

# The Westerly



PWV & PPW Newsletter No.28 – 20th March 2022



## Figtree's A Parable for the Church!

**Rev. Linley Liersch** [Mission Development Strategist & eLM]

**Last Sunday's bible was the Parable of the figtree [Luke 13:1-9].**

***Is this a parable for the church right now?***

Jesus tells that God is like the owner of a vineyard who regularly checks to see if the fruit trees and vines are bearing fruit. The Owner of the vineyards correctly remembers that that one fig tree has not born any fruit in the last three years and that it is better to cut it down and plant something else. But the gardener, who we might think of as Jesus, pleads for the life of the tree. Stating that he will nurture and tend the tree... give the tree one more chance. You can almost hear the owner reply "Ok, but only one year!"

The Presbytery of Gippsland have chosen this passage to be a parable for the church right now. This rural presbytery has many smaller congregations that need to share ministry agents. The ministry agents are appointed to the region, and have responsibility for particular congregations. Each region has its own presbytery minister, and together with the ministry agents, form a ministry team. Education, team ministry training and spirituality sessions are offered within these three regions.

More and more congregations are asking why is there no 'missional fruit' growing on the congregational tree? These congregations have been putting in some hard labour in their local garden. If a farmer does not get the yield he expects he/she would investigate the causes. E.g. lack of water? lack of nutrients? Then the farmer provides what is needed.

So too we should be curious as to what is happening in our mission fields.

***Where do people gather?***

***What are the greatest needs around you?***

***What diversity do you notice in your community?***

***What do people beyond the church, give their energy to?***

***Where is God already working in our communities?***

[Vital Threads for Missional Conversations, VicTas Synod—also at [uca.ppw.org.au](http://uca.ppw.org.au) MSE]

***How can we coax the congregational tree to fruit? How can we prepare the ground for the year ahead?***

## The Figtree



**VicTas Synod Lay Preachers' Conference**  
**Friday, Saturday 25-26 March, 2022**

## **Last chance**

**You can come to CTM\* or  
Join us online for a Feast of Learning**

**Friday Evening**

### **Jesus Sophia**

**A look at Wisdom with Sally Douglas**

**Saturday Morning**

### **Open up the Bible**

**Exegesis with Robyn Whitaker and Sean Winter**

**Saturday Afternoon**

### **The DNA of the UCA**

**Exploring how 'who we are' informs our ethical  
practice with Mel Perkins, Peter Morris and  
Robert Lees**

The full programme is attached  
with an Application Form, Instructions and Programme.  
Points for Continuing Education Certificate: 2 per session.

\* Covid restrictions apply: sign in or QR code, plus evidence of triple vax

# Mental Health Matters

REV. FI BOTCHER (DEACON AT SUNSHINE MENTAL HEALTH)

I love the analogy of Spirit as wind. Wind can be felt as the refreshing breeze on a hot summer's day or the groaning of branches forewarning the coming storm. It can delight us and terrify us, make dappled sunlight dance joyfully and dust storms rage with destruction.

Stephen, a man suffering from depression, felt "like the wind keeps getting knocked out of me". "It's hopeless" he said as he sighed and slumped into his chair. For the past hour I had listened to all the things that had gone wrong in Stephen's life, and it was hard to tell if he was comforted by my presence.

After a quiet pause I said, "I'm sorry I can't promise that things will get better, but I can promise you that things will change." Suddenly Stephen sat upright, a smile breaking over his face, and said "Ha! That's brilliant! Thank you!". He stood up, shook my hand, and bounced down the hallway laughing. It took me by surprise!

Of course, my little reminder didn't cure Stephen's depression, but perhaps the promise of change that breathed hope into that moment created a space in his soul for the Spirit to stir. I hope so.



## East Coast Flood Appeal

Dear friends,

I am calling for support from across Victoria and Tasmania to join in a national appeal for communities affected by record-breaking floods across the east coast of Australia.

**The national appeal has been launched by Uniting Church in Australia President, Rev Sharon Hollis.**

<https://uniting.church/east-coast-flooding-emergency-appeal/> (Or click on picture below).

Over the last few days, thousands of people and communities have been affected by intense rains and flooding across the eastern coast of Australia. The rains continue to move south, affecting the lives and livelihoods of communities across vast areas of the east coast.

I am inviting the VicTas Uniting Church community to contribute to the National Disaster Relief Fund and to join in prayer:

***"We pray for those whose lives and livelihoods are impacted.***

***We pray for communities supporting each other.***

***We pray for emergency and relief workers giving of themselves to those most affected.***

***We pray for friends and neighbours reaching out from afar, to give support in whatever ways they can."***

Grace and Peace, Rev. Denise Liersch [VicTas Moderator]







**Our planet is changing: Do we?**

## **Justice and International Mission Convention 2022**

**Saturday 30 April**

**9:30 am – 4:15 pm**

**Centre for Theology and Ministry or On-Line**  
29 College Crescent, Parkville

\$40 for Metro. Participants

\$25 concession and non-Metropolitan participants

\$10 online participants.

We are witnessing a rapidly growing scientific understanding of the need to act urgently on the environmental challenges we are facing. The Justice and International Mission Convention revisits where the Uniting Church can continue to make a difference in how Australia impacts environment issues.

At this Convention we will particularly consider the issue of whether technological developments will enable us to continue with our current lifestyles without unsustainable harm being done to our planet. The alternative possibility is that we will need to significantly change our lifestyle.

Join in and be part of the conversation to inform the future direction of the Uniting Church's social justice mission as we unpack the urgency of climate change that we are all facing.

Register now by accessing the Conference brochure [here](#) Or contact Alicia Torres Centre for Theology and Ministry (03) 9340 8815 or email: [Alicia.Torres@victas.uca.org.au](mailto:Alicia.Torres@victas.uca.org.au)



## Training for Church Councils 2022

**Session 2 Thursday March 24, 2022 6pm – 9pm Zoom and in person at Hoppers Crossing**

Practical issues for Church Councils - employment, finances, property, placements, mission, Relationships with Ministry Agents Presbytery, Synod, Assembly – purpose, membership responsibilities and key committees, relationships and processes with Church Councils.

**Saturday March 26, 2022 9.30am – 4pm In person only**

**Understanding and Responding to Conflict run by Rev Terence Corkin** (Former UCA Assembly General Secretary) & Julie Kuhn Wallace (From the USA Uniting Methodist)

**BOOKING & COST:** Booking via Trybooking; <https://www.trybooking.com/BXHD>

### CLIMATE CONCERN CONGRATULATIONS !

#### GROVEDALE

- Received a grant to install water tanks which are used to flush toilets and water gardens
- Uniting uses their buildings and applied for a grant, which installed 90 solar panels
- Lawns and gardens are maintained, and new plants are planted as needed
- Uniting has created a vegetable garden onsite

**GOOD ON YOU GROVEDALE UCA & UNITING TOGETHER!**

# Education Events

March 17th, 24th 7—9 pm **Training for Church Councils** (Part 1 & 2 On-line & Hoppers Crossing)

<https://www.trybooking.com/BXHD> [Narelle Collas & Linley Liersch]



March 26th **Conflict Resolution Workshops** (Part 3 In-person @ Hoppers Crossing)  
Guest Speaker Rev Terence Corkin <https://www.trybooking.com/BXHD>

March 25th—26th **Lay Preacher Conference** (Worship Leaders welcome too)



April 20th 7:30pm **Digital Welcoming**

April 21st 2pm

Mat Harry & Linley Liersch look at 'how do we do welcome on-line?' Websites. Social Media Ministry & more...

April 30th 9:30 pm

**Justice and International Mission Convention 2022.**