

# Perspective

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*where we've trod & the way ahead*

ANNUAL REPORTS

2013 - 14



uniting  
church  
Canberra Region  
Presbytery



**uniting church**  
Canberra Region  
Presbytery

**The cover image:** The Labyrinth at St Clement's Retreat and Conference Centre, Galong NSW, where our yearly ministers' retreats are held. Website: [www.stclement.com.au](http://www.stclement.com.au) has image and information under Facilities→Labyrinth.

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Opinions and advertisements contained in *Perspective* do not necessarily reflect the views of the Canberra Region Presbytery.

**Presbytery meeting 21st February** is when the next *Perspective* will be distributed. **Contributions are due by 31st January.** Contact the editorial team at Presbytery Office, GPO Box 221, Canberra ACT.

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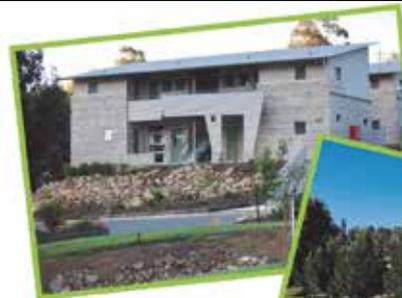
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## Perspective Q and A

- *How often do you publish Perspective and in what quantity?*  
1700 copies quarterly
- *Who is responsible for collating the information content?*  
Presbytery Ministers, Kevin Dilks and Geoff Wellington request articles from those who will be giving presentations at the next Presbytery meeting. Carolyn McAllister edits, lays out and prepares for printing.
- *What is the cost to Canberra Presbytery?*  
approx \$1500
- *How is the document funded?*  
two regular advertisements (Greenhills Centre and Uniting Financial Services) and a grant from Greenhills.



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# New & strengthening relationships

## Presbytery Chairperson reports



Image by Duncan Macleod

**Canberra Region Presbytery is a diverse community of people and churches seeking to express the Gospel both within our congregations and in response to the equally diverse wider community.**

seriously its role to oversee and resource our congregations and agencies and believes current staffing levels are crucial to fulfilling these responsibilities.

Kevin Dilks, as Presbytery Minister (Pastoral & Administration), brings a pastoral dimension to administrative matters. Kevin has strengthened a spirit of collegiality between people in ministry placements, and quiet confidence in congregation office bearers performing their duties, knowing there is back-up when needed.

Although only with us a short while, Geoff Wellington, as Presbytery Minister (Mission & Education), has displayed measured and incisive mission planning skills delivered with quiet pastoral sensitivity to each congregation's particular ministry contexts.

Good communication is essential for our geographically diverse presbytery and is in good hands with Carolyn McAllister and the communications 'think tank' team.

Collegiality is strengthened by the many educational programs offered, the annual presbytery retreat, weekly lectionary groups, monthly 'Kaltara' lunches and ministry resourcing days which help build morale among ministry agents. This collegiality has been tested during 2014 when a little over 50% of placements became vacant. Some have been filled but it emphasizes how crucial Presbytery is in maintaining stability and continuity in the region and amongst its congregations.

### **Mission and Ministry**

An important factor in building collegiality and our mission focus has been to link 'education' and 'mission' in our regular quarterly presbytery meetings. More than business meetings, they provide opportunity for equipping members for mission and ministry.

Like all presbyteries, we are facing issues of declining membership and reduction in financial support.

However, as Kevin Dilks recently observed, many of our congregations *"have opened themselves to ministry that is not governed by the declining resources of ageing members, but by the needs evident around them."*

This positive outlook has been strengthened by the placement of a UnitingCare Community Development Coordinator to work with congregations within the region. We are grateful to Alison Inglis for maintaining momentum whilst Bri Griffiths is on maternity leave.

### **Co-operative relationships - congregations**

We are greatly encouraged by the agreement of both Sapphire Coast and Monaro parishes for placement of a Presbytery Resource Minister (Far South Region) to assist them in the transition from a resident minister dependent ministry to ministry shared by members in collaboration with a presbytery resource person. We have three other partnership arrangements where congregations have agreed to pool resources in order to enable full-time placements to be offered.

One of these co-operative initiatives will enable an intentional ministry to university students. At the beginning of 2014 the student group, **Christian Students Uniting ACT** (CSU ACT), was formed on campus at the Australian National University. There are plans to expand the CSU ACT network to the University of Canberra as well.

### **Mission strategies beyond existing congregations**

Geoff Wellington has been working with neighbouring congregations to coordinate our response to residential growth areas including Molonglo and Riverview in the ACT, Googong and Tralee in Queanbeyan and our continuing commitment to the new Grace Congregation in Goulburn. We believe strategic mission planning is more effective at the local level where presbyteries and congregations can engage more directly in the process.

### **Property resources**

We are thankful for property resources at our disposal. Judicious property decisions in the past has made current mission objectives possible. However it is difficult to rely permanently on property income and we face the continuing challenge of funding presbytery operations in facilitating and encouraging the ministry and mission of its congregations.

There is however much to celebrate in the life of the Presbytery.

*Ivan Roberts, Presbytery Chairperson*

# Mission & Who is Jesus



**As I write this report, Canberra has just experienced lightning, thunder, hail, wind, sunshine and rain all in one day.**

In this part of the world such natural weather cycles in the season of spring are commonplace.

But it does remind me of the year that has been.

The start of the year was a time of endings and finishing up things that have past, saying goodbyes to friends and folks I had journeyed with through some difficult times, then moving and starting afresh with the sights, sounds and smells of a new place. Reminiscent of a summer storm, it has held a freshness that is invigorating and life giving.

As I have travelled around the presbytery worshipping with many congregations, it has been like the roller coaster of a day with at least four seasons in it, not sure what you're going to get next.

There are both joys and concerns in every faith community and it is exciting to hear and experience the activities of many congregations and the way in which they are faithfully worshipping and practising the faith through witness and service. But it is also concerning to see faithful congregations struggling to come to terms with a changed social context for mission and how gospel imperatives might be conveyed in this time and place.

We may do well, like others since Bonhoeffer posed this question, to ask ourselves “who is Jesus Christ for us today?”

Some of my time over the last eight months has been focused on working with congregations as they name their future ministry directions and seek to call new ministry agents.

The presbytery currently has six placements looking for a minister and two more pending in the short term. With the four new placements that came to the presbytery earlier in the year and one more for January next year, this will bring to a total, thirteen new placements for the presbytery in a short period of time.

This transition of ministers will change the nature of the presbytery and, congregations along with the presbytery, look forward to welcoming new ministers as they are inducted into ministry here in Canberra Region.

There have been a number of congregations identified in the *2014 and Beyond* plan for the presbytery that I have worked with particularly, to enhance their ministry and mission in some of the population growth areas of our presbytery.

As a presbytery we have started to look towards the best use of our property to enhance the mission of God where congregations are and the information that has been gathered is very encouraging.

Next year will also start to identify congregations that need different approaches with regard to support and human resourcing as congregations seek to discern God's mission for the world.

The south coast ministers have gathered on a couple of occasions for support and encouragement along with tackling the new ethical ministry course.



*Left and right: the recently held Leaders' workshop held at Cobargo on the far south coast.*

# Education for us today?

This has also led to a recent leaders' workshop on Advent and the building of leadership capacity on the south coast. I'm looking forward to running more of these workshops next year around the presbytery.

Thanks to **Rev Ann Ryan** for facilitating an *Understanding the Sacraments* course this year. **Rev Kevin Dilks** and **Rev Mark Faulkner** have also been conducting the new ethical ministry course to other ministers across the presbytery. The ethical ministry course will continue on next year for all ministers.

**Emma Parr**, from Uniting Mission and Education (UME) in the NSW/ACT Synod, continues to run *Safe Church* workshops across the presbytery and a number of education activities are available from the synod and locally from different sources.

I continue to develop ideas about what's best and most appropriate in terms of education for the presbytery.

The presbytery is blessed with many gifted educators and I will be looking to harness these gifts more fully next year.

Days like the other day, that bring a very mixed experience of the weather, remind us as the church that we live in times of transition. It can be an invigorating and life-giving place to be if, as the church, we practice letting go of all that binds us from embracing the fullness of life Jesus Christ came to proclaim.

There is much to celebrate in the year that has been and I look forward to further adventures of faith over the next year.



**Geoff Wellington**  
*Presbytery Minister (Mission and Education)*



# Pastoral Care & support in



Image by Brian Rope

**This report brings me to the end of my third year on the position of Presbytery Minister (Pastoral and Administration). It has been by far the busiest and most complex of these three years.**

While I continue to do my best to balance the Pastoral

and Administration components of the position it is clearer to me than ever that they cannot be separated. So much of the things that are of concern to ministers and congregations are things we would normally allocate to the Administration folder. So it is that administrative issues such as property insurance, cemetery management, elections, etc meld into pastoral care of ministers and office bearers who bear the brunt of increasing legal and compliance demands, not just of our church but also of the government of the day.

This year I have engaged far more in conversations about the future of the wider UCA. It is impossible to predict what our church will look like in five years. It is clear that our Synod cannot continue to function as in the past. Presbyteries are under stress - financially and in terms of people able to fill positions required for a functioning Presbytery. Participation in these conversations is vital. I do so in the belief/hope that good functioning of the wider church means effective support of congregations and thus more vibrant congregations.

This year there has been considerable focus on the inability of Synod to continue to fund Presbytery Staff. I know some congregations feel unsettled by this, wondering if their buildings are going to be sold in order to deal with the debt of Synod. This is not going to happen. It does, however, raise the question - "What makes for a viable congregation?"

Once this question was not asked - in our strength there was no need to question what we were doing as congregations. In this time of transition it becomes an important question; not so we can determine which congregations should close, but rather so we can find the new things to which God is calling our church. It may be an awkward question. Awkward questions are to be welcomed, even when they make us feel uncomfortable (perhaps because they make us feel uncomfortable).

To participate helpfully in the wider conversations of our Synod, a comprehensive, accurate understanding of the congregations of our Presbytery is essential. So during 2015, we will develop a document that describes each congregation - what they are doing well and what they are hearing God say to them about their future. (Already we have considerable data about the community service and outreach programs of our congregations.)

With, we hope, many ministers coming to our Presbytery to fill the vacancies of 2014, 2015 will require solid pastoral involvement with those new to our region - helping them settle in, find supportive collegiate relationships, etc. I have a personal goal that Canberra Region Presbytery will become known as a place where ministers are respected, encouraged and nurtured in their ministries. I believe that when ministers are valued in this way this flows through to faithful creative ministries with the congregations they serve.



Members at the August Presbytery meeting listening to Gerd Tiedt's presentation on Monty's Place in Narooma.

I was, helpfully, taken to task recently about the part of our Presbytery 5-year plan which names the ageing and decline of our church as an issue we need to focus on. This was never intended to suggest people who are retired are beyond use. Nor was it intended to diminish the place of younger people in our church. In 2015, I look forward to discovering more about the ways older and younger members are contributing to the proclamation of the Gospel through our congregations.

# Administration transition

Of course we do not only have congregational ministry in our Presbytery. We also have a large contingent of Chaplains – defence, hospital, aged care, and tertiary. Taking their pastoral and continuing education needs seriously is also part of my role.

We have continued to work on arranging Presbytery meetings so as to focus on issues that provoke and inspire us. Our meetings in 2015 will continue to provide opportunities to hear about the good things that are happening within and through our congregations.

In closing I wish to express my appreciation to the people who give themselves to the different committees of the Presbytery. Pastoral Relations Committee, Standing Committee, and Finance and Property Committee fulfil important functions. The members of those committees give generously of their time and expertise and contribute massively to the good functioning of our Presbytery for the sake of the ministry and mission of our Congregations.

## What we need to focus on

It is clear our Church is in a time of transition. Now more than ever we need to focus on: listening to the Spirit rather than to voices of negativity; speaking encouragement and refusing to enter the “blame game”; trusting and being trustworthy; working for the “common good” rather than self-seeking protectionism; and being



August Presbytery meeting.

Above: Rachel Kronberger speaks from the floor.

Below: Lunch is served - a time for fellowship.



open to the possibilities that being part of God's New Creation might bring rather than living as if all that is good is in the past.

May we learn from our experiences in 2014.

May we hear God calling to us to enter 2015 with imagination and faith.

May we find opportunities to encourage each other and support each other as we seek God's will for us all.

Kevin Dilks  
Presbytery Minister  
(Pastoral &  
Administration)

## Communication

As a communication hub, the office has not stood still. With communication now part of the administrative function, we are trialling a four-pronged approach.

1. **Weekly notices** continue to provide a regular flow of congregational prayer and praise points, news of events and links to resources. Thanks to **Peter Ellis, Bill Lang, Brian Rope and Dean Tregenza**, the notices are strongly supported by the website (for more detail) and facebook and twitter for fast networking.

2. **Quarterly magazine, Perspective** remains focused on the Presbytery meeting - its theme and presentations, helping to ensure we can all learn the good things that are happening within and through our congregations.

3. **reVISION** – an on-line magazine distributed to Presbytery reps and Council Secretaries distributes the feedback gathered at the Presbytery meeting in response to the presentations. *reVISION* is also used to distribute follow-up responses or articles received as part of the ongoing conversation.

4. **Glimpses of the Spirit** – an on-line magazine to provide a place for your testimonies to God's presence and grace – please feel free to send articles in any time so we can pass them on to congregations for their encouragement.

Finally, **thank you** to all who have contributed articles over the past year.

As I read ‘What we need to focus on’ at the end of Kevin's report, I'm hoping our four pronged approach to communication can help us to hear the Spirit, see possibilities, learn from experiences, hear God calling and be a means by which we can encourage and support one another.

Carolyn McAllister, Editor

# Greenhills Camp & Conference Centre

## Camping ministry

*This article includes extracts from the Greenhills Annual Report 2013 -14, with additional material from an article prepared by Greenhills Board Secretary, Barry Howe, reflecting on 'camping ministry'. Barry's article is on our website: [canberraregion.unitingchurch.org.au](http://canberraregion.unitingchurch.org.au)*

### The value and impact of 'camping ministry'

This year our understanding of the value and impact of 'camping ministry' has been greatly increased by the forums organised by the 'Christian Venues Association of Australia' and 'Uniting Outdoors & Venues Network' (the recently-formed network of CEO's from Uniting Church venues around Australia) as well as through intense discussions within our own Ministry, Mission and Communication Committee.

Christian camping ministry (as it is known) is recognised worldwide as one of the most powerful and effective ways of people – especially teenagers and young adults – experiencing a safe Christian environment and temporary community in which to explore and extend their faith through learning, sharing and experiencing God's wonders and love. Indeed, the recent analysis of the 2011 National Church Life Survey (NCLS) showed "Church Camp" as the fifth most important activity in Christians coming to faith. In 15 to 29 year olds it was the third most significant influence.

### Greenhills Mission and Ministry

The ministry offered to all client groups and guests is 'to provide opportunities and facilities for meditation, worship and personal development that reflects and celebrates God's gifts to us.'

Our Mission Target over the next three years: We will endeavour to extend the ministry of Greenhills through our hospitality, service and witness to clients and guests; with enhanced facilities, careful stewardship of the local environment, and partnering with clients and local community. (Strategic Plan 2013)

### Partnership in Ministry

Greenhills' continuing relationship with a number of Christian groups has extended over decades. This has led to recognising and formalising a "Partnering in Ministry" program that identifies selected groups and organisations that stay with us and carry out a Christian ministry that Greenhills will share in more fully by the provision of extra assistance, activities and possible financial support.



*Students engaged in art work at Greenhills.*

This year the Greenhills Board formally recognised "Partnership in Ministry" arrangements with selected organisations that regularly use our facilities or have the potential to do so and whose mission and activities are an extension of the Christian ministry of Greenhills.

The first group to be recognised was L'Arche Genesaret in January 2014 with a donation to further support their ministry.

### People

- We were saddened by the prolonged illness and passing of **Zeta Hill**, the wife of Greenhills' founder Max Hill and a great supporter of Greenhills Centre since its inception some 50 years ago. Zeta will be missed for her insights and support but permanently remembered in the Max & Zeta Hill Building at the Greenhills Centre.
- We have farewelled and thanked three Board Members who have provided valuable service and guidance for many years – **Alistair Christie, Tara Munro-Mobbs & Duncan Macleod** – and welcomed three replacement members in **John Grant, Jan Baker and Geoff Wellington**.
- The retirement of managers **Kathy and Stephen Schlenk** to Tasmania, after three years of transforming the landscape and office management has been followed by the appointment and induction of new managers **Sue and Will Ellis** with son James and daughter Bek.
- The involvement of Executive Director **Peter Badowski** in Uniting Outdoors & Venues Network, Australian Institute of Company Directors and volunteer Rotary and Mens Shed groups has increased recognition and inputs.

*a retreat, accommodation, conference, worship and recreation facility specialising in group retreats, workshops and conferencing for schools, church and community groups to provide opportunities & facilities for meditation, worship, & personal development that reflect and celebrate God's gifts to us.*

### Facilities and more

Further to the major road reconstruction and drainage works and conversion of two underutilised lounges to ensuite leader's rooms, completed late last financial year, we have achieved:

- Demolition of the old manager's residence and its replacement with a new residence of superior size, facilities and outlook.
- More sporting and games activities for soccer, carpet bowls, tetherball and polypong.
- A loan from Uniting Financial Services for the new manager's residence and associated works.
- Greatly enhanced website, quarterly Greenhills *Update* publication, brochures and presentation materials.
- Improvements to mobile phone access
- Jubilation at being able to pay over \$300,000 off the remaining loan for the 2006 construction of Cotter Units and Rotary Hall.
- Development of a "Partnership in Ministry" with selected organisations that regularly use our facilities.

### Bookings

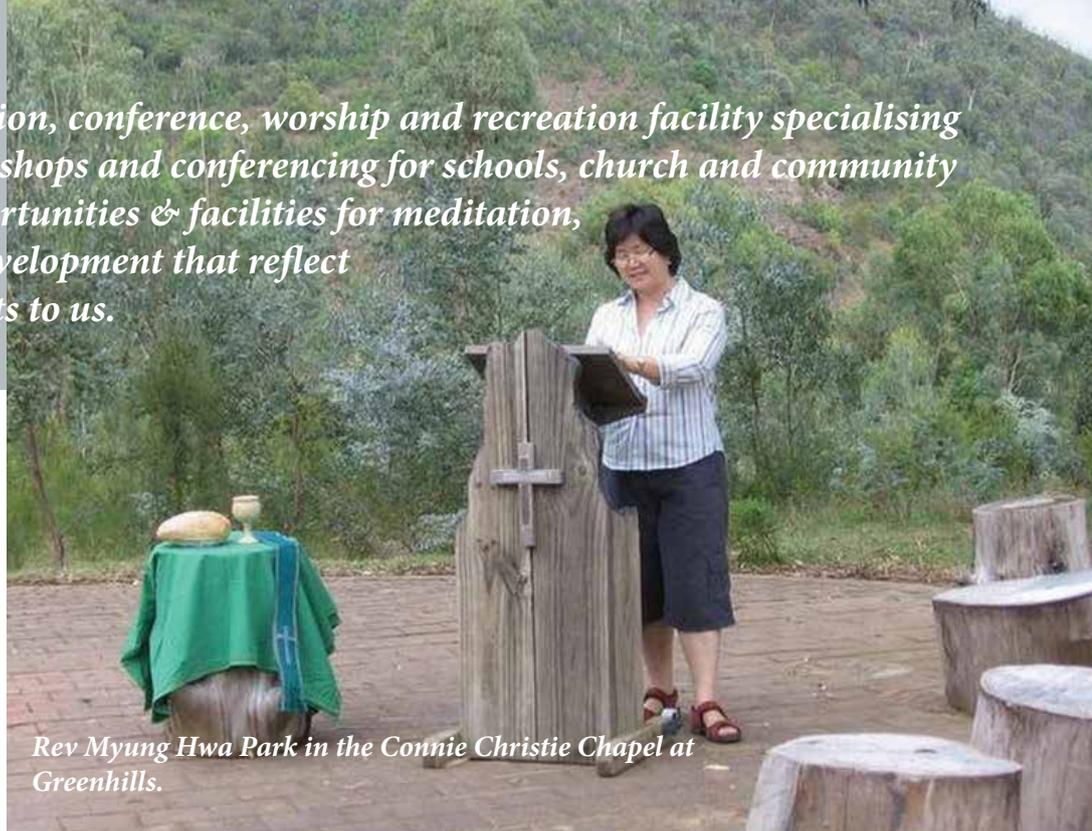
While schools are still our largest customer, the number of Church and Community groups has increased by 15.5%. There have also been increases in Corporate, sport and family groups coming to Greenhills. Bookings remain strong for the 2014/15 financial year, with forecast bed-nights to be around 20500. Bookings are being taken through to 2017. Our overall occupancy rate remains at 35%, which is above industry standards.

### Positive feedback as follows:

Verbal praise, a large number of cards, certificates of appreciation, and email messages; a high number of repeat bookings, which is currently about 90% of our total bookings and more importantly, the extremely high number of bookings for the coming two years.

### Volunteers and Community relations

Apart from the services and facilities provided to local groups and guests, Greenhills has continued its strong relationship with dedicated volunteers and our extended community in the Canberra region.



*Rev Myung Hwa Park in the Connie Christie Chapel at Greenhills.*

- The Canberra Region Presbytery now meets annually at Greenhills, to inform and encourage our 'owner stakeholders' from all congregations in our Christian ministry.
- We support Presbytery through advertising in the quarterly Perspective magazine and financial support for youth ministry and catering for presbytery meetings.
- three Rotary clubs have supported two Rotary Working Bees this year
- two Community Working Bees were strongly attended by Melba Men's Shed members and Greenhills staff with pleasing results in landscape improvements.
- a 'Special Morning Tea' for Anglicare's Shaw Possibilities Group with Rotarians and Men's Shed guests was trialled with great success.

### Challenges for the year ahead include;

- Replacement of our CAMPS accommodation management software
- Looking at the production of a short promotional video for inclusion on our web page;
- Targeted marketing to increase weekend bookings and gain a foothold in the day conference market;
- Developing strategies for Partnerships in Ministry within the community.
- Continuing to develop ideas for enhancing guest experiences

### Giving thanks

Greenhills is blessed by its setting, facilities and particularly the people who have devoted their talents and commitment towards its development.

May we continue to give thanks to God for these contributors to the ministry of Greenhills Centre.

*Find out more on <http://www.greenhillscentre.com/>*

# from the Chaplains desk

## Coming of age



**The last 12 months are a bit of a blur and I wonder whether that is a sign of a chaplain's busyness or age.**

I know I put 20,000k on the car so I got around a bit. We had some wonderful new volunteers join the chaplaincy team and our long standing, fabulous volunteers remained with us. I take that as a sign of stability

and maybe even a compliment. South Woden continued to render enormous pastoral support to me and produce visually stimulating and deeply moving afternoon hospital services for everyone. Worship leading volunteers relieved me every fourth week so I could stay on top of my studies and as a result, I have learned to say 'yes' when help is offered.

This has been a year of completing my studies for the Deaconate and consolidating developments in our chaplaincy.

So what have I learned this year?

I've learned that whatever I thought I knew about the parables, I was probably wrong. I've learned that I don't learn the way I used to – when I was thirty-something. I've learned to listen to the lessons patients patiently teach me every day...and just to receive those gifts.

**Not too sure about apologetics?**– God sends Harry to fire off a really important, difficult, scriptural and theological question every time I walk into his room.

**Think you're invincible?**– Then listen to people railing and ultimately accommodating life-changes wrought by illness and unexpected disability.

**Feeling lonely?**– Then put your arms around a homeless man and listen to him weep for the poor choices he's made that has led to a lack of intimate contact. Can you imagine never being hugged for a year? Two years?

**Think you know something about grace?** Watch this amazing woman on whom life has dumped again and again as she shines with hope, deep faith and genuine forgiveness. And she looks at me as if I know – as if I have all the same gifts. I wish.

**Queen of denial?** This has been a gruelling year. It has stretched me beyond my capacity and I know it has been at a cost. As I sit with people accommodating the unfairness of ageing; the disappointment that their

bodies refuse to obey their inhabitants, I now know all the things I will/can never do again; intimately aware of every second I have to share with my amazing husband and beautiful children and grandchildren.

I have spent much of my Deaconate education immersed in the broader Uniting Church. I have seen the breadth of our worship styles and spaces. I have a clearer idea of what speaks to me both liturgically and spiritually. I have learned that it is not the liturgies or music that drives or draws people to or away from traditional services; it is their sense of acceptance or whether they will be judged – for how they look, what they wear, or where they've been.

People need/want to come as they are; broken, not perfect, un-church-skilled, but there.

Talking to patients, wards assistants, groundkeepers has taught me that there was something about our childhood churches that left a generation believing they were not good enough - many of whom will never set foot in a church – yet they believe in God and yearn for community. How will we serve them?

I don't think the seminary even knows these people exist. We are still in the business of looking for people just like us – or making them just like us, instead of embracing our diversity. We have so much to learn.

I have been re-reading the story of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts and ask myself, who benefited the most?

Nadia Bolz-Weber, the keynote speaker at the Uniting Women's Conference, would say emphatically, 'Philip'. He was sent to witness the eunuch's seemingly hopeless commitment to study and worship; to discover what deep and abiding faith looks like in the real world. And so, our first gentile Christian convert was black and a member of a sexual minority. Expect the unexpected.

I am Philip. The Spirit sent me to the hospital to rediscover my faith; to learn to learn with my heart – not my head; to see God in the real world.

I have aged this year. I spent my genetic capital to run this marathon and I have discovered my limits. But I've met and travelled with loving and wise people at Uniting Theological College who have broadened my horizons and enriched my faith. This year would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of so many:

- St James Curtin who launched me, supported me and forgave me abandoning them for my studies
- The Presbytery; in particular PRC, Presbytery Secretary and Carolyn

*continued on next page/...*

# Property Usage Pilgrim House

*Given this year's spotlight on property usage, we are taking a look at the Uniting Church's Pilgrim House, the predominantly commercial office building in Canberra in which you will find Canberra Region Presbytery office.*

*Pilgrim House is in The National Capital Centre bounded by Northbourne Ave, Barry Drive, Moore St and Rudd St, originally leased to the Congregational Union of Australia.*

*In 1985, 65% of the Centre was sold and developed as a commercial precinct leaving what is now Canberra City Uniting Church and Pilgrim House which includes Canberra City's Early Morning Centre and Conference Centre as well as the commercial office building which is, in the main, controlled by a Synod constituted body - the Pilgrim House Policy Committee.*

## **Pilgrim House Policy Committee**

Members are appointed by the Synod Standing Committee. Two members (with an alternate for each member) are nominated by City Church, Presbytery and Synod totalling six altogether. Half the required number are appointed each year. The responsibility of the Policy Committee is to determine the matters of governance of the property, including proportional areas of the plaza and the underground carpark.

## **Income Distribution**

The Policy Committee also appoints annually members of a Management Committee to manage the leasing and maintenance of the property.

On the recommendation of the Management Committee, the Policy Committee determines the distribution of excess annual income from the commercial rental income of the building and carpark. Since 1990 a total of \$6,630,000 has been distributed to the Assembly, Synod, Presbytery and City Church in the ratios 20%, 20%, 30% and 30%.

However, for the past two years the building, like many commercial buildings in Canberra, has many floors of lettable space vacant with very little excess income available for distribution until new tenants are found.

## **Management Committee Responsibilities**

Two members recommended by Presbytery and five recommended by City Church are appointed for a three year term. Responsibilities include appointing a managing agent, an auditor and a solicitor, approving tenants for the building, arranging registered leases for tenants and licences for use of carpark spaces, overseeing administration of finances and maintenance and arranging for improvements to the fabric of the building, the plaza and the carpark.

The Chairperson of the Management Committee and the Managing Agent represent the Uniting Church at meetings with the other four owners/agents of buildings in the National Capital Centre regarding the administration of the centre.

### **Robert Tupper**

#### **Chairperson, Pilgrim House Management Committee**

*The Management Committee and Managing agent are working diligently to find new tenants to fill the empty floors in Pilgrim House - a difficult task in the current climate. Kevin Dilks.*

*.../continued from previous page*

- My bosses at UnitingCare
- My mentor, Rev Rachel Kronberger
- The formation panel who were my champions and elders, and
- My colleagues, family and volunteers tolerating my absences and distractions.

I feel like the wobbly gymnast proudly and uncertainly on the shoulders of so many. You can see pride and fear in equal proportions dance across my face as I try not to look at the ground. I am amazed at what we have all achieved this year. I have learned to lean on others. I know I am truly blessed.

**Jean Shannon**

**Hospital Chaplaincy Co-ordinator**

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*Jean Shannon in the middle of the labyrinth at Clair Holland House (the Canberra Hospice). Image by Nigel Hawkens, UnitingCare Chaplaincy Leader at Westmead. Jean's comment, "It's metaphorically a good representation of the year", inspired our front cover.*



# With UnitingCare NSW and ACT

**ACT and region: some of the newer things that I know are happening.**

## **Social Justice Group - Fossil Fuel Divestment**

At their meeting in April 2013, the NSW&ACT Synod of the Uniting Church in Australia decided to divest from corporations engaged in the extraction of fossil fuels. At its meeting of 17 May 2014, the Canberra Region Presbytery resolved to call on the ACT Government to uphold its reputation as a leading jurisdiction on this issue by:

1. Publicly disclosing all directly and indirectly managed investments in coal, oil, conventional and unconventional gas companies held by the ACT Government.
2. Responsibly divesting from these companies over the next 3 years.

Andrew Barr responded that the ACT Government reduced its investment in listed companies involved in the energy sector from 30 June 2014, and expects further divestment in the future.

Our advocacy adds to the pressure on the ACT Government to continue in this direction. Advocating for change is a slow process, and it is important that the Church continue to raise its voice on issues that we feel strongly about.

## **Safe Shelter, St Columba's Congregation**

The vision of **Brendan Kennedy**, UnitingCare Early Morning Centre (Canberra City), for a service to provide emergency accommodation for homeless men, was brought to fruition by a number of committed people from St Columba's Church.

In 2013 the Shelter opened for one night per week over winter and welcomed just 15 guests. The service was continued and expanded in 2014, opening again over winter, but for three nights per week. During 2014 the Shelter welcomed 99 homeless men who slept on the floor of the hall at St Columba's Uniting Church with the Shelter's volunteers. The relationship with the UnitingCare Early Morning Centre was maintained, with visitors often walking over for breakfast, a coffee and a shower, and to access support services, and the Centre's co-ordinator providing training for volunteers. Safe Shelter is run by a community group that has been established for the purpose. It has a Management Committee whose Chair and Treasurer are from St Columba's Church, and who liaise with the Church Council.

**I've been with the Presbytery for less than six months, and the work continues to be uplifting and inspiring.**

My role is to encourage and facilitate community activities that reduce disadvantage and isolation in the ACT region, through:

- building capacity within the Church and UnitingCare to reach out into communities,
- identifying and improving service delivery,
- strengthening partnerships both internally and with other organisations, and enhancing social justice advocacy.

I'm forever moved by the commitment and energy shown by congregation members and councils to look outwards, and the wish to be in community and relationship with others without judgement. I've seen where this is happening, and where this is starting and growing, and I've heard about the difficulties and challenges as well as the gifts it brings. It is wonderful!

**Database** To celebrate and share the community service work that congregations are doing across the ACT and NSW, a database has been set up by the UnitingCare Partnership Program in which I work. It currently has over 450 activities listed, which include everything from cafés and coffee mornings to support social inclusion, English conversation sessions, community gardens, employment programs, a wide range of food services, support for the homeless, healthy living for seniors activities, emergency relief programs, play groups, women's and men's groups, Op shops... the list goes on. Please have a look – see what others are doing and make contact if you have questions. Let us know if your activities are not there or are out of date. [http://www.unitingcarenewswact.org.au/what\\_we\\_do/partnerships-with-congregations/community-services-database](http://www.unitingcarenewswact.org.au/what_we_do/partnerships-with-congregations/community-services-database).

# building community together

The success of the Shelter in 2014 has demonstrated the need for emergency, ad hoc accommodation in Canberra and the Safe Shelter group is now investigating the possibility (and benefit) of expanding the Shelter, possibly by using an alternate venue on other nights.

**Interested churches or people should get in touch!**

## Early Morning Centre, Goulburn

Early in 2014, the Uniting Church and Grace Communities in Goulburn became aware of a gap in support for homeless people in their community. This need was accentuated in July, when two homeless services closed down. So the Goulburn Early Morning Centre opened its doors, slightly earlier than planned (!) for seven days a week, 7:30 – 9:30 on August 2nd. It provides a safe drop-in place for homeless, isolated and marginalized people in Goulburn.

Visitors can obtain a healthy hot breakfast, showers, some basic necessities and company, as well as a postal address and locker to store their personal items. To date they have had about thirty visitors, and have between two and nine people every day.

## Community Garden, Queanbeyan

This project, like several others, is in its infancy. It began with a discernment process undertaken by the congregation that led to the gathering of a group of congregation members with a common dream, a community garden on the grounds of the church.

The group is visiting other community gardens, talking to people and finding resources on the net, meeting to make plans, and drawing up a proposal for their Church Council outlining the benefits they believe will come to the community from such a garden, and their short and long term plans. “From little things, big things grow” seems very appropriate for many of our community activities!

## ‘Active Seniors’ project, O’Connor

Since December 2005, the O’Connor congregation has had a partnership with the Canberra Organic Growers Society who have built a community garden on the old tennis courts. Several years ago the congregation upgraded its hall for the many community groups using that space. Meanwhile the old tennis clubhouse has been largely unused except as a store room.

There is an acknowledged need in their local community for support for the ageing population, so funds were sourced from the Southern Region board of UnitingCare Ageing to renovate the building for use in active seniors programs.

Members of the community garden have offered their services in teaching IT, there are others offering sewing and exercise classes, and Northside Community Services

will bring people engaged with them to the club for activities.

This is a wonderful example of how activities grow from and support each other, and how giving people the opportunity to become involved, and building partnerships, can lead to deeper community connection.

## New UnitingCare/congregation collaboration.

In the last Perspective we talked about the different models for congregations and UnitingCare to work together. Here are three examples of new partnerships formed in the last 12 months.

*.../continued next page*



*At the August Presbytery meeting, John Williams illustrates with powerpoint, the unique journey of the Kippax congregation in relationship with UnitingCare.*

In developing the model for the service a very dedicated group of people, led by **Sue Robinson**, met with the UnitingCare Partnership Program, the UnitingCare Canberra City Early Morning Centre, Safe Shelter (St Columba’s) and St Benedict’s Community Day Centre, which has strong involvement from the Uniting Church in Queanbeyan.

They also worked tirelessly with agencies in Goulburn to identify needs and garner support, and advertised via social media as well as other more traditional channels to get volunteers.

This activity is staffed and managed by volunteers from both within and outside the Church. In the words of **Julie Furner**, Minister Goulburn UC “every day I marvel at what we are doing”.

# building community together



*Building stronger communities - Alison was a presenter at the August Presbytery meeting.*

*.../continued from previous page*

## Healthy Living for Seniors

UnitingCare Ageing is working in partnership with two congregations, Queanbeyan and St James, Curtin, to provide a healthy living for seniors program. The Healthy Living for Seniors approach is based on working with each person to understand the lifestyle they want and to provide information, care and support to improve health and wellbeing, enable social participation, and improve functional independence and quality of life. The services are run by UnitingCare Ageing, are situated within Church buildings, and the Minister and congregations provide pastoral and social support to participants.

## Ability Links

This is a NSW Government funded program linking people with a disability to their local communities, assisting them to build local networks to support them to achieve their goals, as well as promoting community inclusion. UnitingCare has three "Linkers" in our Presbytery: Beck Minear: Cooma/Far south Coast, Melissa Shoard: Queanbeyan/Goulburn and Troy Read: Batemans Bay and surrounds. Beck and Melissa have offices in Uniting Churches, and all three are open to working with congregations, and happy to take referrals. I have contact details for all three if you are interested in connecting with them.

## Emergency Relief

A number of congregations currently provide emergency relief to people within their community, ranging from ad-hoc support and hampers, to more formal ER services.

The Bateman's Bay congregation has been receiving federal government funds to run their program, and Kippax and Goulburn congregations wished to expand their ER services, so when the Federally funded ER program was re-tendered in September, UnitingCare worked with these congregations to prepare a submission. We do not yet know the outcome, but should be informed by early next year.

## Building our capacity to work in the community

### Faith and Justice Expo in Sydney

The Faith and Justice Expo was a joint project between NSW/ACT Synod's Uniting Mission and Education (UME) and UnitingCare held in August, 2014. Over 100 people gathered to hear a theological imperative to take action, be inspired by current campaigns and equip themselves to take action in their local community.

### Community Development Training Needs Assessment

In partnership with NSW/ACT Synod Uniting Mission and Education (UME), the Community Development Partnership Program is undertaking a community development training needs analysis of church leaders across NSW & ACT. We will use this to inform the development of resources and programs.

**The online survey will be open until the end of November, so please have your say:**

**<http://www.surveymoz.com/s3/1685195/Community-Development>**

If you have any questions about any of the activities discussed here, feel free to contact people directly, or get on to me and I will answer what questions I can, and put you in contact with others who might help.

### A new role

I'm also really happy to say that when Bri returns to the Presbytery in February as the Community Development Coordinator, I will continue to be involved with the UnitingCare Partnership Program and this Presbytery. I will take up a new role that will be working with the Partnership team to examine and measure the impact of the work we and congregations are involved in on the alleviation of poverty and reduction of disadvantage.

May Christmas be a time of reflection and generosity. Peace and love, Alison

*Alison Inglis*

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# Canberra Region Presbytery

## community services

- **Activities For Children** - none yet

- **Activities For Older People**

North Belconnen Day Care Centre [North Belconnen]

Morning Tea At Warmington Lodge [Yass]

Uniting Care Ageing Healthy Living For Seniors  
[Queanbeyan Uniting]

South Woden Lunch Program [South Woden ] Yarralumla  
Friendship Group [Yarralumla]

- **Community Cafe / Soup Kitchen**

Unitingcare Canberra City - Early Morning Centre  
[Canberra City]

Cooma Public School Breakfast Program [Cooma]

Monty's Place [Narooma - Mount Dromedary]

Narooma Court Support [Narooma - Mount Dromedary]

South Woden Lunch Program [South Woden]

Cooma Courthouse Morning Tea [Cooma]

- **Community Garden**

The Garden Of Eden Community Project [Eden St George]

Goulburn Community Garden [Goulburn Uniting Church]

Cooma Community Garden [Monaro]

- **Counselling / Mental Health**

Kippax Emergency Financial And Material Aid [Kippax]

- **Disability**

Stepping Stones For Life [St. Margaret's]

Yarralumla Stroke Club [Yarralumla]

- **Education /Training**

Cooking For Community [Eden St George]

funsew [Tuggeranong Congregation]

- **Emergency Relief**

Unitingcare Pivot Point Community Centre [Batemans  
Bay]

Emergency Relief - Food Packs [Canberra City]

Tuggeranong Emergency Relief [Tuggeranong]

- **Family Support**

Unitingcare Kippax [Kippax]

Case Management Program [Kippax]

Newpin [Kippax]

- **Fundraising / Op Shops**

Amos (Alpine Mobile Op-Shop) [Alpine-Jindabyne]

Braidwood Uniting Church Op Shop [Braidwood]

Narooma Op Shop [Mount Dromedary Multi Centre]

Fund Raising For Local, National & International Projects  
[South Woden]

Tuggeranong - Pre-Loved Clothing Outlet [Tuggeranong]

Tathra Uniting Church Op Shop [Tathra ]

Community Markets [Crookwell]

Stalls In The Main Street [Crookwell]

*This listing is extracted from the UnitingCare NSW/  
ACT database at [http://www.unitingcarenswact.org.au/what\\_we\\_do/partnerships-with-congregations/  
community-services-database](http://www.unitingcarenswact.org.au/what_we_do/partnerships-with-congregations/community-services-database)*

*Visit the database and fill in the form to add to, or make  
changes to, the listing. For help, contact Jenny Gallagher:  
[JGallagher\[at\]unitingcarenswact.org.au](mailto:JGallagher[at]unitingcarenswact.org.au) or (02) 9376 1421.*

- **Grocery Supplies**

Cooking For Community [Eden St George]

Mustard Seed Uniting Food Pantry [Gungahlin] Act

- **Homeless**

Unitingcare Canberra City - Early Morning Centre  
[Canberra City]

St Columba's Safe Shelter [St Columba's]

- **Other**

Carols In The Park [Crookwell]

St Ninians Fete [St Ninians Lyneham]

Pivot Point - Books On Wheels [Batemans Bay]

Christian Bookshop [Crookwell]

Arts & Craft Show [Yarralumla]

- **Social Connection - Craft Groups**

Craft, Cuppa, Chat [Murrumbateman]

Stain Glass Workshop [Murrumbateman]

- **Social Connection - Drop-In Centres**

Afternoon Teas [Crookwell]

Narooma Unitingcare Drop-In Centre [Mount Dromedary]

Yarralumla Friendship Group [Yarralumla]

Making Friends In The Community [Yass]

- **Social Connection - Men's Sheds**

Men's Shed - Jindabyne [Alpine, Jindabyne]

Melba Men's Shed [North Belconnen]

- **Social Connection - Other**

Jindabyne Local Neighbourhood Centre [Alpine,  
Jindabyne]

Pivot Point - Caring Club [Batemans Bay]

Community Choir Crookwell [Crookwell]

Community Visitors Scheme [Merimbula]

St James Wellbeing Centre [St James ]

Yarralumla Stroke Club [Yarralumla]

- **Social Connection - Play Groups**

Crookwell Playgroup [Crookwell]

Kippax Kids [Kippax]

Drop In Play Group & Rock Rhythm & Roll [Kippax]

Wesley Whippersnappers Playgroup [Wesley, Forrest]

Gumnut Playgroup [Yarralumla]

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