

Spring



THE RIVER OF LIFE Loddon Mallee Presbytery SEPTEMBER 2020

Faith, Farming and Covid

Spring 2020 is here and with it comes the wonders of new life. Trees that have been dormant over the cold winter months are breaking forth with colourful blossoms, pastures and crops are growing prolifically with the promise of a good harvest in summer. Calves and lambs are being born on many farms and we delight in seeing these new arrivals frolicking in the paddocks enjoying the warm sunny weather. Spring is truly a special time on a farm and we have been truly blessed and are privileged to live in this environment every day as we work the land, tend our animals and work to make a living from the soils.

However, Spring doesn't always bring the positivity in farming that we are seeing this year. As farmers we are always optimistic and we live with the faith that with sound management practices the seed we plant will grow to provide a harvest and that our animals will produce offspring. There have been many years where winter rainfall has not been adequate to allow crop and pasture growth or to fill dams for livestock water. Dry winters are often followed by a lack of rainfall in spring and therefore hand feeding of grain & hay has to be continued through until the following autumn to keep livestock alive. We have been blessed on our farm to have access to bore water which provides reasonable quality water supply for our livestock but this is not the case for many in farming and hand feeding and carting water for livestock must be a significant challenge for farmers in such circumstances. These necessary actions come at a substantial cost to farmers.

Australia is an expansive country, and drought in one area does not mean the whole country is experiencing drought conditions. Similarly, when some parts of the country experience bushfires the world is lead to believe that the whole country is on fire, as we saw in the bushfires of last summer. While it is heartbreaking and devastating for those affected there is the opportunity for us all to help out those affected by donating hay, stockfeed and money to help our fellow humanity to rebuild their lives. There may come a time when we are in the circumstance of needing such assistance if such events happen in our part of the country.



Life throws us many challenges. Droughts or years of low rainfall, floods, bushfires and windstorms which cause such devastation, are all acts of nature and part of the Australian environment. Our forebears had to contend with these natural disasters as well as life through two World Wars and pandemics like Spanish Flu. Yet here we are today experiencing the same types of natural devastating events and holding on to our faith in God to get us through it. And He does.

This year has seen our whole world thrown into turmoil with the COVID19 pandemic. Coronavirus has had devastating effects on humanity worldwide causing enormous loss of lives, both young and old. We ask God to keep us and our loved ones COVID free and that we will stay well. This worldwide pandemic has caused massive disruption to life as we have known it. We are on a new journey, but there is no doubt that what the future holds will be different to what the past has been.

Our Christian faith is being truly tested with the isolation due to COVID19, particularly from our families and friends, but in our faith we see hope – medical scientists working around the clock to develop an effective vaccine to protect humanity from COVID, development of new ways of meeting and communicating via Zoom, Facetime conversations with family, caring for members of our communities and the hope that our communities can accept the changed way of life we will need to adjust to.

We need to maintain our faith and trust God through these testing times of the pandemic just as we have through our challenging years in farming. There have been disappointing years throughout our careers in agriculture but many blessings as well.

How fortunate we are as Christians to have a God who loves us and cares for us, and provides for our needs.

We need to trust God to see us through these challenging times and learn from these experiences to improve our responses when the next challenge presents.

*Geoff and Merna Curnow,
Dunolly Uniting Church.*

An Intercultural & Intergenerational Church

Two Presbyteries
– Loddon
Mallee and

North East – gathered
at the Echuca Uniting
Church on Saturday

31st October, 2019 to hear two wonderful speakers. In the morning session we heard Rev. Dr. Apwee Ting, who has had extensive experience in intercultural ministry, and after lunch, we had Rev Charisse Suli, a 2nd generation Tongan Minister of the Word, with experience in mentoring youth and young adults.

There was a wide intercultural presence. A bus arrived from Robinvale and Mildura, bringing a large group of Tongans and Fijians. Also present were people from Korea, China, Indonesia, Kenya and Myanmar, and I share with you some of the information that was given.

Rev. Dr. Apwee advised that we get to know these people who have come to our shores. Their history, upbringing, social status, culture, ethnicity, sexuality and faith.

There is a cultural iceberg –

1. Visible at the peak. Which is the dress, language and behavior
2. Less visible. Just below the surface. The traditions and worship
3. Not visible. Under the surface. Social status and sexuality

There are a number of Cultural groups:

1. Multicultural – accepts each other and share leadership
2. Monocultural – one particular culture
3. Cross cultural – embracing other cultures
4. Bicultural – Two cultures sharing leadership

The aspects of a migrant church are survival and thrive. The 2nd and next generation is hybrid and in between.

Australian society is increasingly multicultural, multi-religions and secular. In both city and regional towns, the migrant church have people that often have association with Christian identity.

Our Aims.

- Hope for reconciliation and inclusion in a mosaic society
- Recognise differences, discrimination and racism.
- Recognise different issues, such as power and privilege.

Some have had a painful journey to arrive in Australia, separated from their homeland and family. How can we relate to that?

After lunch, Rev. Charisse spoke on “How do you minister with understanding, our generation.”

1. Role strain. There are tons of expectations. Mentally and physically, that makes it difficult to build a multicultural congregation.
2. Know what you can control and let go what you cannot control. You have to lose ethnicity to make progress and all have to embrace a vision.



The Generations within the UCA:

- Oldest builders—The older adult boomers.
- Midlife generation—X
- Young adults

generation—Y

There are the 1st generation. 1.5 generation. 2nd generation and the 3rd generation.

The 75 year plus—have values and respect for elders. Their attitudes are black and white. Right and wrong. Personality – distrust change.

The Boomers—55-70 years. Re questioning, enthusiastic with job and symbols being important. They are experimental and longer to retire.

Generation X are independent and have a work lifestyle. Family before work, seek the truth and married late 20's.

Generation Y love fun and enjoyment, have social awareness and enjoy the now with confidence. Regarding worship – they want hope based, knowledge and emotional.

Generation Z value diversity and inclusion, and are active volunteers. They are realist and enjoy chats and Instagram. They want to participate and have responsibility in work and to be respected.

During the course of the day, I was seated next to a 1st generation Tongan woman and her two children (1.5 generation). She told me how different her up-bring in Tonga was to the culture in Australia. In Tonga they are community minded, live in a close knit community with free housing and shared resources. In Australia people are trained to be independent and support ourselves with emphasis on finance, employment and property.

It was a great opportunity to meet, speak and share with people of different cultures, and to be more inclusive and understanding.

Fay Fletcher,

Weeroona Uniting Church Bendigo.

The Cover Header Photo: “Spring”

Nothing symbolises Spring in Australia more than our national flower, the Wattle; and did you know that September 1st is Wattle Day, the official start of the Australian spring?

This is the time when many *Acacia* species (commonly called wattles in Australia), are in flower. So, people wear a sprig of the flowers and leaves to celebrate the day.

Although the national floral emblem of Australia is a particular species, named the golden wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*), any acacia can be worn to celebrate Wattle Day.

Regeneration by Fire

It's been quite a year so far, hasn't it? We started with devastating bushfires - and it's been all downhill from there.



The effects of fires like those we saw early this year can be catastrophic. Lives, homes, livestock, properties, livelihoods and community facilities are lost, thousands of acres of land are devastated, habitat destroyed, unknown numbers of native animals and birds killed and the emotional toll on those affected, both directly and indirectly is enormous. Is it any wonder that we see fire as an enemy?

The indigenous people of this country, however, have known for countless generations that fire is not their enemy, but have practised "cultural burning" to maintain the land on which they lived and sustain their food sources. "Cool burning" for example, replenishes the earth with ash that fertilises and potassium that encourages flowering. "Soft burning" encourages rain by warming the atmosphere to a level where warm and cool meet and condensation occurs and rain falls.

Despite the devastation that we have seen as a result of bushfires, we have also seen that new life can and does emerge over time. We've seen how blackened trees start to grow new foliage and green shoots emerge from blackened soil. There are seeds and plants that actually require heat and fire in order to germinate. In some Australian native trees and shrubs, such as banksias, the seeds are stored in

woody capsules and are released to germinate and provide new growth when the capsules are destroyed by fire. In other plants, seeds may lie dormant in the soil for many years and germinate after fire.

The Covid-19 pandemic has also caused devastation across the world and we are yet to see the long-term effects. We are still experiencing the "fire" and only when the danger has passed will we fully understand the extent of the destruction it has caused. However, just as the world has recovered in the past from disasters such as wars, pandemics and financial crises, there will, in time,

be recovery from Covid-19. Some of the potential for new growth may be lying dormant until the time is right for it to germinate, but there are hopeful signs already in places that are still "blackened" by this fire, as people find new ways to live productively in restricted circumstances, to support, connect and care for each other, to worship and share their faith.

Let's continue to be open to recognising and encouraging the potential for new growth in our churches and the possibilities that have been lying dormant, waiting for the conditions that might encourage their development.

Judy Causon, Presbytery Chairperson

I still can't believe people's survival instincts told them to grab toilet paper.	I'm going to stay up on New Year's Eve this year. Not to see the New Year in, but to make sure this one leaves.	If I had only known in March it would be my last time in a restaurant, I would have ordered dessert.
At the store there was a Big X by the register for me to stand on... I've seen too many Road Runner cartoons to fall for that one.	Having some states lock down and some states not lock down is like having a peeing section in a swimming pool.	Until further notice, the days of the week are now called, thisday, thatday, otherday, someday, yesterday, today & nextday.
THEY SAID A MASK AND GLOVES WERE ENOUGH TO GO TO THE GROCERY STORE THEY LIED. EVERYBODY ELSE HAD CLOTHES ON	The dumbest thing I've ever purchased was a 2020 planner.	When Does Season TWO of 2020 Start? I Do Not Like Season ONE.
Keep in mind, even during a pandemic, no matter how much chocolate you eat, your earrings will still fit.	The buttons on my jeans have started social distancing from each other.	I never thought the comment "I wouldn't touch him/her with a 6 foot pole" would become a national policy, but here we are

Presbytery Contacts

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The Office is closed indefinitely, but emails and phone messages are checked regularly

Presbytery Minister Administration

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(on leave from October 19th and retiring December 31st)

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(NB: Rose is working part time till December)

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(on leave from September 21st to October 5th)

Merle Pole was recently featured in the Ouyen local newspaper, North West Express. She is a member of the Central Mallee Co-operative Parish and the Pastoral and Administrative Team (PAT). Merle is Public Worship Team Leader on PAT, Secretary of Walpeup Congregation and CMCP lay representative to Presbytery. She has been a great resource for visitors and locals seeking information on the history of our local churches too.

A Passion for Local History Recognised

Merle Pole was granted a Royal Historical Society of Victoria Award of Merit for 2020 for her continued work in the preservation and promoting of Mallee History at their recent Annual General Meeting. Merle was able to take part in the online conference linkup to hear her well-deserved award read out.

The requirements needed to qualify for the award are quite strict with the nominee needing to have given exceptional 'meritorious service' to the RHSV or an affiliated member society, going beyond what is normally expected. There is little doubt that over her 30 years of being involved in the Ouyen District History and Genealogy Centre, Merle has well and truly fulfilled that requirement.

Merle first became involved with the ODHGC in 1988 during the 80th anniversary of the Ouyen Primary School and the 60th anniversary of the Ouyen Secondary College. The celebration included researching of the many small schools that dotted the Mallee and organising plaques to recognise them.

After a short stint as Vice President, Merle stepped into the role of President in 1999 and has continued in that position ever since. She has led the group in the preserving of local history and hence has been able to make all manner of materials available to the public and supported other historians to ensure the Mallee's story was known and told.

Over the years Merle has offered accommodation to researchers and authors in her own home, allocated unknown hours of research herself and provided countless contacts that allow the Mallee story to be documented and shared with a wider audience. Authors Merle has worked with have used information gathered and from her knowledge to write award winning literature.

It is hoped that RHSV President Richard Broome, who himself has been a recipient of Merle's knowledge, will be able to present the award at a later date when COVID-19 restrictions have lifted enough to allow it.



What is the Money for Mission Program About?

Once upon a time, when our churches were many and congregations were large, most had a manse to accommodate the minister and family. They also had tennis courts, halls that were in constant use and other facilities.

Over the years, the use of these properties has changed, some have been closed and many have been sold. Others have been leased and provide an income for the now-reduced congregations. However, our properties are, on the whole, more maintenance-intensive these days. Government regulations and changing laws are adding to compliance costs. Many things we used to do ourselves must now be done by professionals.

It has also become clear in recent years that, in this changing world, the traditional approach to resourcing the church's missional activities needs re-thinking. So how might we utilise some of our under-used property resources to help fund the wider mission of the church, while at the same time relieving our ageing and shrinking membership of some of the stresses and responsibilities of maintaining and administering these resources?

This was one of the matters discussed at the Synod meeting of July, 2019, following which a steering committee was given the task of exploring new ways to sustain the church's ministry and mission into the future. The Mission Sustainability Steering Committee has proposed the Money for Mission program (MFM) in response to this task.

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Congratulations Rev. Joe Wilson

After completing my Theological Studies, Joy and I were married in January, 1961 and moved to the Pakenham Methodist Circuit which had seven preaching places. Fortunately, they did not all have weekly Services of Worship. After 2 years' probation, I was ordained in October, 1962. Just the following January (1963), I was asked by the director of the Federal Methodist Inland Mission if I would go to Meekatharra in Western Australia (Murchison Patrol), as the minister there had to return to Victoria for family reasons.



Bendigo Gaol and The Anne Caudle Centre. After the Uniting Church was formed in 1977, our circuit was joined with St Andrews Church and became known as the Weeroona Parish.

Time to move on again; this time to the large Essendon Parish which sometimes had four or five ministers working together, a new experience for me. I did however have my own pastorate at Aberfeldie and Buckley Park churches.



We moved to Euroa in March 1985 and were enjoying the time there, when I was again asked to cut my ministry in the area short and consider moving to the Wentworth-Dareton Parish. It was cooperation Parish with the Uniting Church and the Churches of Christ. I worked with the Churches of Christ minister who lived in Dareton for the first 12 months, but when he retired, I had full responsibility, which brought a different challenge. As well, there was a patrol area in south west New South Wales which extended up as far as Pooncarie on the Darling river and west towards the South Australian border.

After six years in Wentworth we returned to Bendigo and retired to Kangaroo Flat.

I then, for a number of years, took on relieving positions and part time work at Long Gully and Marong.

To adapt the words of the prophet Amos, when challenged by the Priest, "I was no Prophet nor a Prophet's son" ... "But the Lord took me from behind the shop counter and made me a Preacher of the Gospel."

Rev. Joe Wilson.

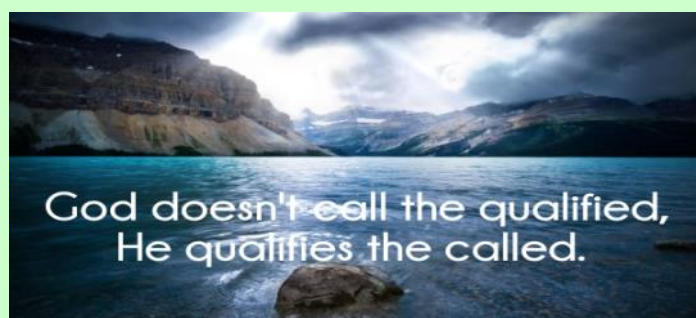


It was not an easy decision, but we left for W.A. in April, travelling by four trains to Perth; picked up the Mission vehicle there and travelled the remaining 420 miles by road, 300 miles of which was unsealed. Meekatharra and Mt. Magnet were the two larger towns in the Patrol area as well as three very small villages, Cue, Sandstone and Wiluna – all former gold mining areas. Pastoral Stations and Mining Camps were also visited. Joy often accompanied me when I went "on patrol".



We left Meekatharra in December 1966 and moved to Woomelang in the Mallee. There were four congregations in the circuit; one, Lascelles being in co-operation with the Presbyterian Church. We enjoyed our five years in the Mallee.

From January 1972, we spent eight very busy years living in Arnold Street, North Bendigo. There were four congregations, Arnold Street, Bridge Street, White Hills and Epsom. As well, I was a part time Chaplain at both the



Photos:

1. Rev. Joe—1987
2. Methodist Inland Mission vehicle—1963.
3. Joe and Joy at Woomelang
4. Kids Club at the Euroa church

Well done Bob

Bob Causon was recently recognised by Badminton Australia as its Hero of the Month for August:

All Rounder Club & Great Hero of The Month!

Bob Causon, at the ripe age of 80, loves getting on court to take on anyone who dares! Bob helps out around his club with coaching juniors, welcoming new players and even takes care of children while their parents have a hit on the court!. He is a life member of Bendigo/ Eaglehawk Badminton Club and runs casual sessions every Saturday and Tuesday, clearly a very deserving of Athlete of The Month!

Bob is a member of the Forest Street congregation in Bendigo, where he first started playing badminton in the hall almost 50 years ago. While he no longer plays in competition, he enjoys a regular social game and loves to help new players to learn the basic skills of the game. The Saturday social sessions have provided an opportunity for many newcomers to Bendigo, some of them on short-term contracts, to get together and enjoy their sport. They all look forward to the time, post-pandemic, when the sessions can start up again.



Biblical Storytelling at Presbytery meeting

At the August Presbytery zoom meeting we had the privilege of hearing Rev. Annette Buckley share her experiences of Bible Storytelling.

We were captivated by Annette's enthusiasm in Bible Storytelling. The first Bible story presented by Annette was the Pentecost story from Acts 2:1-13. She really made the story come alive. We were all familiar with the Pentecost story but with Annette's storytelling it was more personal and engaging. Janet felt that the storytelling experience helped her to identify better with the characters in the story.

Annette outlined how the process of Bible Storytelling can be developed –

- * **M**aster the text.
- * **U**nderstand the text.
- * **L**ive the story.
- * **L**ink personally with the story.

Bible storytelling with Annette was an enlightening experience and she certainly made it look easy. We were all inspired by Annette's warmth and vitality.

Heather Ryall and Janet Limon, Strathfieldsaye Community Church



It was a very special time quite a few years ago, when I asked a friend from Kerang to come and share - by way of Bible Story telling - in the morning service I was leading. I remember the scripture coming alive in a different way as the story unfolded before us and we were all completely intent on listening to every word. For our Presbytery meeting just held, it was the same experience for me again. We have all read many stories from the Bible - no matter what story, or what translation, because that is what we do before the sermon. Every movement, facial expression, and voice intonation held us captive in the frame of the story. This format though to me was very personal, and the whole dynamic of the words 'came to life. True story telling is a gift, and Anne has that gift and the stories are the word of truth. I think we were all privileged to hear her.

Hazel Radley, Cohuna Uniting Church.

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The MFM program aims to addresses some of the issues by encouraging congregations and other Responsible Bodies to sell property that is surplus to their projected missional needs and invest the proceeds in a shared fund, to be administered by U Ethical. This fund is designed to generate a rate of return over the long term that is anticipated to be greater than that from rental income.

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Books of the Bible Puzzle



Unscramble the name of each book of the Bible and write it correctly in the blank. Then write the letter from each numbered position in the corresponding blank at the bottom of the page. You'll spell a phrase that's used to describe the word of God.

We've done the first one for you as an example.

- | | | | |
|---------------|-------------|-------------|-----|
| 1. UTRH | <u> </u> | <u>Ruth</u> | (3) |
| 2. TWAMHET | <u> </u> | <u> </u> | (5) |
| 3. BOPERRSV | <u> </u> | <u> </u> | (5) |
| 4. SUBNEMR | <u> </u> | <u> </u> | (7) |
| 5. WRESHBE | <u> </u> | <u> </u> | (6) |
| 6. USAJHO | <u> </u> | <u> </u> | (2) |
| 7. MORASN | <u> </u> | <u> </u> | (1) |
| 8. GEJDSU | <u> </u> | <u> </u> | (3) |
| 9. STREEH | <u> </u> | <u> </u> | (3) |
| 10. HMOLIPEN | <u> </u> | <u> </u> | (2) |
| 11. LINEDA | <u> </u> | <u> </u> | (5) |
| 12. SEESING | <u> </u> | <u> </u> | (5) |
| 13. SHEEPISAN | <u> </u> | <u> </u> | (2) |
| 14. CLAIMHA | <u> </u> | <u> </u> | (7) |
| 15. HARMEEJI | <u> </u> | <u> </u> | (3) |
| 16. AGHAIG | <u> </u> | <u> </u> | (6) |
| 17. SNAGILATA | <u> </u> | <u> </u> | (5) |

The Bible is also known as the

 of

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To participate in the scheme, once a property is sold, the proceeds (after selling costs) will go into the fund and the Responsible Body will receive units in that fund. There will be two types: Responsible Body Units and Wider Church Units. The proportion allocated to each will be calculated according to the current Property Sales Proceeds tiers and the Responsible Body will receive a regular cash return, to support its ministry and mission. The Wider Church Units will be used to support the work and mission of the church through the presbyteries, Synod, Assembly and Congress. The first priority will be the allocation of funds to the Responsible Body.

This will be an "opt-in" program, so it will be important that congregations and other Responsible Bodies are well informed about how it will operate. Church Councils, Ministers and leaders have received the Money For Mission Program document and a presbytery information session was provided via Zoom on Monday, September 14th. The Presbytery Minister, Rob Dalgleish, is able to help Church Councils and congregations as they give thought to participating in the program.

Come join us



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

Invite your friends to join—this is a closed group.

Learning in LM

Training and Education in the Loddon Mallee Presbytery.

ZOOM TRAINING—HOW TO LEAD MEETINGS AND SERVICES ONLINE.

Ministers and Pastors—September 24 (11:30am—12:30pm)
Lay Leaders & Church Council members—October 1 (10:30am—12:00 noon)

FRESH PATHS INTO DEEPER SPIRITUALITY.

A two-part series so please plan to attend both days: Wednesday October 7 AND November 18, 2–3:30pm. Led by Rev. Gordon Wild.

We will work with questions like: How might we sense God's movement in our lives? How might scripture, heritage and current experience feed our spiritual lives? We will share our learning in the second session.

PREPARING FOR ADVENT 2020.

Preparing for an intergenerational Christmas.

Come join a huddle on **Tuesday September 29, 5pm via Zoom**. This will be a small group of ministry leaders who will meet via Zoom each month between now and December 15 for about an hour each time. It is to share ideas and encourage one another in the thinking/planning of Advent activities.

Synod presentation—Friday & Saturday, November 6-7.

This online conference for our whole synod. It will cover topics like planning Advent & Christmas, preaching from Mark, and how we understand forgiveness. Our leaders include Rev. Dr. Robyn Whitaker, Rev. Fran Barber, Rev. Mel Perkins and Rev. Dr. Bill Loader.

STAYING WELL: REFLECTIONS ON CODE OF ETHICS.

Tuesday October 20 at 1pm until 3.30, or Wednesday October 21, 9.30 til 12.00. *By the Presbytery Ministry Team.*

Another opportunity to reflect on healthy patterns and practices in ministry.

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WHY ARE THESE SESSIONS BEING OFFERED?

Life changes. We have a faith that faces these changes with assurance and hope.

Our training events aim to nourish our faith in personal and practical ways. We are also strengthening our congregations with spiritual encouragement and practical skills for ministry in these new times.

This training is for congregation members and council members, for lay leaders and for ministers.

We look forward to seeing you, and we welcome your questions.



A Safe Church for All People – Putting Children First

The Uniting Church’s National Safe Church Unit has released a new poster to coincide with National Child Protection Week 2020. The poster designed by Melbourne-based illustrators Cat and Annie MacInnes depicts the ten National Principles for Child Safe Organisations applied in a Uniting Church context.

Those ten principles are:

1. Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.
2. Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
3. Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
4. Diversity is respected and equity is promoted.
5. Our people are suitable for work with children and committed to the values of child safety and wellbeing.
6. Child-focused complaints processes
7. Our people are provided with ongoing education and training on child safety
8. Physical and online environments promote safety
9. Policies and procedures document child safety
10. Review and continuous improvement of policy, procedure and practice

National Safe Church Unit Director Rev. John Cox says engaging with the principles is essential if the UCA is to live up to its promise of being a safe church for all people.

“The theme of this year’s National Child Protection Week is ‘Putting Children First’,” said Rev. Cox.

“This poster is an accessible presentation in our Uniting Church context of what we have to do to achieve just that.”

“I want church members to look at this poster, think about and discuss the principles and talk with each other about how you apply them in your church, faith community, school or agency.

The poster and the artwork is available on the safechurch.uca.org.au website in editable PDF form, so congregations, schools and agencies can co-brand if desired. It can also be made available in a range of digital formats for presentations.

National Child Protection Week was from 6-12 September.

Further information on the principles and the UCA’s commitment to child safety through national policies and frameworks is available on the National Safe Church Unit website (<http://safechurch.uca.org.au/>) or by contacting the Unit at info@safechurch.uca.org.au



NEXT EDITION—November 2020

Please write to us by email or snail-mail and send us your contributions (Imucapresbytery@gmail.com).

This is a chance for you to share your news and happenings to unite our mission and connection.

Thank you to those who have taken up this offer. *Editorial Team—Rose and Joyce.*