

Narana Pastoral Letter

Rev. Denise Liersch **VicTas Synod Moderator** [Synod e-news Update 24//6/2021]

Last Friday, I had the chance to visit Narana Aboriginal Cultural Centre. Narana is a significant centre of ministry of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress in Victoria. (Click Picture for Link to Narana's website)



With extended lockdowns, travel and gathering restrictions, this was the first time in a long time since I'd been there. I picked up Uncle Vince Ross, State Elder for Congress Victoria, along the way, and we went together. We met up with Anthony Hume, or Hume as everyone calls him, in the café for lunch.

I met a few of the other Narana staff as well, and Mel Osborne joined us a little later. It was hard to leave the table. The café was warm with the open fire blazing, the views out to the gardens were beautiful, the food and coffee were really good.

We did just a little bit of talking too. Some of it was sad, the tragedy and heartache of family separations and how deeply they've affected Aboriginal communities. Yet it was also inspiring, hearing about how families have found courage and strength in their lives.

NAIDOC Week is July 4-11, with celebrations across the country. NAIDOC Week invites all Australians to embrace First Nations' cultural knowledge and understanding of Country as part of our national heritage and to respect the culture and values of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders along with the cultures and values of all Australians. (Cont p.2)

NAIDOC WEEK

For people in the Geelong area, many head to Melbourne for special celebrations. But thinking about what NAIDOC Week is all about, you could say that Narana is doing this all year round.

Uncle Vince Ross is founder of Narana, and in theory he is retired, but he's still engaging in connecting people and communities. Right at the moment, he's working on a project in Deniliquin, to mark a significant site for the local Aboriginal community. He's got the Mayor, Rotary Club and local Aboriginal and wider community together to protect the site, creating a plaque and yarnning circle around what's left of the old building there.

It's a way of remembering and marking this sacred spot, knowing more about our history, and bringing people together. When he's home, Uncle Vince drops in at Narana pretty often to catch up with people and how things are going. |

Narana has grown a lot since those early days when Uncle Vince first opened up an office and shop in the Geelong CBD. But the overall vision continues in the same line: to promote reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people by developing a better understanding of culture through community connections.

Humey leads groups in interactive cultural education programs. The day I visited, Humey spent a couple of hours with a group of kindergarten children. They loved the stories and dancing, squealing and laughing with delight, as they learned about Aboriginal culture. This is community connection, and Humey has a passion for it, whether it's with children or adults or youth.

I asked Humey if he could say what he'd most like to see develop further at Narana – what he's really passionate about. He answered pretty quickly: youth. They have a homework club at Narana for Aboriginal youth, but it's much more than a homework club. It's a way of engaging kids and young people with discovering their gifts and their talents. |

Lockdown limited a lot of things at Narana last year, but it also gave the opportunity for staff to do some work there's not been the chance to get to when things are really busy. The workshops have been upgraded significantly, and some tools and equipment have been donated that need more work, including two lathes. Things keep growing it seems.

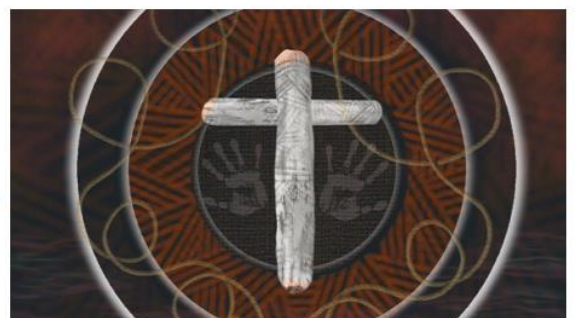
Humey says, for him, the most important thing is engagement – people engaging and connecting with people. This is how we grow, and how opportunities develop for the best to come out in us. If it's going to be worthwhile, it's got to be about doing something that gives to the community.

If you've never been to Narana, or, like me, you haven't been for a long time – make a visit, and plan to spend a bit of time there, chatting with the people who make Narana what it is.

I've already raved about the café, but the art gallery is also beautiful. There's an extensive new display of beautiful works in both traditional and modern styles by Aboriginal and Torres Strait artists from across Australia. Or you can visit the resident emus and wallabies, stroll through the gardens or browse through the shop. It's all free – a gift to our communities.

This NAIDOC Week, let's engage and celebrate. The theme for 2021 is Heal Country. It invites us to seek greater protections for the lands, waters, sacred sites and cultural heritage that sustain the lives of First Peoples, and indeed all of us.

It's a chance to come together to celebrate the rich history, cultures and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. It's a time to listen more carefully to God's calling to us to be a "fellowship of reconciliation". It's a time to lean in more to our Uniting Church covenant to walk together as First and Second Peoples – as a matter of Christian faith. And, as Humey puts it, **it's a time to engage with community.**



Mental Health Matters

REV. FI BOTCHER (DEACON AT SUNSHINE MENTAL HEALTH)

One of my colleagues begins his description of pastoral care by saying: "Sometimes people need their suffering to be witnessed". This is a powerful statement highlighting the important role of storytelling in healing.

As a mental health chaplain, I try to create safe spaces where people, at their most vulnerable, can tell their own stories and be heard.

Storytelling helps wellbeing and mental health in many ways. Through storytelling people discover they're not alone and that they can learn from the experiences of others. Listening to other people's lived experiences can help overcome discomfort, fear and shame.

NAIDOC week is a time for listening. This year's theme, "Heal Country!", is a call from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to protect their lands, waters, sacred sites and cultural heritage.

Aboriginal Christian Leader, Brooke Prentis, asks us to "bring your hands, feet, mind, heart. Bring your listening, your learning, your love" and join Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on a journey of "healing country through Treaty and Truth Telling".

Let us hear the call to heal all of God's good creation. Let us hear the stories. Let us pray for reconciliation and the end of exploitation and destruction of country. (Image credit: Artwork on display at Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, Thornbury, 2019)



Joint Presbyteries Minister's Retreat

Sunday Sept 5 – Wednesday Sept 8, 2021



Formal program will start from Monday Lunch and conclude after 3pm on Wednesday. Ministers can come from Sunday afternoon onwards – Sunday evening meal will not be catered for.

Where: UCA Campsite Norval House / Halls Gap

Who: Open to all ministry agents, chaplains and Pastors in placement, and retired ministers in long term supply.

What: The theme of the retreat will be **Renewal – Psalm 119: 114**

Guest Speaker: Julie Perrin

Accommodation: share cabins – two people to a room

Cost: We have received in kind funding from Uniting Camping.

\$150 per person for three nights (i.e. come to camp on Sunday afternoon)

\$120 per person for two nights (i.e. come to camp on Monday morning)

Meals included (except for Sunday evening)

Extra Costs: Linen hire \$18.20 – you can bring your own linen for free

Booking: Trybooking. <https://www.trybooking.com/BQUHO> Final payments and bookings Friday Aug 20, 2021

We look forward to sharing with you in this Retreat. Jeanne, Narelle and Trevor (Retreat Organisers)



Education Events



4th—11th July

NAIDOC Week

20th July

Sharing our Narratives by Rev Ken Sumner



22nd July

Messy Church Matters

1:30 pm

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86523778374>



27th & 28th July

Intergenerate AUS

Brisbane, Sydney, NZ, Zoom



7th August

Make it Messy

Parkville, CTM



9th August

PWV Pastors Day

9:30—12:30pm



12th August

Pastoral Care in a Pandemic—Part 1

6—9 pm

14th August

PPW Presbytery Meeting

t.b.a



20th August

Pastoral Care in a Pandemic—Part 1

9:30—12:30 pm

In-person at Hoppers Crossing UC & ...



26th August

Pastoral Care in a Pandemic—Part 2

6—9 pm

21st August

PWV Presbytery Meeting

t.b.a



Art Exhibition **sacrededge festival** Queenscliff September 3-5, 2021

Exhibition open every day until September 21

SAVE THE DATE

Sacred Edge 'Celebrates Diversity'
Themes: First Peoples, Refugees, LGBTIQ,
Earth and Ocean, and Wellbeing.

We are especially keen to invite artists who identify with these inclusive themes. Expression of Interest 23rd July 2021. Email unitingqueenscliff@iinet.net.au

Art Exhibition **sacrededge festival** **EXPRESSION OF INTEREST**

Please provide a separate Expression of Interest form for each artwork.
(Maximum of two artworks.)