

Presbytery Standing Committee

**UPDATE**



Issue 6/2021  
August 2021

## *New Mission Plan*

FOR GEORGES RIVER PRESBYTERY



32 insights

Georges River Presbytery featured in the Insights Magazine Winter Edition 2021 page 32-33

For digital copy please visit:

[https://issuu.com/insightsmagazine/docs/insights\\_winter2021\\_web](https://issuu.com/insightsmagazine/docs/insights_winter2021_web)

**georgesriver.uca.org.au**

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A Presbytery in the  
Synod of NSW and the ACT



**WITH A NEW MISSION PLAN, OFFICE, AND BRANDING, GEORGES RIVER PRESBYTERY ARE EMBARKING ON AN AMBITIOUS NEW AGENDA. THE PRESBYTERY SAY THAT THEY ARE WORKING TO REVERSE A DECLINE IN NUMBERS AND TO ENHANCE THEIR MINISTRY. *INSIGHTS* SPOKE TO PRESBYTERY MINISTER REV. MATAGI VILITAMA.**

At the heart of Georges River Presbytery's new 'Mission, Vision and Strategic Plan 2020-2025' are aspirations to reverse a declining trend in numbers and to see what Presbytery Minister Rev. Matagi Vilitama calls "healthy, growing congregations that are known for passionately pursuing the mission of Jesus."

"This is the vision of the presbytery," Rev. Vilitama said.

The mission plan has a particular youth focus as well. In keeping with the Synod's vision of a Uniting Church that is 'growing young', Georges River Presbytery are seeking to support a youth movement in the Presbytery. This includes a working committee of young leaders and youth mentors who are leading the initiative.

"We are investing in growing multicultural and Crosscultural youth groups and training young leaders with the help of UME and Pulse," Rev. Vilitama said.

"We are also mentoring young people to participate in Presbytery committees and we are beginning to see positive response in this area."

Through UME, Synod has provided mission consultants to assist Georges River Presbytery in mission planning.

"The presence and support from Synod has helped build the relationship and collaboration between Presbytery and Synod. Rana Moawad from Synod assisted us in the details of the new logo and branding. Albert Olley, Chief Operating Officer of the Synod, represented Synod in the official opening of the new office."

#### "THE NEW PLACE OF PRESBYTERY"

The Presbytery Mission Day took place on Saturday 27 March. According to Rev. Vilitama, the day's main goal was the welcome new members to "the new place of Presbytery: not just in terms of our new office space but a new place in terms of mission."

"It was a day to mark a new beginning in the life of the Presbytery celebrating signs of new growth and hope," Rev. Vilitama said.

The Presbytery Mission Day had four objectives: To provide a time and space to physically meet for the first time since the COVID-19 lockdown, Sharing 'Good News' stories about mission events and projects in congregations and Presbytery groups, launching the Presbytery's new logo/brand, and the official opening of Presbytery's new office in Hurstville.

"There were four presentations on the day," Rev. Vilitama said.

"Presbytery Youth, known as 'Living Streams in Christ' (name that grew out of the logo referring to Georges river); Engadine Uniting Church shared their new mission in their local community, Cronulla New Beginnings Uniting Church talked about their new Discipleship project, and Carlton-Ramsgate Glee youth shared their experience of revitalising their youth group by reaching out to new families in the community."

According to Rev. Vilitama, it was, "All very inspiring and missional in focus."

Accompanying the new mission and office is new branding, with a logo by the Synod's Senior Graphic Designer, Rana



Moawad. As Rev. Vilitama explained, the logo has a rich symbolism that encompasses much of the new mission that Georges River Presbytery is embarking on.

"The name 'Georges River' is aesthetically positioned with the image of a river inside a leaf flowing outwards. The symbols in the image are deeply theological.

Water is a biblical and theological concept that represents life. Jesus said, "I am the water of life...he who comes to me will never thirst..." Water in Baptism speaks about cleansing and new beginnings - a fresh start.

The leaf in this logo is a symbol of all of God's creation. Much of Georges River environment includes conservation parks and it's something that the Presbytery is very aware of."

"The leaf symbolises new life, growth and vitality. It is inclusive of food, medicine, art and culture; it speaks to God's providence and sustenance. Living in the Anthropocene calls us to care for God's creation and Climate Justice is at the heart of our eco-theology. It is integral to the mission of the UCA."

"Our young people are passionate about social justice and action on climate change. Engadine's Shane Slade for instance, a young leader in our Presbytery, is one of the faces of the Church advocating in the climate and social justice space."

"So these symbols of leaf and river, the colours green and blue are intentionally chosen to represent the ideals and aspirations of Georges River Presbytery reflected in the new Mission, Vision and Strategic Plan 2020-2025."

**JONATHAN FOYE**

THE MISSION PLAN HAS A PARTICULAR YOUTH FOCUS





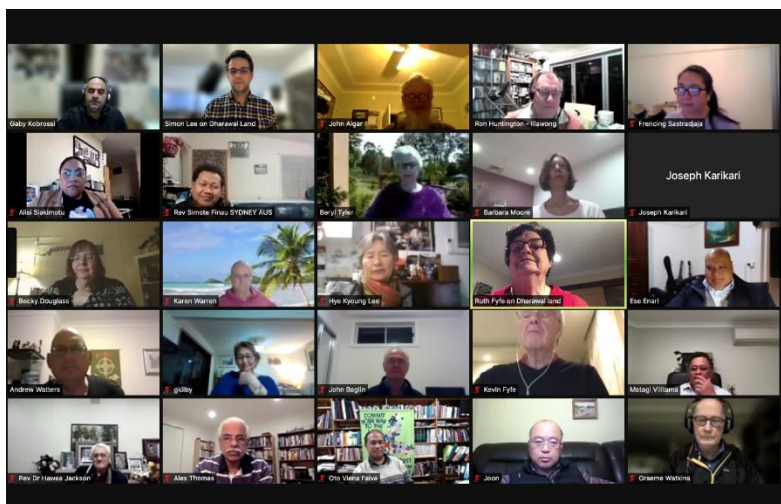
## The Presbytery Standing Committee (PSC) met on the 5<sup>th</sup> August 2021

The following information has been prepared for the use of members of Presbytery and distribution to Congregations within the Georges River Presbytery.

### STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING 5<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2021

The standing committee meet via zoom Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> August. The meeting received the following reports: Finance, Property, PRC, Chairperson, Mission & Leadership Presbytery Minister. The Standing Committee was updated on the progress for the implementation of the “EDRMS” (Electronic Document Records Management System), this included training for presbytery staff and committee chairpersons. The EDRMS provides a centralised system for storage of all the presbytery documents, this will create a more streamlined and secure system for the presbytery. The EDRMS is provided by the NSWACT Synod IT. As part of the roll out of the EDRMS all ministers within the presbytery will be/have been offered an “nswact.uca.org.au” email address. The Standing Committee resolved to change the time of its meeting to the second Tuesday of each month from 7pm till 9pm. This decision has been made to allow people in fulltime employment to attend the meetings.

The meeting of the presbytery was held via zoom Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> August. The keynote speaker for the meeting was Rev. Stu Cameron (CEO & Superintendent Wesley Mission). Stu gave a challenging and inspiring presentation of the work of Wesley Mission. As part of the presentation Stu also gave some very practical resources/information regarding church planting. The Pulse team presented the “Growing Young” program. The presbytery has been invited to participate in the growing young program, that seeks to revitalise congregations through ministry with younger generations. More information about the growing young program will be made available to the presbytery. The presbytery resolved to change its meeting dates to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday in November, February, May & August.





## Presbytery Nomination

Three candidates have been approached potential members to fill the 3 vacant positions on Standing Committee. There are three vacant positions on the Property Committee.

**Meeting times for Standing Committee (SC)** are under review to find a suitable time to suit those who are working during the day.

## PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE UPDATE AUGUST 2021

- The news from Pastoral Relations Committee has already been reported to Presbytery Reps for the recent meeting of Presbytery. Apologies if you feel you have read this news before.
- Much PRC work is done during each month with Congregations and their PRC Support people however the final outcomes are only known once the PRC meeting is informed by report.
- Currently some of this work is on hold until COVID restrictions are eased.
- I congratulate those congregations who are working towards online services, Church Council meetings and fellowship gatherings on Zoom so no one is left behind in these physically distanced times.
- Help is available through the Presbytery Office if you are interested in expanding your Congregation's delivery.
- The devotions led by Rev Alex Thomas at the August PRC Meeting addressed the way we can approach these unprecedented times with confidence (and Govt Health advice of course): Summarised for the Minutes  
"Bread for the Journey" Romans 8:31-39 – no condemnation, no discouragement, no separation – we are conquerors through Christ who loves us and intercedes for us – difficulties will come and go but nothing can separate us from God's love – "The only thing to fear is fear itself" (Franklin D Roosevelt) - we have nothing to fear because we are in Christ and conquerors through Him who loves us.
- **Supply Presbytery Pastoral Relations Minister:** We look forward to a new Supply Minister in September to share his pastoral gifts with the GRP ministers and congregations.
- **Meeting times for PRC** (by Zoom at present) are under review in December to find a suitable time for those who are working nonflexible hours during the day. It was great to share with Helen Lee and Alisi Siakimotu in August when they usually must fit around work timing.
- **We congratulate two members of PRC who were elected to Synod Standing Committee recently: Rev Simon Lee and Alisi Siakimotu.** Their contribution to the Uniting Church ACT/NSW is a big responsibility in making decisions regarding the implementation of plans. The proposals approved at the recent Synod call for knowledge, skills, wisdom and faith from these representatives as they take their place on Synod Standing Committee. We have confidence in Simon and Alisi.



### Congregations

**Engadine** has appointed an Administration Officer to support their mission in the church and community. We welcome Joanna Bradley to this position at Engadine Uniting and wish her well as she settles into her responsibilities.

**New Beginnings (Cronulla)** will have a Vital Ministry consultation soon led by Rev Alex Thomas & Rev Junmo Koo.

**Grace Christian Church (Padstow Panania)** has commenced a Placement Profile.

**Kogarah** has called **Rev Deok Hee Cho** as their fulltime Minister from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2021. Deok Hee has accepted the Call and we look forward to his ministry at KUC being a fruitful and blessed time for all.

**Rockdale** Placement Profile has been prepared for future approval by PRC

**Mission planning** is underway or completed in most of the GRP congregations. If assistance is needed, please contact the Presbytery office.

*The Presbytery exists to facilitate, support, and empower congregations in the mission of Jesus.*

Ruth Fyfe

GRP Pastoral Relations Committee

Chairperson



**PRESBYTERY RETREAT 2021**  
**“Living the Lord’s Prayer”**  
Monday, Sept 20<sup>th</sup> 9am to 5pm to  
Thursday, Sept 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2021  
**POSTPONED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE**  
Hartzer Park, near Bowral.



## PROPERTY COMMITTEE UPDATE AUGUST 2021

- COVID restrictions have delayed all maintenance.
  - Some contractors can work within limits depending on many factors including the contractor's residential address in relation to the work site and vaccination status.
- Completion of the sales for the Penshurst and Riverwood property sales is expected in September.
- The process for leasing out the office at Penshurst is underway.
- Fire and other safety inspections are now routinely conducted, and remedial work is carried out following the inspection report recommendations
- The finishing touches to the renovations on the Manse at 1 Winter Place Oatley were delayed due to COVID restrictions, but hopefully will be made soon.
- We farewelled Helen Phillips after many years on the Property Committee; her input has been invaluable. We welcomed Hawea Jackson, and Jo Matagi as new committee members and we look forward to their contributions.

If anyone knows any reliable, accredited tradespeople, please let us know. We are compiling a directory to make it easier for Congregation Property Committees and Maintenance Teams (and the GRP Property Committee) to find suitable people. The tradespeople need to have a current ABN, Public Liability Insurance and the appropriate licences for their trade.

## MISSION & STRATEGY COMMITTEE AUGUST 2021

### Urgent: Orders for NCLS Research

The NCLS Research statistics has provided the congregations and the Church key information for planning. It is a tool to inform, nurture life and health of our congregations. We noticed that most of our congregations have not made an order yet. Order your NCLS Survey here:

<https://www.2021ncls.org.au/order-surveys/> or contact Julie Prowse if you need assistance on email: [ncls@nswact.uca.org.au](mailto:ncls@nswact.uca.org.au)

### Training Opportunities for Mission

#### Exponential Australia: Movement Makers Online Conference

Anyone interested in Church Planting is invited to register and join a conference that Exponential Australia are putting on next week - [Movement Makers Online Conference](#).

It is next Thursday 2 September from 10am – 12pm.

Rev Dr Glen Spencer from UME will host a 1 hour debrief following the conference from 1pm – 2pm.

Let the Mission & Leadership Minister (0420 643 658) know if you are interested.





## 'First Love Resources'



'First Love' is a simple step-by-step resource on how congregations and members can equip themselves to confidently share the gospel with others, essentially rebuilding the congregation through relationships in responding to God's mission in the local community. 'First Love' that can be found on the UME

website: <https://ume.nswact.uca.org.au/resources/first-love/>

## 'Building a Discipling Culture' (BDC)

With similar goals to 'First Love' resources, BDC is a comprehensive two-year discipleship training course (with 2 intensives) made simple and practical aimed at building a discipling culture. Making disciples is, in essence, the church's purpose for existence. New Beginnings UC is beginning to see the results by the number of members involved in the training and the number of adult baptisms since participating in the training.

Congregations are encouraged to contact the Mission and Leadership Minister or New Beginnings Minister, Rev Simon Lee, for more information or visit: <https://www.bdc.org.au/>



## 'Global Leadership Summit' (GLS)

New Beginnings UC is hosting our Presbytery cohort of the GLS that will be taking place between 8th – 21st November 2021. The actual dates are yet to be confirmed but Standing Committee has agreed to support a group of 10 members of 'Living Streams in Christ' (Presbytery Youth) to join the New Beginnings team. It will be a full-day event and the main speakers for the summit are highly experienced mission practitioners from various backgrounds who are making a difference in God's mission worldwide. For more information about GLS click on: [globalleadership.org.au](https://globalleadership.org.au)



## Webinar, Q and A session 'Solidarity is the Tenderness of the People'

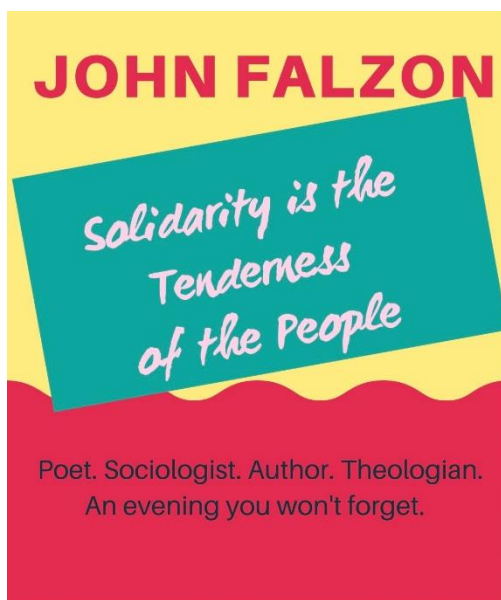
A webinar and Q and A session on Thursday 15th Sept at 7.30pm with special guest Dr John Falzon, senior fellow in inequality and social justice at Per Capita, and former national CEO of St Vincent de Paul Society 2006-18. John will be talking about the theology of social justice and what we can do at

this point in Australia's history.

We will invite all those mentioned above, plus Sydney Alliance (Sutherland chapter) members of the public especially those who attended our public forum in March with Mark Speakman, Lee Evans and Uniting staff working on the Fair Treatment campaign for drug law reform.

Registration will be made through Humantix, for detailed information please send your inquire to

[Admin.grp@nswact.uca.org.au](mailto:Admin.grp@nswact.uca.org.au)





## Letter Writing Workshop

**The Uniting Church in Australia  
ENGADINE**

# Letter Writing Workshop

**Thursday 2nd Sept  
10-11am online**

Get together online with other people of faith to write a personal letter to the PM asking for serious climate action.

Letters will be delivered personally by the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change.

Meeting ID 973 0061 4022  
Passcode 429161

Queries? michael@engadine.unitingchurch.org.au

**ARRCC**  
Australian Religious Response to Climate Change

All over Australia, people of faith are hand-writing personal letters to our Prime Minister Scott Morrison asking for serious climate action. Will you join us?

The letters will be presented in one large stack to the Prime Minister by the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change after Friday 10th September, so we don't have long to get them posted!

Grab some paper and a pen and tune in at 10am to get some letter-writing tips, work out what you're going to say, and start writing! By 11am you'll have a letter ready to go and will be encouraged by meeting with other people who share the same motivations and concerns that you do.

Join us next Thursday morning on <https://uca-nswact.zoom.us/j/97300614022?pwd=UXBNWVZhNUtQZFJpNHJxRIBRTEZmUT09>

You can read more about this campaign on the ARRCC website here:  
<https://www.arrcc.org.au/letters>

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## Knit for Climate Action



Common Grace's [Knit for Climate Action](#) campaign focuses on 101 years of global warming, with knitters putting in countless hours to create these scarves clearly showcasing the rapid rise in temperature over the last 25 years to the alarming levels we are experiencing today. The presentation of scarves to the country's leaders on the occasion of the winter solstice marks the beginning of a campaign which will see scarves presented to all sitting members by the end of September 2021. The day in Canberra marked the culmination of hours of work done by members of congregations and individuals from many different denominations under the Common Grace umbrella. In the months to come, it is aimed to gift every Federal Member of Parliament and Senator with a scarf and a request to wear it in Parliament on the 21<sup>st</sup> October, which is the last day of sitting of both houses of parliament before the [UN Climate Change Conference](#) in November.

Knitting the scarf was so popular amongst Engadine UC our older congregation members and gained them media exposure in both Eternity magazine and on ABC RN\* that we have had people asking whether we would sell the scarves or teach them to make one. We were hoping to hold workshops in person in order for people to come along and be supported in their knitting while talking about their own journey into climate awareness and their feelings about that, but of course that's not possible right now. Knitting online is a suitable activity but we're still working out how we can genuinely support people in making a scarf that requires very specific quantities and colours of wool, at a time when non-essential shopping is being discouraged. Anyone who wishes to take part in knitting the climate scarves and planning to give them to various community leaders can contact [Admin.GRP@nswact.uca.org.au](mailto:Admin.GRP@nswact.uca.org.au)

Georges River Presbytery Updates Newsletter will be published on Georges River Presbytery website monthly on the fourth Thursday of the month.

Please send in all content contribution via email to [Admin.grp@nswact.uca.org.au](mailto:Admin.grp@nswact.uca.org.au) by the Tuesday of the same week.



## Electronic Digital Records Management System (EDRMS)

The Synod of NSW and ACT has developed a centralised Electronic Documents and Records Management System (EDRMS) which will safeguard documents and records, keeping them regularly backed-up and compliant following the Royal Commission recommendations. Georges River Presbytery implemented this system on 2 August. The EDRMS will also facilitate collaborative work practices amongst GRP committee members and staff and reduce the number of attachments needing to be circulated.

### IMPORTANT DATES

2 <sup>nd</sup> September	Property Committee Meeting
7 <sup>th</sup> September	Pastoral Relation Committee Meeting
9 <sup>th</sup> September	Mission and Strategy Meeting
14 <sup>th</sup> September	Standing Committee Meeting

Does anyone have a laptop or device that is in good working order but is no longer needed, please? Thanks

Please let us know by sending email to

[Admin.grp@nswact.uca.org.au](mailto:Admin.grp@nswact.uca.org.au)

### Thoughts

by Rev Dr Matagi Jessop Vilitama

A few months ago, things started opening up again but then all of a sudden, the Covid-19 Delta variant struck and here we are in lockdown again. What have we learned from the second lockdown experience? After sharing with friends and colleagues, most have experienced troubled mind, frustrations but also personal growth. There is dullness, sadness and lostness but also more closeness with God, resilience, and growth.

We all have experienced growing pains. When our faith is tested, it attracts God's power and brings his grace into our situations. He will fight for us on our battlefields, take us through our storms, and turn our seasons of trouble into seasons of growth. The Bible says, 'Even though Jesus was God's Son, he learned obedience from the things he suffered' (Hebrews 5:8). He knows what it is like to face challenges. And he is also present with us in our current lockdown and will be there in the future to strengthen and guide us when we face hardship and stormy seas. Being Christians does not mean we will be free from Covid - or any disease for that matter. Being Christ's disciples does not excuse us also from painful relational challenges or mental trauma or all kinds of trouble and battles. But God will help us get through them when they come. Consider what Paul went through, *"...as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger..."* (2 Corinthians 6:4-10). As we continue to experience this excruciating lockdown, know that God is our refuge. God is forever near and accessible to us. As Paul experienced suffering he also learnt endurance and growth. May we also lean on God and grow in faith, grow in every way during this time of hardship.





Be sensitive to the waves of God's embrace. May his ever-flowing grace gently carry you during this difficult time. Here is a prayer I have composed in a form of a song. It has helped me, and I pray that it will also assist you in these stormy times.

*Waves of God's embrace*  
*Wash over us with ever-flowing Grace*  
Creator God, hold us all together  
Like *Moana*, Lord, joining islands together  
*Waves of God's embrace*  
Call us out Lord, to join you on the waters  
With faith in our souls, calm our stormy world  
*Waves of God's embrace*

*Peace, Holy Breeze*  
*breath unto us, Holy Spirit, fill us*  
O save us God when we drown in fear  
Revive us Lord with hope and faith  
*Waves of God's embrace*  
Come guide us God, let your Wind now lead  
Like the sun and stars guide us through the sea  
*Waves of God's embrace*

*Waves of God's embrace*  
*wash over us with ever-flowing Grace*  
*Peace, Holy Breeze*  
*breath unto us, Holy Spirit, fill us*  
*Waves of God's embrace.*  
*Waves of God's embrace.*

We don't like facing trouble, Lord. But we are reminded, that for every struggle we face is an opportunity to grow our faith and obedience to you and see you at work in our times of hardship. Gracious God, carry us by the waves of your loving embrace and may your holy Breeze fill us with your deep peace throughout these troubled times. Amen.



## A community forum in Sutherland

### Affordable Housing Crisis in the Sutherland Shire

In September 2017 only **16% of rental stock in Sutherland Shire** was affordable for very low and low income households

On a typical day in 2018 only **4.7% of advertised rentals in Greater Sydney** were affordable for households on the minimum wage (\$719.20 in July 2018)

**62%** of low to moderate income earners, living in private rental, are in **rental stress** (paying more than 30% of their income in rent)

Rental prices in Sutherland Shire are about **6% higher** than average rental prices across Greater Sydney

This issue can affect **you, your children and your grandchildren** because affordable rental and house prices are beyond the reach of people working in essential industries in Sutherland Shire, such as teaching, policing or nursing.

**Affordable Housing applies to those earning between 50% - 80% of Sydney median income**

**Sutherland Council is currently considering its commitment to affordable housing**

Show your interest and support this issue by attending the community forum

Local councillors are invited and your vote in the 2021 Council elections matters to them

**TUESDAY 17<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST, 2021**

Registration 6:30

Commencing 7:00pm

Finish 8:30pm followed by supper

**GYMEA MURRAY UNITE CHURCH HALL**

**13-17 CENTRAL RD, MIRANDA**

Or via zoom if COVID restrictions are in place.

Register here: <https://www.sydneyalliance.org.au/local/#sutherland>



Affordable Housing Forum **Postponed**.

The Sydney Alliance forum on Affordable Housing in the Sutherland Shire has been **rescheduled for 9 November 2021 at 6:30 pm**. For more details, please contact Shane Slade from Engadine UC on [snslade36@gmail.com](mailto:snslade36@gmail.com). Please put this date in your diary, even if you don't live in the Shire and support the Uniting Church and Shane on this important issue. Register on <https://www.sydneyalliance.org.au/local/#sutherland>

**[georgesriver.uca.org.au](http://georgesriver.uca.org.au)**

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