

# The Westerly



PPW& PWV Newsletter No.36 – 12th August 2022



## Learn to Listen Well

Rev. Dr. Prince Rivers (Alban Duke University)



We all can understand that leaders must be good communicators. Speaking and writing well are essential tools of the trade. But how well do we listen?

In the book of Proverbs, the writer repeatedly instructs students to “hear” their words. The Hebrew verb, *shama*, indicates a deliberate process of paying attention to what is being said with the intent to obey or take action.

**Listening to someone is about paying careful attention to them.** These days, it can be hard to hear others — for reasons that range from the practical to the political. Face masks make it difficult to understand what someone is saying. Multitasking is an impediment to sustained focus. Political views that are extremely different from ours make us not want to hear the people who hold them.

To listen well, we must minimize distractions. Review the last 30 days on your calendar. How much time did you set aside to listen to others, to yourself and to God?

**The consequences of leading without listening well are familiar — and potentially catastrophic.** We cast a vision. We make plans. But when it’s time to take action, the commitment from the group falls far short of our expectations. When this happens, it’s tempting to lay the blame for this disappointing dilemma at the feet of unwilling or unavailable volunteers. But let’s ask ourselves a crucial question: How well did we listen?

**When we listen well, we might be surprised to hear something we did not anticipate.** For instance, the headlines and the national surveys tell one story about young adults and their faith, but when we have lunch with a young Christian (or non-Christian) and listen to what they have to say in their own words, we might learn more than we expected. What other surprises might be in store when we listen well? It’s tempting to think that a leader’s primary job is to have all the right solutions. Leaders do indeed solve problems, but in the long run, **a leader’s best attribute is his or her desire and ability to listen.** Corporate leaders listen to customers. Political leaders listen to constituents. Teachers listen to students. Citizens listen to one another.

My pre-teen daughter came home from her first weeklong overnight camp. As we drove back home, she told funny stories about what happened. Then I asked her, “What did you learn about yourself this week?” As I listened to her candid and self-reflective response, I learned so much about how she sees herself and what she needs from me as a parent. I’ll keep listening.

## Keep Leading, Keep Listening

# Mental Health Matters

REV. FI BOTTCHER (DEACON AT SUNSHINE MENTAL HEALTH)

The Exploring Spirituality session had ended, and the patients were moving towards the lounge area leaving a few staff members behind. The conversation had ended with a reflection on the experience of loss and change brought on by COVID.

One of the older staff members lamented: “The system’s broken and things have changed heaps. It used to be better.” I began to wonder aloud about “future hope”; the possibility of new growth that comes after things fall apart. And as I began to speak about the inspiration I find in the creativity and curiosity of the young adults I meet, the staff member cut in “sure, but...”

Suddenly a staff member in her early 20’s spoke up. “Wait!” she said, “I need to hear what Fiona has to say” she paused briefly and took a deep breath. ***“Because all I keep hearing is how better things were in the old days, and I can’t bare it anymore! I’m young, and I need hope!”*** and she burst into tears.

***Our nostalgia can be a burden for those yearning for new life. Our challenge is to be beacons of hope in a broken world, living the promise made to us in and through Jesus Christ.***



## “NDIS: Rhetoric versus Reality?”

**“NDIS: Rhetoric versus Reality?”** An Australian Research Council research project.

The Centre for Disability Studies, University of Sydney, is holding conversations in mid-October in Melbourne, with people with intellectual disability who would like to share their experience of the NDIS. There are easy English participant information letter and statement available to help communication.

Emily Gosden-Kaye is the researcher doing the interviews. The Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, via Andy Calder - Disability Inclusion Advocate, is a Partner Investigator.

If you would like to know more about the research, with a view to participating or supporting someone, please contact either Emily at [egos7892@uni.sydney.edu.au](mailto:egos7892@uni.sydney.edu.au) or Andy at [andy.calder@victas.uca.org.au](mailto:andy.calder@victas.uca.org.au).

**From the Editor:** For the attentive reader: **Did you notice I have found two book reviews for two different books with the same title?** If you missed an edition of The Westerly back editions are available at [Newsletters – Presbytery of Port Phillip West \(ucappw.org.au\)](https://www.victas.uca.org.au/newsletters). Next Edition 17th August 2022. Any submission are due the Monday before publication. Always happy to receive your stories, poems, book reviews, photos, and theological reflections from across both our presbyteries. Rev Linley Liersch [Linley.Liersch@ppw.victas.uca.org.au](mailto:Linley.Liersch@ppw.victas.uca.org.au).

# A Gospel for All Ages: Preaching and Teaching with the Whole Church

Rev. Dr. David Csinos



## Zoom Book Huddles

Interested in engaging further with the NEW [A Gospel for All Ages: teaching and preaching with the whole church](#) book by Rev. Dr. David Csinos?

Six creative ministry professionals join author David M. Csinos in providing intergenerational best-practice resources. Each chapter includes discussion questions and exercises for future practice.

*A Gospel for All Ages: preaching and teaching with the whole church* lives at the intersection of two conversations - preaching and intergenerational ministry. By integrating these two topics, an entirely new conversation emerges, one that draws from both, that interrogates both, and that births something new in the process, creating fresh possibilities for churches of all shapes and sizes.

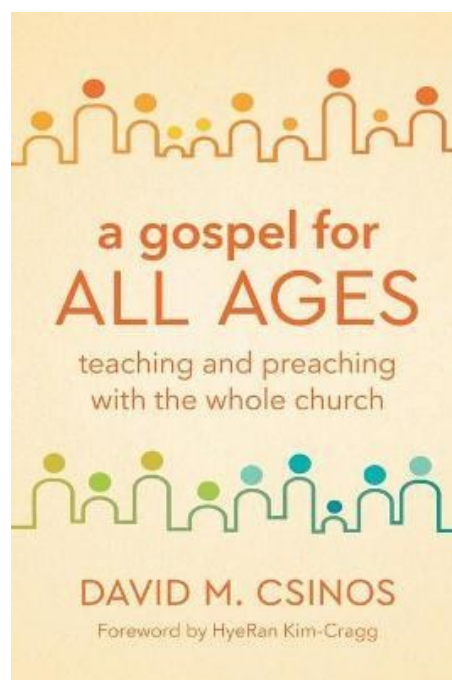
Whether your passion is intergenerational ministry, Christian education or preaching this book will spur you toward that final frontier of all-age worship as you consider how preaching of the gospel in the worship context can be more engaging for young and old alike.

Why not express your interest in being part of a Zoom Huddle!

For **those who preach** (regularly or occasionally),  
**those involved in worship leadership** (regularly or occasionally) and  
**those interested in influencing a more intergenerational approach to worship**,

Each Huddle will meet for one hour fortnightly over three sessions (commencing late August). Huddles will provide the opportunity to gather with peers in order to both **engage the theoretical** and **explore actual implementation** of the book content for your own context.

Click here to express your interest – [A Gospel for All Ages: Huddles](#) or e-mail [chris.barnett@victas.uca.org.au](mailto:chris.barnett@victas.uca.org.au) for more information.





# Growing Up Uniting: A new narrative for our Church

*Edited by William W. Emilsen & Elizabeth A. Watson*

*Book Review by Bethany Broadstock (Assembly Website)*

For many years a powerful narrative about the aging profile of congregations and the absence of younger generations has been shaping the life of the Uniting Church.

In some places, this has been a driving force to set an agenda for action focused on how our communities, structures and indeed the Gospel itself are contextualised and made accessible to each stage of faith and life.

More often than not however, it has been couched in a broader sense of scarcity and decline which has perhaps had even more influence over our collective sense of self than we realise. But it is not the whole truth, as hundreds of highly engaged Uniting Church young people will tell you.

One of the gifts of *Growing Up Uniting*, then, is to remind us that from the earliest days of the UCA, the Uniting Church has been home to whole new generations. Young people have chosen the UCA as the context for their life of faith: growing up quite literally in its communities, shaped by its life and values and going on to make their own contributions.

In an anthology of personal essays from people aged 18-40, *Growing Up Uniting* captures the voices of the first two generations to be formed personally, spiritually and theologically in the Uniting Church.

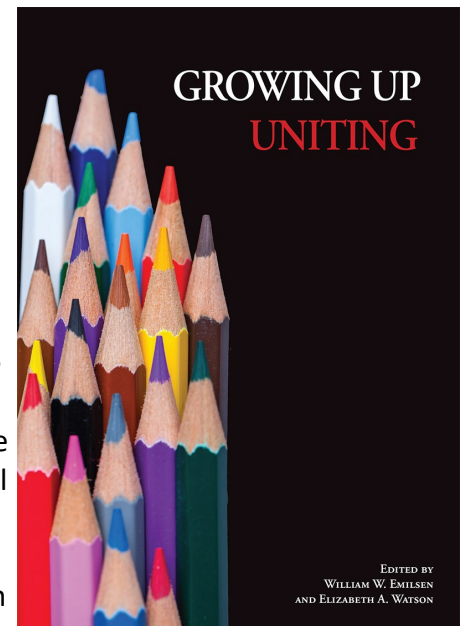
The experiences they contain are as diverse as the 20 people who wrote them and the places from which they were written. The contributors were encouraged to be honest and creative – and to be themselves. The result is a balanced collection of insights which are neither abstract nor romanticise the UCA. Instead they hold up a mirror to the church, celebrating our identity as the Uniting Church and calling us to reflect on where the Spirit is calling us today.

There is great affection for the Uniting Church in these pages and some clear common themes. The contributors speak of the sense of belonging, openness to questions, commitment to justice and Covenant with First Peoples, liberative biblical engagement and a courageous public voice. For many these are key identity markers.

Elvina Kioa Kramer writes about how the Uniting Church gave her the “freedom to explore, freedom to question, and to learn and choose God’s gift of grace.” Craig Corby writes, “I am proud to belong to the Uniting Church—an organisation that is meant to be a movement first and an institution second.”

Others noted that taking certain things for granted in the Uniting Church – like women’s leadership and an open communion table – was a gift they often only became aware of later. There is much in the UCA’s 44 years to celebrate.

The authors also offer a measured critique, naming the things that may pose a threat to the integrity of our life and witness: aversion to risk, creeping corporatisation, top-heavy bureaucracy and the loss of imagination and vision that characterised union. ( Continued on page 4)



# GROWING UP UNITING



( Continued from page 3 ) Collectively they also warn about the implications of failing to invest in faith formation and mentoring, which may open a leadership and discipleship void. For some contributors this is the true source of decline. Many note the intentional spaces which have been integral to their discipleship including national events like NCYC, NYALC and AboutFace, tertiary ministries, and crucially, local congregations and faith communities.

Contributor Ben Cross speaks of this risk plainly: “If the UCA is collectively either incapable or unwilling to help form young people for Christian discipleship, we might plausibly ask whether it is a good thing for it to continue to exist.”

Others reflect on the willingness of the UCA to be forward-facing. Richard Telfer writes, "People in the Uniting Church should be proud of who we are, a church that is committed to walking into the future.”

Several contributors note their tenuous links to the founding denominations, having no lived experience from the other side of union. This raises interesting questions about how new generations carry forward the story of union and its dissent from denominationalism.

For those that have known no other tradition nor witnessed the process of ‘uniting’, the challenge is that a different kind of denominationalism can emerge.

With the Basis of Union committing us to pursue the broader wholeness of both church and world in an ongoing sense, the generations which continue to grow up Uniting must live this out in fresh ways that make sense for their time. Among other things it means holding our traditions lightly, beloved though they are.

Perhaps in the years to come our commitments to unity and ecumenism will take on a different shape that is less institutional. Instead of being primarily focussed on seeking doctrinal or theological common ground with other denominations, though that is important and will continue, it may become more about a spirit and culture of partnership with others in the pursuit of justice and wholeness for all.

This is a timely book. Right now, through the Act2 project, the Uniting Church is embarking on the biggest conversation we have had since union about the shape, identity and life of the Uniting Church. There is much within these pages that will inform the questions we will ask ourselves about moving boldly and with faith into the future.

I commend the contributors to *Growing Up Uniting* for their courage. To consider and critique a movement that is so entwined with personal identity asks both vulnerability and hope. It also takes trust that the church stands ready and willing to listen. I hope all UCA members get the chance to hear the voices and insights between these pages.

You can purchase *Growing Up Uniting* from MediaCom Education.

# Meeting Together



We believe that meetings can be rewarding, enjoyable and worthwhile, whether the issues that we face together are large or small. The Meeting Together workbook will assist **Church Councils, Committees and groups** in the Uniting Church to work more collaboratively, to understand the role of their group and leadership in the wider life of the church, and to deal with poor behaviour in meetings.

It can help to build the capacity in our members to meet and work together well, to respect and listen to one another, and to value each person's voice. It looks at the Scriptures and what we believe, the Basis of Union, the Manual for Meetings, and other resources. The booklet includes 14 short sections that can each be used to start discussion, plus resources for community building. These resources are an invitation to pause from what we do, and to have conversations about why and how we meet.

Meeting Together workbook [Downloadable](#) version & Imago Vita cards.  
Launch Video available: [Meeting Together Resources Launch on Vimeo](#)

## Imago Vita – Images of life

“Imago Vita” is a set of Australian photographs selected for personal and group reflection. The set is diverse and may be used for a range of purposes – community-building, story telling, identifying needs, dealing with change, discussing choices, exploring hopes, revealing strengths. There are 86 images and an activity guide providing some suggested activities for group conversation. The We recommend getting them printed on a colour laser printer/copier, then laminating them and cutting them to size.





# A little church having a big impact

By Christine Morris (PPW Climate Action Task group)

**Airport West Uniting Church** is making waves. This little congregation, comprised largely of octogenarians, is enthusiastically engaged with their local community. They have forged relationships with neighbours, school students, local traders and people who hire rooms in their building. Their faces are radiant as they talk about many community connections. Their values of welcome, acceptance, friendship, inclusivity and hospitality ooze out of them. When I arrived at the front door by bike, the adjacent bike rack validated my transport choice. Before I walked inside, Ken came out to greet me having seen me through the expansive double glazed windows and doors. This truly is a building fit for mission!



When rebuilding, the number one priority for Airport West UC was to create a space from which they could better serve the local community and that would facilitate mission. A comfortable, welcoming, energy efficient building was essential to this vision. Their architect worked to turn vision into reality with building design, concertina walls, large double glazed windows, modular sound proofing, quality insulation, rain water toilets and more. The features that boost efficiency and make the building cheaper for hirers also improve the ambience and facilitate the congregation's connection to creation and to the neighbourhood.

Their minister, Rev. Judy Rigby, says that the large windows have altered the life of the church. During worship, the congregation is bathed in natural light and is looking outwards. Judy says 'We are more aware of the community and the community is more aware of us.' When people walk past, they wave at the congregation. The congregants wave back. 'We are not shut away anymore.' People have walked in off the street when they can see what knitting and friendship groups are doing.

Cal, a member, commented that people who come in comment on how warm and welcoming the building is with natural light and natural air flow. The large north facing windows catch the winter sun's light and heat and the double glazing and quality insulation keep the building warm. Concertina walls are used to limit the amount of heating required. The building is fully electric. Power bills are tiny – so the church can serve the community with minimal hire fees and practise good stewardship. The building is busy – well used by both by church and community groups.

When I arrived, the playgroup facilitator, an outside hirer, was packing up, a huge smile on her face. The playgroup had just had its highly successful end of term celebration, and many of the congregation had joined in. In doing so they lived out another of their values: engaging in – and supporting - the life of the community.



The environmentally friendly features of the Airport West UC building have opened up new opportunities for the congregation to live out their values of offering worship that reflects Jesus' teachings and of reaching out to others with compassion. Airport West UC has shown that caring for creation facilitates their ability to serve their community and to exercise good stewardship. When asked if the extra expense was worth it – they say 'Absolutely!'

**Our Creator God loves all of creation – including people.**

# DAY RETREAT for Ministry Agents

**Tuesday 6th September 2022 9:30am-5pm**

**NARANA Aboriginal Culture Centre,**

410 Surfcoast Highway, Charlemont, Victoria . Australia, 3217



The 1 day retreat program will include workshops shaping and carving talc stone. These holding stones will then be used in guided meditation. This combination of stone shaping, carving and meditation provides opportunities for reflection, creativity, silence, community building and transformation. It is a gentle, life-giving process.

In an encouraging, safe environment we will explore our creativity and reflect on the spiral symbol from the perspective of faith. No previous experience necessary for this fun and engaging program.



## **Some feedback from the 2022 Loddon Mallee & North-East Presbytery's Retreat:**

*"I thoroughly enjoyed the stone carving and the space to prayerfully engage in it."*

*"Such a retreat is life-giving, integrating the creative and spiritual in a highly helpful manner."*

*"It taught me new skills, and this is always helpful. It gave opportunity to sit and reflect, but to also chat with people I would probably not walk up to for a conversation."*

*"I will use them [the stones] as both a personal reflection tool and a tool that can be used to help people in my ministry."*

*"I also enjoyed the times of silence and the meditations and want to explore this more for myself. I really enjoyed this contemplative method."*

## **Stone carving workshops and guided meditations will be facilitated by Studio artist, Steve Singline & Rev Isabel Greenall.**

Steve is a practising artist working in the mediums of oil painting and sculpture. Steve has facilitated stone carving workshops for people of diverse ages, cultures, and abilities. Key to the workshop program Steve has developed is the importance of participants connecting with symbols that provide metaphors for hopes, aspirations and belief.

In addition to Steve's art practice he has worked in the Vocational training and employment sector, Community Development, Disability Services and Public Art management.

Isabel is a Minister of the Word in the Uniting Church currently engaged in providing supply ministry as a Chaplain at University Hospital (Geelong) and studying for the Graduate Certificate of Professional Supervision (University of Divinity). Isabel has over 18 years of congregational ministry experience and has recently completed a Bachelor of Psychology (Deakin University). The intersections of theology, ministry practice and psychology are of particular interest. With this in mind, Isabel has been nurturing her understanding of contemplative spirituality, practising individually and in group settings using meditation and mindfulness. **Together Steve and Isabel are exploring and developing a contemplative creative ministry.**

COVID Plan: The event is held in a room with two double door opening to outdoor spaces for air circulation. Times for being outdoors are included.

**This is sponsored by PPW.**

**FREE Event for Ministry Agents and is FULLY CATERED.**

**Registration links out soon.**



# August Education Events

**August 11th**      **Ethical Ministry Refresher Day**  
9:30-12:30pm      (a.k.a. Code of Ethics)



**August 13th**      **PPW Presbytery in Council**



**August 13th**      **Lay Presider Refresher Day**



**August 20th**      **PWV Presbytery Meeting**



**Sept 4th - 7th**      **PPW & PWV Ministry Agents Retreat—  
Postponed on Synod Advice**



**Sept 6th**      **Ministry Agents DAY Retreat at Narana**  
9:30am-5pm      410 Surfcoast Highway, Charlemont / Geelong  
FREE. Rego links out soon.

## START PLANNING FOR A WEEK OF CLIMATE ACTION 2 TO 9 OCTOBER 2022

The Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC), together with Green Faith International are organising a multi-faith mobilisation for a Week of Action in the week of **2 - 9 October**, ahead of the **United Nation's COP27** conference in November (7 to 18 November in Egypt).

This Week of Action will continue to challenge ineffective governments, powerful extractive industries and financial institutions to take the steps necessary for a more just and compassionate world. **So why not start thinking about creating or joining an action to demand that the world ceases the use of fossil fuels by 2035.**

Many churches in our Presbytery already celebrate caring for creation during September by using the worship resources for Season of Creation <https://seasonofcreation.org>  
Also Tuesday 4 October is St Francis' (Patron Saint of Animals) Feast Day

So, in keeping with the theme, congregations could make **Sunday 2 October** a special service to dedicate the people and actions taking place during the Week of Action. During the service worshippers could also be made aware of the many activities taking place and how to get involved.

Start planning now! You can also keep up to date with information from the ARRCC website [www.arrcc.org.au](http://www.arrcc.org.au)