

## **RIVERINA PRESBYTERY**

### **UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA**

PASTORAL LETTER from the Presbytery Ministers.

15 January 2018

**(This letter is for all Uniting Church Members. Please copy it and pass it on.)**

Dear Presbytery Members, Church Council Secretaries and Congregations,

Happy New Year and Greetings in the Name of Christ!

We had two weeks break; one week before and during Christmas - with our son's family in Sydney and one week in January - when we took our four grandsons to Gerroa for a beach holiday.

It is now the season of Epiphany. The Cambridge Dictionary explains epiphany as "a moment when you suddenly feel that you understand, or suddenly become conscious of something that is very important to you, or a powerful religious experience (as it was for the Magi to see the Christ child)".

Throughout this season our Bible passages are focusing us on baptism and calling. In other words how do we live out that God is with us and have a greater openness to God's leading. The gospel of Mark (our Lectionary Readings from January 7 to February 11) is action-oriented. Action always follows the words. There are many ways in which we hear this call. It may be to a deeper spiritual discipline. It may be to recommitting ourselves to steps we have already taken in carrying out Jesus' ministries of hospitality, teaching, pastoral care or leadership in the church.

What are your epiphany moments? How did they change your life?

#### Follow Up on The Presbytery Resolutions of November 2017

We have been visiting Congregations across the Regions talking about the resolutions (on Presbytery meetings, Regions and the Presbyter (Regional Minister) role) and how they apply in particular situations. The meetings have been very positive and a sense of relationship and connection is building up between the congregations.

The Southern Region has had their first Leaders Meeting and we have been planning with Rev. Paul Cosier a date for an Inauguration of that Region. This will be the Region's first event. Similar gatherings are gradually being organised in other Regions.

#### Courses:

##### *Lay Preacher Training*

New Testament: 12 and 13 May, 2 and 3 June

Proclaiming Jesus: 8, 9, 22 and 23 September

##### *SRE Training and Safe Church Training*

You are able to attend this training with another denomination who is hosting a day in your area. SRE training can also be done on line. Emma Parr will be visiting the Presbytery twice this year and will facilitate a day in four Regions of the Presbytery for Safe Church Training.

##### *Worship*

Carolyn will be facilitating this one-day training in each region in the second part of the year.

Riverina Presbytery Website:

The website information is updated regularly. Please send any information for the website to Paul Ballard or Carolyn and Andrew. If you have photos make sure you have permission to have them on the website. Could you please look at your congregation information and send on any updates or information to our Website Administrator John Milnes, [jmilnes@live.com.au](mailto:jmilnes@live.com.au).

Worship Resources: The Uniting Church Assembly Website has many resources prepared for particular occasions. The website is: <https://assembly.uca.org.au/>. I would also like to promote the DocBytes that are available on the Assembly website. They can be used in a Study Group.

NSW ACT Synod publish a weekly 'Insights'.

Write to [www.nswact.uca.org.au](http://www.nswact.uca.org.au) or [contactus@nswact.uca.org.au](mailto:contactus@nswact.uca.org.au) to receive a copy.

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Do not hesitate to get in touch with us if your contact details need to be updated and if you have any other queries. We are as close as a phone call or an email message.

Below is prayer by Stanley Hauerwas, Professor of Theological Ethics at the Divinity School of Duke University in the United States.

*Invade our bodies with your hope, dear Lord, that  
we might manifest the enthusiasm of your kingdom.  
Give us the energy of children, whose lives seem  
fired by the wonder of it all.  
Thank God, you have given us good work, hopeful work.  
Our lives are not just one thing after another.  
We have purpose. But give us also your patience.  
School our hope with humility, recognizing that  
finally it is a matter of your will being done.  
Too often our hope turns to optimism, optimism to despair,  
despair to cynicism. Save our hope by Israel-like patience  
so that we can learn to wait hopefully in joy. Surely that  
is why you give us children – signs of hope requiring infinite patience.  
Give us hope so we can learn to wait. Christ has died,  
Christ is risen, Christ will come again. Amen.*

Grace and peace,  
Rev. Carolyn and Pastor Andrew Thornley