people of most faiths in their ranks and require a reference from your Faith Leader for a person to do the training and be deployed in an emergency situation. Karen Bradfield and Tricia Blanks (area co-coordinators) are keen to visit local churches if you'd like to know more about this organisation. An information session will be organised in the new year (2026) and training will be arranged after that.

For more information contact Karen on 0428399442 or check out the VCC Ministries website - <https://vccem.org.au/>

Bridal Daze



On a lovely sunny Sunday afternoon in Rainbow, the Church was buzzing as excitement rose for the Bride to walk down the aisle. But it wasn't just one Bride, the Rainbow Church was hosting a Bridal Fashion Parade of wedding dresses over a century. Dreamed up by Pam Clugston and supported by the church, fellowship and wider community, 23 bridal gowns were modelled with some other wedding garments on display. Starting



with a black 1904 wedding dress, up to a 2012 strapless gown, Pam had prepared descriptions of each frock. To set the scene, she prepared vignettes to introduce aspects of the culture of the decade, referencing the cost of meals, average wages, popular music and fashion. Dresses were modelled by secondary students from the local school and some adults, as well as a mother and daughter duo who wore their wedding gowns from 55 years and twenty years ago.



As well as a wonderful Parade, a sumptuous high tea was prepared and presented by the Rainbow Fellowship who worked behind the scene to top of a very special day. A number of women from the Rainbow congregation loaned their dresses for the Parade; being married in the 1960's, they were married in the church, whereas many today do not have a Christian wedding. The lack of Christian weddings in our current climate was noted, but it is our



faith that upholds us and the knowledge that God is with us and leads us that keeps us faithful. Pam and the team are to be congratulated on such a wonderful day.

Rev Susan Pearse

UCAF Invitation

All UCAF representatives of the churches of the Uniting Church in the Loddon Mallee Presbytery are warmly welcome to come to the Planning Meeting of the 2026 Loddon Mallee UCAF Fellowship Day. The Planning meeting is to be held at Weeroona Uniting Church, Neale Street Campus. Kennington, Bendigo. on Monday February 2nd 2026 at 10:00am. Let either Barb or Susie know if you are going to attend.

Please note that the UCAF Fellowship day will be held on Monday 7th September 2026.

Any RSVP or queries please contact: Barb Talbot - 0419 511 800 or Susie Pollock - 0429 416 694

Reflections on Synod 2025

Over the years, I have been approached and asked various times to attend the upcoming Synod meeting for that year. Each time, the timing hasn't been right, and I have had to say no. This year the stars aligned for me, and I felt called and able to say yes.

Rather than write a description of what happened over the 4 days, I am instead going to reflect on 3 words I have chosen to highlight my experiences of Synod 2025 and how I felt. They are, surprised, enriched and encouraged.

Surprised. I went into Synod 2025 presuming that this would be primarily a business meeting with some other activities thrown in. I was wrong. It was so much more than a just a business meeting. The networking, the conversations, the guest speakers, the services and prayers, the bible studies, the op shop stall and coffee cart. These are just some of the extras that occurred each day alongside the business. They were full days that always surprised me in how they unfolded and what would speak to or challenge me. So many connections were made with people, so many beautiful faces I could finally place to a name, particularly with the Synod staff. It was wonderful, exhausting, and beautiful.

Enriched. One of my favourite parts of my time at Synod quickly became the Theological Reflections at the end of the day. These were led by Rev Tara Tautari, the General Secretary for Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa (Methodist Church of New Zealand). Tara would get up and as soon as she began to speak it was like a calm breeze had meandered through the hall and I felt instantly calm and at peace. She wove together thoughts on the day with the Spirit of God and enriched me in ways I still cannot put into words. Added to this was Rev Salesi Faupula's gift of singing or humming when he felt called to and so at the end of what would be a difficult or long discussion. He would begin to sing, and all would

join him. I honestly could feel the spirit of God move through the space in every discussion, Bible Study, elective, guest speaker and sermon. There are too many instances to name, but I am all the richer for them.

Encouraged. Our very first night we had 2 guest speakers to talk to us about the Peace Process that is happening on the ground between Palestinians and Israelis. Riman Barakat and Peta Hones Pellach were incredible women who are advocating to give peace a voice and work to end the conflict, and they encouraged those there to spread the word that there are peace advocates on both sides. We also had the privilege of hearing Aunty Esme Bamblett of the First People's Assembly of Victoria speak on Treaty. She spoke from the heart in a clear and concise

manner and encouraged all who were there, to be an upstander and not a bystander. It was in listening to these inspiring women, in discussing the various proposals in the business, even in the deep dive sessions into various reports. It was in these moments that I was encouraged and reminded of why I love and am a part

of the Uniting Church. I was encouraged by the hope, the joy and the passion of its members. I was encouraged by the gift of watching the consensus process in its glorious action. I was encouraged by so many things, and left feeling hopeful for the future.

There is so much more that I could say – so many things that shaped my experience that I haven't touched on. But I will finish here, in gratitude for the time I spent there, and with the surprising revelation (to me) that I would go to another Synod meeting in the future.

Katherine Wall Dobson

Photo of the LMP people (minus one) who attended Synod 2025. We had managed to find a quiet moment to meet for dinner.



Teachers Exploring Chaplaincy or Spiritual Care?

Many schools' report difficulty filling chaplaincy and spiritual-care roles. At the same time, some teachers may be wondering about that work—perhaps in a hybrid role that keeps some teaching alongside a formal role in caring presence.

eLM's Chaplaincy and Connections Team are running a small, six-month inquiry to see what interest exists and what supports would help (formation, mentoring, time release). This is exploratory and listening-led - not a push to move teachers out of classrooms.

Do you know a teacher or educator who might be willing to share some thoughts? They can participate in two ways:

Short primer (comment welcome):

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1rollRcmzg4JWO0cE9AyR6W5Ci2yVvXX9TEsiqrhRJ24/edit?tab=t.0#heading=h.se9pj0jwupgp>

Brief anonymous survey (4-6 mins): <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MNFRWHG>

Questions? Contact Adrian Pyle: adrian.pyle@victas.uca.org.au

Faithful Futures

Faithful Futures Project is a collaborative effort between Presbyteries and the Synod to discern priorities, direct resources, and ensure we are equipped for the challenges and opportunities ahead. The project was initiated out of conversation at the Presbytery Synod Forum and approved at the Synod Meeting 2025. This is being discussed at the November 2025 Presbytery meeting but as a refresher here is the vision and the goals for Faithful Futures.

Vision: Following Christ, walking together as First and Second Peoples, seeking community, compassion and justice for all creation.

Goals:



New communities of faith

Establish at least five new Christian communities by 2030



Intercultural Leadership

By 2028, to:

- Be providing appropriate intercultural leadership formation and equipping for all ministry agents and congregations; and
- Develop intercultural networks for worship, witness, and service.



Respecting Country

Honouring the Church's Covenant with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress, all communities of faith will listen to and be able to tell about some of the histories of the Country on which they are located by the end of 2028, and be invited to develop local and appropriate ways to respond.



All-age growth

To have at least one all-age community of faith that is interactive, diverse, inclusive and transformative in 80% of Coordinated Ministries by 2030.



Coordinated Ministries

Coordinated ministry and mission in geographic areas such as Local Government Areas by 2030: attentive to renewing discipleship, and to the life and needs of the local context.

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.

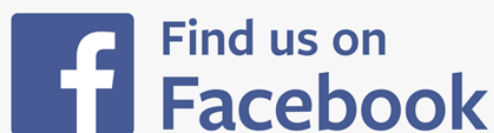
Working With Children Checks

New Requirement – Organisation Email Address

When applying for or renewing a WWCC, applicants are now required to include an organisation email address. To ensure consistency and proper handling of notifications, please use the Synods dedicated email: wwccr@victas.uca.org.au

This email receives all WWCC and Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) notifications, helping to avoid misdirected communications across the Synod.

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 private 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.

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NEXT EDITION—February 2026

Please write to the Presbytery Office by email or post and send us your contributions (Impresbytery@lm.victas.uca.org.au). This is a chance for you to share your news and happenings, and the River of Life is all the richer for it! Please note that the cut-off date for article submissions is the **10th February 2025**.