

# The Westerly



PWV & PPW Newsletter No.17 – 29th Sept 2021



## Are you just tired – or burning out?

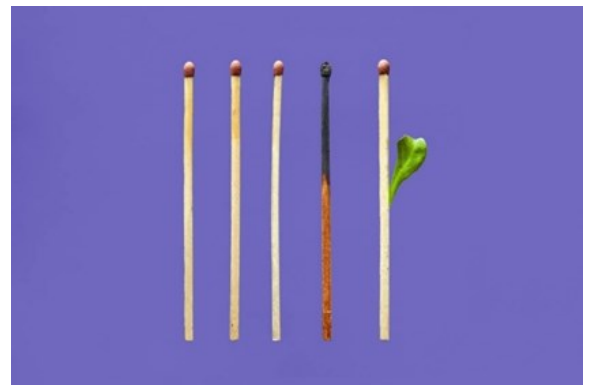
Prince Rivers [Editor Alban at Duke University]

A group of ministers told me about a senior pastor they knew who resigned because the demands of ministry had become too much. This was not the first person they knew personally who resigned this year. Such sudden exits make sense: just when we thought we were coming out of the doldrums of a pandemic, a viral variant has businesses, schools, the entertainment industry and churches rethinking their fall plans. In addition, let's not forget about the global crises and natural disasters that require pastoral responses, financial resources and engaged leadership.



The uncertainty of these times not only changes our assumptions about what's possible in the short term, but it also takes its toll on leaders' mental and emotional well-being – and clergy are no exception. **Church leaders' mental and emotional health impacts their long-term overall health, as well as the effectiveness of their congregations.**

Some of the mental and emotional fatigue we experience can result in burnout, which is more than just stress. "Stress" is the general tension we all feel in most areas of our lives – relationships, professional demands, planning for the future. "Burnout" is the emotional response to unresolved work-related stress. Leaders may try to power through the feelings of exhaustion, cynicism and low job satisfaction, but that usually only makes the problem worse. **We can't power through burnout.** If you're experiencing severe burnout, you probably need much more than a vacation. You will definitely need more than balance. You may need a change.



Research indicates that we can avoid burnout when we have strong social networks and rich, spiritual resources. **While the COVID-19 vaccines are designed to keep our bodies physically healthy, how are you taking care of your mental, emotional and spiritual well-being?** What spiritual practices do you incorporate into your meetings, planning and weekly patterns? What about the importance of regular prayer?

Lockdown Languishing

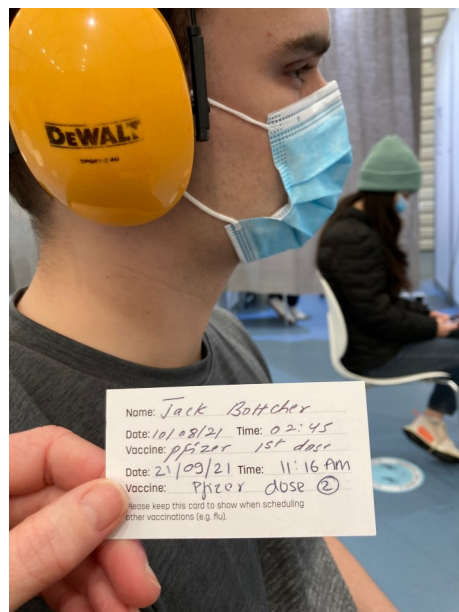


# Mental Health Matters

REV. FI BOTCHER (DEACON AT SUNSHINE MENTAL HEALTH)

"I want to get the jab. I booked my first one, but I was in so much pain on the day. I got in the car, and I had a panic attack. I couldn't do it. I'm going to try again though when I'm done here." I'm watching the telly with Jesse\* in the lounge area of the Acute Psych Unit and the news is on. "Scathing report finds federal health department 'seriously deficient' in rolling out vaccine to people with disability" is one of the top stories (headline credit: Guardian News) and it comes up just as Jesse, who lives with disability and mental illness, has finished telling me her story.

In these "COVID times," we've become so fixated with numbers: number of cases, number of deaths, and now, numbers vaccinated. We've lost sight of the individuals that make up these numbers. Deaths aren't marked by names but by "unvaccinated" and "man in his 40's". The 20% who will soon be called "unvaccinated" are individuals with stories that need to be heard, held, and told. Jesus invites us to be loving witnesses, the face of the God who never leaves the one behind (The Lost Sheep Luke 15:3-6). (Note: \*name changed to protect identity).



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## Reflection on Ecclesiastes 3:1-14

Rev. Linley Liersch

Everything that happens in this world happens at the time God chooses.

There is a time for COVID. And there is time for Vaccines.

There is a time for Lockdown. And there is a time for letting go.

There is a time for being Indoors. And there is two hour of time for being outside.

There is a time for being unmasked. And there is time for masks.

There is a time for curfew. There is a time for freedom.

There is a time for zoom fatigue. There is time for social connection.

There is time for caring for self. There is a time for helping others.

There is a time for essential shopping. And a time for window shopping.

There is a time for on-line worship. And a time for live worship.

There is a time for toilet paper. There is a time without toilet paper.

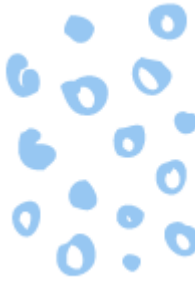
Somehow the **original wisdom poem from the bible makes more sense** to me now. Because it talks about times of opposites that appear as harsh realities in our lives as human beings. We move from sorrow lock down to letting go. From curfew to freedom, from inside to outside. The OT poet is not saying that we are going backwards and forwards, but instead our lives move in a circular movement. A cycle of life. Time passes us like the seasons we experience. *For full sermon about how Covid is changing the church see...* <https://surfcoast.unitingchurch.org.au/sermons/sermon-sunday-5-september-2021/>

You can even use this to give your preacher a week off.

# Vaccination, Inclusion and exclusion:

## The Ethics of Regathered for worship in a part-vaccinated world.

Rev Dr Rob McFarlane [PM Parramatta Nepean Presbytery]



The Uniting Church holds two core values as part of our ethos.

**First, we believe that our gatherings should be safe places for all, especially the most vulnerable.**

Appropriately, we invest considerable resources in policy, codes of practice, and training to make our worship and other activities as safe as possible.

**Secondly, we believe that all are welcome at worship.** We sing this in our hymns: “Come as you are” and “All are welcome in this place”. We proclaim our inclusive welcome in spoken words, as well as on our signs, websites, notice sheets and orders of service.

When we think about regathering for worship after this current lockdown, we are faced with a new ethical challenge that wasn’t present last year. What do we do when society is moving towards a situation where being fully (double) vaccinated will be a requirement of entry to businesses, offices and indoor events?

The two core values which I have described point in opposite directions. The first principle of safety for the most vulnerable implies that people who are not fully vaccinated may need to be excluded for the safety of the vulnerable. The second principle of inclusion implies that we can’t turn anyone away.

There are two further principles, or at least questions, that flow from this clash of equally valid principles.

**First, we have a duty of care to our volunteers.** Can we reasonably ask a door steward or greeter to tell someone at the door that they can’t enter?

**Second, we have a duty as Christians, individually and collectively, to obey the state,** unless there are compelling reasons to disobey when our “citizenship in heaven” (Philippians 3:20) conflicts with our national citizenship. Paul describes our duty to obey the state in Romans 13:1-2.

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgement.

The Gospels speak to these questions. When questioned by a lawyer, Jesus affirmed the centrality of the command “Love your neighbour as yourself” (Leviticus 19:8; Luke 10:25-28). Now, the lawyer’s next question may be a dodge, **“Who is my neighbour?”** (Luke 10:29). However, this is exactly our question. “Who is my neighbour?” becomes for us “To whom do we owe our primary duty of care: the vulnerable or the unvaccinated?” The principle of being a safe place tells us that the vulnerable are our primary neighbour. However, the principle of being inclusive tells us that the unvaccinated are our primary neighbour.

Taking this to the next step, the dilemma becomes deeper. Whichever path we take will exclude someone. Obviously, protecting the vulnerable means excluding the unvaccinated. However, including the unvaccinated leads to exclusion of the vulnerable who are afraid to come into an unsafe place.

(Cont p.5)



# Vaccination, Inclusion and exclusion... (Cont.)

Rev Dr Rob McFarlane [PM Parramatta Nepean Presbytery]

In both lockdowns, and the return to face-to-face gatherings after the first lockdown, congregations have already wrestled with questions of inclusion and exclusion. Several examples from the experience of congregations in Parramatta Nepean Presbytery illustrate the reality of wrestling with inclusion and exclusion.

**First, people with limited access to broadband internet, adequate devices or technical ability have experienced exclusion from online worship.** The “digital divide” in all of society arises from social inequality, such as crowded and insecure housing, low levels of education and English, as well as personal limitations, including disability and (for some) age.

Already, people who we would most want to **include** as “the last, the least and the lost” experience exclusion. Despite this, many congregations have decided that it was better to have online worship, that may exclude some, than no worship at all. Other congregations have followed a different path, distributing printed or pre-recorded DVDs to people’s homes, with no streamed or Zoom worship, so that all are included equally.

**Secondly, some congregations have wrestled with the “good-problem-to-have” of being at full seating capacity before the first lockdown.** Turning people away at the door or rationing members’ attendance did not seem like acceptable options to deal with the two and four square metre rules. Instead, they have developed new ways and patterns of gathering, at least one of which echoes patterns in the early church. For instance, in a typical month having one or two online services, and one or two resourced home church gatherings across the congregation (when home gatherings were allowed). As well as these online and home gatherings, the whole congregations have gathered monthly in the open air or a large borrowed space for Communion.

What the challenges of the digital divide and physical space constraints illustrate is that we have already been dealing with questions of inclusion and exclusion. Exclusion in the physical, face-to-face space has seemed too unpalatable to contemplate, and instead, not gathering face-to-face has been a better path. Exclusion in the digital space has for most, but not all, seemed like an acceptable compromise.

What we do in the next stage of emerging from the pandemic, with its new inclusion/exclusion challenge around vaccination status, is still unclear. Nevertheless, as Wesley would have said, our struggle can be informed by our UCA tradition and scripture on one hand, and our experience and reason on the other.

**Whichever way we go, our ethics are not just a matter of opinion or theory, but decision and action. Blessings to all as we decide and act.**

**Rev Dr Rob McFarlane** *Rob McFarlane has served for over 20 years on institutional ethics committees in public hospitals and non-government agencies in NSW & Queensland. He has also served on Uniting Church ethics working groups around issues such as euthanasia. He currently serves as Presbytery Ministry Leader with Parramatta Nepean Presbytery.*

<https://www.insights.uca.org.au/vaccination-inclusion-and-exclusion-the-ethics-of-regathering-for-worship-in-a-part-vaccinated-world/>

# Lockdown Languishing

By Rev. Linley Liersch [PPW MDSE & eLM]

**Do you wake up most mornings feeling flat? Do you regularly struggle with motivation?**

**Have you revise your goals in the last two years? Do you struggle to remember the last time you felt joy?**

Languishing is when life feels a bit flat, exhausted all the time and aimless. Not happy or sad, just blah feeling. We know that we have a roof over our heads, can walk outside safely. We may even be content, grateful and blessed. It is just that the pandemic has sucked all the joy out of life... having coffee with friends, catching up with family, vacations in beautiful remote locations and going to church.

Psychologist Adam Grant [New York Times] states “It is not burn out—we still had energy. It was not depression—we didn’t feel hopeless. We felt somewhat joyless and aimless. It turns out there is a name for that languishing. Languishing is a sense of stagnation and emptiness. It feels like muddling through your day...” Grant quotes sociologist Corey Keyes [2021] the antithesis of flourishing is languishing.

[Feeling Blah During the Pandemic? It's Called Languishing - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/20/well/feeling-blah-during-the-pandemic-it-s-called-languishing.html)

Dr. Frank Chow psychologist says that we need to “Be aware of the strategies that boost our wellbeing.” e.g. exercise a renewed sense of purpose. [Source Advertiser “Body and Soul” by Felicity Harley]

Here are some hints from Victorians:

- A welfare workplace in Melbourne gave its staff a mental health week this month. There was encouragement to have a home break with these instructions. Learn something new. Share something. Give something. Help someone.
- Christians know gratitude and wellbeing are linked. Work out what is bringing you joy in lockdown and do more of it. Rev. Joan Wright Howie [UCA Minister, World Vision] recommends to combat stress ‘Leisure and Pleasure’ in large quantities to combat cortisol that builds up in your body from stress.
- Denise Bush [Craigieburn-Wallan UCA Chairperson] Walks her dog at 5 pm every evening and rings her daughter interstate who is also walking her dog. This family ritual has helped her survive lockdown.
- Brian Lauder [Macedon Ranges Partnership] Spoke about the hardship of rural businesses going in and out of lockdown. Hiring, filling out employment contracts, only to close again a week later. Repeat. This time they will wait to find out if we are truly coming out of lockdown or not?
- [Unknown Ministry Agent] Holiday at home was still worthwhile I felt rejuvenated after it.
- Most Ministers miss out on all the long-weekends because we work Sundays. The Synod and eLM have given their personal 2 days mental health leave. Perhaps congregations could make similar allowances. If your stress is building up consider arranging your time for three days off in a row and take a mental health break.



## Pray for Australian Roman Catholic Church Plenary Council 3rd—10th October

**2021:** UCA President Rev Sharon Hollis has shared a letter requesting congregations to join in prayer for God’s Wisdom and openness to be with all the Roman Catholic bishops and lay leaders. Congregations and presbytery could gift as symbol of prayerful solidarity by sending a candle, card, video prayer to your local Roman Catholic congregations or Dioceses.

Let us pray: Creator God, in your great love you have given us the gift of your Spirit. As the Roman Catholic Church in Australia enters this time of discernment, we pray that your Spirit would guide and encourage those involved in the Plenary Council. May we all stand together as we seek to be your people on the way of Jesus. We pray this through Christ Our Redeemer. **Amen.** [Rev. John Hughes]



# Education Events

Oct 6th **Preaching & Art of Preaching**

7– 9 pm Mel Perkins & Linley Liersch



Oct 8th—10th **Western Victoria Road Trip**  
Horsham Warrnambool & Ballarat

Oct 12th **PWV Ethical Ministry Training (Code of Ethics)**

9:30—12:30 pm



Oct 12th **Synod Intercultural Forum Seminar**

9:00—12:30 Meet the First Peoples of Gondwana



Oct 13th **Synod Intercultural Forum Meeting**

## October, 8-10 WESTERN VICTORIA PRESBYTERY ROAD TRIP



### CELEBRATING MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN, YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS

Western Victoria Presbytery is excited to host the Synod Intergenerational Ministry team on a road trip around the Presbytery.

Everyone involved or interested in ministry with children & families, youth and young adults is invited to gather at three different places over the October 8-10 weekend.

It will be an opportunity to be together, celebrate what God is doing in the midst of our young people, share our hopes and challenges for the future, and be resourced in children & families, youth and young adult ministries.

[Click here to register.](#)

For further information, please contact Rev Trevor Bassett [trevor.bassett@pwv.victas.uca.org.au](mailto:trevor.bassett@pwv.victas.uca.org.au) or **0408 058 793**.

### Horsham Uniting Church

Cnr Pynsent and Urquhart Streets,  
Horsham 3400

**Friday October 8<sup>th</sup> | 7pm-9pm**

### Warrnambool Uniting Church

115 Koroit Street,  
Warrnambool 3280

**Saturday October 9<sup>th</sup> | 2.30pm-4.30pm**

### Ballarat Central Uniting Church

103 Lydiard Street,  
South Ballarat 3350

**Sunday October 10<sup>th</sup> | 2.30pm-4.30pm**