



Issue No. 211

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A Zero Emissions Church?



The Uniting Church in Australia Assembly is committed to reduce its carbon footprint to achieve net zero emissions by 2040. The commitment forms part of a [Climate Action Plan](#) designed to encourage action across the Church. Our [Synod Climate Action Taskforce](#) is taking up the challenge across Tasmania and Victoria, and the next step is to assess the Church's commitment and capacity to act, both locally and collectively.

Tim Molineux from the JIM cluster is keen to engage and consult with local and regional councils of the Church: congregations/Church Councils, Presbytery members and the leadership of the Presbytery including the three Presbytery Committees.

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From the worship resources at <https://victas.uca.org.au/resources/weekly-worship>



Person 1: Let us pray for all God's people.

For people who are blind and cannot see, and for those who can see but are blind to people around them,

Person 2: God, in your mercy help us touch each other.

Person 1: For people who move slowly because of accident, illness or disability, and for those who move too fast to be aware of the world in which they live,

Person 2: God, in your mercy help us work together.

Person 1: For people who are deaf and cannot hear, and for those who can hear but who ignore the cries of others,

Person 2: God, in your mercy help us respond to each other.

Person 1: For people who learn slowly, for people who learn in different ways, and for people who learn quickly and easily but often choose ignorance,

Person 2: God, in your mercy help us grow in your wisdom.

Person 1: For people who have chronic illnesses for which there is no known cure or relief, and for people

who live in unholy fear of developing a chronic illness.

Person 2: God, in your mercy help us and heal us.

Person 1: For families, friends and caregivers who serve people with disabilities, and for those who feel awkward in their presence,

Person 2: God, in your mercy help us see each other with your eyes.

Person 1: For people who think they are worthless and beyond your love, and for people who think they don't need your love.

Person 2: God, in your mercy help us to accept your love.

Person 1: For people who feel isolated by their disabilities, and for people who contribute to that sense of isolation.

Person 2: God, in your mercy change our lives.

Person 1: For all the people in your creation, that we may learn to respect each other and learn how to live together in your peace,

Person 2: God, in your mercy bind us together.

All: AMEN.

A Zero Emissions Church (cont.)

This consultation is not to request/require locals to action on climate change, but to assess the local and regional capacity to act as part of a whole-of-church response to action. This consultation is not about '*what we should do*' (aspirational), but about '*what we can do*' (practically and affordably).

This consultation will lead to information for the VicTas Synod meeting in November 2023 about what the Uniting Church across Tasmania and Victoria can realistically do to act together in response to climate change.

Draft outline/timeline (to be confirmed by PSC):

- March 4: Presbytery meeting at Kingston UC with 10-minute introduction to inform Presbytery members about the consultation process
- **May 27-28: two-hour consultations at two regional venues** (including hybrid/online option for people unable to be present in person), with an invitation for each Church Council to identify two (or more) participants:
 - North/North-West: Saturday lunch/afternoon tea (time TBC)
 - South: Sunday afternoon tea from 2:00pm
- June 24: Presbytery meeting (North) with 10-minute update on the consultation
- Late Jun/ early July: weekday evening Zoom meeting to engage with Tas leadership: *given the consultation outcomes, what can the Presbytery of Tasmania realistically do?*
- November 18-21: VicTas Synod meeting with report and proposals

If there is little local response to the invitations to the consultation process, that is very useful information for the Church – indicating little local capacity to act, and more collective action together is needed.

If on the other hand there is a collective sense that continued reduction of emissions below net-zero in Tasmania is critical to long-term global sustainability, or that the Church's share of [Tasmania's net zero emissions](#) could be utilised to offset emissions in Victoria, or that other action taken together is possible, that too is very useful information for the Church. These are the matters for the consultation.

If you have any interest or feedback on the proposed consultation process, including attending the consultation gatherings in late May, your responses would be appreciated – contact the Tas Office tas.office@victas.uca.org.au or phone 6331 9784 so we can hear your views.



Images from the JustACT website <https://justact.org.au/climate-justice-creation/>

Worship Resources

Here you will find resources for worship leaders to use to encourage people to worship and pray together as a gathered community or at home.

<https://victas.uca.org.au/resources/weekly-worship/worship-resources-archive/>

The Fig Tree Worship Resource is typically available here about 10 days early. You can also subscribe to receive this in your inbox every Monday morning.

<https://gippsland.unitingchurch.org.au/>



Worship at Home

Resources

Worship at Home Resources

During these difficult times we are pleased to provide you with resources for worship leaders to use to encourage people to worship and pray together as a gathered community or at home. These resources have been prepared by Rev Cheryl Wilson:

<https://sa.uca.org.au/worship-at-home>

Kelly Skilton joins the Synod younger generations team.

Kelly Skilton (she/her) has joined eLM as part of the younger generations team. Her role will be developing younger generations' discipleship, networks and leadership within our Intergenerational church. She will have a particular focus on growing younger generations' digital and new communities.



Vibrant churches need all generations to work, worship and serve together, and Kelly brings practical understanding and passion for engaging the life of the church across generations. Kelly's energy comes out of her deep faith in Christ, and a commitment to mentor and disciple young people into deeper faith. We would invite the church to pray for Kelly and all those she will work alongside; that their hopes for growing community, stronger faith, and emboldened leadership would be realised.

More information on Kelly will be available in the February Crosslight.

Kelly can be contacted on Kelly.Skilton@victas.uca.org.au or 0432 714 758.



In the large and growing regional town of Tatura in North East Victoria, the congregation of Tatura Uniting Church radically reshaped its life when it decided to sell its 60-year-old building complex and move into an unfamiliar space.



With a church building no longer ‘fit for purpose’ and determined to steward limited resources wisely, it swapped its 1959 brick building for a café and gallery space that it has opened to the community. Now, it is a visible presence in the heart of town – and it’s growing.

Rev Brian Spencer, Minister in the Waranga Uniting Churches cluster to which Tatura belongs, says the courageous and innovative move has inspired huge excitement in the congregation and beyond.

“As we shared the vision with the community and the wider church, the congregation sensed the support and excitement in the response of others. We knew this was something important.”

Tatura is one of three main urban centres in Greater Shepparton with a growing population and unique needs and opportunities. Connecting with the community became a driving factor for change.

“We wanted to reach out to our community and to the many new residents making their home in Tatura,”



says Rev Spencer. “For many of these new residents relocating exposes deeper spiritual needs. They come with hopes and dreams, but need to find belonging and acceptance in a new community.”

“Our vision was to create a prominent, warm, inviting place with space for worship, fellowship and to explore new opportunities for outreach and mission. We want to be a sustainable congregation where people in our growing community can find faith, hope, meaning, grace and belonging.”

The congregation originally hoped it would realise this vision at the existing church site, which was well located but showing its age and needing significant maintenance.



For nearly two and a half frustrating years it unsuccessfully sought approval to redevelop. At the same time, it had been going through a process of “mission-motivated development”, looking at the current and future needs of the congregation and local communities.

In the same year the congregation realised it would need to spend the bulk of its finances to bring the existing 1960s building up to code, it discovered an established café and gallery for sale in the heart of the Tatura township.

A lengthy and transparent process of discernment followed. No pressure was applied towards a decision. The congregation was encouraged to pray and reflect on the options and possibilities.

“It was emphasised that this was the congregation’s decision to make. We avoided suggesting that the proposed sale of the old church and purchasing the café was ‘God’s will’. There were many



ways of pursuing our vision and mission as a congregation, and the concerns or contrary views of some should not be portrayed as somehow them lacking faith or resisting the Spirit.”

“In the end it was a clear consensus that this was indeed the way we wanted to go and we did have a clear sense of it being God’s leading. We did not lose any members through the sale of the old church and purchase of the café.”

The congregation was intentional in marking the end of an era and the closure of the old buildings with special services where it gave thanks for the past and for new beginnings. It engaged a professional photographer to record important moments, and moved important symbols from the old to the new site.

It has since given the café a new life as a hybrid worship and hospitality space, and a new name – Olive & Vine. Despite COVID-19 delaying plans it is already well used by the church and community, hosting fellowship after worship, Pancake Day (which was open to the public), private functions and



community events organised by Rotary Australia and the Country Women's Association. There are more opportunities on the horizon.

Reflecting on what innovation looks like, Rev Spencer says their experience reveals how a change in context and structure encourages people to think and act differently.

“The move to Olive & Vine takes what is familiar to the existing community and puts it in a strange context. In doing so the familiar becomes strange and causes people to think differently about faith and mission. The context creates opportunities.”

“In the same way for the broader community, the familiar context of a café makes the strange familiar. The strange rituals of liturgy and church seem different in this new context; entering the space seems less forbidding. There is a greater sense of control. Knowing where to sit and how to behave empowers people.”

“Somehow the new premises have allowed past members who were alienated from the church to heal, to be curious, to discover that the church they left or drifted away from is not the church of today.”

The congregation is now discussing options for developing the café as a social enterprise, providing work experience and training for refugees in partnership with Uniting Settlement and Employment Services in Shepparton. It has secured funding for a pilot project that will offer work experience to refugees and job seekers and opportunities for them to tell their story, building greater understanding and awareness in the community.

Rev Spencer says the congregation's story resists "the prevailing narrative that people are too attached to their buildings and not prepared to move or change for the sake of their mission and faith."

"With a clear vision of what we wanted and a readiness for change, the congregation was in a good space to dream a new future and to enter into the uncertainty of such a new venture."

"We were both excited and scared but felt confident that we were responding to God's leading and guidance."

See more of Tatura's story in the video below from Rev Mat Harry, New and Renewing Communities Catalyst in the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania.

More stories from Mat: <https://victas.uca.org.au/ministry-mission/new-renewing-ministry/>



<https://youtu.be/7L8cVVmfB3w>

Article originally from the Uniting Church Assembly <https://uniting.church/innovation-in-tatura/>

Mission and Service Fund 2023 contribution

Mission and Service Giving sustains the mission of the Uniting Church in Tasmania.

The form indicating your congregation's 2023 contribution for the Mission and Service of the Uniting Church in Tasmania and Victoria is due 25th November 2022.

Please return it to the Tasmanian Office or contact the office if it has been mislaid.

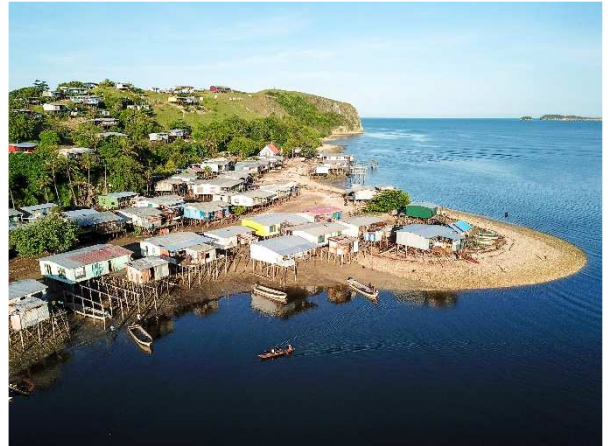
Cutting through the 'noise' of life and refocusing during Lent

"When I was a child, I would sit on my mother's lap and she would tell me the stories of our people. It meant that my whole life I've known who I am because I know my story."

"I'm so grateful for it because today it's fading away. It's harder for young people because of the noise of modern life."

Ever since I heard this from Kim Allen, a youth leader with our partner the United Church in Papua New Guinea (UCPNG), I can't get it out of my mind. I think it's because his words transcend his culture and speak into our current moment in time.

At just 28 years old, Kim is responsible for around five thousand youth across almost ten remote islands. He acts as a facilitator to connect youth to the work of the church.



"The challenges we're facing are school dropouts, unemployment, early marriage and the impacts of climate change," he told me. But the underlying problem affecting young people today is what he describes as 'noise'.

"Young people are exposed to so much noise, with the internet, mobile phones, drugs, peer pressure, music. They can't focus."

I asked Kim how he and his church are addressing it:

"The first step is to help them be aware of themselves and their lives as children of God," Kim said. "With that awareness we can then meet them at a practical level, training them to be good citizens, to work against violence, to build up their communities. The church gives them hope and a solid foundation to be human. We see that as intrinsic to spiritual development."

I think we can all relate to that feeling of too much noise in our busy, modern world. I love that Kim's antidote is having greater awareness of who we are as children of God as a first step to refocusing our lives.

I know I don't have to tell you how powerful that idea is, but I always find the reminder encouraging. When we see ourselves and others as created children of God, infinitely loved and valuable, our hearts are changed. We can't ignore the cries of people suffering in poverty and injustice. We long to make a difference, and through God and God's people, we find the power to do it.

I hope, like me, you find strength and encouragement in that thought, because it's a critical time to play your part, however you can. Here at UnitingWorld and across our church, we do that together during Lent with [Lent Event](#). We reach out to others through prayer, living more simply and practising generosity.

Here's how to join us:

- **Pray** - Use our prayer guide to pray alongside our partners as they address the challenges facing their communities.
- **Live simply** - Give up something in solidarity with people who have less.
- **Give** - Donate or fundraise to help our partners fighting poverty and injustice.

Every prayer, action and gift make a difference, and not just for people overcoming poverty. Because when we work for change, we too are changed.

I hope you'll join us for Lent Event this year as we seek to refocus our lives through prayer, simplicity and generosity. In 2023, Lent is from 22 February to 6 April.

Head to www.lentevent.com.au today to get started.

In hope and gratitude,

Dr Sureka Goringe
National Director
UnitingWorld

UnitingWorld is the international aid and partnerships agency of the Uniting Church in Australia.

We're a channel for people like you to connect with God's work around the world, working together with

the global church to build lives that are whole and hopeful, free from poverty and injustice. Find out more: www.unitingworld.org.au



This 'n That

- About forty copies of the blue covered Australian Hymn Book – Melody Line Edition are available. Contact Marilyn Page if interested at makapage1@bigpond.com
- <https://ucatas.org.au> Presbytery of Tasmania
- <https://victas.uca.org.au> Synod of Victoria and Tasmania
- <https://uniting.church> Assembly

Praying for Everyone

- The Earth as it reels from the consequences of Climate Change
- Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community as they deal with pushback with regards to important referendum decisions to be made later this year
- Presbytery members as they prepare to gather at Kingston in March
- For those exploring innovative ways of being church in their place and those worried about getting their toes wet
- For the committees of the Presbytery as they lead us into the new year and negotiate the pathways of the church as an institution
- For those beginning new work and those who need to look at the same work in a new way
- For the shoots of new growth and the courage to see them
- For the staff at the Tasmanian Office as they respond to those who pass through the office and check up on yet another cemetery

From Checklist for UCA Congregations

March

- AGM by end of March
- Check items in Annual Maintenance Log Book
- Notify UCA Tasmanian Office of any changes to Presbytery Directory – office bearers, worship times
- Working with Vulnerable People up to dates

What's On

Feb

Thu 2	10:00am	Presbytery Standing Committee
Tue 7	10:00am	Pastoral Relations Committee
Wed 15	11:30am	Resource and Development Committee

Mar

Sat 4	10:00am	Presbytery Meeting at Kingston UC
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Tuesday 21 February 2023

Pancake Day is a great chance to get together, have some fun and make a difference. Funds raised from Pancake Day are used by Uniting Vic.Tas to help some of the most vulnerable and marginalised people in our communities.

More information at <https://pancakeday.com.au/vic-tas>

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Presbytery of Tasmania website: <https://ucatas.org.au>

The map of Tasmania including King and Flinders Islands has been adapted from a Creative Commons file
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Australia_Tasmania_location_map_blank.svg