



Viewpoint

Volume 2 Issue 1 Autumn 2019

Soon to be online at canberra.uca.org.au - Viewpoint replaces our former magazine, Perspective



‘The full catastrophe!’

by Rev Kevin Dilks
Presbytery Minister - Presbytery Wellbeing

Reflections on impending retirement

In the movie of Nikos Kazantzakis's novel, *Zorba the Greek*, Zorba's young companion turns to him at a certain point and asks, "Zorba, have you ever been married?"

Zorba replies (paraphrased), "Am I not a man? Of course, I have been married. Wife, house, kids, everything ... the full catastrophe!"



It was not meant as a lament nor was it saying his being married was a tragedy.

To quote Dr Jon Kabat-Zinn in his book "Full Catastrophe Living - using the wisdom of your body and mind to face

stress, pain and illness" (Delta. 1990.), "Zorba's response embodies a supreme appreciation for the richness of life and the inevitability of all its dilemmas, sorrows, tragedies and ironies", to which I would add the inevitability of its achievements, joys, successes and insights. This is not a statement in support of, or in opposition to, heterosexual marriage or marriage in any form. Rather it means the "poignant enormity of our life experience," (p6), whatever our particular life experience may be.

Since being ordained early in January 1982, I can report that I have experienced the full catastrophe – the church at its best and the church at its worst. Having grown up in the church it was not a complete shock to me as an ordained person to discover that not everyone lived out the values of the Gospel of Jesus, at least as I understood them. With youthful omniscience I saw clearly the church's failings, both corporately and in its individual members.

Once I recovered from this omniscient phase I started to be open to discovering people about whom I could say "in you I see the light of the Christ".

... /continued over the page

INSIDE

- Intentional Interim Ministry - Queanbeyan 4
- What makes a healthy church? David Cornford 5
- Glimpses of Presbytery 6
- Geoff's move to Saltbush 7
- We hear from Cooma; also Far South Coast, Crookwell about drought relief funding 8-11
- Wells or fences - a paradigm for spiritual growth 12
- View from the Chair 14



“The full catastrophe” continues from previous page ...

And in my journey as an ordained member of the church I have been lifted by those individuals who have shown me it is possible to live “as Christ”, far more than demoralised by those who seem to use the church for their own purposes.

And now? I am far more comfortable than ever with the knowledge that the church is a broken body in which the full catastrophe is expressed. Long gone is my need for the church to be some sugar-saccharin community of perfect, Stepford-like, individuals. In fact, I am quite close to believing that “perfect” is the complete mix of Christ-like and other-than-Christ-like individuals – just like a perfect gut contains both good and bad bio-organisms.

Surely this is partly what the incarnation is about – Christ is present in the messy reality of life, rather than in some pristine-perfect exclusion of pain, turmoil, disagreement and diversity.

Do not misunderstand me – I am not saying bad behaviour is acceptable, it is not. (All people are welcome here but not all behaviour is acceptable.)

And now? I am far more comfortable than ever with the knowledge that the church is a broken body in which the full catastrophe is expressed.

I am simply trying to acknowledge that good and bad, light and dark, success and failure, harmony and disharmony, etc, are all part of the full catastrophe of life in the Church.

Since 1982 I have engaged with six placements: suburban (x2), country, new development area, inner city mission, presbytery.

Each placement has contributed something to my growth and development as a minister.

The arguments with dogmatic individuals who were determined to prove that the things I learnt at theological college were heretical; the inaction of those wider church office-bearers who could have helped in a time of personal upheaval and opposition but didn't; the stubborn resistance by certain individuals to anything that threatened their comfort; all were as valuable to me as the experiences with those who joyfully embraced new ideas; with those who were there with compassion and care when I needed it; with those who saw more clearly and further than I ever could.

So here I am, facing retirement. We used to say, each placement prepares you for the next one.

Well there isn't going to be a next! Have the last 37 years prepared me for retirement? We will see.

I admit, I am looking forward to being on the sidelines. Many who have gone into retirement before me have shared their wisdom, usually some form of, “I am busier now than I ever have been!”

I am happy to venture into this new experience with such wisdom to guide me and with no expectation that bliss is around the corner. To quote Kabat-Zinn again, Zorba's “way is to dance in the gale of the full catastrophe, to celebrate life, to laugh with it and at himself, even in the face of personal failure and defeat. In doing so, he is never weighed down for long, never ultimately defeated either by the world or by his own considerable folly.” (ibid. p5)

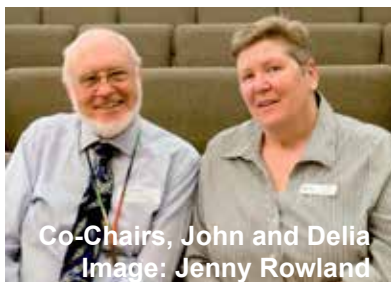
I look forward to finding new, retired, ways of giving expression to my own considerable folly.

If you hear distant sounds of laughter and the clomp of shoes on timber decking perhaps it will be me dancing with Zorba in the gale of the full catastrophe of retirement: no longer engaging with groups of faithful people who committed themselves to hearing for God's word in my preaching; no longer being someone who is looked to for guidance in how to get things done in the church; no longer being the one to whom people turn when they want to understand Church Regulations; no longer being the one whom my Catholic and Anglican friends think of as an all-powerful bishop (they just don't understand the UCA!).

In closing I wish to acknowledge the companionship over the last seven years in the Canberra Region Presbytery of: the various Chairpersons and Deputy Chairpersons - Ivan, Alistair, Vanessa, John, Delia, Doug and Jared; and the different people who have worked out of the Presbytery Office – Duncan, Geoff, Carolyn, Janise, Bri, Alison and Amy. These people have worked closely with me and I have appreciated their insights and their commitment to the well-being of the Canberra Region Presbytery, and to the importance of Monte Carlo biscuits as the antidote to all manner of distresses.



**Kevin Dilks, retiring 31 March 2019
as Presbytery Minister: Presbytery Wellbeing.**



Co-Chairs, John and Delia
Image: Jenny Rowland

Thank you, Kevin

What a huge contribution Kevin has made over his long and fruitful Ministry in the Uniting Church in Australia. For us in the Canberra Region we owe Kevin deep gratitude for all he has given to shaping and building the mission of this Presbytery.

He has built a warm and valued fellowship across the Presbytery ministry team as reflected in the enjoyment and positive view with which the Ministers' Gatherings at Galong are held.

Kevin has worked tirelessly to connect our presbytery in positive and rewarding links to Synod and Assembly. He has fostered the development of a Movement of faith expression in congregations across country, coast and capital and sought to balance the life of the expression of faith and action with the stability and guidance of the Institutional Church.

We thank you, Kevin, for your long hours and enduring commitment to the values and faith of the Uniting Church and its expression of discipleship in the ways of Jesus, both in word and in active engagement and service with community.

Thank you for walking in the hard places and facing the difficult issues.

Thank you for your steady leadership and willingness to guide and encourage us and use your deep knowledge of the functioning of the Institutional church to ensure we walked in a safe and caring manner.

You have given us so much and we thank you.

We know your retirement will be the beginning of new initiatives, refreshment and engagement with your interests and your communities in ways you are yet to imagine. As you leave know that our loving creating God walks with you and ahead of you opening doors and new roads of fellowship and peace.

Thank you Kevin for your love, care and ministry to us.

John Williams and Delia Quigley
Co-Chairs, Canberra Region Presbytery.

A set of random quotes from Kevin's seven years with Canberra Region Presbytery



1. Set a tone through honesty, clarity, concern for the well-being of congregations
 2. Everything cannot be done – the art is working out what things need to be done
 3. Every institution ends up working to prevent from happening the very thing it was set up to bring about
 4. No matter how times and contexts may change what remains constant as we seek to give expression to the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the character of the Christian life – how we relate with each other and with the rest of the world.
 5. Character is about how we conduct ourselves, how we intend to relate with each other and the world in which we live. In different times and different contexts what we do, in mission and in the “internal” life of our Christian communities, will change.
 6. Spring and Summer have not failed because Autumn and Winter have taken over, any more than Spring and Summer are victorious when they take over from Autumn and Winter.
 7. The Church is both Institution and Movement.
An institution values the good ordering of its structures.
A movement values inspiration, education and information.
- Canberra Region Presbytery seeks to encourage the Movement.
8. All of the functions of Presbytery are dependent upon the key factor of the Presbytery having relational oversight for those congregations within its bounds. This is not oversight as exercising power or control but a relational way of being where the gathered members of the Uniting Church are cared for and working together to fulfil their call to discipleship in Jesus Christ.

Intentional Interim Ministry

with the Queanbeyan Uniting Church



In February 2019 the Rev Dr John Squires commenced Intentional Interim Ministry (IIM) with the Queanbeyan Congregation. John comes to us from Western Australia. His last placement was as Director of Education and Formation with the WA Synod and was one with multiple challenges. Here John reflects on IIM ...

Intentional Interim Ministry (IIM) is a process that, as the term indicates, is for a limited time—in this case, an interim period of 12 to 18 months—and it is focussed and intentional in what is undertaken.

It is important for everyone to know that the IIM minister is not there to “fix things”, but to work carefully and patiently with people in addressing the matters that need to be dealt with.

Intentional Interim Ministry begins with paying attention to the history of the congregation, and developing a shared sense of identity, so that people can say, “this is our story; this is who we are”.

After that, the process involves exploring the kind of leadership that is required for the future, and also ensuring that the congregation feels linked with, and supported by, the denomination—in this case, through the Canberra Region Presbytery, which has oversight of the congregation.

The final element in IIM is the development of a common understanding about the new paths in ministry and mission, and this may then lead to the issuing of a call to someone to service in ministry with the congregation for a longer term of placement.

Already there are ideas and hopes bubbling within the Queanbeyan congregation, as to what its future mission might look like.

I feel very fortunate with regard to this IIM placement, since my wife, the Rev Elizabeth Raine, has served in three IIM placements over the past 12 years. So I have a ready resource to consult with, right on hand!

**John Squires, Intentional Interim Minister
Queanbeyan Congregation**



“Greenhills is the place to stay!”
(Nambour Christian College, QLD)

Situated in the beautiful Murrumbidgee River corridor, close to the junction of the Cotter and Murrumbidgee Rivers, Greenhills is a place for learning, renewal and retreat...Canberra’s premier rural camp and conference facility, only 20 minutes from the city centre!

FACILITIES INCLUDE:

- Dining Room
- 2 Large Auditoriums (up to 200 people) (AV included)
- Outdoor Chapel with Firepit
- Facilities for outdoor activities, sports and barbeques
- Meditation Garden and tranquil bush walks

ACCOMMODATION

- Group accommodation for up to 198 people
- Great package deals for groups include all meals, accommodation and use of facilities
- Four separate self-contained holiday Units and Cottage
- **Whole site capacity of 215 people**








A. 1437 Cotter Road, Stromlo ACT 2611
E. bookings@greenhillscentre.com

P. (02) 6288 1074
W. www.greenhillscentre.com



What makes a healthy church?

from our guest speaker at the meeting of Canberra Region Presbytery 23 March 2019 hosted by Weston Creek Congregation

David Cornford is Head of Mission Strategy at Uniting Mission and Education, NSW/

ACT Synod. David gave a presentation at our Presbytery meeting on 23 March 2019 in response to: 'What makes a healthy church?'

This is a topic that gets people to prick up their ears – or fold their arms – eager to hear what someone claiming to know the answer might dare to say. One thing's for sure, it's something that might be hard to measure, but it's not hard to tell when you're in one.

The National Church Life Survey has been exploring the health and vitality of congregations for over 20 years based on analysis of their data – across Australia and across denominations. The characteristics they've found to be associated with church vitality and growth are:

- have an alive and growing *Faith*
- experience vital and nurturing *Worship*
- feel a strong and growing sense of *Belonging*
- a clear and owned *Vision*
- inspiring and empowering *Leadership*
- open and flexible *Innovation*
- practical and diverse *Service*
- willing and effective *Faith-sharing*
- intentional and welcoming *Inclusion*.

Figures for the Synod or a Presbytery aren't as valuable as those for individual congregations – which of course give some guidance to leaders on strengths to build on and opportunities for improvement. With or without NCLS resources, this is a great framework for congregations to work through for themselves and develop some practical local initiatives.

Another way to look at “health” is through the eyes of young people – the future of the church. We're reminded in Psalm 78 of the task of passing on our faith to the next generation:

- 1 My people, hear my teaching;
listen to the words of my mouth.
- 2 I will open my mouth with a parable;
I will utter hidden things, things from of old—
- 3 things we have heard and known,
things our ancestors have told us.
- 4 We will not hide them from their descendants;
we will tell the next generation
the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD,
his power, and the wonders he has done.

I recommend the Autumn issue of Insights to you, especially [Steve Molkentin's article](#) where he suggests five simple things that young adults willing to engage with the church are looking for.

When I heard this quoted recently, the thing that struck me was a pressing question that I've been mulling over ever since – what's the difference between telling of “the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord” and telling of “our own praiseworthy deeds”? Something to think about.

I recommend the Autumn issue of Insights to you, especially [Steve Molkentin's article](#) where he suggests five simple things that young adults willing to engage with the church are looking for:

1. A PLACE OF AUTHENTICITY
2. A CHANCE TO SERVE
(WITH EXPECTATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES)
3. OPPORTUNITIES TO WORSHIP THAT CHALLENGE
4. WORDS THAT MEAN SOMETHING
5. RELATIONSHIP

Not a bad list at all – in fact, these resonated with me personally as things I aspire to experience – in my home church and the churches and faith communities I support and encourage through my work. Maybe they're more than things that young adults might be looking for, but are in fact another, helpful recipe for a healthy church.

David Cornford, Head of Mission Strategy, UME

GLIMPSES of Presbytery

The Inner North Congregations in Canberra continue to meet and explore options for mission together. Rev Dr Cameron Eccleston (right) from Uniting Mission and Education (UME)



was a guest speaker at the last meeting held 12 March where three possible ways forward were considered. He joined Presbytery's



Geoff Wellington (top left), Uniting's Briony Griffiths (left) in leading the discussion. Briony has distributed a report to those who were present. **The next meeting is for 25 March 7pm at O'Connor Uniting Church,** open to anyone interested from the Inner north churches. Enquiries: Geoff Wellington 0400831445.



Elections were held at the November Presbytery meeting where we welcomed **Delia Quigley** (Tuggeranong Congregation) who joins John Williams (Kippax Congregation) as Co-Chair, with **Jared Mitchell** (left) from St James, Curtin as Deputy Chair. Presbytery's **Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC)**, which oversees and works with Congregations and Ministry, is chaired this year by the minister of North Belconnen Congregation, **Tim Jensen** (above).



Thank you to all who serve the Presbytery on its Committees and in many other ways.

Federation Star Award

Rev Noel Williams (centre), a Defence Forces Chaplain with the RAAF was awarded the Federation Star in recognition of 40 years of exemplary service and commitment to Chaplaincy within our Defence Forces and in particular the RAAF. This award was presented to Noel on 18th March at a special ceremony at RAAF Fairbairn.

As co-chair of Presbytery I was able to join in the celebrations to acknowledge and recognise the important work of our defence Chaplains and to bring our greetings, congratulations and good wishes to Noel and his family, Kayleen and Fiona, who have supported him in his many postings.

Celebrating 90 Years

Canberra City Uniting Church's 90th anniversary



(16 January 2019) was celebrated on Sunday, 3 February 2019 with 250 people aged from 7 months to 93 years. John Williams, Co-chair of the Canberra Region Presbytery, brought greetings and congratulations from Presbytery, accompanied by the other Co-chair, Delia Quigley, and the Deputy Chairperson, Jared Mitchell. **Jenny Rowland's** article and photos are in the magazine *Contact* -email:

office@canberracityuca.org.au for a copy.



*Rev Dr Paul Chalson
Canberra City anniversary
photos by Aldo Bongiorno.*

Understanding the Sacraments

The Uniting Church has two Sacraments - Baptism and Holy Communion. For those who would like a deeper understanding of these Sacraments, a **course is to be held** at Tuggeranong and Queanbeyan Uniting Churches 25/26th May and the 15/16th June, led by Rev Elizabeth Raine and Rev Dr John Squires. To register or find out more about the course, please contact Geoff Wellington at geoff@cruc.org.au or 0400 831 445. **RSVP to Geoff by the 6th of May.**

Docbytes for group discussion on the Sacraments are also available at <https://assembly.uca.org.au/doctrine/item/856-docbytes>



We rejoice with Noel and acknowledge his dedication and commitment to the ministry of Jesus; being there and standing with those who stand at the hard edges for our community. We celebrate Noel's ministry and give him thanks for his [discipleship](#).
John Williams, Presbytery Co-Chair



Geoff Wellington, Presbytery Minister - Congregation Futures, has accepted a priority placement call to join the Saltbush Team led by Rev Mark Faulkner and will therefore be leaving us on 31st May 2019.

Geoff's five years of ministry have been such a wonderful blessing to us all. His lovely quiet manner disguises the wealth of diverse ministries that he has exercised across this Presbytery.

He has played like a fullback and covered the whole field of our operations as well as pioneering the work for helping congregations seek new futures and form new faith communities as we see in Grace, Goulburn.

There is so much more which we will say at another time to acknowledge all that Geoff has given but for the moment we say a huge thank you.

We also feel a strong sense that the call Geoff has taken is very much where God is calling him: a call to serve the rural communities that bore him.

Thus, much as we will miss him, we rejoice with him and he goes with our blessing and prayers.

We are confident that God will continue to bless him and walk with him as he continues to break new ground in his discipleship.

Go well Geoff and Thank you.

John Williams and Delia Quigley, Co-Chairs, Canberra Regional Presbytery.

Geoff's move to Saltbush

Many of you will be aware of Saltbush - Uniting the Scattered Community that has been developed by the NSW/ACT Synod over the last few years in response to rural ministry.

<http://ume.nswact.uca.org.au/our-work/rural/saltbush-evolution/>

This ministry is seen as a priority for the life and ministry of the synod and the many rural and regional congregations. Rev Mark Faulkner has been taking a lead role in developing this ministry across the synod and two new ministry placements have been created to aid in this work and create a ministry team.

Uniting Mission and Education has issued a priority call to me to move into the *Scattered Community Minister* placement and I have accepted this call. This will mean that I will conclude my placement with the Canberra Region Presbytery on the 31st May 2019.

It has truly been a blessing to have served the presbytery these last five years in the role of Presbytery Minister: Congregation Futures.

Together we have journeyed through some difficult times as well as celebrating the movement of God in the congregations across the presbytery. There is much to give thanks to God for about the life of our congregations and I feel that the Canberra Region Presbytery is in a good place to move into this time of leadership transition.

I pray that the presbytery continues to grow, develop and be a blessing to congregations as it wrestles with the call of God to be worshipping communities of hope and missional practitioners of God's reconciling love. Shalom,

Geoff Wellington

Presbytery Minister: Congregation Futures

Innovative Community Grants

Apply by Friday 28 June 2019 at uniting.grantplatform.com

Complete flyer is on the Presbytery website <https://canberra.uca.org.au/presbytery-news/>

Capacity grants funding (up to \$15,000)

Breakthrough grants (up to \$30,000)

Contact your local Church Engagement Leader:

Briony Griffiths (Church Engagement Leader, Canberra Region)

T: 0427 038 180 E: bgriffiths@uniting.org



Uniting

uniting.org/about-uniting/social-justice/grant-programs



What I want to say to the Church

a regular feature where we hear from Ministers of Congregations

In the mountainous regions of our Presbytery, there is a farm of about 1800 sheep and other stock, where Rev Noel and Kayleen Williams live. As well as running the farm, Noel is a Senior Chaplain in the RAAF and Minister of Monaro Parish (Cooma and Bombala). On this page and the next, Noel offers some recent highlights from his life as a Parish Minister.

COOMA COMBINED CHURCHES

Men's Breakfast

<http://www.cooma.mensbreakfast.com.au>

For many years, the men of St Andrew's Uniting Church in Cooma have hosted a monthly combined Churches Men's Breakfast, whereby Christian men of the Monaro from all denominations can get together to tell and share their faith stories while eating bacon, eggs, toast and coffee (or tea)! How good is that!!

I was to be the Guest Speaker at the Breakfast held Saturday 2nd February and I'd given the address a ridiculous title of, 'Pioneering Impossible Possibilities in 2019'.

I wanted to share unique aspects of my faith journey that is current and ongoing today: the inward faith journey with its times of refreshing, struggle and times of uncertainty and 'not-knowing'.

To close, I played a Christian song that I want played at my own funeral that encapsulates who I am and what I believe in God. If you want to know what song it was, you might have to wait a bit...#

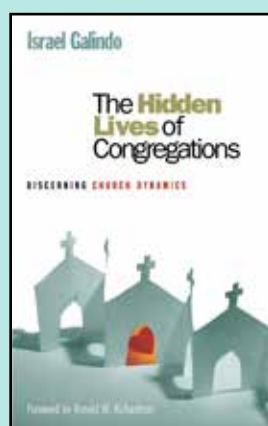


Interviewed by ABC Radio's Afternoons Presenter, Paula Kruger... Image: https://twitter.com/paula_kruger?lang=en

Out of the blue in late January, on the Tuesday before the Breakfast meeting, an ABC Radio producer called me and asked if I would speak about the Men's Breakfast on ABC Radio's *Afternoons* program. I accepted the invitation and was interviewed by Presenter, Paula Kruger for approximately 30 minutes. Some asked, 'How on earth could someone speak about a Men's Breakfast for that long??'

Early in the interview, Paula Kruger introduced the widely held view that 'men can't/don't/won't talk about their feelings' and sought a response from me. She also mentioned on air that men need to 'rub shoulders with men' and that the Men's Breakfast might be an ideal opportunity to do that!

I felt that our conversation was interesting, informative and engaging. Thirty seconds after the interview concluded, I received a text from an Air Force Chaplain who had heard the interview and texted, 'Well said!#

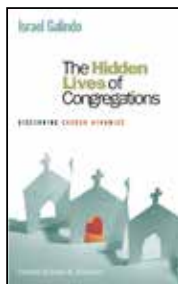


The Hidden Lives of Congregations – Understanding Congregational Dynamics

by Israel Galindo. Alban Institute, 2004. Reviewed by Noel on the next page.

Faced with crisis, lack of direction, or just plain "stuckness," many congregations and their leaders are content to deal only with surface issues and symptoms—only to discover that the same problems keep recurring, often in different, and more serious, ways. Christian educator and consultant Israel Galindo takes leaders below the surface of congregational life ... for experienced pastors, [this book] provides support for renewing ministry; for lay leaders and committees, it offers insight to deepening mutual ministry.

Extracted from the Publisher's overview on <http://www.lifeandleadership.com>



BOOK REVIEW

The Hidden Lives of Congregations by Israel Galindo

I feel almost too embarrassed to write this book review. I borrowed this book from a friend a number of years ago and I have not yet returned it! I started to read the book, read a couple of chapters and through the crazy life that I live, I never finished it. Then I would read some more... and did not get back to it. Then some more ... until finally, something 'clicked' inside my head and it all made perfect sense or, at least, it was a practical, systems thinking framework that helped me understand and discern hidden dynamics within my Congregations.

This understanding engaged my intellect, feelings and pastoral nous, so much so that I wrote to the author to thank him for his book:

"I'm still working my way through [your book] and finding your systems thinking framework most enlightening and inspirational.

As a Uniting Church Minister in Cooma, NSW, Australia, I am writing out your concepts (longhand) as an attempt to understand and apply your model of systems thinking to our parish context and felt compelled to write to you to express my gratitude.

I shouldn't have been surprised but I was! Overnight, Israel Galindo responded with thanks. He also included links to his two later works on systems theory and congregational leadership [below].

The Hidden Lives of Congregations is a worth-while read for those interested in deepening awareness of hidden dynamics within congregations, congregational leadership and ministry.

Now ... who was it who gave me the book ...

Noel Williams

Minister, Cooma and Bombala

Israel Galindo's latest books:
Perspectives on Congregational Leadership

<https://amzn.to/2Nf0b8P>

Leadership in Ministry

<https://amzn.to/2tqn9AX>

an indispensable manual that leaders will return to repeatedly for new wisdom and guidance on the unseen mechanisms that drive congregational life.

Alban Institute. <http://www.lifeandleadership.com/book-summaries/galindo-the-hidden-lives-of-congregations.html>

The Moderator's Drought Relief Fund - a Tale to Tell



As farmers in primary production, Kayleen and I have struggled with the severest drought in our memory.

We have had to purchase fodder and sheep nuts by the semi-trailer load as well as having to feed our 1800 odd sheep and other stock. When the drought started to really bite and water sources began to dry up, paddock fodder (including 3 large Lucerne stands) also dried out and things began to get really tough and desperate.

Supermarkets, Governments and businesses began to collect monies for drought relief and local communities (including Churches) became aware of the plight of the farming community in the midst of this drought and desired to assist in some way.

As UCA Minister with the Monaro Parish, I had part responsibility (with our Church Council) in finding the best way to disburse funds given to us from the [Moderator's Drought Relief Fund](#) (about \$3,600). As a Church Council, we struggled with the question of how, and to whom should we give these drought relief monies.

I sought to find worthy recipients (or at least information on such) from our local Rural Shops, Rural Financial Counsellors, civic leaders, Farming organisations and the like. People could not provide any information that might assist us in this task due to privacy and confidentiality.

We thought of giving the funds to support our Breakfast Club ministry in one of our local Primary Schools but they had just received a significant donation to cover the costs of breakfast cereals etc. A solution seemed to present itself when we rationalised about the effects of drought on the farming community which included farming families and children of farming families.

.../continued over the page

Rev Noel Williams, Cooma continues from the previous page/...

A Tale to Tell



As a Church Council, we decided to apportion the monies across our regional, rural primary schools (six in all) and sent the money to the Principals for use among children.

We received very positive feedback from the School Principals: some who utilised it for school excursions and outings for all children of the Primary School.

I was invited to one of these regional Schools as a Guest for their Presentation night. They had eight students in the School and over 60 parents and friends attended!

The Moderator's Drought Relief Funds were greatly appreciated by both the School Principals and staff as well as the families. But what it did do very effectively, was assist the Church to express itself in a positive, supportive and practical way to the farming community during a period of intense uncertainty and apprehension.

Many thanks to the Moderator and those Congregations who gave of themselves in support of the farming community.

Noel D. Williams
Minister,
Monaro Parish (Cooma and Bombala Congregations)

Bling on the rain

a farm family gathering - Far South Coast

The Far South Coast Dairy Development Group, Bega Beef Co-op and the Far South Coast Farmers' Network teamed up to organise a free event for dairy, beef and sheep farming families, and associated businesses, at the Bega Showground in Bega on Friday 16th November 2018. The event was titled "Bling on the Rain", a hopeful title to build on some recent welcome rain at the end of November.

One of the event highlights was a wonderful bistro dinner provided by the local bakery and take away.



Care for the farming community

Moderator's Drought Relief Fund

More about the fund on <https://vimeo.com/283827796>

The evening, which attracted more than 200 people, was primarily designed as a social gathering and a chance to get out and catch up with fellow farmers from across the Bega Valley and further north, but was also an opportunity to help support those who have been doing it tough over the drought.

Participants were invited to dress up in their finest bling outfits.

"With Christmas approaching, we thought it was a good time to bring Bega Valley farmers and their families together to have some fun, de-stress and take their mind off the drought", Brad Smith, chair of the Far South Coast Dairy Development Group, said.

"You can't underestimate the value of taking a break, getting away from the farm and connecting with other farmers. Sometimes you don't recognise the need to do so - this event has given the opportunity to provide that break", commented Col Pilkington, chair of the Bega Beef Co-op.

Generous support came from major sponsors Mitta Beef Co-op from Victoria, Dairy NSW, and the Uniting Church of Australia. Support also came from NSW Department of Primary Industries, Rural Adversity Mental Health Program (RAMHP), Quayle Milling, Cobargo Primary School P&C, Commonwealth Bank, Bega Cheese, and South East Local Land Services.

Fun on the night included prizes of \$1000 towards a holiday, cricket bats signed by the 2011 Australian and England cricket teams, as well as jumping castles, pony rides, face painting and ice creams.

Wayne Schaefer
Bega Congregation (Quotes from Bega District News, Friday November 02 2018)

Letting others serve us

from [Crookwell Congregation](#)

simply knowing the city cares sometimes makes the biggest difference in the bush

Last year, Crookwell Uniting Church was very Lgrateful to be a recipient of the Moderator's Drought Relief Fund. Thank you to any individuals or congregations that contributed to this appeal – simply knowing the city cares sometimes makes the biggest difference in the bush.

Unfortunately, in Crookwell we have had trouble finding tangible ways to use this money for the benefit of the local community. There are several reasons for this. In country areas like Crookwell there is often an attitude that stubbornness is the same as resilience.

Care for the farming community

Moderator's Drought Relief Fund

More about the fund on <https://vimeo.com/283827796>

While locals are often the first to put their hands in their pockets to help another, they refuse help when they need it themselves.

In Crookwell, this is often made worse by a mythology that Crookwell is never as bad as other parts of the state. It is common to hear farmers I know saying things like 'Crookwell is always the last part of the state to go into drought,' and 'if you are in trouble in Crookwell, it is really more bad management than drought.'

In fact, the very week we received the drought relief funding, the local CWA was collecting food parcels for other parts of the state.

This creates an environment in which accepting the help or generosity of another is seen as a sign of weakness.

Yet, how can we ever expect others to accept our help, if we never allow them to help us?

I am reminded of the words of the hymn 'Brother, Sister, let me serve you' which say, 'Pray that I may

have the grace to let you be my servant too.' It takes enormous grace to let others serve us. It takes deep

humility of spirit to allow Christ to reach down and wash our feet. But that too is our call.

This month, the drought in Crookwell has only gotten worse. I drive past empty dams most days, and a plague of grasshoppers has stripped what little grass remained on some properties.

The worst is yet to come – to get through it, we will need to learn to accept that God might be helping us through others and learn to love ourselves as we love our neighbours.

Daniel Mossfield

Minister, Crookwell Uniting Church.



Viewpoint - next issue



Viewpoint articles and contributions to the *Glimpses of Presbytery* page are due **end of April** in time for the Presbytery meeting on the 18th May. Send to the Editor, Carolyn McAllister - viewpoint@cruc.org.au. Enquiries: Presbytery Co-Chair Delia Quigley 0438 018 799 cochairDelia@cruc.org.au

This issue - Cover Canberra Region Presbytery logo artwork - Bill Lang. **Image of Co-chairs** pp 3,14: Jenny Rowland.

Viewpoint (Presbytery News ISSN 1322-8323) is published by Canberra Region Presbytery, Uniting Church in Australia and printed in-house. **Opinions and advertisements** in *Viewpoint* do not necessarily reflect the views of the Canberra Region Presbytery.

Presbytery Office Contacts

Presbytery Office:

Amy Junor 02 6248 9311 office@cruc.org.au

Presbytery Minister - Presbytery Wellbeing

Rev Kevin Dilks 0400 361 468 kevin@cruc.org.au

Presbytery Minister - Congregation Futures

Geoff Wellington 0400 831 445 geoff@cruc.org.au

Operations Manager:

Janise Wood 0455 558 130 manager@cruc.org.au

Church and Community Engagement Consultant -

ACT Region: Briony Griffiths (Tues-Thurs)

0427 038 180 bgriffiths@uniting.org

Web canberra.uca.org.au

Facebook facebook.com/CanberraRegionPresbytery

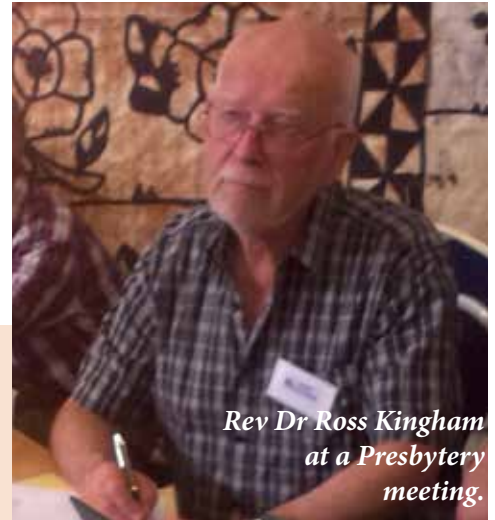
Twitter twitter@ucacanberra



Wells or fences

A Paradigm of Spiritual Growth

adapted by Rev Dr Ross Kingham from an article, Wells or Fences?, by Sheila Pritchard, in Spiritual Growth Ministries Newsletter, NZ, June 1996, 2-5



*Rev Dr Ross Kingham
at a Presbytery
meeting.*

In the last issue of Viewpoint, our Presbytery Co-Chairs introduced us to the idea of the church as a water-hole (or well). To explore this further, Presbytery Co-Chair, John Williams, brings us Rev Dr Ross Kingham's adaptation of Sheila Pritchard's article 'Wells or fences'. Ross wrote this while Director of Barnabas Ministries, the agency he established to provide support for church leaders coping with the stress of their responsibilities. The Director is now Pr Sue Dunbar. Ross is retired and currently providing Supply Ministry to the Bega-Tathra Congregations.

A visitor to an Australian outback cattle station was intrigued by the seemingly endless miles of farming country with no sign of any fences. He asked a local farmer how he kept track of his cattle. The farmer replied, "Oh that's no problem. Out here we dig wells instead of building fences."

The implication is obvious. There is no need to fence cattle in when they are highly motivated to stay within range of their source of life.

Let's consider a paradigm for spiritual growth which is based on digging deeper wells rather than on building higher fences.

Conversion is the point at which a person turns towards the centre and begins the journey. That new fragile follower of Jesus (about whom s/he may know very little) is as much a part of the family of God as the missionary who told him/her the gospel story. The fact that the missionary has a degree in theology is irrelevant to defining the membership of the church. The fact that they are both moving towards the central goal is the important thing. Distance from the centre is not as important as direction of movement.

One can be close to the centre but moving away from it; another may be less close but moving toward it. Although boundaries are not the primary focus there is a clear distinction between those moving in and those moving out.

What I am suggesting is that it is both more Biblical and more risky to entertain a 'wells' approach to Christian faith.

'Wells' Christianity is defined by active, dynamic relationship to Jesus Christ. There is no place in Christianity imaged in this way for us to shelter behind the fences of theological orthodoxy, denominational superiority or verbal assent to gospel values which bears no resemblance to lifestyle.

One of the apostle Paul's most striking victories for the early Church was his insistence that the 'fence' of Jewish orthodoxy, in particular circumcision, should not be a barrier to entry to the Christian community. Paul insisted that faith in Christ alone was the criterion.

And consider Jesus himself and his scorching condemnation of the Pharisees in Matthew 23. While affirming that what they taught was orthodox, he says, "Do not follow them for they do not do what they teach". "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you lock people out of the kingdom of heaven. For you do not go in yourselves, and when others are going in, you stop them."

Or Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, "Not everyone who says to me "Lord, Lord" will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my father in heaven."

Or Jesus in his discourse in John 5, "You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that testify of me. Yet you refuse to come to me to have life."

Jesus clearly does not undervalue doctrine or the study of scripture or verbal commitment.

But what he does do is indicate that they cannot be used as 'fences' to define disciples.

So who is the true disciple - the well-churched graduate who can defend Christianity against all opponents in a theological argument, or the hesitant, barely literate young woman who comes to the drop-in centre but never to a church service?

From the perspective of 'fences' thinking the answer is obvious. The graduate is clearly 'in'; the young woman 'out'. But from the perspective of 'wells' thinking we cannot answer the question without more information.

We need to know about the personal relationship of each to Jesus.

If the young woman is, however stumblingly, moving towards discovering what relationship with Jesus can mean for her, while the churchman/woman is quietly ignoring all aspects of personal commitment and prayer, and moving towards increasing self-sufficiency, materialism and disregard for others, what then?

Our purpose is not to theorise about imaginary others. The question we need to consider is this: if Christian disciples were no longer defined in terms of fences, but towards Christ the centre, where does that leave you and me?

Freedom from Defensiveness

Paradoxically, the nearer you are to the centre the more freedom there is to explore widely. After a while the cattle on the station realise both their security and their freedom and no longer need to huddle.

A deep relationship with Jesus develops in his disciples a confidence which transcends fearful huddling. It enables us to reach out in ever widening circles of experience and relationship without defensiveness - just as Jesus did.

Confidence in who he was in relation to God enabled Jesus to cross boundaries of every kind.

Christians who have that kind of freedom from defensiveness seem to attract others to the well also.

This kind of freedom is quite different from licence. Neither is it a grey wishy-washiness. Remember the determining factor is likeness to Jesus.

Evangelism by Attraction

Evangelism in 'wells' thinking is motivated by personal, life-changing experience of the Christ, and focuses on pointing others in the direction of the source of life.

It works by attraction to the centre. Our lives serve as witnesses to the extent that they contagiously attract others to what has so captivated us.

“What I am suggesting is that it is both more Biblical and more risky to entertain a 'wells' approach to Christian faith.

'Wells' Christianity is defined by active, dynamic relationship to Jesus Christ. There is no place in Christianity imaged in this way for us to shelter behind the fences of theological orthodoxy, denominational superiority or verbal assent to gospel values which bears no resemblance to lifestyle.”

Sadly, some forms of evangelism pay more attention to the numbers of people who can be corralled within a particular doctrinal or even denominational fence, and do little to attract folk to the Jesus of the gospels.

A very good Biblical example of 'wells' evangelism is (please forgive the pun) the woman at the well! Her own encounter with Jesus so transformed her that she was freed from defensiveness and fear in such a remarkable way that even those who had previously shunned her were attracted to the source of life she had found.

- Are our lives dynamically connected to their source in the Christ, source of living water?
- Do we freely and fearlessly cross boundaries to attract others to the well - or have we lapsed into complacent sheltering inside a respectable theological fence which hides our own lack of movement and serves mainly to keep others out?
- In what ways may 'wells' theology inform our experience of being God's people in this land?

“Out here,” said the farmer, “we dig wells instead of building fences.”

**Ross Kingham
Supply Minister
Bega-Tathra**



Well and water pump at
Mount Ive Station, SA

<https://www.rdon-outback-guide.com/>



Co-Chairs, John and Delia
Image: Jenny Rowland

VIEW from the Chair

2019 - a year of Transition for Transformation

On 16th February 2019 there was a combined gathering of Presbytery's Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC) and Standing Committee (SC) to wrestle with:

- what are the issues we face as clusters of Christians scattered across our country, coast and capital towns and cities.
- what should be our focus and priority actions and activities for 2019?

Presbytery Co-Chairs, John Williams and Delia Quigley reflect:

It was apparent that the year ahead will be one of transition and transformation.

Our "Future Directions" planning has prepared us well for this. It speaks to the Presbytery's commitment to transition for transformation.

Changing circumstances

The institutional church regardless of denomination in most of its current forms, expressions and structures no longer sits in our community with the engagement and moral authority it once did.

The loss is painful. But it signals opportunities to focus on the essence of being Jesus' disciples; seeking new expressions of living and engaging in our society consistent with the ways of Jesus.

It's time to seriously re-think being and doing church and seek out ways of living as a Jesus movement in our context and cultures.

Priority 1: Are we ready to give first priority to seeking new expressions of living the Way of Jesus; as we relate to our neighbours and communities.

This first requires a call to prayer, meditation, reflection; being open to hearing and engaging with the Holy Spirit exactly as our UCA Basis of Union sets down in describing our journey ...

"On the way Christ feeds the Church with Word and Sacraments, and it has the gift of the Spirit in order that it may not lose the way".

Presbytery has sought to do this through the evolution of our "Future Directions". [see the separate column and also the last issue of *Viewpoint*]

2019 will be the year for innovation, initiative, and emerging results. Yes, there will be many attempts, several failures, and a few successes. But transition requires we make our commitment real, and now.

In stepping out, in all experiences of "risking the Way of Jesus", we remember that the Spirit of God accompanies and empowers us.

- Constantly look out for signs of the movement of the Spirit so that emerging opportunities can be identified and encouraged.
- Listen and talk to one another of the Spirit signs you observe.
- Share stories of awe and wonder at God's work in neighbourhoods and communities.
- Pray together.

Meet Christ in Galilee

"The church is found not where human capacity fails, at the limits, but rather in the middle of the village."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 1944

This begins with each of us hearing the calling and sending words,

"But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'" (Mark 16:)

According to the first three chapters of Mark's Gospel, Jesus gathered disciples, healed, proclaimed and taught, got stuck in with those on the edge, touched the sick and mentally ill, spoke truth to power.

As we meet the risen Christ in our Galilee, know that we are called to do this same mission as Jesus.

Priority 2: Congregations and faith communities to be Safe Places for everyone, whether church host, guest or visitor.

Only in safe places can relationships that invite and offer Christ's love, grace and compassion be established and grow in mutually beneficial ways.



Well and water pump at
Mount Ive Station, SA

<https://www.visit-southaustralia.com/>

Safe Waterholes and Wells

Safe Church places are like Safe Waterholes and Wells, with no Fences. (see Ross Kingham's article on pp12-13) Our gatherings, our presence in Christian community are Safe Wells and Waterholes which nourish and sustain us and can become signs, foretastes and instruments of God's mission amongst neighbours and communities; providing exposure to God's life-giving Word and words, nurture, hope and joy.

They can become places and relationships in which Christ draws diverse people together into authentic community.

Priority 3: Leadership development

- building skills, equipping, nurturing, mentoring, and generally lifting the leadership of both lay and ordained members. What can the Presbytery offer congregations that helps us all discover new futures, and provide care for those facing radical change?

Discipleship in today's context means building capacity to meet these challenges.

Consider:

- connecting with opportunities to plant new communities of faith and church;
- joining others who are already investing skills and energies in nurturing, and supporting aged congregations;
- identifying, acquiring and harnessing new skills and capacity...

Leadership development will not happen unless we are proactive, building and nurturing leadership capacity in individuals and communities.

Priority 4: Ministry of and with young people

- growing vital faith communities with those born after 1980. Let's make ways to connect with Synod's *PULSE*, <https://www.ucapulse.org.au/>, establishing a people network passionate about sharing the good news of Jesus with the emerging generations.

In all these opportunities,

Presbytery is about building connections between Assembly, Synod, Uniting and our congregations. Presbytery is the council best placed to explore and foster initiatives with congregations, helping them come alive in ways appropriate to the people to whom they have been called and sent. Presbytery is all about how we connect to strengthen and foster healthy strong congregations growing as loving, nurturing, open wells and waterholes, engaging with and embedded within the communities where we are...in our Galilee where Jesus continues to meet us.

*John Williams and Delia Quigley, Co-Chairs,
Canberra Region Presbytery*

FUTURE DIRECTIONS -

- becoming practical

'Future Directions' provides plans and programs to build, nurture and equip Christ's disciples for God's mission. The five pillars of "Future Directions" will:

1. resource congregations to function in healthy ways,
2. work with congregations to discover new futures,
3. provide care for congregations facing radical change,
4. improve the capacity of leaders across Presbytery to be innovative and accountable,
5. work with the wider church for the wellbeing of the whole.

If we often feel stressed by the changes happening around us and to us as church, let's remember the character of the life of faith into which Christ calls and sends us.

Governance and administration

When it comes to matters of governance and administration it is too easy to adopt behaviours that diminish our integrity and do harm to those around us. Therefore I see resourcing and equipping congregations to function in healthy ways as a priority.

We need to make Safe Church Awareness Workshops come alive.

Go further

We must go further than awareness with teaching and training so congregations are Safe Places because there are skills and leadership across all the issues of abuse - sexual and psychological abuse, bullying, how we are inclusive and manage our cultural diversity, how we govern and manage ourselves so we can listen and respect diversity of theological and liturgical difference - in short, how we put in place the leadership and social and governing process as we live together so that we actually love one another as Jesus call us to.

John and Delia, Presbytery Co-Chairs



It's about
shared
interest.



Returns
that
matter.



Community
investment.



Wealth
and
wellbeing.



Call 1300 133 673 or visit
unitingfinancial.com.au

Level 9, 222 Pitt Street, Sydney NSW 2000
PO Box A2178 Sydney South NSW 1235

Financial services are provided by The Uniting Church (NSW) Trust Association Limited ACN 000 022 480, ABN 89 725 654 978, AFSL 292186 ("UCTAL") and by The Uniting Church in Australia Property Trust (NSW) ABN 77 005 284 605 ("UCAPT") (together and separately "Uniting Financial Services"), for The Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of NSW and the ACT ("Synod"), under s.911A Corporations Act 2001 (Cth.) authorisation and pursuant to APRA Banking Exemption No. 1 of 2017 and ASIC Regulatory Guide 87 and ASIC Corporations (Charitable Investment Fundraising) Instrument 2016/813 exemptions. Uniting Financial Services® is a registered trademark of UCTAL used with permission by UCAPT. None of The Uniting Church in Australia, UCAPT and UCTAL is prudentially supervised by APRA. Therefore, investments with and contributions to these Uniting Church organisations will not receive the benefit of the financial claims scheme or the depositor protection provisions in the Banking Act 1959 (Cth.). All financial services and products are designed for investors who wish to promote the religious and charitable purposes of Uniting Financial Services and The Uniting Church in Australia and for whom profit considerations are not of primary importance in their decision to invest.