

The Westerly



PWV & PPW Newsletter No.15 – 2nd Sept 2021



A Church for all Generations

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Imagine a community where people of all ages participate in all aspects of church life, including worship, mission and outreach, discipleship, leadership, making a difference, having fun and more. A church where everyone is welcome, regardless of age, ability, or stage of faith. A community where people can learn, listen, play, pray and share God's love and activity in the world.



I discovered a passion for cultivating intergenerational relationships while attending a Uniting Church cross cultural gathering held by the NSW/ACT Synod's Board of Mission in 2008. It was an event I didn't want to attend but I went anyway to support my friends. It turned into the most life-giving and transformative experience. What struck me was the intentionality with which cross-cultural and intergenerational listening and learning took place across generations and cultural groups. There was recognition of the dual heritage that second generations have, which enriches their life, but may also be a source of pain because they don't know where they belong. There was also an intentionality in overcoming barriers and theologically reflecting on what it means to be the body of Christ, acknowledging our privileges as well as our limitations and striving towards becoming a church that embodies the radical hospitality of Jesus. The Synod and Assembly leaders of the time introduced me to this concept of Intergenerational and Cross-cultural Ministry and it planted the seed for a life-long interest in bridging generational divides.

Years later, I've continued to investigate, research and discern, to learn and unlearn, to practise, and to gain a greater understanding of what Intergenerational Ministry means in the context of the Uniting Church in Australia. I don't have all the answers and sharing my discoveries in this space would still not be sufficient, but what has become clearer to me is that investing in and promoting Intergenerational Ministry is critical to our mission and the health of our church. This is especially true in the post-COVID era when the revolution in digital technology is transforming how we live, work, and be the church today.

I recognise that there are many different meanings and interpretations of what it means to be engaged in Intergenerational Ministry. **Intergenerational Ministry occurs when generations come together in mutual service, sharing, learning or celebration, as we live out our lives as the body of Christ.** Key to Intergenerational Ministry is intentional leadership that promotes engagement across the generations. It is the flourishing of communities in which people of any age and generation share in the journey of life together.

I've appreciated the ministry of Chris Barnett, Intergenerational Ministry – Children and Families worker for the VIC/TAS Synod. Through his work and research, Chris has discovered that *"an intentionally intergenerational environment is more likely to encourage and sustain lifelong discipleship for all ages and **being intergenerational** can be thought of as a core value (something fundamental to who we are and who we are aspiring to be), an attitude or disposition (the way we approach "other", in this case those who are different to us in age), is part of a philosophy of ministry/ethos (the way we do the things we do) that encompasses all aspects of our life together. Being genuinely intergenerational can be characterised as people from at least two different generations intentionally engaging together in respectful relationships marked by mutuality (all benefit), equality (all are valued equally) and reciprocity (all give and receive)."*

A Church for All

The practice of becoming an intentional Intergenerational Church, like any other missional objective in the church, has its challenges. One of the challenges we face is that there is a growing number of people in the life of our church who were born overseas, have a parent born overseas or speak a variety of languages. The adjustment to a new country, way of life and language can be stressful and isolating. This may be compounded by the reason for migration, ability to access employment, social and economic strain, ability to speak English and the cultural differences between Australia and the person's culture of origin. In family and church life, many of our culturally and linguistic diverse (CALD) communities face tremendous cross-cultural and intergenerational strain because they live in a society where choice is a dominant factor. CALD communities are often more communal in nature, operating in a hierarchical system in which each generation naturally understands their place in the larger group. This structure has the potential to suppress younger second and third generations from deepening their participation in ministry, faith formation and discipleship, especially when the generational divide in family and church life widens.

In urban Western societies communities are dispersed and an individualistic approach to life and ministry can fragment families and decrease the sense of community identity and participation. Young people of the second and third generations are subject to the expectations of two different cultures, which are often similar but sometimes contradictory in terms of behaviour and loyalty.

It is critical that when we engage in Intergenerational Ministry, we do so with an Intercultural lens and framework in mind, so that we can journey through life and ministry together. Through intentional holistic relationships that form and sustain lifelong formation and discipleship, we respond to God's call to live as God's reconciled and reconciling people.

As one of the core themes in the Assembly Strategic Plan, the Assembly is committed to delving deeper into what an Intergenerational Church looks like in today's modern world, and particularly in a post-COVID period, throughout the new triennium. In an age where individuals are becoming increasingly isolated and communities are under lockdown, we can strengthen intergenerational and intercultural relationships within the church by forging new connections with one another, regardless of difference.

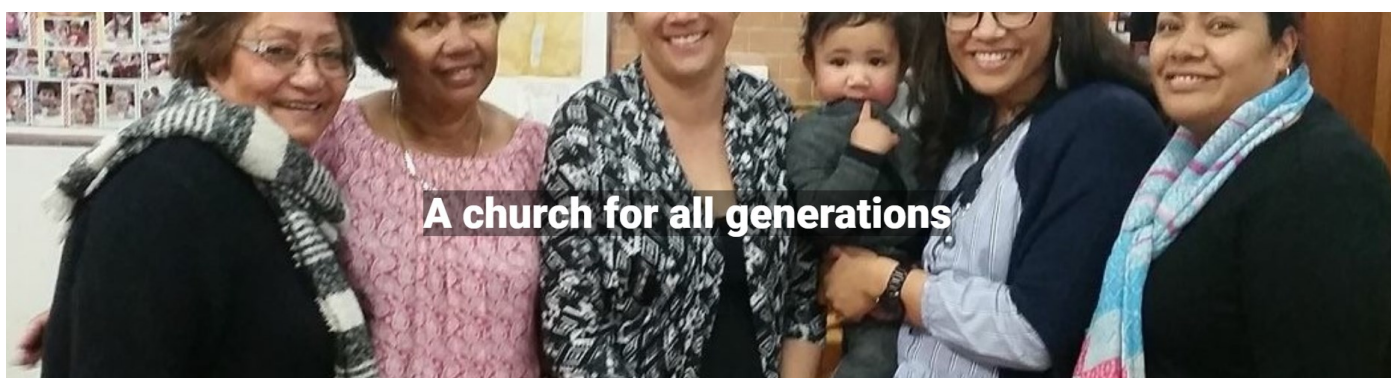
Additionally, we want to identify the resources necessary to better equip our Church and the actions necessary to develop models for faith and leadership formation in our emerging generations. Part of this work will be developing an Intergenerational and Intercultural Ministry Framework that welcomes, equips, and holds together the different generations and communities in the church's life, ministry, decision-making, and leadership. The Assembly's work will complement the excellent work being done in this area by our Synods. You might be interested in the following Synods' intergenerational work:

<https://victas.uca.org.au/ministry-mission/intergenerational/>

<https://sa.uca.org.au/intergen/>

<https://unitingchurchwa.org.au/blog/intergenerational-ministry-model/>

Keep in mind that God's church was designed to include people of all ages. There is no hierarchy of power in God's family. As a result, we are all teachers and learners, regardless of our generation and culture. We are co-creators with the Divine and with one another. God calls us to lead one another in love and humility, with God's love as our guiding principle. We all have talents, passions, and abilities to offer that God can use to care for everyone. Helping all generations connect and grow in faith and discipleship enables the light of the Gospel shine through in our witness, mission and service as the body of Christ.





Mental Health Matters

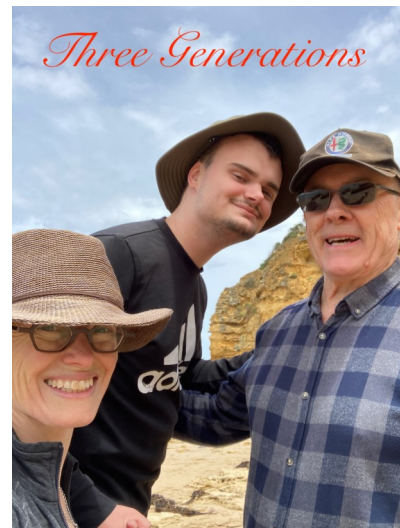
REV. FI BOTCHER (DEACON AT SUNSHINE MENTAL HEALTH)

I secretly believe I have superpowers. Well, that's a bit of a stretch, but there's a part of me that thinks that I "should" be above average - at least. As a minister and hospital chaplain, I seem to think I "should" be able to cope with this pandemic better than most. But as it turns out, I am very average. A fact that hit me like a baseball bat recently as I realised, I wasn't dealing with stress particularly well at all!

This "mini revelation" got me thinking about the stories we tell ourselves about how we "should" be coping, and how sharing these stories could help us build a kind of community resilience. Which also got me thinking about our intergenerational experiences, and how we, the body of Christ, might be invited to work together to heal and grow as a "post-pandemic" church.

And that made me feel surprisingly hopeful. As a church and community, we are walking towards this "new normal" together, not knowing what to expect but with vastly different skills and experiences, gifts, and graces.

And by grace, and as the body of Christ, we are building the resurrection church we are called to be. Together.



Share Sunday Appeal - All are Welcome.

Support those struggling to manage their mental health.

Worship Resources (Click here)

Donate now →



Uniting

Synod Intercultural Forum—Two Day Event—Oct 12th & 13th

Intercultural Seminar

We invite you for a walk with Rev Dr Garry Deverell to listen and engage with his story and reflections as an indigenous person.

Theme: 'Meet the First Peoples of Gondwana'

When: October 12th

Time: 9 am to 12.30pm

Cost: \$20-

Where: Zoom (will be given on registration)

Register at : <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/intercultural-seminar-tickets-167694624135>

Synod Intercultural Forum meeting

The 2021 General Meeting of the Synod Intercultural Forum will be held on October 13th from 10 am to 12.30 pm via Zoom.

All those who want to engage with intercultural ministry and enhance the intercultural vision of the Uniting Church in the Vic Tas Synod are welcome to the meeting.

Education Events

3rd September
9:30—12:30 pm

Pastoral Care in a Pandemic—Part 2



3rd - 5th September

Sacred Edge—CANCELLED Reluctantly

Ticket holders can keep ticket for future event, be refunded, donate.

5th - 8th September

Joint Presbytery Retreat—POSTPONED Possibly Nov or Feb?

Money will be refunded.

8th September

Worship & Preaching On-Line Training

7 - 9 pm

Understanding Preaching 1; Working with difficult texts



Sept 14th

Pastoral Care Seminar 1

6—9 pm

I missed out on earlier training so joining now.



Sept 15th

Worship & Preaching On-Line Training

7 - 9 pm

Responding to the Word; Multi-sensory—Multiple Intelligence



16th September

Pastoral Care Seminar 7 Dealing with Criticism...

6—9 pm



Building Intercultural Communities

This all-day workshop seeks to resource ministry leaders in engaging and understanding the diverse spiritual needs of members shaped by culture.

Opportunities to reflect on your ministry practice and its cultural relevance in your ministry context.

It seeks to enhance greater awareness and intentionality in building intercultural skills for ministry and community building with presentations on cultural awareness and skills, biblical reflections, sharing of ministry experiences, panel and group discussion.

NAVIGATING THE LANDSCAPE
Building intercultural communities

03 NOVEMBER
WEDNESDAY

9:30am- 4pm

Zoom (will be provided on registration)

This all-day workshop seeks to resource ministry leaders in engaging and understanding the diverse spiritual needs of members shaped by culture. It will offer opportunities to reflect on your ministry practice and its cultural relevance in your present ministry context. It seeks to enhance greater awareness and intentionality in building intercultural skills for ministry and community building with presentations on cultural awareness and skills, biblical reflections, sharing of ministry experiences, panel discussion and group discussion.

[Click here to register](#)

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