

The Westerly



PWV & PPW Newsletter No.73 October 2025



Weave Threads of Love

Rev. Charissa Suli (UCA Assembly President)



As President of the Uniting Church in Australia, my theme for these three years is:

"Threads of Love – Weaving Christ's Love Across Cultures and Boundaries."

This theme captures what I see and hear as I travel among our communities: Christ at work across difference, drawing us together in hope. Year A of the Revised Common Lectionary (The bible readings plan for the next Christian year that begins with advent) invites us into that same story as we walk alongside Jesus through the Gospel of Matthew.

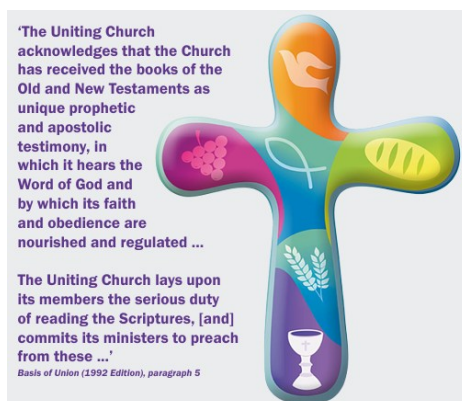
Matthew's account speaks directly to communities seeking to live faithfully in complex times. It is a gospel rooted in Scripture and tradition, yet radically open to the new work of God in Christ. Written for a diverse and often pressured community, Matthew weaves together a story of Jesus as Emmanuel – "God with us" – from his birth to the promise of his abiding presence at the close of the age.

This year we will hear the voice of Jesus the Teacher. Matthew frames Jesus' ministry around five great discourses, echoing the five books of Moses. In these we encounter the Sermon on the Mount with its call to a deeper righteousness; parables of the kingdom that reveal God's upside-down reign; instructions for life together as disciples; and visions of judgment and hope for the nations. Matthew continually invites us to see not only what Jesus does but what it means to follow him: to embody mercy, humility, justice and courage in our own context.

We also hear Matthew's deep concern for the community of faith. This gospel was written for a church learning how to live as Christ's body – struggling with persecution, diversity and change, yet called to bold witness. Matthew names the reality of conflict, but also offers practical teaching for forgiveness, reconciliation and leadership that serves. In a time when our own communities wrestle with similar challenges, these texts ground us again in the transforming presence of Christ.

This bible reading in the year ahead invites us to weave these same threads of love in our worship, witness and daily life. It draws our eyes to Jesus who fulfils the law and prophets, who heals and feeds, who calls us to pray "Your kingdom come."

May this journey through Matthew renew our discipleship, open our lives more fully to the Spirit, and draw us closer to Emmanuel who makes us one.



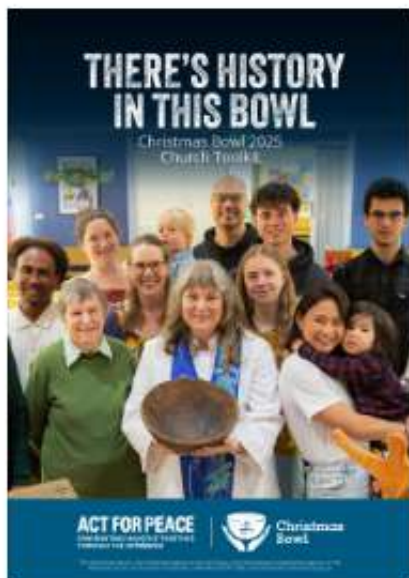
Weave Threads of Love

Lectionary released

The 2025–26 Uniting Church lectionary resource has been released by the Assembly. A key resource for preaching and teaching in Year A, the coming year's lectionary continues with a new-look poster format, and includes official Uniting Church dates and links to an [online hub of resources](#) for preaching, teaching and worship.



DISCOVER THE LECTIONARY



TOOLKIT

The Christmas Bowl 2025 toolkit booklet, with everything you need to run the Christmas Bowl in your church.

Download

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge all First Peoples of the beautiful lands on which we live and celebrate their enduring knowledge and connections to Country. We honour the wisdom of and pay respect to Elders past and present.

From the Editor:

If you missed an edition of The Westerly see [Newsletters – Presbytery of Port Phillip West \(ucappw.org.au\)](#). Rev Linley Liersch Linley.Liersch@ppw.victas.uca.org.au.

Please click links or pictures for hyperlinks. **Next edition submissions 28th October 2024**

Can we handle the truth?

Christians for Yoorrook by Dr. James Thom (Brunswick UCA)

The Yoorrook Justice Commission was a groundbreaking project in truth telling led by First Peoples, and its final report and recommendations were tabled in State Parliament on 1st July 2025. On Saturday 18th October 2025, I was one of three members of Brunswick Uniting Church that attended an event run by Christians for Yoorrook (in Father Tuckers Meeting Room at the rear of the Brotherhood of St Laurence in Fitzroy) to examine how the different churches might respond to the Yoorrook recommendations and what land justice might look like.



In the morning, the first speaker was the distinguished Indigenous Theologian Aunty Professor Anne Pattel-Grey from the University of Queensland. She spoke about systemic racism as well as her personal experiences of racism. She emphasised the need for Christ's Allyship and what it looked like. Then, Professor Mark Brett, a non-indigenous theologian from Whitley College, spoke on how the churches should respond to Yoorrook.

After lunch, we then heard from representatives of the Anglican and Uniting Churches. Bishop Genevieve Blackwell, who testified before the Yoorrook Justice Commission on behalf of the Anglican diocese of Melbourne and Dr Mark Zirnsak, who (with Tim Molineux) did much of the work preparing the written submissions to the Yoorrook Justice Commission on behalf the Uniting Church. What emerged from these two presentations was the apparent differences in legal advice about the property trusts that Uniting and Anglican churches have received - Uniting lawyers seemed very cautious about property trusts whereas the Anglican legal advice seemed more open to the church being able to transfer property to (for example), local first nations groups. The meeting closed with a communal liturgical response to Yoorrook led by Rev Associate Professor Robyn Whitaker from Pilgrim College.

In responding to the Yoorrook recommendation, the church needs to act, but it needs to first do the work that will bring people in congregations along with the Synod.

Further information about the Yoorrook Justice Commission and the Churches

The website of the Yoorrook Justice Commission <https://www.yoorrook.org.au/> has so much information available, including the final reports and recommendations. To watch the hearing at which representatives of the Uniting, Anglican and Catholic churches gave evidence, visit <https://www.yoorrook.org.au/videos/land-sky-waters-hearings-1-may-2024-church-representatives>. This hearing lasted over 3 hours, so you might want to allow more than one session to watch it!

Included in the 100 recommendations from the Yoorrook Justice Commission is recommendation number 19, which is directed at the Churches in Victoria:

Consistent with their commitments to First Peoples, Churches should identify, as a priority, opportunities within the State of Victoria to:

- (a) Return land acquired for little or no consideration, or reserved by the Crown or Governor for Church purposes, to Traditional Owners of that land; and*
- (b) Share a portion of proceeds from the future sale of land of the nature described in (a) with Traditional Owners of that land (irrespective of whether it is subject to the State Aid to Religion Abolition Act 1871 (Vic)).*

The recent meeting of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania of the Uniting Church instructed the Synod Standing Committee to setup a working group to respond to this recommendation. According to the former moderator, Rev David Fotheringham, as quoted in [Crosslight](#), "The Synod has identified 127 properties currently held by the Church for which land was granted by the Crown in this manner, besides properties that had previously been sold. Approximately 10 per cent of Uniting Churches in Victoria have been built on land granted by the Crown."

DONATE to Reduce Carbon Emissions in the Church

Climate Action Group

WOULD YOU LIKE TO HELP THE UCA REDUCE CARBON EMISSIONS?

There has been a SYNOD EMISSIONS REDUCTION FUND allocation for that purpose, but it needs some help. This fund of \$100 000 comes as a dollar-matching process if presbyteries (PPW has pledged \$30,000 over two years), churches or individuals contribute to the fund, over the next 2 years.

So all parts of the church can contribute

You may like to consider paying what you can afford to this fund, to help churches in our Synod reduce their **carbon** emissions. Any payment you make will be doubled through the Synod allocation.

Thanks for considering this.

Payments can be made through:

1. Direct bank transfer to:

Westpac Bank

Account Name: The Uniting Church in Australia Synod of Victoria & Tas

BSB: 033 157

Account Number: 344 136

Mark the transfer as "SERF donation"

2. Make a donation by **credit card** through <https://victas.uca.org.au/product/moderators-emergency-response-fund/> Note the payment as "SERF donation".

Theology & Culture Conference

Gendered Violence

WHERE: Centre for Theology and Ministry, 29 College Crescent, Parkville, Naarm.

WHEN: 11-13th February

Note this conference is in person only.

COST:

Early bird rate - \$220 (full cost \$250)

Students - \$180

[Register here through Humanitix](#)

PPW 'Regenerating the Church' Strategic Review



The PPW presbytery had decided that a review of the Presbytery Strategy [2022-2026] would be timely in light of the Faithful Futures project. This review is targeted at Presbytery in Council members in the first place, however we are happy for wider responses and for church councils to be included in the response.

To that end the Mission Strategy & Education Committee are asking to complete a 12 minute [Survey](#) by the 14 November 2025, if possible.

The survey can be found here: <https://forms.office.com/r/W0NLC994G3>.

CH1200P/8200P

Respecting Country: Deep history, the colonies, and the church

Field C – Church History (CH)

Lecturer:	K Handasyde and colleagues
Semester:	Semester 1, Intensive blocks
Schedule:	Fridays and Saturdays: 27 – 28 February, 27 – 28 March and 22 May, 9.30 am – 5 pm; and two evening sessions: 26 February and 29 April
Mode of Delivery:	In person and Online Synchronous
Points	18/24

Unit Description

This unit equips you to tell histories of the land on which your congregation lives and worships.

It focuses on seeking understanding and on respecting Country. It examines the deep history of First Nations peoples, the recent history of colonial settlement, congregational history writing, and the challenges and hopes for the contemporary church on Aboriginal land.

You will be introduced to methods of historical research and the skills you need to interpret legal, theological, and local historical sources.

This unit walks with you as you research, write and reflect on the legacies of the past in the present.

Unit Delivery Notes

Students will attend in-person or online in real time at 7 pm – 9 pm on Thurs 26 Feb (Northey Lecture), 9.30 am – 5 pm on 27 – 28 Feb, 27 – 28 March and 22 May, and an online evening workshop 29 April.

Resources will be provided online.



Chaplaincy and care

The Chaplaincy and Connections team within equipping Leadership for Mission is exploring whether some teachers might want to move towards chaplaincy or spiritual care (often hybrid roles), and what support might be required to do so.

[MORE INFORMATION HERE](#)



Covenanting Pathways Toolkit:

A resource exploring how to practice Covenanting in Victoria

Covenanting is a special call to all Uniting Church members to form meaningful relationships between First and Second peoples based on truth-telling, justice, equality and mutual understanding.

This [Covenanting Pathways Toolkit](#) and its supporting resources were designed for a Victorian and Tasmanian context to explore contemporary pathways to connect, or re-connect with Covenanting. You could do things like participating in one of the listed 'Walking on Country' tours, or attending an event run by one of the many First Nation led organisations across Victoria and Tasmania.

Use this Toolkit to get access to resources to better understand where opportunities exist to connect with First People Communities in Victoria and Tasmania. Or, perhaps use it to go deeper into your own understanding of the Uniting Church practices that inform how Covenanting is embedded in the life of the church. Accompanying this toolkit are supporting resources in the form of four additional FAQs, and a cultural calendar that are accessible below.

- ⇒ **Start a 'Covenanting Group' or a 'Reading Group' in your congregation or faith Community**
- ⇒ **Church Councils can consider Covenanting in their congregation**
- ⇒ **UCAF groups could arrange a Traditional Owner organisation to make a visit and talk on their personal experiences**
- ⇒ **Prayer Groups could pray for respect of country, reconciliation and healing**



We encourage members of the PPW Presbytery to have a look at this toolkit in preparation for our November 15 Presbytery in Council where we will be focussing on the Faithful Futures goal – Respecting Country.

Pastoral & Spiritual Care With Transgender People Workshop

A professional development workshop for **pastors, chaplains, counsellors and professionals** seeking to support trans and gender diverse people

Thursday 20 November, 12-2pm, \$49– (On-Line)

Working alongside trans and gender diverse people in ministry, chaplaincy, counselling, or social work can be deeply meaningful - and at times complex, especially when navigating faith, tradition, and community expectations. This 2-hour online workshop offers a safe and supportive space for Christian professionals to: Hear stories of hope from a transgender person of faith (Steff), Explore how scripture and theology affirm gender diversity as a core quality of God, Better understand the language being used by trans and gender diverse people. Learn practical tools for providing safe, inclusive, and trauma-informed care. Connect with other faith leaders and carers committed to walking this path.

Whether you're seeking greater confidence in your pastoral care, clarity in responding to trans people, or encouragement to advocate for safer communities, this workshop will equip you to walk with love in your professional practice. <https://events.humanitix.com/pastoral-and-spiritual-care-with-transgender-people>

For Church Councils

Attention: Safe Church Contact People

We're reaching out to all Safe Church Contact People and Working with Children (WWCC) Administrators to inform you of a recent change introduced by the Department of Government Services Victoria regarding WWCC applications and renewals.

New Requirement – Organisation Email Address

When applying for or renewing a WWCC, applicants are now required to include an organisation email address. To ensure consistency and proper handling of notifications, please use our dedicated email: wwccr@victas.uca.org.au This email receives all WWCC and Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) notifications, helping us avoid misdirected communications across the Synod.

We kindly ask that you share this information with members of your congregation who are updating or applying for their WWCC.

Guidance and Resources

For detailed instructions on completing the organisation section and the overall WWCC process, please refer to the "Getting a WWCC Checklist" available via the following link: [Getting a WWCC-checklist.docx](#)

Updating Contact Roles

You are receiving this message because you are currently listed as the Safe Church Contact Person or WWCC Administrator for your congregation. If your role has changed or you know who the new contact person is, please let us know by replying to this email or contacting us at cultureofsafetycontact@victas.uca.org.au so we can update our records accordingly. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to Safe Church practices and for helping us maintain a culture of safety across our community.

AUSTRALIAN COLLABORATORS IN
Feminist Theologies

TO LISTEN AND RESPOND

DIALOGUE AS FEMINIST METHOD

Australian Collaborators in Feminist Theologies 2025 Conference



7-8 NOVEMBER 2025

at Pilgrim Theological College
29 College Crescent, Parkville VIC

and online

www.feministtheologies.net

Registrations now open.



PROGRAM

BOOK LAUNCH

Feminist Theologies: A Companion

(eds. Kerrie Handasyde, Stephen Burns and Katharine Massam)

Tending to stories in Feminist Theologies: Interdisciplinary Renderings of Faith, Hope and Love

(eds. Helena Kadmos and Katharine Massam)

to be launched by

Professor Joy Damousi AM FASSA FAHA

5.30-6.30 pm, Friday 7 November

Dalton McCaughey Library, including refreshments
and online

JANETTE GRAY RSM MEMORIAL LECTURE AND DINNER

Julia Thwaites

Janette Gray RSM Scholar

7-9 pm, Friday 7 November

Yuma Auditorium, with two-course meal
and online

PRESENTATIONS

with papers, workshops and more by members and friends of the
Australian Collaborators in Feminist Theologies

10.00 am-5.00 pm, Saturday 8 November

Yuma Auditorium and other spaces at Pilgrim Theological College, with lunch and refreshments
and online

ACFT Inc. AGM

including opportunities for members to be nominated and
elected to ACFT Committee roles and working groups

12.00-12.30 pm, Saturday 8 November

Yuma Auditorium
and online

This program of events is proudly brought to you by the Australian Collaborators in Feminist Theologies Inc. in collaboration
with the Janette Gray RSM Fund Committee, Pilgrim Theological College and the University of Divinity.



Events

1st November	All Saints Day
7—8th November	Feminist Theologies: To Listen and respond (Page 7) @ Centre of Theology 29 College Cres, Parkville
9th November 11 am	Conclusion of Pastor Position @ Keilor UCA, Crn Flora St & Church St, Keilor
15th November 10 am	PPW Presbytery Meeting @ St. Albans UCA & on-line Cnr East Esplanade & Elaine Street, St. Albans
15th November 10 am	PWV Presbytery Meeting @ Willaura Memorial hall 93 Main Street, Willaura
16th November 2.30 pm	Closure of Moriac UCA buildings @ Moriac, Hendy Main Rd, Moriac
20th November 12 - 2 pm	Pastoral & Spiritual Care With Transgender People Workshop @ on-line (Page 6)



23rd November **Reign of Christ**

30th November	Advent 1
3rd December 5pm	Holding the Light An Ecumenical service Remembering Victims and Survivors of Families Violence @ Wesley Uniting Church, Lonsdale St, Melbourne/Naarm and online
5th December 12—1:30 pm	Retired Minister's Gatherings—Pascoe Vale RSL (Below) Venue: Pascoe Vale RSL, 40 Cumberland Rd Pascoe Vale 3044

Retired Minister's Gatherings—Pascoe Vale RSL

Venue: Pascoe Vale RSL, 40 Cumberland Rd Pascoe Vale 3044

Time: 12:00 – till 13:30 Friday 5th December 2025

This is for those of us who are retired or in the process of retiring to have lunch together and share a little of the journey. We gather in an informal way to catch up on how everyone's going and what we're up to. New members welcome.

So if you're interested, can you please let me know your RSVP by email before 5pm Tuesday 2nd February mark@dunn.id.au This is essential for a lunch booking.