



THE RIVER OF LIFE

Loddon Mallee Presbytery MAY 2021



So here we are – me and Moses. I hope you can see the similarities! We both love travelling round in the desert, both got big ideas, and big tempers. One of us can part waters, one can't.....yet. 😊

Right now, the thing about Moses I most relate to is the end of his story. After all the struggles and wandering in the wilderness, Moses climbs a mountain. From there 'with his own eyes' he can finally see the Promised Land – and God said 'Yes, you've travelled with the people on this journey, but you're not going there.'

From where I sit in the Presbytery, what I see looks awfully like the Promised Land to me.

I remember when I started in the Southern end of the Presbytery, several difficult placements ended. Then other Ministers resigned or retired. Where would we find new Ministry? And where was the money going to come from? What about the small congregations – how will they ever have Ministry again? What about the exhaustion of congregational leaders from years of producing a worship service every week? What is God's missional call on top of everything else?

However, God's Spirit was at work and so many wonderful things have happened because so many people of faith generously shared their gifts,

skills, time and prayers. Too many to list, so instead I'll just provide some little glimpses. It doesn't matter if you don't know all the people:

Train trips to Melbourne enjoying untangling many puzzles with Judy Causon, prize-winning vanilla slices at the Standing Committee retreat – thanks Ian and Kaye, as it was the only time I got to try one.... 😊 Still looking at the lovely card of welcome on my wall from Di on my first nervous day. The day we discovered Maryborough could only afford an impossible .3 Ministry, then a coffee with Mike who said 'I'd really like a .3 placement. When Covid hit, and Gordon was there to help us work out how on earth to keep in touch with Ministers and provide weekly worship across the Presbytery.....and which has now transformed how we work as a Presbytery. And now the online congregation is the biggest in the Presbytery. Discussing how much Vodka Marie might need after a big Presbytery Zoom Worship crash. And Gordon picking up my distress call, just to say he was in the middle of baptising his son. 😊 The congregations like Weeroona and Heathcote who hit the online worship running and connected beyond their congregations. The coming of new Ministers – to the point where there are very few opportunities

for Ministers who'd like a placement in Loddon Mallee, and something that no other Presbytery could say. The inspiration of the Dunolly Op Shop and its new vision. Attending Australia Day at Moonambel and meeting the amazing Jill Hunter who's nurtured the congregation for decades. Our incredible Lay Preachers and Supply Ministers who at times covered half the Presbytery and never hung up on me when I called them. The excellent IIM work of Bruce Gallacher and the Birchip, Donald, St Arnaud and Wyche congregations who each envisioned new futures – and the tables of all four, creaking with cream-filled delights (but I only ate them to avoid looking stand-offish). Two Ministers having babies. The honour of talking theology with Wes Campbell. Sitting at Hazel's kitchen table. The amazing work of food share across Bendigo congregations. Huge travel and praying my thanks to the Creator for the beauty of this landscape. The Worship Collective who prepared Presbytery worship every week for 8 months. The inspiration of worship in happy ecumenical congregations at Strathfieldsaye and Boort (with many more in the North). The many discussions with Don Needham about whether he was actually a hairy guy. Heathcote's experiments with worship. The inspiration of Tanya Dunbar's coming into Ministry and seeing Tanya and Cynthia on Facebook, out on the town after finally graduating. Coffees and deep talks in the Presbytery kitchen with Joyce. Roast pork crackle with Jon and Gwenda. Finally meeting the famous and efficient Judy Berridge. Jim's fantastic photos. The local community responding to St Arnaud's costs Appeal, because the church is so respected. The story of the day Powlett

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A Morning with Uncle Rick

Several Uniting Church people spent a morning recently "walking on country" with Aboriginal elder, Uncle Rick Nelson.

The group had spent three days studying the Uluru Statement from the Heart that seeks constitutional reforms to include a First Nations Voice in the Australian constitution.

Part of their gathering was to walk around the area occupied by the Franklinford Aboriginal protectorate, the school site and adjacent cemetery and hear from Uncle Rick about life there in the 19th century.

The Franklinford area had been a traditional camping are for thousands of years before European settlement. The protectorate was established by an English organisation concerned about the treatment of Aboriginals and the loss of their lands.

Uncle Rick told the group "We want to share our country and walk together with respect and understanding".

The group, organised by retired Uniting Church minister, Rev Tim Angus, is writing to the Australian government in support of the call for a First Nations Voice being enshrined in the Australian constitution.



Uncle Rick Nelson at Franklinford school site.

Hearing and Responding to the Statement from the Heart: Adekate April 20-22



Uncle Rick Nelson at Parker Memorial with Rev. Sarah Tomilson (and daughter Susanna) and Rev. Tim Angus.

It was a simple walk around Franklinford but it held plenty of significance for those who hope for a better path between Australia's First and Second Peoples. The "walk on country" was one of the highlights of the Uluru Statement from the Heart camp at Adekate Lodge, near Creswick in the 3rd week of April.

The purpose of the camp was to hear and respond to the Statement from the Heart, which was released in 2017 by First Nations people as an invitation to non-indigenous Australians to walk with them towards a better future.

Dja Dja Wurrung elder Rick Nelson, who led the "walk on country", says such events are an important part of educating non-indigenous Australians about indigenous culture. "It's about strengthening the relationship between First and Second Nations people and the hope that from small steps big things can grow," he said.

Twenty four people from across Victoria gathered at the camp. Most were from the UCA, and ten were from the Loddon Mallee Presbytery. The Greater Bendigo Uniting

Church Social Justice Group and the Castlemaine Parish helped with the organisation of the camp, which was initiated by Rev Tim Angus. The camp was heavily subsidised by Uniting Camping, which has covenanting and reconciliation as one of the core parts of its mission. Despite the onset of a burst of cold air from the south, participants were warmly welcomed by Uniting Camping staff, and were well fed and cared for.

Tim Angus said. "we explored the Statement from the Heart through a number of different lenses. We listened to powerful speech given by Noel Pearson to the National Museum on 17th March this year. We learned about the Aboriginal Protectorate that was established at Franklinford in the 1840's as a failed attempt at 'enlightened colonialism',



Preparing a submission.

which itself is a contradiction in terms, the basic premise of colonialism being exploitation of the land and its resources". eLM Social Justice Officer Timothy Molineux said the camp was an important part of the process towards promoting the statement and what it could achieve. "I found it an engaging and rewarding experience to be among a group of people,

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Now your Chaplain needs YOU!

Arthur's* look changed from concern to relief. A sigh and a smile followed.

"Hi, I'm Gordon, and I'm your Chaplain here" I said.

Arthur and I lean into a conversation unlike any other in the hospital. He can speak out the concerns and questions that have rocked his heart for days. He has been wondering how he will adjust to life back home and he feels a burden to family, but that's not all that's on his mind. His time in hospital has him wondering about his life in deeper ways. Arthur's also troubled by that long night last week, when he wasn't sure if he would see the morning or see God instead: and would he be welcome.

I am here to listen, and Arthur hasn't actually had a conversation with a minister since Bob Hawke was in shorts. Here he can talk freely in these crucial days when others seem so busy. While hospital staff are watching his physical health, with his Chaplain he feels known as a whole person and his spirit feels cared for.

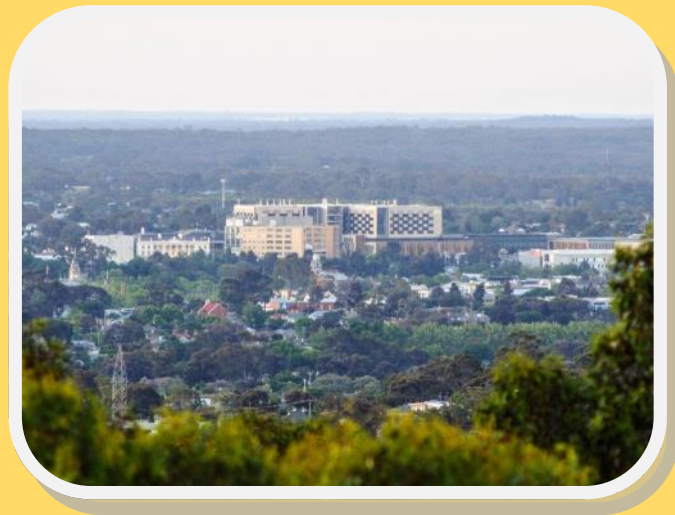
In any week there are over twenty men and women like Arthur from a Uniting background who would welcome an opportunity to talk with a Chaplain. This is far more than we can cover on two days a week.

Here are some short answers to long questions I am asked:

Is Chaplaincy different to church ministry? Yes it is.

Chaplaincy is a specialised form of pastoral ministry. Most people we meet are no longer part of any congregation, so every week we are reconnecting with people afresh who we have not shared life with for a long time, often decades. They still have beliefs and values to be respected whether they attend church or not. Chaplains complement and enhance the care that people need in hospital. Every week we meet and work with the pastoral care team at the hospital, and we operate alongside the wider health team there.

Do Chaplains need special training? Yes we do. We complete specialised training in Clinical Pastoral Education, as well as theological study. We also join in ongoing



Bendigo Health from One Tree Hill.

professional development Spiritual Care Australia – which I am a member of. This year the paid Chaplains are now recognised as contractors not volunteers. We have largely the same access and responsibilities as staff at our major hospital.

Will our UCA chaplain program finish at the end of this year? Some of the Chaplain role is funded by generosity from our UCA congregations, but most has been funded by a Synod grant of \$30,000 per year. That grant does finish at the end of this year. The Presbytery will apply for another round of funding, but the funding is uncertain. The more of this cost we can cover from congregations in our Presbytery, the more secure the future of Chaplaincy will be.

This why your Chaplain needs you: Your congregation can contribute to the costs that your Presbytery covers to provide Chaplaincy. You can ask your Chaplain to speak to your congregation about spiritual and pastoral care.

On behalf of all those who feel fresh currents of care in their lives, I thank you.

Rev. Gordon Wild, Hospital Chaplain

**Not a specific person. Sample story from combined experiences.*

PENTECOST WORD SEARCH



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V	T	G	R	L	W	H	J	N	N	GLORIFY	FATHER	JESUS
G	N	A	L	E	I	M	I	I	I	MINE	COMPLETE	TELL
L	T	E	C	M	H	K	W	M	H	EVERYTHING	WHY	HIMSELF
O	T	I	S	O	A	T	J	H	T			
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A Modified Pancake Night - a Congregation Picnic.

With the Strathfieldsaye Congregation unable to hold their usual and very popular Pancake Night on Shrove Tuesday to raise funds for Uniting Care this year due to the Covid19 Regulations it was decided to try a Congregation Picnic at a later time.. On Tuesday 15th March the planned Picnic was held in the spacious and pleasant church grounds. The evening weather was ideal and the 26 members of all ages brought all their needs for the picnic consisting of all sorts of interesting fare - ranging from a 1 Foot Subway to various types of salads, desserts and treats and even the occasional sandwiches. A very successful and pleasant social evening took place before; during; and after the meal.



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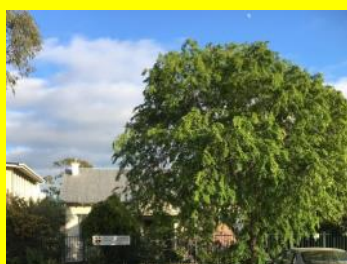
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Rob's Journey



I grew up in a Christian family attending a Baptist church in Blackburn, Melbourne and when I was seven, I invited Jesus to be Lord of my life. It wasn't until I was in year eight and on a youth group camp that I had a deeper understanding of all that Jesus had done for me through his death and resurrection.

While on that youth camp, I recommitted my life to Christ and over the following years my relationship with God continued to grow as I learnt more about God and who I am in Christ.

As a teenager, I had some great youth leaders who encouraged me in my walk with Jesus. These leaders had a positive impact on my life, and it was because of their influence and example, that I became a volunteer leader at my church. I started out as a Sunday school teacher in 1992 and in 1995, I graduated to become a youth leader and have been involved in youth ministry since.

In 1996, I started working in a warehouse picking orders and 4 months later I applied for a job (in the same company) as the inventory Stock Controller/Supervisor. I was successful and with the new role I was now responsible for over 11,000 different lines in the warehouse and making sure the orders were dispatched on time! While working in the warehouse, I started studying part time at Bible college to increase my knowledge and understanding of God!

In April 2003, Michelle and I were married and we moved to Bendigo in January 2004 where I started as the Youth Director in the South East Bendigo Anglican Parish. Over time this role changed as I oversaw the Youth, Children, Families and Young Adults. Our family also grew and we now have three boys, Nathan, Pete and Josh (see photo below).



On 30th November 2019, I was ordained Deacon in the Anglican Church and until the end of May 2020, I was ministering at South East Bendigo. At the end of May I started as the new Minister at Strathfieldsaye Community Church. This has been a challenging time, starting a new role in a new church in the middle of a worldwide Pandemic and being unable to meet your new congregation in person. Yet through all of this, God has been faithful and helped me.

I was Priested in the Anglican Church on 28th November 2020 and I still have lots to learn in order to fulfil my new ministry at Strathfieldsaye Community Church, but I know that God is with me the whole way, helping and guiding me.



*Rob's Induction on February 7th, 2021
On the left is Judy Causon & right is Bishop Matt Brain.*

I am excited about being used by God in a new way at Strathfieldsaye and I look forward to seeing how God will use me as I continue to share God's love with His people and seeing them grow in their relationship with Jesus.



*Rob's first service during Covid!
By Rob's smile, the church isn't so empty these days.*

Rob Edwards

Cover Photo:

One of Rev. Gordon Wild's hobbies is photography and he has taken some stunning photos while travelling around the Loddon Mallee Presbytery. This photo is sunset over the Loddon River at Kerang, April 1, 2021, whilst eating dinner. (Gordon says—"Camera in one hand, souvlaki in the other". What an extraordinary gift you have Gordon.)

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Plains had a Blessing of the Dams, and it poured. The big bird painted across the front of Wedderburn UC. Sitting with the Bishop talking about puppets and pretending I knew all about Frozen. The inspiration of the Mallee Rivers Cluster, Swan Hill, Kerang, Cohuna, Pyramid Hill, and Moulemein. Congregations who said 'lets thrive. Lets forget ourselves, join together and share a team of Ministers who can help us, whether congregations can pay or not. Then a Minister, Mark, way over in SA seeing our little ad in the paper and knowing he was called. His wife Carol, a Chaplain only over here to attend the JNC with Mark letting me know confidentially that morning her own

growing sense of call, only to be challenged later in the day exactly about that and by someone with no knowledge of this conversation. The Steering Committee who in order to enable all the Mallee Rivers congregations to Zoom into their services decided in two minutes to all change the times of their services to 10am. Two minutes – not two decades! And so much more.

Finally to my colleagues throughout this adventure, and my dear friends Siotame and Gordon. Thanks for all the coffees, the pubs, times at the Onie, the tears and disappointments, the many things we achieved together, the arguments, the dreaming, the hoping,

the years of laughter, and the love that grew between us.

So as I sit on my own Mt Nebo looking at the Promised Land of new plans, new ministries, new adventures around the corner, I grieve. But I give my deepest thanks to God for all you've given me. Loddon Mallee Presbytery will always have a big place in my prayers and in my heart.

Rose Broadstock



Thanks Yandoit for Your Witness



A service was held at Castlemaine on Sunday, May 16th, to mark the closure of the Uniting Church in Yandoit, after more than 150 years of Christian witness in that community. Among the memories shared were those of the great times shared by the community around bonfires and Christmas carols. Those present were reminded that God's presence is not confined to a building and that they will continue to be God's people wherever they are called to continue their Christian journey.

A second service was held in the afternoon at Yandoit to formally close the building.

Photos say it all (l-r): Musicians Jane Thompson and James Rigby sing a song about Yandoit at the first of services to mark the closing of the church at a parish service at Castlemaine.

The two kerosene lamps on the altar provided lighting in the church for many years, until electricity was connected in the late 1950's.

Kaye O'Connor and Tyson give the church bell a final ring and Stephen O'Connor listens as Rev Tomilson (with Susanna) ends the service. On the left Tyson engages in the long time custom of Yandoit children, trying to work his way around the church on the narrow stone wall edge.

From Page 2 ...

with differing experiences and views, who all saw the importance of the Statement from the Heart. We spoke about our personal experiences and how they have shaped us, then broadened the discussion to reflect upon the 1967 Referendum and what that experience had to teach us, and subsequent generations."

Timothy said the conversation helped inform the possibility of a referendum to enshrine a Voice to Parliament in the Constitution, and what it would take to make that referendum a success. The camp submitted a submission to Parliament to that end. The camp was also introduced to the Synod's new Covenanting Guide and the JIM cluster's new Statement from the Heart Study Guide resource for congregations.

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Gathering under a 'Saltbush'. New horizons in rural ministry.



Why would twenty-five come travel from all across Australia? And what is "Saltbush"?

One reason drew us: we are all Uniting Church leaders serving rural communities. This one reason drew us together to the southern NSW town of Galong. We meet under the invaluable leadership of "Saltbush": Mark, Tim, and Geoff are UCA Ministers established by the NSW/ACT Synod to support Rural Ministers and Congregations. They generously open their ministry up to those serving in the same way across our wider church. They offer online 'cafes', recorded sermons in 'A Word from the Bush', 'Salty Conversation' podcasts, and a 'Ruminations' printed journal. This is in addition to their consultancy and support for leaders and congregations. See more at <https://nswact.uca.org.au/saltbush/>

The esteemed Siotame Paletu'a and I joined this group for three days of education and encouragement in April.

What were some key moments from our three days together in April?

We listened to each other as we shared our ministry initiatives in rural settings. We listened to leaders from most Australian states, as well via Zoom from New Zealand and the United Kingdom. People welcomed hearing Loddon Mallee's achievements, including the Mallee Rivers cluster, forming and supporting Pastors in leadership, our Zoom services. Many were inspired by the Digital Life Packs we have installed across thirteen congregations.

This question hovered firmly above us: 'What is the calling of the church?'. Mark Berry from the UK led us deep into the 'soil and climate' of this ministry, drawing on Jeremiah 29:7 and Luke 10. What do we do to nurture the shoots of new life in the rural 'soil and climate' of our ministry? We leaned together into these needs and the ministry that flows to them; *our need for love, community, healing, action, blessing, and hope.*

We also asked "Are there new ways to be church in rural settings". We heard about a new expression of church life from Daniel Mossfield. He reminded us of the power of the narrative we retell – that good news is at the core of our life. He reminded us of the value in starting multiple new initiatives at once to diminish the chances of rivalry and opposition. There is also value in Presbytery providing new initiatives that don't leave all the weight on single congregations.

Who's leading us? We celebrated many positive examples of lay leaders in rural communities. We noted their ongoing need for training and support in worship leading, preaching, and church leadership. In our Presbytery we firmly encourage everyone participating in the Lay Leadership training offered by Mel Perkins and her team.

Your Presbytery leadership are actively considering the shape of ministry. This included a two-day Strategic Planning retreat this May. There are many encouraging signs and very valuable people to serve alongside. We know that our future will be vastly different from our past, but we are still finding new ways to 'speak the reconciling word of God to our own age'.

Rev. Gordon Wild.

UCAF MAY GATHERING



The 2021 May Gathering of the Loddon Mallee Presbytery U.C.A.F will be held on Thursday 27th of May at the Chum Street Uniting Church in Golden Square. There will be a cuppa at 10 am followed by a 10:30 am start. Guest Speakers will be U.C.A.F State President Necia Morton (Morning Session) and Rev. Bruce Gallacher (Afternoon Session). *Catered Lunch—\$10 per person.* **All Welcome.**

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The 'walk on country' ended at Yandoit Uniting Church, where there was a brief evaluation of the camp. Those who attended valued the way they were able to engage with both contemporary and historical voices, and hope the event can be replicated both across and beyond the membership of the UCA. Despite the onset of a burst of cold air from the south, participants were warmly welcomed by Uniting Camping staff, and were well fed and cared for. All endorsed the value of the Campsite for such gatherings, and encourage the upgrade of the camp and its continued place in the life and mission of the Church.

[Acknowledgement: this article is a slightly adapted and much expanded version of a Crosslight article written by Andrew]

News from the Castlemaine District Parish



RINGING IN THE FESTIVAL

People from Castlemaine district churches enthusiastically responded to a request to "ring in" the Castlemaine State Festival.

They gathered on the Art Gallery terrace on Saturday morning with a collection of handbells while neighbouring church bells pealed out.

It was also the National Day of Action for Ringing the Bells for Climate Change Action, so the bells were ringing out for both events.

Photos Above:

Handbells ring out at the Art Gallery.

Jim Foley pulls the bell rope at the Castlemaine Uniting Church next door.



EASTER BLESSING

Photo Left: Reverend Sarah Tomilson blessing the freshly baked hot cross buns at "Sprout" bakery, Castlemaine on Maundy Thursday with people from a number of churches.

DANCING IN THE CHURCH AISLES

There was dancing in the aisles of Castlemaine Uniting church as Easter Day was celebrated.

Toward the conclusion of a joyful service to celebrate the defeat of death by Jesus Christ, Rev Sarah Tomilson invited people to express their happiness by dancing in the aisles during the blessing song.

As the band hit a bouncy version of "You shall go out with joy", several people joined hands and danced up and down the aisles to the delight of worshippers who kept time with clapping.

Earlier, people placed flowers they had brought onto an empty wooden cross that was lifted up at the front of the church.

Photo Right: The flower bedecked cross at the front of Castlemaine Uniting Church.

