

SALTBUSH
UNITING THE SCATTERED COMMUNITY

Ruminations



Community

Winter 2019

Ruminations is brought to you as part of **Saltbush – Uniting the Scattered Community**. The Uniting Church Synod of NSW & ACT oversees this work as an encouragement to all rural Christian communities and their leaders, irrespective of size or location. You are invited to share this issue of Ruminations with others.

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Contributors:

Alison Campbell is from Henty – Culcairn Uniting Church summing up the thoughts of the Elders from these scattered communities.

Anne Christie is a member of Lithgow Uniting Church and is involved with **The Beehive art group**. The Beehive is a community centre inspired by faith, life and community and is an activity of Lithgow Uniting Church and the wider Lithgow community.

Ken Dean lives in Lithgow and is a member of Lithgow Uniting Church

Ian Haywood is a member of Manilla Uniting Church and is one of three generations of his family who have cared for and farmed their land in rural NSW.

Geoff Wellington is our new Scattered Community Minister as part of Saltbush. This is Geoff's first Ruminations as part of his new role.

Editor's Introduction

Welcome to your spring/summer edition of Ruminations
with the theme of

Community!

As this edition is published, the Synod of NSW & ACT gathers in Sydney bringing together all parts of the broad body of the Uniting Church. Together we are a community, as diverse as we are, and together we live out our faith within the wider community.

Community is not made up of people who are all the same, but of people who live side by side. Community is not always easy, but it is the way of humanity. Participating in community is a choice and contributing well is a gift to others.

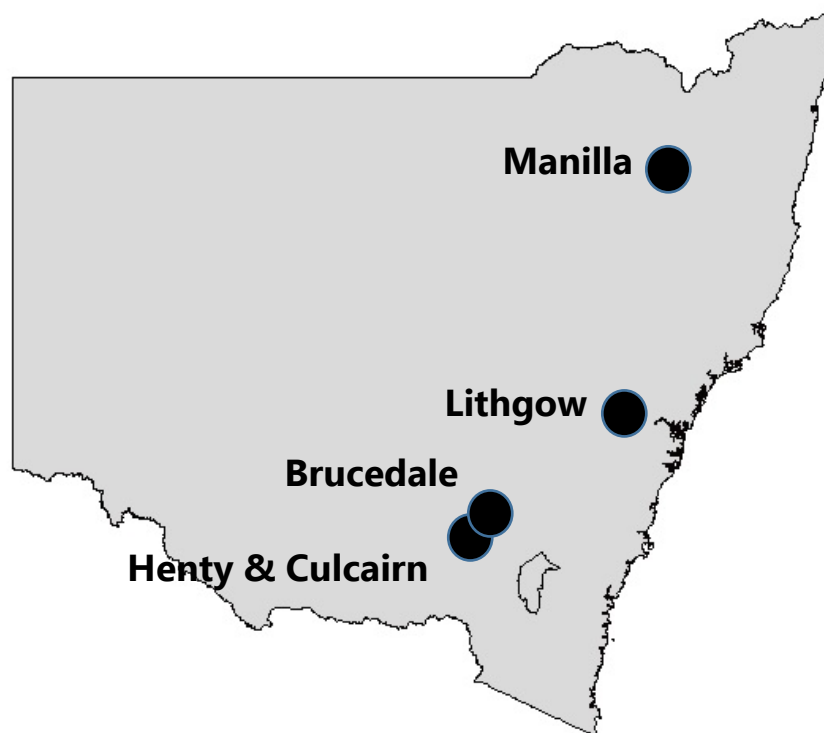
As the church, there is a deeply theological aspect to community as it reflects God's longing and yearning towards humanity. As a people of faith, the way we live is an expression of this theology and important to our place within the wider community in which we find ourselves.

Ruminations brings you in these pages, from across the land, some broad, even confronting, reflections on community and the challenge of being a Christian community within our wider community.

We also bring you good news about Saltbush!

Thank you for reading, for thinking about and for supporting Ruminations and through it Saltbush.

These are the locations from which Ruminations is brought to you in winter 2019!



Peace to you all.

Mark .

A word from the Moderator

Rev. Simon Hansford

Moderator of the Synod of NSW & ACT.

It's always pleasing when a theme like that of "Community" in this edition of Ruminations, coincides with the life of the church and the world around us.

As I write, we are in Reconciliation Week, which names how vital relationships are in our community and points to the need to work for justice with the first inhabitants of our land.

The wider church calendar has the week leading to Pentecost as the Week of Prayer of Christian Unity. The theme this year is "Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue ...", in reference to Deuteronomy 16.18-20.

The second part of the verse is "... so that you may live and occupy the land that the Lord your God is giving you." There are interesting echoes of what justice looks like, and how reconciliation in our nation might be pursued in the years ahead. The third marker is that of Pentecost, celebrated this year on 9th June, the day when the church was ignited into life, when people of all nations spoke – and heard – the gospel. Once the Spirit appeared, the huddled group of disciples grew in character, courage and numbers, and the community surged.



The first deep indicators of this new community were the breaking of bread, prayers and teaching, sharing goods with others in need, worship, wonders and signs of the Spirit's presence. True community, indeed!

So, as this season for many of us goes unrelieved by good rain, and we face the challenges of living in rural communities during difficult times, what will be the hallmarks of our community, as disciples of Christ?

In what ways can a meal shared with a friend echo the Spirit's urging? What can we offer to someone hungry for hope about our God who has always been faithful, in small and larger ways?

When we reconcile with our neighbours, asking and offering forgiveness; when we seek justice for our Aboriginal sisters and brothers – or for anyone – does that not proclaim our faith in the One who has reconciled us?

We worship, witness and serve, not because our circumstances are good, but because God is faithful, because Jesus is our hope, and because the Spirit breathes life.

*May the blessing of God find you this day:
to refresh your paddocks,
to inspire your relationships
to renew your life and faith. Amen.*



Community

Geoff Wellington

Saltbush – Scattered Community Minister

“Gather the people, break the bread and tell the stories¹”



Exploring Community: Life has changed and with it our sense of community – in the broader culture and in the church.

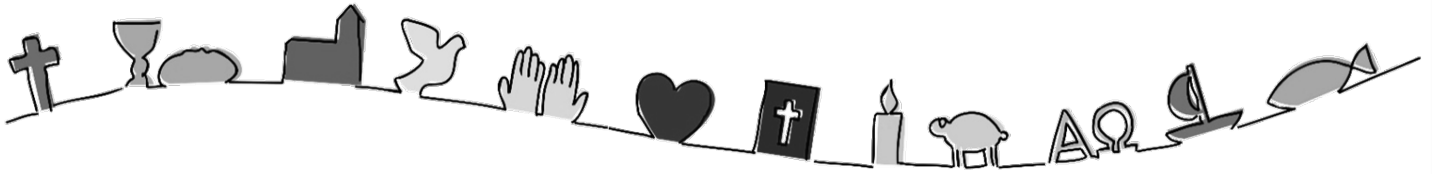
The church struggles to imagine what God’s community looks like given the fracturing of the frame work of Christendom² - that time in our history, now passed, when the church and the state worked together. Beyond the Church, the western world’s sense of what community is has been disrupted and the old “norms” no longer hold. In the church, the consequences of uber individualism, personal salvation and self-actualisation have come home to disrupt the sense of community once experienced by many.

This disruption to community life affects everything - The church’s structures, its ministry agents and its capacity to sustain the financial, structural and property dynamic that until now has typified what it has been to be a congregation. For those who act as ministers and leaders within these communities of faith, co-dependency has driven the search to renew old structures and preserve roles that sustain financial independence and patterns of life.

¹ Page 119 (Rasmussen 1997) (ed Dorothy C Bass) *Practicing our faith*. Jossey-Bass A Wiley Imprint. San Francisco

² Page 58. Clark. David. 2005. *Breaking the Mould of Christendom*. Epworth London. Quoting Adrian Nichols 1999, page 1. As ‘a society where historic Christian faith provides the cultural framework for social living, as well as the official religious form of the State’

The question is: can the church “for the sake of the world”³ renew its sense of what it is to be “community” and join with the interests of God to gather people, break bread and tell the stories?



God’s call to the Church has always been to be a servant of the pledge and foretaste of that coming reconciliation and renewal, which is the end in view for the whole creation⁴. Therefore, kingdom community is present wherever God’s gifts of life, liberation, love (and learning⁵) are manifest within and across social collectives⁶.

Community in depth:

From the beginning of colonisation in Australia, local churches were established by the major Christian denominations. Land was granted to build churches in towns as they were gazetted and began to grow. As the towns grew, so did local congregations and along with growth came a sense of community that was mono-cultural and cohesive in its theological expressions.

Later, as Australia’s population grew rapidly during the post war eras, local churches were built as each suburb was established, making it possible for people to walk to church in their “community”. Local communities took on a sameness that engendered a:

- sense of solidarity - we are building and growing Australia together;
- sense of significance – what we/I am achieving has worth and value;
- sense of security – I feel I have a place where I am able to grow and flourish.

³ Page 111. Croft Steven. 2002. *Transforming Communities: RE-imagining the church for the 21st century*. Darton, Longman & Todd. London

⁴ Par 3 Basis of Union 1992 edition

⁵ Page 32. Clark. David. 2005. *Breaking the Mould of Christendom*. Epworth London. David adds Learning to the 3 L in the following chapter.

⁶ Page 26. Ibid.

David Clark in his book "Breaking the Mould of Christendom" expresses this in terms of people feeling they have a place to stand (security), a role to play (significance) and a world to which to belong (solidarity)⁷.

What once held our sense of community has shifted from a geographic location gathered around a local enterprise – farming, manufacturing or just house building (this is what we all do or contribute to the whole) to groups of dormitory housing, sheltering people who engage in many activities and work practices or none. Those areas of security, significance and solidarity as defined post war up to and including much of the 70's and 80's have broken down. There is no longer a sense that what I do in my house and in my suburb has much of anything to do with my neighbour or the wider society.

In rural areas, our understanding of community has changed with the deregulation of farm production. Where once family farmers shared some aspects of the peak work periods and social events, today farmers are competing for niche markets and working longer and harder. While some of that sense of belonging to a particular rural community and being there for my neighbour remains, there is a growing sense of the individual family business or of the Agri Business farm getting ahead.

Additionally, it may once have been assumed that folk from any particular location held a common or close cultural heritage. This is no longer the case in urban and regional Australia, with the more usual experience, being multicultural and multi-faith.

Societal shifts also mean that expectations around people attending worship on Sundays have completely gone. Those who want to go to worship do so and those who choose to engage with other pursuits do so without guilt. Sport, shopping, social activities and family time encroach on traditional Sunday worship time. No amount of letter dropping, changing the music, adding a band or making the pews more comfortable will entice people "into" worship on a Sunday morning.

⁷ Page 17. Clark. David. 2005. *Breaking the Mould of Christendom*. Epworth London.

However, there is an increase in the individual pursuit of “spirituality”, those who identify as “spiritual and not religious”. Individual questing for “spiritual” and “community” connection takes many forms. From attending meditation, hanging out with friends at the café, lighting a candle in some place of significance to taking care of the environment.

Individuals, I believe, still seek “community”. It is intrinsically human that we seek to relate to others and the Church has a lot to offer in enabling places of community that resonate, but the forms in which the church has offered those in the past have shifted and changed.

Community questions:

The church’s scripture, doctrine and practice has always assumed that living, gathering and practicing faith within community was the norm. The difficulty for the church is that the wider society has decided that the current form/practice of “church” no longer creates community that resonates with them.

While there are many voices offering direction on what it means to be “community” within society, some of which are extremely divisive, the Christian church’s claim is that it is God who calls together community.

The Greek word Koinonia gives the church an example of what community looks like. Koinonia is understood to be like a people of fellowship, a communion of sharing, of contributing and participating, of forming together to practice faith and shape actions through faithful discipleship. For Christians this is what community looks and feels like.

The question then is: can the church change its practices to create a community that resonates more broadly and remain faithful to scripture and tradition?



Church & Community:

Two of the central doctrines of the church are "Trinity" and the "Kingdom of God". These two understandings assist the church to identify, in part, the nature of God and where God is located.

The Church's claim is that the very nature of God is "community", three persons yet one. Like a dance of life, each partner taking the lead, then stepping back, always moving and acting in concert with the others to create, renew and sustain life⁸.

The other claim of the church is that God has indeed located God's self in the midst of creation, among us, revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth⁹.

God calls life into being; life together then is at the heart of community. Though it is not the total picture, such an understanding of the nearness of God is at the very heart of a vibrant faith¹⁰.

If, at the heart of the Christian faith lies God's creative, reconciling and renewing life revealed in Jesus, then the example of Jesus leads the church to understand the nature of "community". Lesley Newbigin describes the work of Jesus like this:

⁸ Par 4 Basis of Union 1992 edition, John 20: 19-23, Acts 2: 1-4,

⁹ Luke 4: 14-21, John 1: 1-5, 2 Cor 5: 19

¹⁰ Loc 380. Butler Bass. Diana. 2015. *Grounded*. Harper Collins Sydney

"The mission of Jesus was to announce and embody the reign of God, a reign which claims jurisdiction over the whole created world and all that is in it."¹¹

The church then is called to proclaim the reign of God pointing to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus as the example of what the Kingdom of God looks like.

The church's task is to enact the Kingdom in the midst of society. Like Jesus it is to practice:

- **Feasting** – with unexpected guest and inclusive table fellowship;
- **Justice** – overturning oppressive structures and relating to each other and the whole creation in ways that bring in the "shalom" of God;
- **Healing** – restoring to "health" those trapped physically, emotionally and spiritually; and it proclaims
- **Good News** - the kingdom of God drawn near¹².

Another way of considering God's call to be community is to consider the call of Abram¹³ to be a blessing to the nations. This call is grounded in covenantal relationship, it brings good news to all and there is a kind of "salvation" in the at-one-ment through community. The church may then shape its life together as a community that blesses the wider society by loving God and loving its neighbour as itself¹⁴.

As a community of faith, it would find ways together that enabled; feasting, justice, healing, proclamation, good news and blessing to those with whom it came in contact. It would be a transforming presence in the lives of the people and it would treasure and tend the creation.

¹¹ Page 25. Clark. David. 2005. *Breaking the Mould of Christendom*. Epworth London. Quoting Newbigin 1983, p. 34

¹² Luke 4: 18-19

¹³ Gen 12: 1-3

¹⁴ Mark 12: 28-34

**Read a Book about
Community**

***Breaking the Mould of
Christendom***

Clark. David. 2005.

***Transforming Communities:
RE-imagining the church for
the 21st century.***

Croft Steven. 2002.

***Practicing our faith:*
(ed Dorothy C Bass) 1997**

Grounded:

Butler Bass. Diana. 2015.

Each year the Lithgow Uniting Church holds a thanksgiving service for local Community Service organisations. Firefighters, Ambulance, Police, Social Service groups etc. all gather. They are recognised and thanked for the contribution they make to the community. Their trucks and equipment are blessed along with the many individuals that are involved. Locals to get to interact with Community Service organisations, give their thanks personally and together a sense of community grows.

***What makes spending time
in community enjoyable
for you?***

***Describe what your dream
community looks
and feels like.***

***Name one thing you could
do to create community for
yourself and for others.***

See Change is an organisation that looks to enable change in our Society, Environment and Economy (SEE). In 2015 this group initiated a number of Kitchen Table Conversations as a way of deeply listening to people in the community. Over a meal they asked people these questions:

- *What is important to you?*
- *What are your hopes for the future?*
- *What are your concerns?*
- *What needs to change?*
- *How can we make change happen?*

People took the time to share a meal together, listen to each other and talk about the joys and concerns about living in their local area.

**Watch a film about Community
*Whale Rider:***

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eSuBMJpPBBo>

Brassed off:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_b4zPoleN28

Softly Falling Rain

Ken Dean

Lithgow

When your heart is way past caring,
When your eyes have shed their tears,
When the one you love is missing,
When your thoughts are mostly fears,
Do you hear deep down inside you,
Sounds ringing through your pain,
The gentle rhythmic cadence
Pure as softly falling rain?

When your heart is proudly singing,
When your eyes are lit with smiles,
When the one you love is sharing,
When you've time to rest awhile,
Do you hear its mystic music,
That sweet echoing refrain,
The gentle magic measure,
Pure as softly falling rain?

Is it love that I am hearing,
This clear drumming in my soul,
The rich rhythms of Love's caring
Of a peace that make me whole,
Do you hear this joyful chorus,
As love's promises ordain,
The gentle caring meter,
Pure as softly falling rain?

Our stories...

The people from Henty-Culcairn Uniting Church

Our small, aging, rural congregation has now been “ministerless” for 15 years and has managed to maintain a very viable worship presence with a team leadership approach. We are blessed to have 2 musicians, one Lay Preacher; two Lay Presiders, numerous willing worship leaders, a competent, committed Church and Elders council and some good cooks.



We can't attract younger folk, our numbers are dwindling and we have become increasingly aware of growing pastoral care needs. In our combined congregations, and amongst our leadership, the following adversities touch our members in direct or indirect ways: Motor Neurone Disease, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome; Dementia; Cancer; Parkinson's disease; Diabetes and eating disorders, just for starters. Then there are hospitalisations, people who are shut-in and of course deaths.

This has caused the Councils of our church to have to face some hard realities. There are not enough of us on the ground to provide the level of pastoral care that is truly needed and to keep open a place in Henty and Culcairn offering a Uniting Church style of worship.

Major threats to how we maintain ministry in two small country towns have been and still are:

- costs of administration;
- dreaded insurance;
- fatigue of the leaders; and
- not being seen by the general community as a valid church because we don't have a Rev up front;
- being time poor, and
- being at a distance.

So we are slowly realising that:

- the point of theology, is in the end, care;
- links are needed within the congregation and the wider community to enable pastoral care
- we don't always have to sing in worship;
- Hospitality seems to outshine talking.

So what have we have tried to do to fill the caring gap that we are slowly realising is getting wider? It has snuck up on us, and we have missed many opportunities, like Dorcas, to "mend the world one cloth at a time". We tried a telephone RUOK month, with measured success. Now we are trying again with a text message with a "staying in contact" theme. We conduct funerals, and feel we do this well. We run a craft day once a month, which is very successful and productive. We run a monthly free

luncheon for people who are elderly or shut, or anyone really - which has been a major success. We have written "intentional prayers"; focussing on the needs of specific Church family members for use in worship. This went well, but requires much thought in how you write the prayer. It isn't just "please help so and so" but much more deliberate and specific in intent. Prayers are written with the person or the family's consent and run for a month in worship and in our weekly sheets. We upgraded one of our church halls and it is becoming almost overused by the community!

We as Elders take the role of "how can we help" very seriously, especially when each of us also has high care needs. We are a long way off getting organised caring right but we are at least nibbling at the edges. Possibly the casual networks we all make in and out of our church family need to be strengthened by prayer and encouragement and then become intentional networks of care.

Editor's Note: I am sure that this speaks to the experience of many, but I'd like to add a note as someone looking in from the outside. These congregations, with very small numbers in leadership, maintain an open and welcoming presence in two small, isolated towns where the theological climate is, otherwise, very conservative. They offer a home for those who don't fit the dominant pattern of church. If you look at what they do, rather than what they think they do not do well, they serve their community by conducting funerals for church and non-church people in a very respectful and caring way. They gather people for fellowship who are otherwise isolated and lonely. They worship and they pray for one another in deep and meaningful ways. They care that their own, or their family's ill-health prevents them from achieving a level of pastoral care which most ministers in placement would not be able to achieve. I do not have anything but admiration for this group who are a very legitimate expression of what it means to be the people of God where they live. Sometimes it is easy to be a disciple of Jesus and sometimes it is hard. Love and lovers shine in the darkness. –

Gereldine Leonard



Our stories...

Ian Haywood

Manilla, NSW.

Thoughts on Community



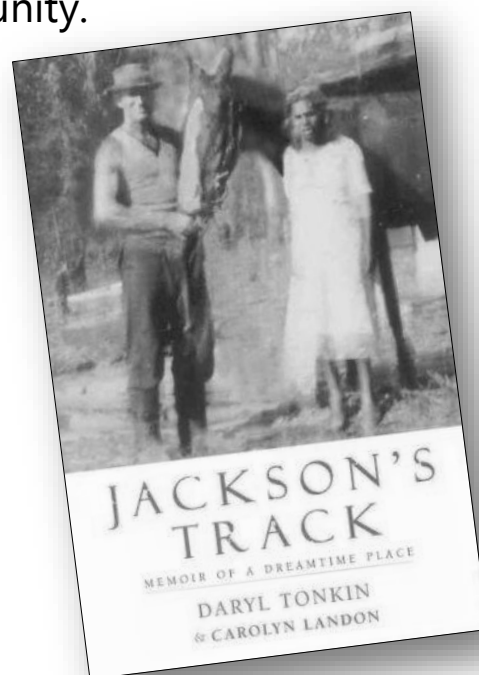
At a time when Church attendance is shrinking and agriculture and dependent services in the Australian Eastern States are on their knees due to "The Dry", the need for our people to understand and work for stronger communities is vital. At our recent New England North West Presbytery meeting in Moree, The Rev. Mark Faulkner, who heads the Saltbush project, was there to give an update. One of the phrases used in his presentation was "to reshape" rural communities, to encourage them to feel cared for and empowered to do things differently.

Community for me can be just two people or the worldwide gathering of humanity. At whatever level, for it to be relevant to its members, it requires honesty, purity, forgiveness and love to be modelled to others for them to accept it as genuine and not simply as the only place left for them. Perhaps community for two or three people may be 'created' out of a commitment to meet regularly, to share faith, hope stories or resources. In this process, if one is brave enough to invite others into their personal sphere and that gift is reciprocated, then functional community is created and lives are changed.

It may begin as a response to tragedy, either personal or environmental. When one of us experiences a chronic or terminal illness, or we lose a close friend, we need understanding. A person given to acceptance, compassion and kindness is a gem when they put self aside and stand beside us. In times of natural disasters, such as fire, flood, drought or earthquakes, the outpouring of love from those least affected towards the most affected leads to feelings of gratitude perhaps not felt before. We have witnessed this during recent fire in Australia and earthquake and massacres in Christchurch. So, a community may be large or small.

The connections made between people build into relationships, which are meaningful and often based on shared values. Our responses may be influenced by feelings of sadness, relief that it is not us or prompting by others. In Acts 11, God challenges Simon Peter, a Jew, to go to the house of Cornelius, a Gentile. Peter, in response to God's guidance, does things he would never have considered doing. He eats 'forbidden' food with Cornelius and stays in his house – another 'mistake'. We, Like Peter, are

encouraged to put aside previous behaviours, cultural customs/traditions and to respond with care and concern and not in judgement. What a boost to community that would be! As a response to this passage, we may be challenged to put aside barriers erected by our group towards those “others” who are different. The diversity in our community would be broadened and the ensuing acceptance of others would lead to a more inclusive community.



Some years ago, a book titled Jackson's Track was shared with us. It told the true story of a community of Indigenous people living together at Jackson's Track. A European man living in that community described one man as a caring, concerned and thoughtful person who helped the cohesion within the group. A subsequent book, Jackson's Track Revisited, by the same author but reporting views about this particular man held by Christians, the Bureau of Aboriginal Affairs and local government authorities, described him as a “layabout usually found at...” the house of a particular family. My take from these two books was that the same person, depending on the reference group, was seen completely differently. Simon Peter went to Cornelius's

house and got to “know” him and was himself changed. As we move toward knowing the other so too can we, in God’s strength, see them differently, be changed by the Holy Spirit and be in community with them.

In the book of Hebrews, chapter 10, verses 22-25, we are entreated to draw near to God and to meet regularly together. Out of commitment to this process, we will be better prepared to forge relationships based on acceptance and love, and a broadened, more inclusive community will grow. It is at this point I return to the beginning. The faith communities of which we are a part will be enhanced through sharing with others and we will be better equipped and inspired to participate in our wider communities.

In more recent years, there has been much to read about empowering communities, employing community facilitators and steps for building a more dynamic community. These initiatives can be helpful but often create groups where members tend to rely on outside assistance. Interest is lost when that “help” is moved on to another position or withdraws due to ill health or burnout. Those initiatives more likely to create community or move an existing community forward tend to occur when individuals are reshaped and empowered by a shift in their paradigm. By expressing themselves naturally, individuals can be the initiators of change.

The possibilities are varied and endless for community development and growth when this happens. Encouragement by others is beneficial but the initial catalyst comes from being self-aware and feeling led to share with others – that leads to community.

Community in Art

The Beehive art group

As part of Lithgow Uniting Church and the wider Lithgow community.



The painting could be titled "community". The art work has been made after studying Jackson Pollack's paintings and each student worked for about five minutes then we had another turn and continued until we thought it was finished. We also discussed how we thought it should progress. A real community activity within the Beehive Community! Anne Christie – Lithgow.

Experiencing the Word...

Rev. Mark Faulkner

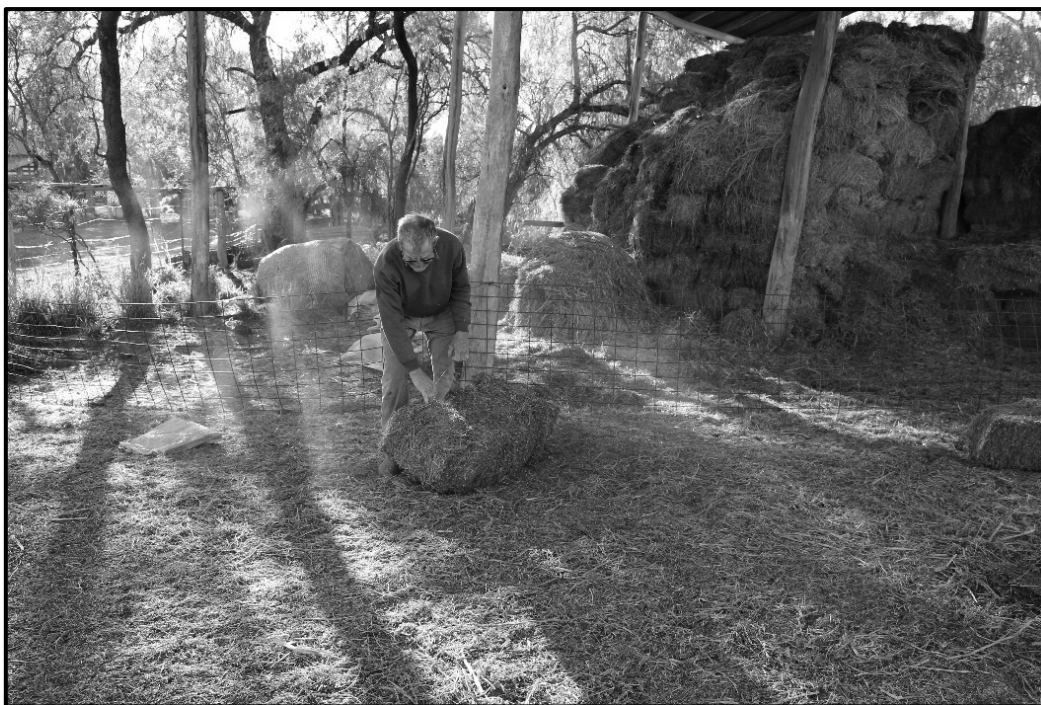
Director of Rural and Remote Ministry Initiatives
Synod of NSW & ACT

How is it that fifty-year-old hay, stored in bales, can still be good enough today to feed your sheep?



As the drought remains and the hardship continues, farmer Ian Haywood has found himself feeding his sheep with hay cut and stored by his father in the shed built by the generation before. The hay was made by his father fifty years ago and as the bales are losing their shape the red string that once bound them is rotting through.

Thrown out to the sheep surrounded by the dry and dirt this old store of hay provides life!



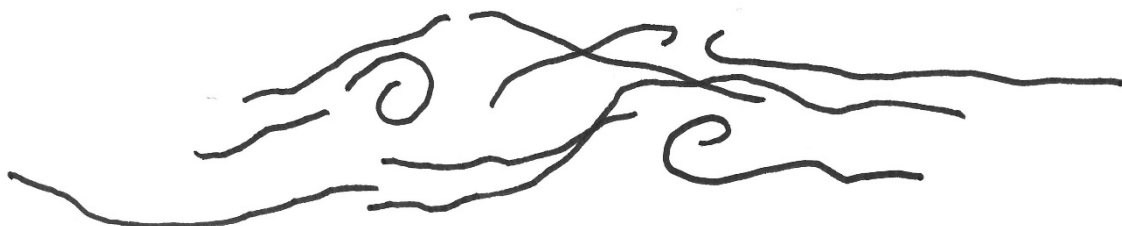
This year, as part of our Easter readings we read the passage of resurrection, of life, where Jesus had breakfast with his friends on the beach (John 21; 15-19). After breakfast, he turns to Peter for a conversation. Three times Jesus asks Peter if he loves him, to which Peter replies somewhat offended, "Yes Lord, you know....", to which Jesus replies each time, "Feed my lambs". "Tend my sheep". "Feed my sheep". At the conclusion of the passage are those familiar words of Jesus, spoken to many throughout his ministry, to the greatest and to the least; "Follow me".

In this passage, we could consider Jesus' three questions to Peter and his responsive affirmation of love against Peter's denial, three times, that he ever knew Jesus. We could consider this conversation with Peter and the question, "Peter, do you love me", against the murmuring within the disciples as to who was the greatest, who was most important and who loved Jesus more than anyone. Or we could simply hear this conversation on the beach as a call to Peter to tend and love, not just the sheep who are in the pen, in the paddock, but the lost and longing as well. A call to discipleship of a wider community. A call to shepherding. A call to following as a disciple of Jesus.

Maybe Jesus invitation, "follow me", is one that needs to be heard multiple times throughout life as one treads the way of Jesus Christ. We see this at the beginning, when Peter's brother Andrew first introduced Simon Peter to Jesus when he was invited to "follow me" and then at the end of Jesus' ministry when Peter is once again invited to love, to tend, to feed and to follow. Perhaps the invitation to follow is one that needs to be heard many times throughout our lives and equally, responded to many times.

For Peter, after all that had been happening - the death of Jesus, no doubt the loss of hope and direction, even with a renewed experience of the Christ, it must have seemed that things were falling apart. No doubt, the re-call to discipleship by Jesus was a significant moment of both reaffirmation and choice.

When Jesus gave the invitation to follow, to Peter, James and John, or the rich young man, or the man who firstly wanted to bury his father, or to the women and men who became the early church, it may well have seemed personally, or in terms of society, or politics and country, or the ways of religion, that there was very little holding all things together. The strings were fraying and breaking!



If an old bale of hay is still good enough to feed the sheep decades after it was cut, then it must still have its intrinsic qualities of vitality and goodness. Within its fibre must be nourishment and life. Even though the hay is losing its shape and the string that binds it together is fraying and breaking it obviously still has the qualities of life. This is also the characteristic of both the Christian community and the decision to follow as disciples. The followers of Jesus including Peter, the early church, the

church we find ourselves in today, our own discipleship, has never been the perfect shape or neatly tied. No one, from congregations, Presbyteries or Synod, would be able to say that there is not a certain amount of chaos and strain, fraying and falling apart which is an enduring part of our church.

It is relatively easy to preach about or discuss the failings of Peter, James and John, Judas, the rich man, the religious leaders and to see their failings in ourselves, yet the intrinsic, life giving power of Christian community endures.

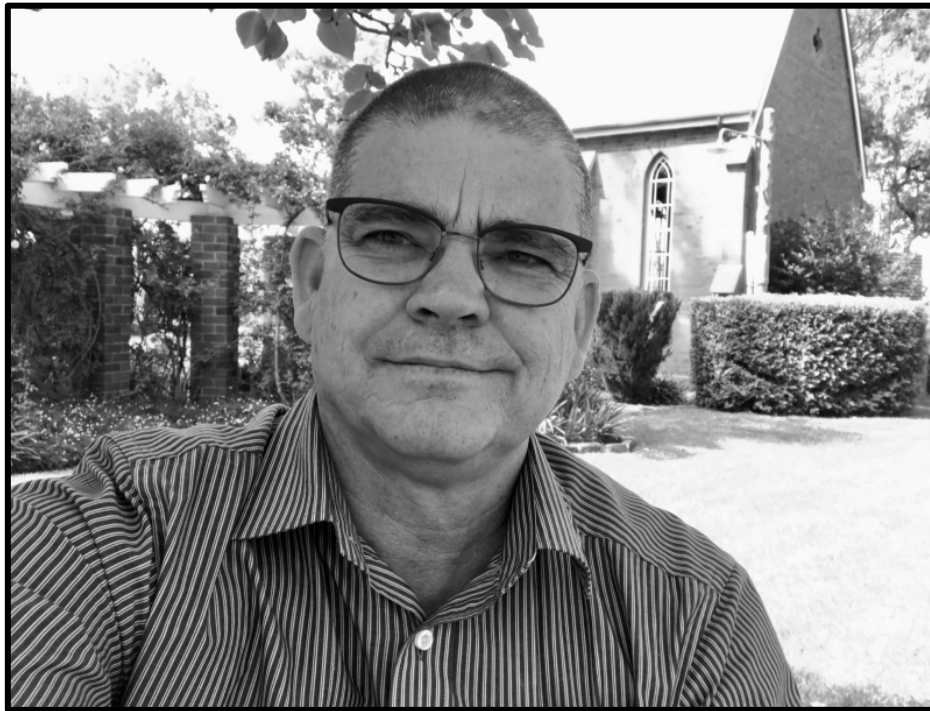
Who else will speak of forgiveness, grace, hope, peace... who else will set a table that is open to all.... who else will ponder the longing of God towards humanity and the wonder of life itself? Who else will respond to the invitation to feed my sheep? This is genuine Christian community and this is the call to each of us as disciples of Christ.

As Peter was asked numerous times, so our congregations, our church, and we ourselves, are invited numerous times to reflect on our willingness to respond to the call of discipleship. We too are invited to reaffirm the goodness and life giving qualities within and around and respond to the invitation to follow, tend and to feed.

News from Saltbush...

Geoff Wellington

Saltbush – Scattered Community Minister



Greetings from our place at Brucedale and the new edition of Ruminations! I am Geoff Wellington and I'm delighted to have just started my role as a Saltbush – Uniting the Scattered Community Minister.

Let me tell you a little about myself. I grew up in a farming family just south of Wodonga and in the late 80's our family sold our farm there and moved to a new farm west of Henty - Pleasant Hills.

In the mid 2000's responding to a sense of call to ministry my wife Meryl and our then, two children located ourselves at Lithgow for three years, working with the Congregation, resourcing Project Reconnect and offering Supply Ministry across the central west of NSW.

In 2009 I responded to a call taking up the Resource Person placement with the Hunter Presbytery and in 2012 I found myself working for the NSW/ACT Synod as the Synod Mission Resource Fund (SMRF) Consultant.

The last five years have been with the Canberra Region Presbytery as the Congregations Futures Minister.

I'm really looking forward to meeting you and listening to your story in the many locations across NSW as together we discover what God is doing and calling us too in this time and place.



As part of our work, we invite you to one of our next Saltbush – **Scattered Community Gatherings**. We have decided to offer these in different places so as to make them easier for lay leaders and members of congregations to attend. You can choose either location and receive the same Saltbush experience! Chose one and register online at **Eventbrite**!

Scattered Community Gathering #1
Brucedale (Wagga)

Saturday 31st. August, 9.30am –

Sunday 1st. September, 2pm.

All meals and refreshments are provided.

Scattered Community Gathering #2
Tamworth

Saturday 21st. September, 9.30am –

Sunday 22nd, 2pm.

All meals and refreshments are provided.

Mobilising Ministry

Mobilising Ministry is about affirming all of us as part of the wider body of the Church; a broad church made up of both rural and urban Uniting Christian communities. In this time of change, Mobilising Ministry challenges us to consider how we encourage and connect scattered congregations, ministers, lay leaders and each other.

Mobilising Ministry asks ministers from larger congregations to support smaller, rural congregations who do not have ministers and who are actively considering change.

Mobilising Ministry asks larger urban congregations how they can enable support and encouragement to take place out of their generosity and community gifts.

Mobilising Ministry asks rural congregations to embrace hospitality, daring change and the challenge of renewed vision and mission.

Mobilising Ministry seeks to encourage over a lengthy period a relationship of support and enabling. For more information and initial enquiries about Mobilising Ministry please contact:

Rev. Mark Faulkner
Director of Rural and Remote Ministry Initiatives
Synod of NSW & ACT
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0477720151



Please consider financially supporting Saltbush; either as individuals or as a congregation.

Your donation will be directly used for the work of supporting Saltbush and the ways we are working to encourage smaller, rural congregations.

You can donate generally towards Saltbush and this will include the cost of enabling the printing of Ruminations.

To donate please make a direct transfer:

Bank: Uniting Financial Services
Account Name: Uniting Mission & Education EFT Direct

BSB: 634-634
Account Number: 100035066

Payment Reference: **"Saltbush"**

