



Crookwell Uniting Church

“To Know Christ and Make Christ Known”



Crookwell – Wheeo – Jerrara – Bigga

August 2019

Small Church

I wonder, what does it look like to do ‘small church’ well?

As you know, in July I attended the meeting of the NSW.ACT Synod of the Uniting Church in Sydney. Attached to this newsletter is a summary of the various discussions and decisions that were made coming out of that gathering of members of the Church from across the state.

But for me, a personal highlight was the Bible Studies led by the new principal of the United Theological College, Rev. Dr. Peter Walker, on the *purpose, focus and identity* of the ‘Living Church’.

Peter argued that the unity of the Church is not a unity of standing in a common position, or a uniformity of thought or belief, but instead a unity of *focus*: that all of us, no matter where we stand, acknowledge that we are all looking

toward the same Christ – and that our different standpoints actually allow us to see different things about the Christ on whom we gaze.

Consequently, Peter warned us not to fall into the trap, so common in our culture, of playing ‘us vs them’ identity politics. Instead, the *identity* of the Church comes from the way in which we mind and embody Christ together, and therefore in the Church there is no room for ‘us AND them’, because there is only ‘WE TOGETHER IN CHRIST.’

Finally, Peter argued that the *purpose* of the Church is to **connect a great chain of witnesses from history with a great chain of witnesses into the future.** As we have received from those who went before us a witness to the story of a crucified, risen and living Christ, we too are obliged to find fresh ways to give new expression to this great story.

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This reminded me of some work by Brian McLaren I had been reading lately, which begged the Church to stop using terms like 'progressive and conservative', 'evangelical and liberal', as they inevitably divide us into camps or identity politics. Instead, McLaren acknowledges that some of us are more focused and better at holding to and honouring the tradition of witness we have received; whilst others of us are better at finding new and fresh ways to make the Gospel present today.

If we only ever stick rigidly to tradition, without finding ways to make the Gospel resonate today, we are a museum, not a church. And if we only ever find new ways to express the Gospel, but abandon the tradition, then we are at best a social club, not a church.

To be the Church, we must do both: we must learn from the witness that went before us and find new and authentic ways to express the great story of God's resurrecting love today.

This means, it simply isn't good enough for us to say 'well, I'm happy as long as the Church is here to bury me' or 'I don't care what happens in the future, because it won't affect me.' Imagine if our forebears had thought in such a way.

Therefore, last year, we named our mission as a congregation as: *Witnessing to God's love for the world from the main street to the paddock.*

As a small church, we can participate in this witnessing to the story of Christ in many ways a big church simply can't, particularly when it comes to the gifts of hospitality and care we might offer to others.

But often we spend our time lamenting the old days when there were more of us, rather than looking at what we can do now that perhaps once we wouldn't be able to.

We are still often burdened by the structures of a medium sized church (think five worship buildings with all the associated electricity, insurance and rates costs) which we spend all our time maintaining – rather than living a new and authentic witness today.

Over the next few months, Presbytery has offered the time of a supply Minister, Rev. Kath Merrifield, to support both the Crookwell and Goulburn congregations think through their missional use of property into the future. No doubt you will see Kath around sometime.

So, I return to my original question. I wonder, what does I look like for us to do 'small church' well today and into the future?



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Pastoral Partners

This year, Pastoral Partners will gather for mutual support and training on the following dates:

August 16th
October 18th
December 13th

Meetings will be at 2pm until further notice. We are on the lookout for more people to join the Pastoral Partners team. Let Daniel know if you are interested.

Viewhaven Service

On the second Tuesday of each month at 10.30am, members of our church lead a worship service at Viewhaven.

We could always do with volunteers at this service to help residents find their pages in their hymn books and other non-speaking roles.

If you are available to help, the next Viewhaven service will be **Tuesday 13 August, 10:30am**



Worship & Readings

Sunday 4 August

9:00 Wesley
2:30 Wheeo

Readings: Hosea 11:1-11; Psalm 107:1-9, 43; Colossians 3:1-11; Luke 12:13-21

Sunday 11 August

9:00 Wesley

Readings: Isaiah 1:1, 10-20; Psalm 50:1-8, 22-23; Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16; Luke 12:32-40

Sunday 18 August

9:00 Wesley
2:30 Jerrara

Readings: Isaiah 5:1-7; Psalm 80:1-2, 8-19; Hebrews 11:29-12:2; Luke 12:49-56

Sunday 25 August

9:00 Wesley

Readings: Jeremiah 1:4-10; Psalm 71:1-6; Hebrews 12:18-29; Luke 13:10-17

2:30 Bigga (Bible Study)

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A New Era for Goulburn

After more than four years of restoration, parishioners were welcomed into Goulburn Uniting Church on Sunday, July 28th for a celebratory service. The highly anticipated new spire was the centre of attention; however more repairs are still required before the Church can conduct services on a regular basis.

Goulburn Uniting Minister, The Reverend Julie Lawton-Gallard said she was disappointed the Church is not quite ready to return to its former glory days; but was happy to invite The Reverend Simon Hansford, the Moderator of the Uniting Church in NSW, to conduct Sunday's service.

The Church was originally damaged in a major storm in late 2014. Planning and insurance issues have caused most of the delays; and there is some new work to be completed due to heavy rain in March this year.

Work resumed on Monday, with a hope of gaining the necessary safety certificates before the end of the year.



Drought Relief Available

The Federal Government has recently increased the assistance available to regional Australians suffering the drought. The Joint Agency Drought Taskforce has completed its operations, and has implemented a number of new assistance packages. These include programmes for animal transport, fodder, farm business skills development, an innovation fund, and interest free loans with no payments for two years.

Information on all the packages can be found at farmhub.org.au, or call the Rural Assistance Authority on 1800 678 593.

At a more immediate local level, if you or anyone you know is doing it tough and needs some assistance, the Church has IGA vouchers available. Please see Daniel if you think this may be able to assist someone you know.

Farmers are known for their resilience, yet they are also over represented in mental health statistics; often because they wait too long to ask for help. Please encourage anyone you know who is doing it tough to access the assistance available. Matthew is available at the Church on Monday and Tuesday mornings, and has extensive experience working alongside government agencies, including Centrelink. Help is available, and privacy respected.



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