

Welcome Rev Peter Beale to Williamstown Uniting Church - Electra St

We are delighted to welcome Rev Peter Beale to our Electra St church community. Rev Peter will be officially inducted as our Minister of the Word on Sunday 28th November.

A Message from Peter Beale

Hi everyone. It is so good to share with you in this website for the first time after starting ministry on the 1st of October. I look forward to that special day on the 28th when I will be officially inducted into the congregation as your minister. Some of you know a little about me, so let me tell you a bit more about myself, and the ministry that I bring to Williamstown.

I was born in England and lived mostly in a village called Corfe Mullen, northwest of Bournemouth, until I was 6 ½. After moving to Australia my family took a while to settle, moving to Mount Evelyn, Truganina, West Footscray and then finally to Altona North. I lived in Altona North for 25 years, attending what was then known as Brooklyn West Primary School, and Altona North High School. I studied physics at RMIT, and worked with Telstra for nine years before training for the ministry.

My faith and theology have changed greatly from childhood, with continued growth and development throughout my early adulthood, years of theological training, and twenty-five years in ministry. The literal faith of youth, and evangelical faith of early adulthood, gave way to a more considered, liberal/progressive theology, helped by formal theological studies. I see no conflict between science and theology, pursue a sense of the connectedness of all things, and find that God is experienced intimately in all aspects of life and death. My ministry continues to be informed by this faith, ongoing Biblical and academic study, the tradition and ethos of the Uniting Church, supervision, and collegial conversations.

In my experience, congregations are rarely theologically uniform, and my approach has always been to embrace a way to hold a unity within the diversity of faith perspectives. My leadership style is collaborative. In leading groups or committees, I seek to ensure that all participants are heard, and that the louder voices do not drown out the lone voice of reason.

Worship remains the central act of ministry for me in any placement. However, each of my four ministry placements have added different ministry skills and capabilities, beyond worship: My first placement in the country town of Mooroopna positioned me as the main Protestant minister, and the default clergy person for non-Catholic weddings and funerals. The sensitivity and pastoral care offered to people in the community needing these services has been a strong feature of my ministry ever since. This placement also included ministry to young families, significant contact with the local Aboriginal Co-op, and 3 years ministry as a prison chaplain.

My second country placement consolidated skills in ministry to youth, children, and families. This involved initiating contemporary worship services, a community tiny-tots worship (with elements of Messy church), and coordination of the youth group events, including attendance at National Christian Youth Conventions. This placement included a major focus on worship ministry in four congregations, and six aged care facilities. It was also ecumenically focused, with a regular cycle of inter-church events each year, many of which I coordinated.

My third placement was a return to the city, to a congregation that allowed me to explore a more progressive theological approach to ministry. The congregation gave me oversight of

the installation of new audio and visual equipment during its building renovations. New initiatives for me included engaging the congregation in an extensive vision process, studying the “Living the Questions” series, initiating an Otira book club, hosting monthly movie nights, and conducting café church.

My most recent placement as a chaplain in residential aged care enabled me to develop my pastoral care skills across the intense ministry environments of four unique facilities. My role included care for all residents and their families, irrespective of faith, or no faith. I established skills in interprofessional collaboration with a diverse range of health professionals. I also utilised my expertise in IT, photography, audio-visual equipment, and choral skills to add to the care offered to residents.

I now return to congregational ministry, carrying all my learning with me. Our journey together is just beginning, and I pray it will be a long and eventful one, filled with the presence of God, and the joy of a community of faith.

Peter Beale