

PRESBYTERY PORT PHILLIP WEST

SEPTEMBER 24TH 2020—NEWSLETTER NO.16



Mission in a Time of Pandemic

Rev. Mat Harry (Deacon) (eLM New and Renewing Communities)

“Mission is, quite simply, the participation of Christians in the liberating mission of Jesus, wagering on a future that verifiable experience seems to believe. It is the good news of God’s love, incarnated in the witness of a community, for the sake of the world (Bosch, Transforming Mission).”

Mission is always shaped by the context it is expressed within, and in 2020 that context has taken a mighty turn, due to an enemy invisible to humanity.



Local UC congregations have typically witnessed to the good news of God’s love in ways that serve the community – food banks, meals programs, providing safe spaces for people to feel included and valued, playgroups, school chaplaincy, community gardens, to name a few examples. These actions have relied heavily upon face-to-face interactions that are restricted at present.

From the results of a recent survey of 35 UC congregations within Victoria it becomes clear that many of these activities have been halted. Yet, some communities have been able to “pivot” – the buzz word of 2020 – some of the activities in order to maintain or even deepen their relationships with those they had been **alongside** pre-COVID. Some examples of this are; meeting as groups through Zoom and Facebook; sending emails and making phone calls; providing activity packs to playgroup families; delivering fabric for people to sew at home; delivering meals; offering to babysit children or pick up groceries to give parents a break. These are wonderful examples of responding to our present context in order to continue witnessing to God’s love. Each involves utilising a technology relevant to the situation.

Perhaps now more than ever, as loneliness and despair becomes ever more apparent within the broader community, the Christian community needs to include others in the hope of Jesus. Yet how could people find the local UC? If the typical entry points into a loving relationship with the Christian community – safe welcoming spaces, meals programs etc. – are closed, how could lonely and despairing people come into contact with your church?



With 88% of internet penetration in Australia we recognise that most people turn online for information and connection. This is the gathering place of the 21st century. This is our context. Without a doubt, having an engaging online presence is an essential element of incarnating each of our Christian communities witness. Therefore, **online** becomes something we must embrace and learn about, it is an edge in which the church must grow. (statista.com)

The pandemic has caused us to realise how powerful a tool the internet can be. A technology that allows us to remain connected with others, to communicate ideas and influence discourse. And possibly an entry point into Christian community. So let us experiment with our online presence, learn about the pros and cons of various platforms like Facebook, Zoom, Instagram as part of our communities witness to the love of God.

The Presbytery of Port Phillip West has been very supportive in providing opportunities to further your learning about maintaining a distinct and intentional online presence. Please grab these opportunities with both hands.

Some Guidelines for Re-Opening

Bruce Missen (Chair of Pastoral Relations Committee)

As we move out of Covid-19 restrictions, the question of when to re-open churches for worship and other activities arises. Part of the answer will be found in the official regulations, but Church Councils and Ministers must still make difficult decisions. Many of us sorely miss worship and want to return. Are there some principles we should use in making decisions about re-opening? Let me put forward a few for your consideration.

Safety: Many of us have elderly and other at-risk people in our congregations. If we open, we must be able to do so without putting anyone at risk. We must have effective Covid-safe plans in place, and we must implement those plans. This is the most important principle. Remember the safety standards and policy actions listed in Safe Church Training.

Numbers in Worship: There are various thoughts and theological ideas about the numbers of people allowed in worship. Some churches are going to wait until they can all meet. Others are choosing to allow the maximum number and have a rotation system so that everyone can come back to worship if they wish to. Churches are organising this either through the Church Council approaching people or allowing people to self-select the week that they attend. Some churches are considering more than one service each week to accommodate all their people (with cleaning in between). We encourage you to have discussions about what you will do. There is no right or wrong way going forward.

Spirit of the Rules: Government regulation has generally stated limits in a form like “10 people plus necessary leaders”. If the regulations say that 10 people can meet and we have 17 wanting to attend, is it reasonable to declare 7 of them leaders?

Until we meet, please continue to support one another through pastoral care, making contact through the phone or video means, and directing those missing worship to the many resources listed in editions of this newsletter and on the [Synod website](#).

Before any church buildings are used, the [Recovery Action Plan](#) must be completed and sent to Elnura.Dulakovic@victas.uca.org.au. See email sent from Communications 17/9/2020.

eLM Events

Chris Barnett (Intergenerational)

2020 On-Line [Stories of Childhood Conference](#) Saturday Oct 10 3pm - 5 pm

It's **FREE**, it's soon and it's for anyone engaged in **Playgroup or Pre-school ministry!** More accessible than ever before, the annual [Stories of Childhood](#) gathering for is taking place via **Zoom** on **Saturday October 10** from **3pm to 5pm**. Focusing on the needs of children and their families in the light of all things Covid-19, Dr. Vivienne Mountain – author of *Building Emotional Health and Wellbeing: a pastoral ministry handbook* – will help us reflect on appropriate pastoral responses. Focusing on Playgroup/Pre-school being a missional expression in the light of all things Covid-19, Rev. Mat Harry will help us explore an appropriate model for missional engagement for 2020 and beyond. Share via Facebook: [2020 Stories of Childhood](#) or Registration and more information: [2020 Stories of Childhood](#)

[Re-imagining Faith and Theology from a Non-Western Paradigm](#) Tuesday October 13

“Imagination is a parent of change” and this seminar will encourage participants to re-imagine Church and Theology from a non-Western perspective. Particularly relevant for the Uniting Church, Dr. Randy Woodley, PhD - activist/scholar, distinguished speaker, teacher and wisdom keeper - will address a variety of issues concerning faith/spirituality, justice, race/diversity, regenerative farming, our relationship

Mental Health Matters

Rev Fiona Bottcher [Deacon]

If I had to summarise my ministry in one word it would be “**connection**”, particularly in this time of Covid and isolation. Connection has been a mixed blessing for many of us, suffering from “Zoom fatigue” as we jump from one virtual meeting to another.

Connection is at the core of mission, now more than ever. At Sunshine Hospital visitations are heavily restricted and there are currently no visitors allowed in the mental health wards.

The reaction from the patients has been mixed. Some appear indifferent; as long as someone can still drop off essentials they're fine. For others the restrictions have been a relief, as face-to-face meetings with family and friends can be fraught. Many others have been turning to their fellow patients, regular community activities and staff, and of course, pastoral care for support and connection.

Significant isolation is not a new experience for many living with mental illness and there's no one-size-fits-all solution to helping people feel and stay connected.

We are being asked to think more creatively and imaginatively about meaningful connection like never before. And this feels like the very heart of mission: finding and facilitating meaning and understanding in our being together in community.



9 minutes @ 9

PPW Presbytery Ministers pledging to pray with you twice a day... We pray for...

Those still in lockdown in Greater Melbourne: May God sustain you and give you peace and hope that there will be an end to this situation.

Those people who have lost loved ones and had to navigate Covid restrictions and border closures: May the Spirit and the body of Christ bring you comfort and support at this time.

Those people in regional places who now that restrictions have been relaxed, are still very fearful of going out and about: May you know that the as 2 Timothy 1: 7 says 'God has not given us the spirit of fear but of power and love and self-control.' May you have courage to step out in safe and secure ways.

Those people who are on jobseeker who are having their payments cut this week: May you be able to cope with this reduction and to have the resilience and energy to keep trying to find work within this difficult time.

Those congregations across the presbytery who are undertaking mission studies to discern their future with property, ministry and mission.

All of us as we continue to seek to live lives which reflect the extravagant grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. **Narelle Collas**

DIGITAL CHURCH PLANTING

Creating Faith Communities for Transformative Ministry

Course work has been brought out from the US.

On-line 5 Seminars with Australian context watch parties and local discussions.

Register NOW

3 options:

Oct 7th—Nov 4th & 7th
Wed Afternoons

Oct 7th—Nov 4th & 7th
Wednesday evening

Nov 4th—7 th
Daytime Conference

LINK

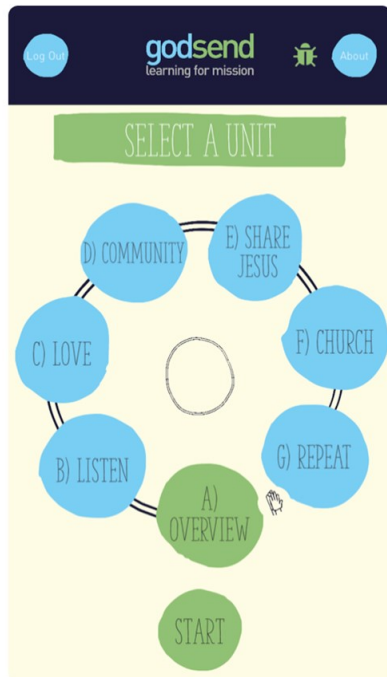
God Send App

Rev. Narelle Collas

Godsend is an app for your phone or tablet that has heaps of resources for your congregation or ministry context. This app is about a 21st century way to follow Jesus – this app gives you the tools to live a life that builds Christian community and what you need for the journey - a compass, a map, food and the address of your destination.



This App is for EVERYONE who is interested in Christian mission and sharing the good news of Jesus with others. It is packed with videos and content on mission. It has 5 main sections about building missional communities: love, listen, community, sharing Jesus, church – and then repeat the process.



Listening to the Spirit about what you can in mission in your context, learning about prayer, finding answers, testing your call to start something new.

What can you do in mission? Heaps of ideas of what others have done, how you can innovate

Community – how to build your core team?, how to create community during your mission activity?

Share Jesus – how do I start to share my faith in authentic and natural ways..

Church – how do I move our missional activity to become church? How do I make disciples? What is church really? Encouraging Christian maturity.

Repeat: Sustaining your community through reproduction

It was established by the Fresh Expression movement in the UK and has been adapted with Australian content by the UCA in W.A.

You could use this app in a variety of ways: 1) get your church council to download this and use a section of it during each meeting. 2) use this in a small group setting especially with people who want to do more in their Christian walk than just attend church on Sunday. 3) use it with

the volunteers who help in your op shop/messy church/community garden or any missional activity.

This Godsend App is FREE and can be downloaded from the app store or wherever you get apps for

Intercultural Retreat—All Welcome

Oct 13th 9 am—1 pm **Intercultural Seminar: Rev Dr Randy Woodley, PhD, Activist** TO REGISTER [click here.](#)

Oct 14th 10—12:30 pm **Intercultural Forum**

Code of Ethics

15th October 6:30pm or

16th October 2pm

Booking on Tribooking:

<https://www.trybooking.com/BLMJ0>

Ministry Agents' Chat

14th October

4 - 5:30pm

<https://zoom.us/j/4790460893>

Meeting ID: 479 046

Mission on-line, how do we do that?

Linley Liersch

'Mission' is shaped by your local context. Here are some local and John Roberto Ideas.

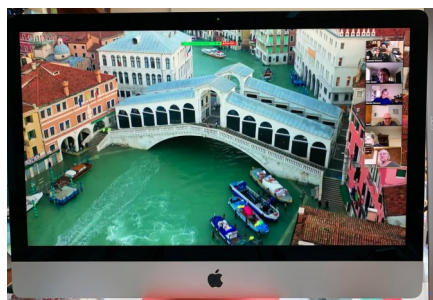
Working with Refugees or O.S. Students: English conversation groups are valued by new migrants and overseas students. Traditional meeting for two hours with a morning tea break in the middle. It has now gone on-line. Zoom conversations keeping the conversation going on-line. Notably, you can add a chat group on What's App/Twitter. Students can ask questions throughout the week: 'What does this word mean?' Adding to their language skills.

Intergenerational Story Telling: At it's simplest you can have grand-parent aged people in your congregation read biblical stories to the children. At its best you could pick a theme each week 'eg. How do you get to school?' Have some cross-generational story telling.

Messy Church on-line: Wayne Myers at Drysdale has his puppets out to tell a story. They are offering a half hour chat where families have prepared puppets, lego bible stories, or cards before hand and share it on-line together. Messy-zoom action sing-a-longs. Many of our Messy Churches have continued to work out ways to go on-line to reach out to families on the edge of our community.



Film Festival: You can do a film festival on a shared platform like Zoom or Discord. Often you can link your 'Netflix/Foxtel Go' accounts etc to your computer and share. e.g. 'The Way' is a great movie for secular and Christian viewers: Martin Sheen as actor/director takes on the pilgrimage of 'The way of St. James' through the Pyrenees. Alternatively you can recommend a movie of the week. Everyone watch it in their own time and then all talk about your favourite parts on Facebook.



Virtual Tours: Zoos, museums, art galleries, national parks, The Great Wall of China, Taj Mahal, Colosseum, Pyramids of Giza, etc all have virtual tours you can connect into as a group. Amanda Nicholas and Anne Key have a small group of women touring the canals of Venice. Probably the first time you could afford to take the church group to Italy! You could do this with any fellowship group or outreach group.

Spotify Play Lists: Youth leaders can make up music play lists of Christian songs and save them under their churches name. Youth Camp has been doing this for several year. We make a short list of songs of encouragement. That can inspire our young people. Share them in the newsletter at church and see what response you get from young and old alike.

Visual Faith Sharing: Get people to take photos of things that encouraged them through COVID. Gather on zoom and share the photos as backgrounds / or print photos and hold them up to the camera. Or use Instagram and people can do digital story telling throughout the week. With everyone posting at different times it could be an inspiring week.

Craft group on-line: You can knit and chat on zoom as well as you can at the church building. Join everyone together on-line and keep crafting together. Fill a Samaritan's Purse Box with all home made items. Knitted scarfs, beanies, gloves or sewn sunhats and masks can go to Uniting or overseas missions.