



The Presbytery of the Downs

Living Water for a Thirsty Land

Newsletter - November 2023

Synod Renewal

The 37th gathering of the Council of the Queensland Synod (a.k.a. Synod-in-session) was held at Alex Park, Sunshine Coast, 20-24 October. The Synod draws delegates from all over Queensland: congregation members, presbytery office bearers, ministry agents, board members, representatives from Wesley Mission Queensland, UnitingCare Queensland, Trinity College Queensland, Schools Commission, and many other “branches” of our denomination. Women, men, young, old, lay, ordained, first peoples, second peoples, first-timers, old-hands—you get the picture—there were lots of different people, all coming together to discern God’s direction and serve the Church.

A key feature of this Synod was a significant “changing of the guard”. Most notably, Rev Bruce Moore has taken over from Rev Andrew Gunton as Synod Moderator and the role of Synod General Secretary has been passed from Rev Heather den Houting to Rev Dr Adam McIntosh.

The Synod received updated information through reports from various bodies and organisations within the Church. And there were discussions and debates regarding funding for public hospital chaplains, work practices of ministry agents, the theological focus of church reviews, and appropriate governance structures of boards and agencies.

Times of worship, prayer, singing and learning are also central to any Synod gathering—and in these times the theme of *Renewal: Faith for a new season* was developed. In his opening address to the Council, Bruce Moore focussed on the analogy of the Church as a human body (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). The Church can be big and complex and challenging, but God who calls us together in this way. And it is important for each of us to consider the kind of relationships we have, because that will influence the kind of conversations we have. And vice versa, the type of conversations we have will determine the type of relationships we have.

Another presenter, Pastor Katie Isles, invited us to learn from the cells in our bodies and understand the symbiotic relationship of cell proliferation, differentiation and death. All are occurring concurrently all the time, and all are essential for the vitality of the body.

Pastor Mandy Smith challenged the approach to life and ministry that always seems to respond, respond, respond without any space for rest and restoration. Drawing from the image of a tree with roots in a good water supply (Psalm 1), Mandy encouraged us to first rest and receive and then respond.

And finally Dr Paul Jones used the story of Jeremiah 13:1-11 to remind us that the people of God are the clothing of God, that is, what people see in us will equate to how they perceive God. Therefore it is important to ‘strengthen the Body of Jesus for the sake of God’s reputation.’

Each of these presentations, along with other sessions, can be viewed online at <https://ucagld.com.au/synod-livestream/>. Summaries of each day can be found at <https://journeyonline.com.au/features/>.



Presbytery gathers

The Council of Presbytery gathered for the third time this year at St Stephen's Uniting Church, Toowoomba.

The Presbytery comprises all active ministry agents plus Presbytery office bearers plus delegates from congregations and faith communities across the district. The meeting also received representatives from Synod, UnitingCare, and Easter Madness.

The meeting began on Friday 3rd November with the commissioning of Pastor Jennie Feldmeier, bush chaplain for the Cunnamulla Burke and Wills Remote Area Ministry.

On the following day, alongside the "business", the council explored and reflected on the theme: *Great is Your faithfulness*.

Members were first reminded of the insights from the Presbytery gathering in June, especially the challenges and tips to living in a liminal season—a time of significant ambiguity and uncertainty. Focus then quickly turned to the lessons offered by nature and the lifecycle of living cells. Watching (and for some, re-watching) the presentation made by Pastor Katie Isles to the recent Synod, Presbytery members considered the implications of proliferation, differentiation and death when applied to a church context. Perhaps most sobering was the fact that death is not only a natural part of any lifecycle, but it is essential for the body to remain vital. (The full presentation can be viewed: <https://vimeo.com/876616452>.)

Attention then turned to God and the things that God has done for us. As the Ancient Israelites can testify, life goes through many seasons and cycles, but God's faithfulness remains constant. In both good and bad times, they would recall the story of God's covenant with Abraham and how that was honoured over centuries and fully realised when the people finally claimed the promised land as their own home. Psalm 105 is a good example of how "the story" became part of the temple worship.

Within our own district there are many different stories pointing to the cycle of life: beginnings and endings, triumphs and tragedies, grief and joy. Members took time to share these stories within the fellowship of Presbytery Zones and recognised the faithfulness of God throughout it all. A psalm capturing our own story emerged.

The day closed with a reminder that God's faithfulness deserves reciprocation of faithfulness from us. Of course, any response from us is born out of the gracious faithfulness of God. Holy Communion was the last act of the day—a sacrament that not only retells but re-presents God's faithfulness to us.

What else happened at Presbytery?

- ✓ We welcomed Pastors Peter Cole and Jennie Feldmeier as first-time members.
- ✓ We approved the ordination of Mrs Annie Baker as a Minister of Deacon.
- ✓ We recognised the conclusion of Rev Rob Callow's role as Presbytery Resource Minister.
- ✓ We discussed the recent decision of the Synod Standing Committee to withdraw funding for public hospital chaplains and the ramifications for chaplaincy at the Toowoomba Base Hospital. Current chaplain, Rev Jenny Potter, led the Presbytery in brainstorming ideas to continue the church's pastoral presence after the chaplaincy ends.
- ✓ We continued to develop a Presbytery-wide policy for calculating contributions to the Combined Presbyteries Ministry Pool with specific focus on donations.
- ✓ We received the Cambooya Congregation's decision to close. (The date of the service of closure is yet to be confirmed.)
- ✓ We agreed to donate \$3,000 to help fund Easter Madness, a UCA youth camp at Easter time. And we agreed to sponsor young people from the Downs Presbytery up to 50% of the cost of attending Easter Madness.
- ✓ We frequently paused to pray for different people and circumstances.
- ✓ Joined the St Stephen's Congregation in worship of God on Sunday morning.

Check with your Presbytery delegate for more information on any of these items.

ALEX PARK
CONFERENCE
CENTRE

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WE RISING
WE RISING
WE RISING
WE RISING
WE RISING
WE RISING
WE RISING

easter
MADNESS

5TH-8TH
APRIL 2024

Commissioning

The recent Presbytery gathering kicked off with the commissioning of bush chaplain, Pastor Jennie Feldmeier. Jennie officially began in ministry 1st September and would probably describe her first two months as a whirlwind of activity: Birdsville Races, Minister's Retreat, Frontier Services Conference in Adelaide, and Synod.

During the service, Jennie shared that this ministry was decades in the making explaining how a call began to stir when she had her first encounter with Outback Links volunteers in Cape York 25 years ago.

National Director of Frontier Services, Mr Rob Floyd, addressed the congregation reflecting on the pioneer of Frontier Services, Rev John Flynn. Rob then offered insights from Luke 24:13-35, suggesting that Jesus' actions of listening and being present with the two travellers on the road to Emmaus was a good model to copy in bush chaplaincy.



Pastor Jennie Feldmeier (centre) being congratulated by Mr Rob Floyd (left) and Rev Dona Spencer at the commissioning.

Among the attendees were members of Jennie's family, friends from different eras of her life, members of Presbytery, members of St Stephen's UC, and even travellers from Charleville.

Markets For Mission

Friday, 24th November 2023
5pm - 8pm

Saturday, 25th November 2023
7am - 12noon

Supporting Cunnamulla Burke and Wills
Remote Area Ministry

Middle Ridge Uniting Church

264 Stenner Street Middle Ridge

Ph: 46363850

www.mruc.com.au



Crafts and Gifts

Bric-a-Brac

Cake Stall

Plants

Market stalls

Cafe & BBQ

Psalm 105, version 2.0

A psalm of the Downs Presbytery

- 1 Give praise to the Lord and announce who he is.
Tell the nations what he has done.
- 2 Sing to him, sing praise to him.
Tell about all the wonderful things he has done.
- 3 Praise him, because his name is holy.
Let the hearts of those who trust in the Lord be glad.
- 4 Seek the Lord and the strength he gives.
Always seek him.

For God has given us ministers and lay leaders
who served faithfully,
many, many years of faithful service.
And God continues to gather faithful people together,
many, many years of faithful commitment.

The people gather for worship,
God draws them together and shapes a congregation,
old and new, we are welcome, we belong.

The Lord speaks to generation after generation,
those who were once children now bring their children.

While some churches close, others grow.
With God there are endings and beginnings.
But when the plan falls apart, when the stress and pressure is great,
we will continue to trust in the Lord.

The opportunities to tell of God's goodness are endless;
there are too many ways in which we can bring the Light to the world:
Messy Church, Connect 100 initiatives, online streaming, and invitations for prayer.
The spiritual hunger grows, but God meets all our needs.

God's love is felt in the quilts that have been given;
God's love is present in the pastoral carers who visit.

God's grace is shared from the Cambooya church grounds—
in the shape of a rose, "Grace" is known.

Within the fellowship of our church, God has helped us through tough times.
The fellowship across the churches encourages us.

God leads us into times of loss and letting go.
We sit and wait and listen and wait some more—
and we learn to trust in the Lord.

continued...

Looking for Advent resources?

Two free resources...

Love in Action: Preparing and nurturing the garden of the soul. Contact jessica.pinkerton@ucaqld.com.au

Engage Together. Download at https://uniting.church/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Engage-Together-Resource-DEC-LENT_Updated.pdf

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We see a new chapter beginning in Crows Nest District,
God has provided a new minister there.

God has given us respite in the midst of our fiery distress;
God sent cool winds and rain.

The Lord has opened the hearts of our people to give generously,
and opened the way to build new homes.
The Lord inspired and strengthened our volunteers.

We praise the Lord for the hope that has entered our hearts:
the Warwick café blossoms into a community;
new people have entered the church,
people who were previously strangers to us.

God's presence is felt in Stanthorpe,
the Spirit is stirring, something good is going to happen.

God sends us to the grieving,
and takes away their tears and lets them laugh again.

The Lord is faithful.
God's love endures forever.
Praise the Lord!

Verse 1-4 taken from the Holy Bible, NEW INTERNATIONAL READER'S VERSION®. Copyright © 1996, 1998 Biblica. All rights reserved throughout the world. Used by permission of Biblica.

News from WKF

The Warwick Killarney Freestone UCA celebrated 70 years of Blue Care on the same Sunday as we celebrated the 70th anniversary of the Wesley Indoor Bowling Club.

We celebrated with Jenny Potter who conducted the wedding of her father Ian Darnell and Betty Spalding. It was a pleasure to see families coming together with such warmth and joy.

A second wedding took place late October: Jnr Charles Lala and Joyce Rage. Joyce was baptised by full immersion on the day before the wedding. The couple will also be baptising their young daughter, Eleanor.

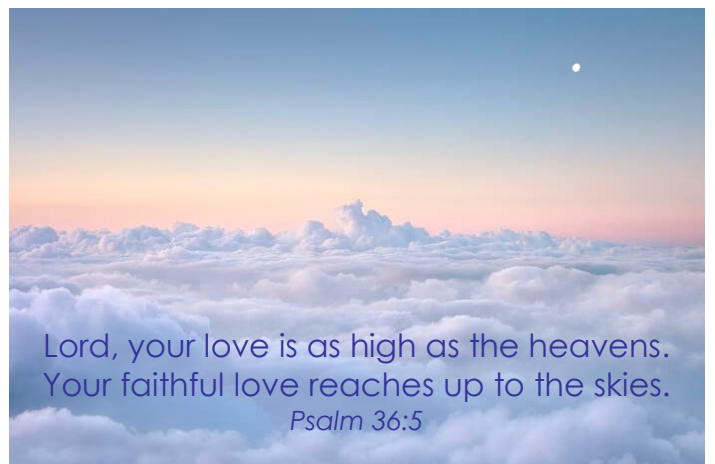
Our last Market Day for 2023 was held on 14th October. It was organised by a small but effective team and we received a good response from our local communities.

Courtyard Coffee runs every Friday in the Warwick UCA from 9:30-11.00am and is attracting more and more people into the property. Friendships are being formed—a welcome way for newcomers thinking of joining a church but may be a bit nervous about that first step.

A huge thankyou to our Who Cares (Church) Catering team for organising the Hawaiian Night which was such fun while raising money for a defibrillator. A good social night and good to see people we have not seen for a while as well as some new faces.



Celebrating 70 years of Blue Care and the Wesley Indoor Bowls Club



Lord, your love is as high as the heavens.
Your faithful love reaches up to the skies.
Psalm 36:5

NATIONAL PEACE CONFERENCE
SAT 18TH NOV 2023

BROADENING DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF OUR CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY AND WORK TOWARDS ESTABLISHING A COMMON HUMANITY

“ ALL GENERATIONS SUPPORTING PEACE AND HARMONY ”

Free registration at: <https://events.humanitix.com/national-peace-conference-2023-all-generations-supporting-peace-and-harmony>

ST PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL CENTRE, 123 NEIL ST TOOWOOMBA 4350

JOINTLY ORGANISED BY

The poster features a large yellow hibiscus flower in the top right and bottom left corners. The text is centered and uses a mix of blue and green colors. The bottom section includes logos for the organizing bodies: St Patrick's Cathedral Centre, UNAA, and another organization.

Bell bus was beaut

Lots of folk rose earlier than usual (especially two from Brisbane) on Wednesday 11th October to join a coach taking a scenic trip to Bell and Lake Broadwater. The growth of population as well as facilities was very evident in Highfields and Meringandan and surrounds—the sports ground alone being an eye-opener. The dry conditions in the countryside was a reminder to some retired folk as to why they had left their properties. And then there was the remains of a recent fire near Bell..... another stark reminder.

A large shady tree in front of the Bell Catholic Church was a very popular spot for those sharing morning tea and lunch, while others indulged at the hotel and cafe. Memories were recalled as folk checked out the abundant memorabilia on display in the cafe's dining room.

The church building offered a cool spot to sit and reflect on the murals painted by Megg Cullen—a pictorial history of salvation as told through the Old and New Testaments being on the side walls, which were done for the church's 95th anniversary. The three paintings on the back wall were completed for the church's centenary in 2012. The Biblical Garden was begun in 2009 with the aim to use as many as possible of the trees and plants mentioned in the Bible, interspersed with other devotional art and incorporating *The Way of the Cross* in a garden setting. Unfortunately some of these plants have not survived the harsh conditions, but it is still amazing what they have created. It was officially opened during the centenary celebrations.

Conversation, commentary, silly quizzes and singing kept all awake during our travels. Lake Broadwater had lots of water in it, and is a very inviting camping area which some plan to revisit later. A huge "farm" of solar panels, the electricity station powered by gas from Moonie, and a drive through Oakey township and soon we were on the Charlton end of the Toowoomba Bypass and arriving safely back at the Wilsonton church thanks to Baz our driver.

Barbara Leitch



The Bell Bus Tour group outside the Bell Catholic Church on the grounds of the Bell Biblical Gardens

Quick Dates

Events around the Presbytery district

- 8 November
PRC meeting
- 25 November
*Christmas Markets,
Middle Ridge UC*
- 28 November
PSC meeting
- 5 December
PRC meeting
- 12 December
PPC meeting
- 25 December
Christmas!!!

If you want to know more about any of these events, you could:

- check the Presbytery website:
www.downspresbytery.org.au
- talk to your presbytery delegate
- contact the presbytery office

And into 2024

For those who are already planning ahead

- 23-25 February
*Presbytery gathering
@ Allora UC*
- 14 February
Ash Wednesday
- 31 March
Easter Sunday
- 5-8 April
Easter Madness
- 19 May
Pentecost Sunday
- 22 June
Anniversary of the UCA
- 14-16 June
*Presbytery gathering
@ Lifeworks UC*
- 11-16 July
*17th Assembly gathering
in Sydney*
- 1-3 November
*Presbytery gathering
@ Warwick, Killarney,
Freestone UC*



TRINITY
COLLEGE
QUEENSLAND

GET A TASTE OF OUR ACTIVATE GAP YEAR PROGRAM

Find your people. Ask big questions. Activate your life.

FRIDAY 17TH NOVEMBER