**Art of communication**

‘If I’ve told them once I’ve told them a hundred times. It just seems to go in one ear and out the other.’ This is an amazing confession when you come to think about it, suggests Hugh Mackay, social commentator and communications expert. What it’s really saying, argues Mackay, is this “Hey, I know a message that never works. It doesn’t seem to matter how often I say it.”

Mackay goes on to suggest we normally assume communication is about injecting our messages into the minds of others. “The really powerful part of the communication process is not the message, but the mind of the person on the receiving end who can accept or reject what is said and make it mean what he or she wants it to mean.”

For our communication to be effective it is therefore essential we understand the world view of the one with whom we are meeting. Effective communication involves listening to the ideas and views of the other even though they may differ from our own perceptions.

That’s why we so often find ourselves preaching to the converted and reading newspaper columns that reinforce our own prejudices rather than listening to an alternative view. “Not listening is far more comfortable than listening”, suggests Mackay.

This is salutary advice to me and other Presbytery representatives as we seek to engage with the wider community – particularly in political, government and community service delivery areas – seeking to develop a voice for the Uniting Church in this region.

My hunch is that effective communication becomes possible when we respect the integrity of the other, taking time to listen and understand their attitudes and perceptions so that healthy conversation and exploration of ideas can occur.

We have good news to share. Let us then attend to those with whom we seek to communicate the Gospel, listening to both their needs and their ideas in order to discern how the Gospel might heal or transform the lives of others and our world.

**Ivan Roberts**

Presbytery Chairperson

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“Ministry”, writes Rev Dr Chris Walker, “is essentially about the continuing ministry and mission of Jesus”.

“The primary call”, he goes on to say, “is to discipleship; God is telling the church to get on with fostering discipleship and engaging in Christ’s mission.” In his paper, *Towards a theology of resource ministry* Chris refers to the way the Holy Spirit empowers us for service and the need to work cooperatively.

As new editor of *Perspective*, I am learning how a Presbytery magazine helps to resource ministry in this way.

In this issue we are focusing on communication and community development from an outreach perspective. This involves learning from each other, listening to other people’s wisdom and sharing our own.

At the same time we need to understand, maintain and develop our inner relationships from a “body of Christ” or “movement of the Spirit” perspective.

*Perspective* itself contributes to these relationships along with the weekly Presbytery notices, the website, *Equip* and Facebook. All in different ways help us keep one another in view, to co-ordinate ourselves, to encourage one another in ministry, learn from one another and follow Jesus.

Suggestions of what your group or congregation want to learn more about can be sent to the Presbytery Communications Think Tank, GPO Box 221 Canberra City 2601 or send an email to office at canberraregion.unitingchurch.org.au

**Carolyn McAllister**

Editor
I was sharing a taxi with colleagues recently when we drove past a large creative public billboard advertising one of the local congregations in Melbourne.

One of my fellow passengers expressed his contempt for churches that lowered themselves so much that they became involved in the world of advertising. My response was to reflect on communication in a public arena. We can do it effectively or ineffectively. Or we can totally absent ourselves from the minds of people in our community.

**Effective Marketing**

In the UK the Churches Advertising Network has provoked conversation around Christmas through billboards, posters and even beer coasters in pubs. In the USA the United Churches of Christ have run television and online campaigns connecting with people who feel they’ve been rejected by local congregations. In New Zealand progressive Anglican congregation St Matthew in the City hits the news every Christmas and Easter with a provocative billboard on its front lawn. Here in Australia we’ve had various versions of the ‘All About Jesus’ campaign.

Each of these projects involved planning, research, consultation, brainstorming, skilful use of creative arts, and selection of strategic media space. In most cases churches and organisations have engaged the services of advertising agencies, professional sign writers, illustrators, photographers, film makers and web site developers.

Companies with significant marketing budgets know that connecting with potential customers or fans requires an integrated approach.

Advertising on radio, television, in newspapers and magazines makes sense when you know who’s watching or reading.

Out of home advertising, including billboards and posters, taxis, buses, bus stops, and at point of sale, connects with people on the move.

Digital marketing, on web sites, Facebook and mobile applications are becoming more mainstream, particularly with younger generations.

Ambient “on-the-spot” experiences get people talking.

These all have something in common.

A hook gets people listening or reading further. A billboard on a cross.

People get to look at information shared, like who put this billboard here.

At the end what’s the took? What do we want people to take with them? It may be a web site, a phone number or a time and place.

**Why advertise?**

At the very least we can reinforce the sense of shared identity and loyalty among our own members when they see or experience their own message in the public arena.

We can build our association with the local community by evoking curiosity, building a sense of respect. We can shape the way people in our community work and live by challenging, inspiring and equipping people to see the world in a new way.

**Cautions**

There are dangers involved in the world of consumerism. We can easily be sucked into individualism and product-oriented values. Without a sense of integrity and follow-through we can resort to shallow promises. We can end up prioritizing around attendance numbers and dollar figures rather than changed lives.

What are we advertising? Are we just promoting an event at which we’ll make some money? Are we just letting people know about our Easter and Christmas services? Or are we inviting people to experience something of the gospel of Jesus lived out by an open and welcoming community?

I hope our communication with the community will be infused with the good news of radical hospitality, genuine welcome and inclusion, reconciliation, peace making, healing for the brokenhearted, solidarity with the suffering and oppressed, a search for truth and insight, humility, graciousness, and ultimately a life-changing experience of the Divine.

Duncan Macleod
Presbytery Minister
(Mission and Education)

Duncan is the editor of advertising and design website The Inspiration Room: theinspirationroom.com
Today I did an online search for the phrase “Online Presence”.

I clicked on a link to a web page with the question, “What is Online Presence”. The page came up with just the phrase, “Error establishing a database connection”. Ironic!

So how’s your online presence? As Aimee Kent points out in her article on the opposite page, being found on the internet is becoming more and more important for organisations and their leaders.

**Web Sites**

I advise churches to make sure they highlight two things before anything else: being a Christian church, and where exactly they are in the world. Bear in mind that people stumbling onto your site may not be locals. Write it as though your readers are in London or Johannesburg.

Keep your content fresh. The most engaging web sites have room for material that remains the same (location and times of service), along with news and views from the last week or two.

See more on my online article, “Church Website Tips”, postkiwi.com/2011/church-web-site-tips

Avoid putting email addresses on your web site. Spam merchants (senders of unsolicited email messages) gather thousands of names using software that trawls through web pages looking for the @ symbol.

Talking about this with Aimee Kent I did a search for her email address online. We found it sitting on two public lists hosted by Russian websites, most likely sourced by spammer software through a Deacons conference pdf flyer.

**Facebook**

The Presbytery opened up a Facebook page in August 2012, connecting with the growing number of Uniting Church members on Facebook, joining Weston Creek, St James and the City Early Morning Centre Facebook pages.

Kippax Uniting Church and the Presbytery’s Young Adult network have Facebook groups, accessible to group members only.

If you’re thinking about a Facebook presence for your church, remember to set up a page or a group for an organisation, not a “person” with a birth date.

You can use Facebook to promote events, to post videos and photographs, and to connect with individuals, groups and other web sites.

**Email**

Tuggeranong Uniting Church has recently developed a stylish weekly email newsletter. The goal is to regularly touch on people’s lives, even if they don’t come to worship each week. The content is essentially the same as their printed news sheet. The church also has a Twitter account, @TugUniting.

Have you thought about including a standard signature under each personal email message you send out, with your email address and your phone number? Some conversations are best had in person or on the phone, rather than through a series of email exchanges.

Not everyone is into building an online presence. That’s OK. Not everyone is into preaching from pulpits or leading small groups. Find the people who are keen and comfortable with this field, or at least willing to give it a go, rather than expecting the usual up-front people to be on-line spokespeople.

Let me know if you want any help with your online presence.

**Duncan Macleod**

**Presbytery Minister**

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This week I was once again reminded that I am on the cusp between those who are technologically intuitive and those who find it more of a struggle.

Whilst many of my friends would consider me technologically useless, my address book, my calendar and my to-do list are all electronic. When looking for a postcode I instantly head for the internet before the phone book. At the Goulburn Australia Day celebrations I was the lucky winner of a six month free membership to the local pool and gym. Excited by this new opportunity to get fit and out of the heat I madly Googled ‘Goulburn pool’, ‘Goulburn aquatic centre’ and ‘Goulburn YMCA gym’ hoping to find information on Aqua aerobics times, seasonal closures and gym equipment.

I was sorely disappointed when the only information I could discover was the pools opening and closing times and last year’s entry fees.

My friends are similar. On moving to a new town the internet is often the first and sometimes only source of information used to discover what there is to do and see in their new home. It is the source of information on where to eat, what clubs to join, what there is to do and yes, what churches are in town and how active they are. Sad though it may seem to some – if it doesn’t exist on the internet some people may never know it exists at all!

Goulburn Uniting Church Linked Centre has been very lucky over the last year to have the Presbytery website host information on our worship services for us. But as you can imagine, we have so much more to offer the community than that!

Festivals, Craft groups, Kids clubs, Lunches, Community Gardens and new faith communities are just some of the many interesting things that are happening within our Church, so the time has come for us to launch our own website.

Now I have to be honest, for me, the idea of writing a website is a daunting thought indeed. Come on - my six year old god son still runs rings around me when it comes to the inner workings of the Xbox and despite being shown how, I can’t record TV shows on my housemates TV! But, despite these technological set backs, I have decided to take on the Website challenge.

The Uniting Church can help congregations and groups set up and host websites for free if there are people willing to learn how.

Turns out it’s just as easy as writing this little article!

Duncan Macleod, our illustrious Presbytery minister, spent a couple of hours showing me the ropes and helping me set up our web address. Within 24 hours it was there!! Our brand new website is sporting two photos, one of Goldsmith St Uniting and one of the local railway station. We’ve added information on the ministry team and some recent news. We are on our way!

Adding information on a group, an event or a service to the website should only take about 15 minutes. Although it takes a while to get all of the amazing information up there initially, it will be a breeze to keep up to date.

I invite you to join me on the journey. Visit goulburn.unitingchurch.org.au and follow my attempts at building our website.

Better still take the new year’s challenge and try building one for yourselves! That way we can support each other with our victories and our speed bumps!

Aimee Kent
Have you ever wondered how stories get into the newspaper or on to radio and television?

Here’s a few thoughts on what we all can do to make sure our good news stories are shared in the media.

We have had the good fortune at Kippax Uniting Church of being able to communicate regularly with the wider community through mainstream media – newspaper, radio and television. So too have several other congregations, agencies and UCA people. I am no media expert, but there are a few things that I have learnt over the years.

Is it newsworthy?

It is good to keep an eye and ear out in your congregation, agency or organisation for what might be interesting to others in the community.

Try and be realistic about what is interesting and what isn’t.

Get in the practice of asking people outside your congregation whether they would be interested in knowing about the craft stall, or pancake day, or what’s happening at your Sunday school. Some things are newsworthy, and some things aren’t. Try and work out the patterns.

The journalist

Remember that papers, radio and television are made by real people.

Get to know what each journalist tends to cover. It is going to be much easier to convince a person who is regularly writing about social matters to tell the story of Ross Walker Lodge than it is to convince someone who is in the Parliamentary Press Gallery.

If you can develop a rapport with that reporter/writer and make their work a bit easier that will stand you in good stead.

Find images that grab the attention of people looking for stories, especially visual media like television, newspapers and magazines. Sometimes you can attach image (high resolution 300 DPI) to your press release, telling the story. It is helpful to have ideas about photo opportunities for journalists and their teams who want their own shots.

Get a feel for the audience. The Chronicle, Canberra Times, City News, Win News and ABC TV all have a different feel, aimed at different people at different times. Some will only tell very current stories. Some might update people on what happened a week ago.

Finally for now, have a go. Try writing and sending out a press release. Send an email to a reporter who seems to be interested in what you are doing or planning.

Gordon Ramsay
Minister
Kippax Uniting Church

Extend your reach

There are plenty of interesting things happening that deserve to be shared.

There are people who are making a difference to the communities they are living in. There are stories of humour and interest. Sometimes what we do in our churches is really only of interest to those who are part of the congregation. But that isn’t always the case.

Sadly, false humility, the tall poppy syndrome, or just plain over-busyness means we don’t let others know what is going on. Or when we do, we use communication channels that don’t get the message out very far. That’s an enormous shame – for us and for people who might be interested or assisted.

Gordon
I have been a volunteer 'radio talent' for many years, publicising various church and community events.

Radio stations are always looking for 'talent' to fill their air time. Volunteer and community organisations can always do with a good plug for their events and activities. So, you would think that this is a match made in heaven. It is, if you do it well.

Sending a media release is a starting point. Under a letterhead set out your points clearly in a few choice sentences. Test it out with someone reading it aloud. Use **bold** sparingly.

Give details of a contact/spokesperson who is happy to be that person, along with the organisation's normal address/contact details. Make sure you spell correctly and use good grammar.

Follow up with a call to the producer or presenter of the show(s) that you are targeting. This gives them a feel for your interest, authenticity and on-air likeability. Try and avoid calling while the show is on air. Remember that air time is precious.

The spokesperson should be able to "think and speak on the fly", so it may not be the organisation's head for that year but rather someone who is willing to speak and do so year after year.

**Radio interview**

When arranging a radio interview, offer to go to the studio, as being there locks in the interview and eye-contact helps the flow of the conversation.

Just before going on air drink a few sips of water. Avoid milk as that will clog your speech.

Take with you your media release, with any extra notes scribbled on it. Do not rely on your memory!

**Phone interview**

If you are speaking by phone, remember to turn off the radio when the call comes. There's usually a delay and it's really confusing to everyone to have an echo effect.

When the interview starts, do not ask "How are you?" Instead acknowledge the presenter by name then start straight into your good-news story. For example, “Good morning Peter. Yes, our garage sale has fashion clothes, furniture and lots of good coffee and snacks, starting at 8 am this Saturday.”

Even though you're on the radio, your body language affects the way you talk. Practice smiling. It relaxes you and the presenter. Move your head and make your voice rise and fall in tone normally.

**Use stories**

Have several quirky facts scribbled down to keep the interest level high. You can enliven the interview with stories, tips and “behind-the-scenes” insights.

"Someone coming right on the garage sale's start time could fit out a student flat, no trouble."

"Thanks to the income from the last garage sale we were able to invest in a new food bank facility. We're now able to help an extra 20 people a week."

When the interview is coming to an end, thank the radio presenter and wind up with a well-prepared final sentence.

Two, three or even five minutes goes remarkably quickly. Sometimes you feel as though you missed something. You'll do better next time.

A television interview happens in a similar way, but expect only 10 seconds or two lots of 8 seconds going to air.

**Media Training**

To express interest in future media training contact the Presbytery office 02 6248 9311 or email: Office at canberraregion.unitingchurch.org.au
Phil Anderson shares how his experience as a military chaplain in a high risk, high tempo environment in the army prepared him for his new work as a chaplain in ACT Emergency Services.

Preparation and formation for my role as an emergency services chaplain has happened over a long time.

It has been twenty seven years since I was ordained as a Uniting Church minister and went to a country parish in the south east of South Australia. The country people were still affected by the 1983 fires and I listened to many tales of loss and fear.

In my second parish on the Gold Coast, the first Gulf War began and I was moved to join the army reserves as a chaplain to a Brisbane artillery unit.

Army Padre

In December 1992 I began my full time army chaplaincy as a padre and moved to Townsville with my family.

Troops were on their way to Somalia and I ministered to the mates and families who were left behind and eventually to the soldiers who returned.

The memorial service for the first casualty from Somalia was a very sobering event for me and the army members in Townsville at the time.

Australian troops were involved in many minor operations as well as Rwanda, Bougainville, Timor and the Solomon Islands.

The army padres were kept busy as soldiers returned from overseas operations and peace-keeping missions. Veterans were posted to new units while dealing with the personal toll on their lives.

As an army padre, my postings included an infantry unit in Townsville, four years at the Recruit Training Battalion in Wagga, three years at ADFA officer training academy in Canberra, Army Headquarters at Russell ACT, the Chaplains’ Training College in Bonegilla Vic, and four years in Randwick Barracks Sydney with the 17th Combat Services Support Brigade.

Credibility

I believe those twenty years of sharing the highs and the lows of Defence members and their families was good preparation for my new role as a chaplain with the ESA.

I have been involved with people who work in a high tempo, high risk environment and who are predominantly non-church attendees.

I have been with them on exercises and deployments and shared the environment and their lives.

The padre’s credibility is in his or her ability to be alongside the troops in the tough times as well as the good.

The ACT Emergency Services Agency has many ex-military members embedded in the organisation.

I am looking forward to getting involved with the men and women of the ESA who risk their lives to serve their community, and ministering among them as their chaplain.

Phil Anderson
Emergency Services Chaplain
There are so many conversations we struggle to have and chaplaincy seems to highlight them all.

The most obvious one is reconciling post modern, independent, functional adults with the idea that it’s ok to talk to God. Many fear, since they have been silent so long, that God has abandoned them. It is always amazing how frightened people are just to open the conversation.

Anne Lamott would say to start with something simple like, ‘Hi, I’m here in hospital – and it sucks.’ If there is one eternal existence with whom you can be honest – to whom you can pour out your fears and your anger – surely this is the time or place.

But often as a chaplain, it is my job to ‘bring God into the room’ – and open that dialogue. Lying in a hospital bed staring at the ceiling – is an opportune time to begin again.

Honest conversations with God remind us that we are not alone, that we are loved and have meaning.

Doctors

Another challenging conversation is the one between patients and their doctors.

Doctors visit in early morning, usually before the patients have had a bath. Imagine. You’re dishevelled, don’t smell too good and hurt all over. The doctor enters with a cheery smile and asks, ‘How are we this morning?’ and the patient responds, ‘Fine!’.

Not fine! But we don’t want to sound like wimps. Why do we find it so humiliating to be honest?

What the doctor needs is a system check: a factual set of information to base his/her action plan upon. ‘Fine’ means they have to ask 50 questions and it’s going to be hit and miss whether they ask the right one.

Families

Conversations with families are fraught with difficulties. Parents want to protect their children from the truth, no matter how grown up the children might be. Spouses want to put on a positive spin and be strong for the other.

Sometimes there is an unwritten family rule that prohibits any discussion about incapacity or death. The rule says if you talk about it, you will make it happen or you’re willing it into existence. So denial becomes the policy of the day and every time a parent brings up the subject of incapacity, the adult child changes the subject. Or every time a spouse tries to outline how they would like to spend their valuable limited time, the other says, ‘Don’t worry! It will all be OK.’

My advice as a chaplain to patients is that your family needs to know the truth so they can prepare. Your loved one keeps bringing this up because their family is important to them. There is unfinished business that is stressing them at the very time they do not need stress. Please let them talk.

Jean Shannon

Chaplaincy Leader
When I first accepted the new UnitingCare Community Development role for ACT, a lot of people outside the Church asked, “What will you be doing exactly?”

My reply was that I was going to be having lots of cups of tea! I suspect that some walked away a little bemused while others would have understood - yes, I would possibly have lots of cups of tea, but more significantly, I was going to engage in lots of conversation.

At the heart of community development is conversation and communication. In fact some would argue that we build community principally through communication. So this has been a key focus of my first few months in the job – meeting with individuals, congregations and members of the Canberra Region Presbytery, fellowship with other community development workers and the UnitingCare network, and meeting with the ACT Government and others outside the Church.

A key purpose for all this conversing has been to identify opportunities for partnership – connecting those who can help one another in their mission. There have certainly been lots of cups of tea! More importantly though, relationships have been built and opportunities for partnership in 2013 have materialised.

The Presbytery has arranged and commenced meetings with ACT Government Ministers in order to build relationship and awareness of the extensive community service network of the Uniting Church.

The Safe Shelter Group of St Columbas’ has established a relationship with ACT Shelter in support of their emergency shelter for the homeless proposal.

The St James’ Social Justice Group wants to have a more local focus this year and a number of Church partnership opportunities are being considered.

Ross Walker Lodge has identified the possibility for a ‘community garden’ in their grounds at Hackett.

Hospital Chaplain, Jean Shannon, is seeking support from Lay Preachers, musicians or those able to run a CD player, for the new Thursday afternoon Chapel service at Canberra Hospital.

The UnitingCare Social Justice Unit will work with us to support research and advocacy for Canberra-based social justice issues, and UnitingCare Australia are facilitating a Media Training Day in February 2013. A lot is happening but the opportunities are endless!

If I haven’t met you yet – please feel free to invite me over for a cup of tea.

Briony Griffiths
Community Development Worker

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Children from far north west NSW enjoy a break in Canberra

As we all wrapped up for Christmas, rural chaplain Julie Greig and I were working with Kippax Uniting and the St James’ Social Justice Group in Curtin to coordinate a much deserved break in Canberra for a family from far north western NSW.

Judy and her six adopted Indigenous children made the 900km trip to Canberra in January 2013. Their hope was to connect with families with similarly aged children, such that Judy’s kids could benefit from broader socialisation opportunities.

Families from Kippax kindly arranged play dates at the Dickson swimming pool, National Zoo and Aquarium, National Museum, Botanic Gardens, and the Church Holiday Happenings program.

The Rural Ministry Unit and St James’ Uniting Church covered accommodation costs for the week.

The kids had a ball and Judy had a well deserved break!

Briony.
Three friends, Rosemary, David and Anne, walked past the long disused tennis courts dominating the path between Goldsmith St Uniting Church and Wesley Centre in Goulburn. Rosemary continues the story.

We commiserated together about the sorry sight the courts presented. “What about a community garden? “Brilliant! How do we go about it?”

First, we met with the minister and some members of the Property Committee to pool ideas and objections.

Next an article in *Insights* supplied information and a contact, Miriam Pepper of *Uniting-Earthweb*. Miriam was organising tours of Community Gardens on church sites in Sydney and Canberra. Graeme from the Property Committee joined us and off we went.

We put together a PowerPoint presentation of what we had seen to show the congregation. In May, 2011, a steering committee was set up with power to invite members of the Goulburn community to join.

**Vision**

The vision was of the church giving the people of Goulburn the use of a site with amenities, for a community garden. Once established, it would be run by the garden community with representation from the congregation.

In the nineteen months since then, we have trodden an exciting, sometimes frustrating, but always interesting path and been joined by a variety of people who have enthusiastically provided their insights, expertise and labour just when they were needed.

**Money granted**

Money was a pressing need. Our applications for Synod grants were successful, allowing us to complete enough of the first stage of the plan so that the garden could be opened using town water (in watering cans).

**Conditions and plans**

Because of our location in the CBD, Mulwaree Council required a Development Application. Much of 2012 was devoted to developing plans in association with an engineering company in Goulburn who steered us safely through pro bono.

The Construction Certificate had to be obtained before we could begin. A retired engineer from the Council took on the job of Project Manager. Because of his expertise and local knowledge he saved the project considerable expense, put in many hours of work, and provided an experienced guiding hand.

Much time was spent working on a Mode of Operation document and a pledge for members and bed renters promising positive behaviours.

There are ten beds, with twenty more to follow soon. At Meet and Greet functions in January those on the waiting list for beds materialised into a group of potential friends, all eager to know when they could begin.

We hope to enlist more people at our stall on Australia Day and plan an Orientation Day with appropriate Work Health and Safety training. Only then can we begin to garden.

Do you recall that fishing story about Jesus, where the catch was so great, the nets were breaking? We also have experienced the ‘unexpected overwhelming generosity’ of God and are deeply thankful.

Rosemary Miller
Goulburn & District Uniting Church
goulburn.unitingchurch.org.au

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**Opening and Blessing of the Garden**

will be held on Easter Sunday following the 9.30am service, during the period of celebrations of the 150th Anniversary of the declaration of Goulburn as the first Inland City.
Canberra Region Presbytery continuing education & meetings

For more details about continuing education, see the Equip newsletter sent out quarterly, the Presbytery website canberraregion.unitingchurch.org.au, or ring the Presbytery Office on 02 6248 9311.

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<th>August</th>
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<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>Old Testament Course starts at O’Connor Uniting Wednesday nights, Feb 20 - Apr 10, May 8 - Jun 30 Led by Anne Ryan and Duncan Macleod</td>
<td>Quiet Day - 1 day retreat</td>
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<td>April 13-16</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>NSW/ACT Synod (Saturday – Tuesday)</td>
<td>Canberra Region Presbytery meeting, Greenhills</td>
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<td>May 18</td>
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<td>29-31</td>
<td>8-11</td>
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<td>Canberra Region Presbytery meeting, Tuggeranong Ministry Retreat, Lake Eucumbene – Strength Deployment Inventory work on relationship building &amp; conflict management with Noel Williams &amp; Kerry Bartlett</td>
<td>Canberra Region Ministry Retreat, Galong Quiet Day - 1 day retreat</td>
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<td>Canberra Community Development Forum</td>
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<td>24-27</td>
<td>26</td>
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<td>Riverina Kaltara retreat, Galong (Monday – Friday)</td>
<td>November</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>Canberra Region Presbytery meeting, Batemans Bay</td>
<td>Quiet Day - 1 day retreat</td>
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Photo of North Belconnen congregation by Graham Freeman

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