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Keep sharing your stories and events with us — we love to hear what's happening across The Northern Presbytery!

Contact The Northern Presbytery News Team



Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. (Ephesians 2:20–21, NLT)

Bibimbap: Unity in Diversity

One of Korea's most well-known traditional dishes is *bibimbap*. To make bibimbap, you first place a serving of steamed white rice in a large bowl. Then, you add a variety of vegetables on top, such as carrots, spinach, seasoned radish, bean sprouts, shiitake mushrooms and zucchini. These

vegetables are usually boiled or stir-fried and lightly seasoned. A fried egg and some stir-fried beef are also added. To bring out the flavour and aroma, a little sesame oil and some sesame seeds are sprinkled over the top.

And then comes the essential ingredient – the much-anticipated sauce, *gochujang* (Korean red chilli paste), or sometimes stir-fried gochujang. Add a spoonful or two, mix everything together thoroughly, and you have a delicious bowl of bibimbap ready to enjoy!

What makes bibimbap so special is that all these different ingredients come together in one bowl without losing their individual flavours. Instead, when mixed with the sauce, they create a wonderful new flavour. The beautiful combination of colours also makes bibimbap a feast for the eyes.

And what brings all these wonderful ingredients together and makes bibimbap even more appealing is the gochujang. Depending on its flavour, consistency, texture and variety, the taste of bibimbap can be quite different. But for a Korean like me, it's almost impossible to imagine bibimbap without gochujang!

Not long ago, we held a combined worship service with a neighbouring church. Christians from different cultures, backgrounds, professions and age groups came together in one place. We worshipped and praised our Triune God, listened to God's Word and shared in its message. We also enjoyed wonderful and meaningful fellowship, not only during the service but also over morning tea afterwards.

It was a lovely opportunity to reflect on what, or rather who, brings us together as one. Because Christ Jesus is among us and dwells within us, we can become one and grow together into the church he calls us to be. Because the Lord walks alongside us, we can go out into the world with faith and confidence. Through him, we continue to grow and mature in our faith. Just as gochujang is an essential part of bibimbap, Jesus Christ is essential to who we are as the church. Without him, something vital is missing.

Last September, the Northern Presbytery was officially formed. This week, from Thursday to Saturday, a conference will be held at the Wesley Conference Centre in Sydney under the theme ‘ONE CHURCH, ONE HOPE, ONE FUTURE’. As we come together for this gathering, I find myself reflecting once again on what, or more importantly, who we truly need if we are to become one.

Rev. Sanghyeon Nam (Forestville Uniting Church)



The Forest Kirk and Forestville UC’s Combined Service @ Forestville UC, 25 October 2026



Celebrating the people, congregations and communities doing amazing things across The Northern Presbytery.

Sawtell Uniting Church



Small Congregation, Big Thinking — A Church at the Heart of Its Community

What can a small congregation achieve when it looks beyond its own membership, embraces partnerships and thinks creatively about the resources available to it?

At Sawtell Uniting Church, the answer is quite a lot!

For nearly 30 years, this relatively small, lay-led congregation has been putting its vision of being ***"The Church in the Community"*** into practice, creating opportunities for people to connect, building lasting relationships and becoming an integral part of village life.
And behind its extensive community engagement lies a fresh approach: **you don't have to have all the expertise or do everything yourselves to make a meaningful**

difference.

A vision that shaped a church

Sawtell's community focus began in the late 1990s, when Rev John Thornton and the congregation were planning their new church building. They deliberately chose a multipurpose design, creating a space that could accommodate worship alongside a wide range of community activities.

Their intention was never to be a church set apart from the community, but one actively involved in its everyday life.



That vision has taken many forms. One of the earliest initiatives was providing tea, coffee and Anzac biscuits following the local Anzac Day dawn service. For many years, the congregation also hosted Christmas lunches for people who would otherwise spend the day alone.

In 2006, under the guidance of Rev Richard Harris, Sawtell's Carols by Candlelight began, eventually growing into the largest event of its kind on the Coffs Coast. Today, around 3,000 people gather on the village green each Christmas for this much-loved community celebration.

These initiatives reflect something central to Sawtell's philosophy: community ministry isn't confined to what happens inside the church building, nor does it have to originate within the congregation itself.

Partnerships make more possible

One particularly effective example of Sawtell's creative approach is its UUFIT program, which has been running for more than a decade.

Recognising the value of affordable exercise and social opportunities, the congregation established a business arrangement with a local physiotherapy practice. The practice provides a qualified exercise physiologist to lead classes at $180 per session, while participants pay just $6 each, with numbers capped at 30. The arrangement also provides insurance coverage through the physiotherapy practice.

The church doesn't seek to profit from the program and is prepared to subsidise activities where necessary. Instead, it uses its facilities and resources to make professional services accessible to the community.

Other activities, including mahjong and table tennis, are supported by volunteers, while rental income from a church-owned property helps cover cleaning and maintenance costs. It's a practical example of how a small congregation can extend its reach without expecting its members to possess every skill or shoulder every responsibility.

Good ideas, thoughtful decisions

Importantly, Sawtell's community activities aren't simply the result of enthusiasm and goodwill. The congregation takes a considered approach to new ideas, recognising that even worthwhile initiatives need to be manageable and sustainable.

When someone proposes an activity, they are asked to complete a standard assessment form identifying genuine community interest, the time and resources required, who will take responsibility, the impact on existing programs and how success will be measured.

This process has helped avoid potential difficulties and ensures that new activities are carefully considered before commitments are made.

For a small congregation, it's a particularly valuable discipline, balancing a willingness to try new things with responsible stewardship of people, property and finances.



Where community becomes connection

While careful planning and partnerships make these activities possible, it's the relationships they create that matter most.

Through UUFIT, people have formed friendships that extend well beyond the classes, often gathering for coffee afterwards or meeting at other community activities.

One participant reflected:

"This church opened its doors and hearts to people. I felt really welcome."

Another, after attending UUFIT for three years, began joining Sunday worship with her husband and mother. By then, the church was already a familiar, welcoming place.

Sometimes the simplest activities create the strongest connections. A suggestion to hold a monthly afternoon tea has become a much-loved gathering, regularly attracting 30–40 people. Tables are decorated with embroidered cloths and flowers, a traditional church afternoon tea is served, and everyone is welcome. There's no charge and no need to book.

Increasingly, people are bringing friends who haven't previously participated in church activities. What began as a simple social gathering has developed into an informal network of friendship and support.

Many regular participants now regard the church as ***their*** place, willingly helping with food, cleaning up and equipment. That sense of belonging also extends to supporting others, with community members generously contributing to fundraising initiatives for homelessness services, foodbanks and other charitable causes.



Thinking beyond the Pews

Sawtell's story isn't about having a large congregation or unlimited resources. In fact, its members are very conscious of their size and the need to share responsibilities carefully.

The congregation does benefit from a flexible building, a central village location and rental income that supports property maintenance. But perhaps its greatest strength is the way it thinks about ministry.

Rather than focusing solely on what congregation members can provide, Sawtell has been willing to listen to its community, welcome ideas from outside the church, develop partnerships, engage professional expertise and involve participants in the life of the place.

Their advice to other congregations is practical: ask people what they need, assess ideas carefully, make the most of available resources and recognise that building genuine relationships takes time.

Sawtell's experience is a reminder that a church's capacity to serve its community isn't necessarily determined by the number of people in its pews. Sometimes, it's about recognising the possibilities beyond them — and having the vision, planning and openness to bring people together.

Northern Presbytery Website Link

Northern Presbytery Update

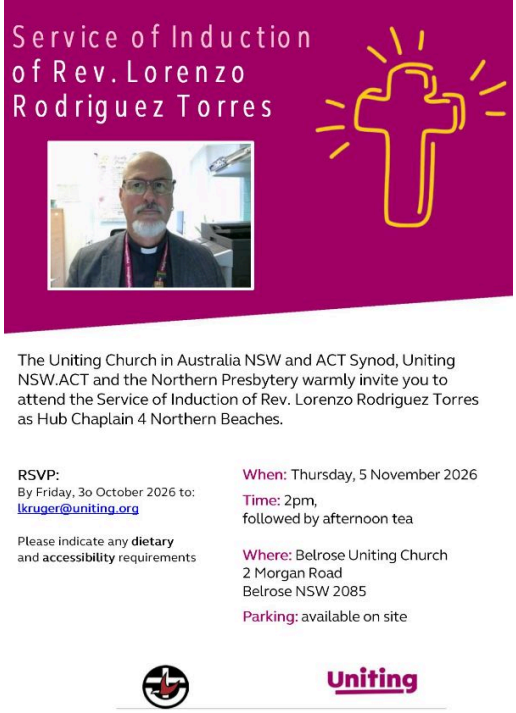


Save the date (Presbytery meetings via Zoom, 7.00pm to 9.00pm)

2026: Tuesday, November 24th

2027: (Tuesdays) February 23rd, May 25th, August 31st, November 30th





Fijian National Conference – A Gathering of Faith, Culture and Hope

More than 850 people gathered in Fremantle, Western Australia, from 1–4 October for the 2026 Fijian National Conference, celebrating faith, culture and community under the theme *"Wind of Change and Hope in the Wilderness."*

For the Tamworth and Gunnedah Fijian community, it was a particularly special occasion, marking their first attendance at the national gathering. Among the delegation were 11 children and young people who enjoyed opportunities to connect with others, celebrate their cultural heritage and experience the wider Uniting Church community.

A highlight was an elective exploring the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) Scheme, led by Talatala Samuela Sadrata and Talatala Geoff Flynn, sharing insights into the Church's ministry with Pacific workers in regional Australia.

The conference also celebrated Fijian traditions, encouraged emerging leaders and brought more than 800 participants together in a powerful call for climate justice.

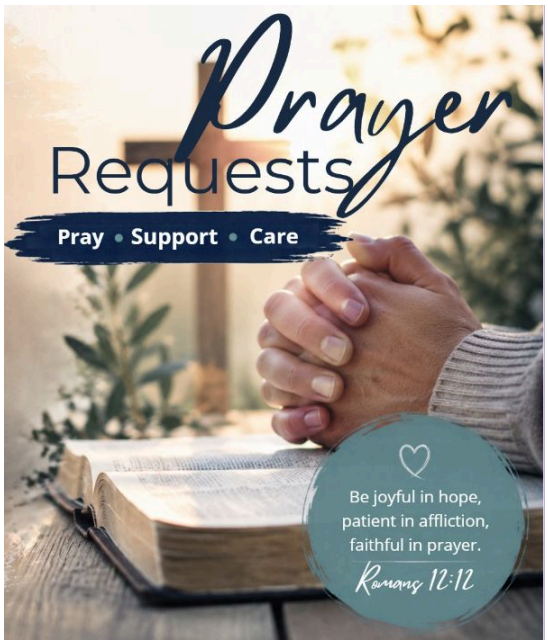
Talatala Samuela expressed heartfelt gratitude to the congregations, Presbytery and community supporters whose generosity and prayers made the delegation's participation possible.

Read Talatala Samuela Sadrata's full report for a wonderful account of the gathering.

[Link to full report]







Big or small, every prayer matters — share what's on your heart and let our Presbytery pray with you. Click here to request a prayer

As we approach the busy Advent and Christmas season, we pray for renewed energy, creativity and

We pray for students facing exams, important decisions and new beginnings. May they find confidence, encouragement and peace

opportunities to share God's love with our communities.

As living costs continue to place pressure on families, we pray for those struggling financially or facing housing insecurity. May they find practical support and renewed hope.

We pray for those affected by conflict and displacement. May compassion overcome division and world leaders seek pathways to lasting peace.

As we offer these prayers may God open our eyes this week to the people, places and possibilities where love is needed most.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

EVENTS AROUND THE PRESBYTERY IN THE UPCOMING WEEKS

Interested in what's happening at your local congregation?

Many of our congregations have **regular activities, groups and events** throughout the week. For the latest details, times, changes and **special events**, check your congregation's **Facebook page or website**.

It's a great way to stay connected and discover what's happening in your local church community.





Follow us on Facebook/Insta





My Aged Care Forum

Empowering individuals to make informed decisions about their ageing journey.

Join us if you would like to find out more about how to navigate aged care, what government funded support may be available and how to register.

Date: Tuesday, 17 November 2026
Time: 10:30am – 12:30pm
Venue: Cherrybrook Uniting Church, 134 New Line Road, Cherrybrook, 2126

- ☑ Expert inputs
- ☑ Practical next step
- ☑ Tea and nibbles
- ☑ Q & As

Places are limited.
Please register ASAP by scanning the QR Code or leave a message with **Rob Cranna** at Cherrybrook UC on **0418 287 018** or E: **crannarobert@gmail.com**
General enquiries: cvermeulen@uniting.org

Cherrybrook Uniting Church
134 New Line Road, Cherrybrook, 2126

Uniting

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Voluntary Assisted Dying Community Forum

Reliable information, open conversations and directions on how to offer support and care.

Ask your questions about this sensitive topic at our free community forum.

We will discuss:

- What's involved and who is eligible?
- How does the process work?
- How do we talk about this topic?
- How do we listen and provide support?
- Medical, legal and pastoral perspectives

We will have expert advice from an authorised medical practitioner from NSW Health. There will be roleplays and examples to help us learn. Everyone is welcome.

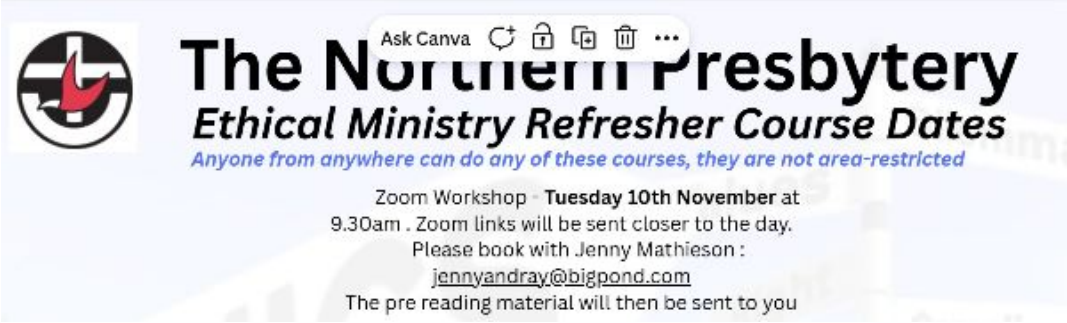
Wednesday 4 November
9:30am – 1:00pm
Thornleigh Hillcrest Uniting Church
1 Paling St, Thornleigh
Morning tea provided

For catering purposes, RSVP to forums@thornleigh-hillcrestuca.org.au or call David 0407 805 487

Uniting













Other Publications

threads of love
WEAVING CHRIST'S LOVE ACROSS CULTURES & BOUNDARIES

weekly
SYNOD SPOTLIGHT
Uniting Church Synod of NSW and the ACT

UCAN
UNITING CLIMATE ACTION NETWORK

NSW Ecumenical Council



Acknowledgement of Country

From before recorded time, the First Peoples of this Nation have cared for this Land.

We praise God, the Creator, for the beauty of this Land and honour those who have cared for it.

We acknowledge the Elders and community members who have told the sacred stories and nurtured faithfulness to the Creator.

We ask God's blessing on those who continue to work for the healing and restoration of this Land and its many communities.