



Uniting Tasmania

Issue No. 232 | December 2024

WELCOME BACK MARIAN!



Rev. Deacon Marian Bisset returns to commence in ministry placement as Presbytery Resource Minister for the north, and Presbytery eLM Minister for Tasmania, from 1 December 2024.

Marian returns to Tasmania from placement in the Victorian High Country Remote Area in the Presbytery of Gippsland. From earlier ministry experiences in Bridgewater-Gagebrook following the devastating church fire there in 2017, and then in the Omeo-Swifts Creek area following the devastating bushfires in 2020, it is clear that one of the gifts Marian has is in getting alongside people in their loss and grief, supporting the next steps in recovery, and stepping into the future with renewed hope and energy.

An induction service will be held at the first meeting of the Presbytery on 1 March 2025 at Launceston North Uniting Church, Newnham.

CHRISTMAS BOWL

GIVE NOW

One of the more remarkable stories in Australian church life is the Christmas Bowl. A young Methodist minister, Rev Frank Byatt, took an initiative with a simple bowl and invited his church community to take part in what he called the 'Christmas Bowl'. He had little idea that his idea would be taken up the way it has been and that we would in time be celebrating the 75th anniversary of its beginning. Get your resources for 2024: <https://christmasbowl.actforpeace.org.au/>



TOOLKIT

The Christmas Bowl 2024 Toolkit, with everything you need to run the Christmas Bowl in your church.

Download

Peace I leave with you;
my peace I give to you.

JOHN 14:27

JOIN CALLS TO TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT ON GAMBLING

The Presbytery of Tasmania meeting in council on 9 November 2024 resolved by consensus to authorise the Presbytery Chairperson to sign an open letter with the unanimous support of the Presbytery, joining with Rev. Tim Costello and other faith leaders of the Alliance for Gambling Reform in calling on the Tasmanian Premier Jeremy Rockliff to demonstrate the leadership and resolve necessary to hold the line on significant gambling reforms on behalf of all Tasmanians. Read the open letter here:

<https://www.agr.org.au/.../open-letter-urges-tasmanian...>

"The decision by the Tasmanian Liberal Rockcliffe Government to backflip on becoming the first State to introduce a poker machine cashless card is an inexcusable capitulation to the power of the gambling lobby. The Alliance's Chief Advocate, Tim Costello, said he was shocked and devastated by the announcement by the Tasmanian Government to 'defer progress' on the cashless card system."

<https://www.agr.org.au/.../tasmanian-poker-machine...>

Tasmanian residents can sign an e-petition to the Tasmanian Government on poker machine mandatory pre-commitment cards. The E-Petition closes on 1/3/2025. Click this link for the E-Petition:

<https://haepetitions.parliament.tas.gov.au/haepe/Home/PetitionDetails/125?title=Petition%20Details>.

Read more about Rev. Tim Costello at The Guardian:
<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2024/nov/23/rev-tim-costello-social-cohesion-is-really-fraying>

Disappointed and very saddened: Tasmania Prioritises Industry Over People

"I'm incredibly disappointed and very very very saddened by the fact that we had almost within our grasp the ground-breaking initiative that would protect so many Tasmanians and be so good for this industry,"

- Jenny Cranston
Chair of the Tasmanian Liquor and Gaming Commission

Tasmanian poker machine backflip 'a capitulation'

Gambling industry capture of State Government complete



ALLIANCE FOR GAMBLING REFORM  Media Release

Australia's Leading Voice Against Gambling Harm: Hope, politics and the moments that changed him



Rev Tim Costello: 'Social cohesion is really fraying'

Tim Costello looks out from the dunes on Frankston beach, Victoria. "I can talk to both sides of politics. I have probably had as much influence as I might have had if I was in there."
Photograph: Ellen Smith/The Guardian

ALLIANCE FOR GAMBLING REFORM #TimCostello

A CALL TO LISTEN, LEARN AND ACT FOR RECONCILIATION

President Rev Charissa Suli reflects on her experience attending a parliamentary reception in honour of King Charles and Queen Camilla, urging us to pay attention to emerging truths.

It was a great privilege to attend the recent reception alongside political, community, and church leaders as the President of the Uniting Church in Australia, where we had the opportunity to hear from King Charles as he addressed the nation.

As I reflect on the events of that day, where Senator Lidia Thorpe courageously declared, “this is not his land,” I am struck by the profound significance of this moment. Her words challenge us to face uncomfortable truths, while King Charles’ call to learn from First Nations wisdom names a pathway toward deeper reconciliation and understanding.

We are standing at a crossroads where two powerful truths meet. On the one hand, we are called to acknowledge the painful history and ongoing impact of colonisation on Indigenous peoples. On the other, we are invited to embrace the wisdom of First Nations communities, whose connection to this land predates the arrival of European settlers by tens of thousands of years.

As the church, what does this mean for us?

As the Uniting Church, we have made a covenant with the First Peoples of this land, acknowledging their sovereignty and the unique role they play in God’s creation. But the Covenant is not a static declaration. It is a living, breathing relationship that requires us to continually listen, learn, and act. We must be



willing to engage in uncomfortable conversations and to honour the history First Nations peoples carry—no matter how challenging it may be for us to hear.

“First Nations wisdom teaches us that stewardship is not simply about ownership but about relationship. It is about a deep, spiritual connection to the land, to each other, and to the Creator. As we learn from Indigenous communities, we are invited to rethink our approach to caring for the earth, to practice sustainability, and to engage in justice.”

So, let us be bold in our truth-telling, courageous in our actions, and humble in our learning. Let us not shy away from the discomfort that comes with confronting our history, but rather, let us embrace it as the necessary step toward healing and reconciliation.

May we be good stewards of this world, and good ancestors for those who come after us. And may we, as a church, be known for our love, our justice, and our unwavering commitment to the work of reconciliation and healing.

Extracted from <https://uniting.church/a-call-to-listen-learn-and-act-for-reconciliation/>

HISTORICAL SOCIETY GIFT



Give a VicTas UC Historical Society gift subscription to a church friend or family member.

They will receive our journal 'Proceedings', invitations to events and a churches tour, and our news.

Here's how it works:

1. Contact your friend
2. Then, simply fill in the Membership Form with the person's details and also note your name as 'Gift Subscription', then post it to the President, 30 Campbells Road Portsea Vic. 3944 sending a cheque for \$45 (concession \$35)

or using these bank account details;

BSB 063-194 Account 10031138 Note as 'Gift'

We will then send a welcome letter to the person, noting your gift.

The Membership Form can be emailed to you by request, or find it on the Synod website, as a document on the Synod Archives page

www.victas.uca.org.au/resources/mission-resourcing/synod-archives

Enquiries email: ken.barelli@bigpond.com



threads of love
WEAVING CHRIST'S LOVE ACROSS
CULTURES & BOUNDARIES

#MEETTHEMEMBERS

I hope to see and experience the power of God's sacrificial love and oneness in our discernment and resolving of the challenging issues confronting us today for the glory of God who is love.

REV GOSPEL RALTE
ON GUNAIKURNAI LAND

A familiar face with faithful hopes that still resonate well after this year's Assembly meeting ...

People from Ulverstone area and Presbytery Members will remember Rev Gospel Ralte, who is currently serving in Victoria in the Wattlebird Ministry Team, with pastoral responsibility for the Neerim South UCA-Anglican Cooperating Congregation and the Bunyip District Uniting Church Congregation.



Not on the Titanic. A loving community in Christ.

**A reflection and a beginning by
Assembly General Secretary,
Andrew Johnson**

Andrew Johnson was commissioned as Assembly General Secretary on 23 November in Canberra.



One of the most popular questions we ask is, “Is this just shuffling the deck chairs on the Titanic?” Do we think we are on the Titanic as a Uniting Church? Do we believe this enterprise of hope we embarked upon over 47 years ago is, like the Titanic, inevitably destined to sink? I do not believe that. I believe that God has a future for the Uniting Church. However, we need to be honest that at least for the

foreseeable future it will be a smaller and more marginal future than what we believe we knew in the past.

Yet we have something of distinctive value to offer the mission of God in our nation and globally. Our theological culture, while in need of some ongoing work is marked by an openness and willingness to change, holding in tension diverse perspectives. Our ecclesial culture seeks to be inclusive, consensus building and collaborative.

As a friend said to me, ‘I don’t think God’s given up on the Uniting Church yet’. So, for me, if God hasn’t given up then why should I?

We believe that we will behold God doing a new thing. If we conclude that institutionally the Uniting Church will no longer exist, that is ok. We will have been prophets and martyrs to the gospel.

We are called to these ministries, along with the ministry of scholar and evangelist so that the world might know the risen, abundant life of God

Continued P5

From page 4

through Jesus Christ. It is in that hope that we will find renewal, in dying to self and rising with Christ. It is in that we will find the hope of the resurrection and new life.

It is in this vision that I find hope and strength for the journey ahead. God does speak to us both collective and individually in our work of prayer and discernment. As we continue our journey towards the promised goal, let us be nourished by the vision God has placed before us.

The funny thing about Christian worship is that the group of people who gather have almost nothing in common. They are thrust together into an intimate, messy, complicated, intergenerational community based solely on their geographical proximity and the belief in the transformative power of Christ. This makes this time of community, bizarre, uncomfortable, and at times difficult to navigate. Even more so than that, we are called to intentionally make this situation worse – called to make [new] disciples. By so doing we invite new people into the community, whether by birth or by adoption, and each time we expand the community we have a new voice to accommodate, a new person for whom to find space.

If we want children and their families in our community, we need to worry less about the sincerity of the commitments we ask of baptismal parents and more about how we live out our commitments to every baptised believer. One that may make us feel a whole lot more uncomfortable, but which might actually look like the body of Christ to which God calls us.

Extracted from <https://uniting.church/loving-community-in-christ-assembly-general-secretary-reflects/>



sacred arias

BACH HANDEL MOZART
& more

JACQUELINE WARD
soprano

ROBB DENNIS
tenor

KAREN SMITHIES
pianist

Saturday 14th December, 6 pm
Penguin Uniting Church

TICKETS: 

Got a good news story or a great photo?

Share your good news with the Uniting Church across Tasmania and Victoria!

Send your information to
Tas.office@victas.uca.org.au
and Crosslight@victas.uca.org.au

A space for silence.

A NEW CALL: PAPERS FOR ACT 2

What do the words 'mission', 'discipleship' and 'evangelism' mean for the Uniting Church? A new call for papers from the Act2 Project invites your reflections. Earlier in the Act2 Project, we invited a variety of reflections on the theological culture of the Uniting Church in Australia: <https://act2uca.com/category/theological-culture/>.

As we now look to the future, we want to encourage dialogue, debate and theological reflection around the concepts of 'mission', 'discipleship', 'evangelism' and 'diaconal communities.'

Dedicated work in this area will be led by the Commission for Theology, Formation & Leadership and the National Assembly. Alongside this, we are pleased to invite contributions from theologians and others who wish to contribute from across the breadth of the Church on one or several of these terms.

This could be in any form in any genre including papers, provocations and theological reflections, and may be written or offered in other ways.

We invite all those interested in making a contribution to do so via email or to direct enquiries to uca.act2@nat.uca.org.au. We ask that everyone contributing to this call for papers provide permission to publish so that we can continue to cultivate a vibrant conversation across the life of the Uniting Church.

Questions that you may wish to respond to include (but are not limited to):

1. How ought the Uniting Church in Australia best define the term 'mission' in light of our Covenant commitments?
2. What is the relationship between God's all-encompassing and cosmic mission and our own individual and corporate call to mission?
3. How does the Uniting Church understand 'discipleship' and the 'making and growing of disciples'?
4. Does the term 'evangelism' still have currency and relevance to a Uniting Church audience? How does our understanding of evangelism transcend 'personal salvation'?
5. Where in the web of relationships across the Uniting Church, from agencies to communities of faith, might we see 'diaconal communities'? What are the contours and characteristics of these communities? What particular charisms do they contribute to our understanding of our Uniting Church?
6. What, if anything, is distinctive about the Uniting Church's understanding of the terms 'mission', 'discipleship', 'evangelism' and 'diaconal communities'?

Extracted from
<https://uniting.church/act2-call-for-papers/>

LECTIONARY YEAR C, 2024-25

The 2024-2025 Uniting Church Lectionary is now available to download from the Assembly, and available to order from Wayzgoose, the new online store for MediaCom and Uniting Church resources.

The new-look lectionary features a number of changes - a new poster format, additional liturgical colour coding, new listings for Uniting Church special days and an online list of worship and preaching resources.

In her introduction, President Rev Charissa Suli writes:

"The Gospel of Luke invites us into a unique and profoundly compassionate vision of Christ's

ministry—a vision that speaks especially to the lost, the marginalised, and the least among us."

"As we journey through this liturgical year, may Luke's witness inspire us to embody and weave Christ's love that knows no bounds, welcoming all with the same compassion, justice, and joy that Jesus embodied."

Enjoy preaching and worshipping in the Year of Luke!

<https://uniting.church/2024-2025-lectionary/> - to download free copy

<https://www.wayzgoose.au/> - to purchase hard copy

Please join us for the

Service of Conclusion and Recognition for Bridgewater Gagebrook UC

everyone who has contributed to the long ministry and mission of the Uniting Church in the Bridgewater and Gagebrook Communities

DECEMBER

08

AT 2 PM

Uniting, Green Point Plaza, 28 Green Point Rd, Bridgewater
Please bring your own (folding) chair if you are able!



Christmas Bowl resources are available at <https://christmasbowl.actf.orpeace.org.au/resources>



This is a perfect opportunity to enrich your Advent journey. This event is from a Catholic perspective, but has proved very useful in the past even if you will miss the first session due to publication dates.

It is a series of virtual Advent talks by three Australian biblical scholars from Yarra Theological Union, a College of the University of Divinity. Each week this group of accomplished guides will work together to explore the readings for the week.

Speaking to us from their own area of expertise will be: Prof Mary Coloe PBVM, Dr Mary Reaburn NDS, and Dr Chris Monaghan CP.

EVENT DETAILS

WHEN: Tuesdays – 26 November and 3, 10, 17 December 2024

TIME: 7.00pm – 8.00pm (AEDT)*

WHERE: Via Zoom meeting

COST: No Accreditation: Free; With Accreditation: \$22.00 (incl. GST) (4 sessions)

REGISTRATION: Online registration is essential. Zoom meeting details will be forwarded upon registration. The sessions will be recorded and will be made available the Friday after the event. An email will be sent with the details on how to access the videos.



I'd like to share a wonderful story with you, because it shows just how much your support means to our friends in the bush - including the children.

In a small community in the outback, 40 kilometres from the nearest town, lives a seven-year-old boy, who I'm calling Noah to protect his privacy.

Noah lives with a degenerative disorder, and already, his body doesn't do what he wants it to do. Soon, he will lose the ability to walk.

He had never been on a school camp. As his condition continues to worsen, it had looked like he never would...until wonderful people like YOU helped fund a school camp for his "entire school" of seven kids, many of whom have disabilities or special learning needs.

I'm so grateful for our Bush Chaplains and their dedication to forming and growing relationships with the people and communities they serve. You see, we were able to be there for Noah because one of our Bush Chaplains works closely with his school and knows the staff well.

The school's principal, Renae, said to me, "Our Bush Chaplain [is] this angel willing to help our little community and our school in any way they possibly can without being intrusive."

Renae moves mountains to make sure her kids get the learning support they need, but it's those memorable, character-developing opportunities like school camps that can often be out of reach.

She was determined to make the school camp happen this year because of Noah's condition.

She said, "We really wanted to give Noah, his family, and his classmates, the lifelong memories to be able to say 'I went on that school camp with my friends.'"

Thanks to kind people like you, our Bush Chaplain could contribute funds to make this camp possible.

Renae told me, "The learning that took place on this camp is not something that you could simulate in the classroom. It was all a hands-on experience.

"Most of our kids had never been on a plane. They'd never been on a boat. So, that was a huge start!

"They saw native wildlife and whales, they connected to country, and they learned about First Nations' history."

I hope the happiness on their faces warms your heart, as it does mine.

Thank you so much for supporting our work - for giving our Bush Chaplains and people like School Principal Renae the help they need to open opportunities for children in rural and remote Australia.

Thank you for being part of the Frontier Services team. With my warmest regards,
Rob Floyd, National Director *(From an email)*

WHEN AI IS NOT AOK

Protecting our children from online harm

Like most technologies, the development of artificial intelligence (AI) has beneficial uses but, in the wrong hands, it can also be used to inflict great harm. AI is developing rapidly and it is now nearly impossible to tell the difference between a real image and one manufactured by AI. AI-generated video technology is not far behind.

The relevance to congregations, communities of faith and church-based agencies is that any publicly accessible image of a child or small group of children can now be used to produce AI-generated child sexual abuse material with the child's face and body shape.

Congregations, communities of faith and church-based agencies would be wise to not post publicly accessible images of a child or small group of children online where the faces of the children are clearly shown. To do so exposes the children to a small but growing risk the images may be misused to produce AI-generated child sexual abuse material.

This material can also be used in the sexual extortion of children, and a child threatened with AI-generated sexual images of them can be coerced to provide real sexual abuse images of themselves.

The Australian Centre for Counter Child Exploitation has reported that the sexual extortion of children where the abuse is then captured by camera generates between 60-70 per cent of the referrals to its Victim Identification Unit.



Recent investigations have uncovered the existence of organised sexual extortion groups. These groups operate across borders and use call centre-like operations in order to communicate with hundreds of potential victims at once.

For the full Crosslight article by Dr. Mark Zirnsak, visit <https://crosslight.org.au/2024/10/18/trip-raises-awareness/>



This image is AI-generated. It's innocent, but there are others police are very worried about

Artificial intelligence is being used to generate child abuse material, and police are increasingly worried about its spread. But AI may also be able to help investigators.

ABC News / Apr 17



WHAT'S ON!

DEC 2024 - JAN 2025

DEC 03 | Pastoral Relations Committee
10am -3pm

JAN 13 | Tasmanian Office Reopens
9am

DEC 03 | Resource and Development Committee
10.30am - 2.30pm

DEC 20 | Tasmanian Office Closes
Presbytery Office Closes 4.30pm

As we approach Christmas may you rejoice in the vulnerability of God who makes a place amongst us from which to recreate, guide and inspire.

MONTHLY CHECKLIST

Look forward to Lectionary New Year and Secular New Year and Chinese New Year

Look forward to the coming/return of Jesus everyday