



Issue 39
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New Times

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THE VOICE OF THE UNITED CHURCH IN N.S.
FREE



Embracing THE NEW

[What is my purpose? pp6-7](#)

[Black Lives Matter - my perspective pp12-13](#)

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Synod of South Australia

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Members of Echunga Uniting Church watching the online service from their lounge room. Refer to the Congregational Website Program pp14-15.

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PLACEMENTS NEWS

Placements finalised as at 17 July 2020

Rev Leanne Jenski as Chaplain, Memorial Hospital (0.6) from 1 October 2020

Advertised placements

Disaster Recovery Worker (Kangaroo Island) for 12 months

Vacant placements

The following is the list of vacant (or soon to be vacant) approved placements:

PROFILES AVAILABLE

Generate Presbytery

Loxton UC / Renmark UC / Renmark West; Port Augusta UC (0.5); Tea Tree Gully UC

Wimala Presbytery

Plains Community Church (Joint Church of Christ/UCA) (0.4)

Presbytery of Southern SA

Adare UC; Bridgewater UC (0.5); Noarlunga UC (2nd placement); Seaford Ecumenical Mission (0.4) (Joint Christ of Church/UCA)

Linked Congregations in Multiple Presbyteries

South West Fleurieu (0.5) Delamere UC, Range Road UC, Yankalilla UC; Southern Yorke Peninsula (0.5-0.6?)

PROFILES NOT YET AVAILABLE

Wimala Presbytery

Trinity Alberton (0.5) from 1 January 2021

Presbytery of Southern SA

Aldinga UC, McLaren Vale UC (0.6?); Newland UC (0.5?); Willunga UC (0.3)

For more information about placements, please visit

sa.uca.org.au/pastoral-relations-mission-planning/placements-vacant-and-finalised

Reflecting in a deeper way



Caption: A sequence of the mist receding along the River Murray.

Our family has recently returned from holidays. We spent a week on a houseboat cruising slowly along the River Murray upstream from Renmark. It was a great opportunity to relax and see some different country from the comfort of the houseboat – our own 'COVID-19 free' cocoon. There was no phone service for much of our journey which added to our sense of isolation; although mostly in positive ways!

It was interesting to wake up in the morning in a different place, uncertain of what the view out the window would be. Often we were initially enveloped in fog and mist which had a beauty of its own. Then, as the mist cleared, I gained a new appreciation of the beauty of God's creation – the magnificent Red Gums reflected in the water, the variety of

**“
We have learned and grown
as a church, adapting
and responding to our
changed circumstances.”**

bird life flying and swimming past and the occasional kangaroo peering through the trees. When added to the opportunity to spend time together as a family, it all made for a special holiday.

I reflected on how our lives have been over the last few months. We wake up each morning unsure of what the

day will bring, whether COVID-19 restrictions will change, wondering if someone we know has been affected and how is everyone adjusting to different ways of working, socialising and being community.

For the Uniting Church, there has been a rapid and significant change in the ways we minister and worship as congregations, as well as the ways we conduct pastoral care and emergency relief. We have learned and grown as a church, adapting and responding to our changed circumstances.

Leaders and congregations are learning new skills and coming to terms with new processes as they continue to be effective in mission and ministry. I am thankful for the stories I have heard from people who, in their physical isolation, feel more connected to their congregation than before. God has truly worked through the words and actions of congregations and individuals who have ministered to those seeking connection. Many, both within and outside the traditional church, are reflecting in a deeper way on their faith and spirituality, with an increased openness to talk about spiritual matters and even to engage with worship.

As we recognise that the new 'normal' will be different, and that it will be constantly changing, may we consider our continuing journey as a 'pilgrim people, always on the way towards a promised goal' (*Basis of Union*, paragraph 3). My prayer is that we might see this as an opportunity to carefully consider our priorities, to think about what we had once taken for granted, and to be challenged on how we understand and respond to our faith, our world, our relationships and our church. ■

Blessings,

Bronte Wilson

Bronte Wilson

God 'has the situation sorted' (Ps 103)



Caption: Rev Felicity Amery on her 6,000 km road trip to Darwin.

Holidays often become important opportunities for reflecting on the year just gone or goal-setting for the times ahead – especially when a 6,000 km road trip is part of the adventure! In my report to the July meeting of the Synod Standing Committee I shared that journeying has often been an important entry point for me to explore the question of why God matters. So, one year into my role as General Secretary, deciding to drive to Darwin for my grand-daughter's baptism seemed very doable, almost necessary.

In the late 1880's my great grandfather had taken a similar journey, several times, on camels and on horse-back to survey potential tracks (future roads) and communication lines. While I was traveling a bit faster than he was, the rhythm of the 'track' and the

The journey of discovering God's focus and priority for the work of the Synod to support and resource the mission of the church, is a journey we can feel compelled and confident to take.

passing of the landscapes connected me with my sense of identity and connectedness to a faith story that continues to give me purpose and meaning.

Driving north, rarely needing to listen to music or the radio, I paid attention to what particular landscapes offered me as a source of reflection. There were trees that reminded me of special mentors and faith conversations, hours of no trees where provision (in



Caption: General Secretary Rev Felicity Amery and Moderator Bronte Wilson visited Burra Uniting Church in the mid-north of South Australia.

times of loneliness, pain and the apparent absence of hope) is hard to quantify and lament is food, and the awesome beauty and anticipation as I left the protection of the range and, seemingly called by faith, took on the open plains with dry river beds, remote communities and road trains.

This trip came days after a road trip to the mid-north of South Australia with the Moderator to visit congregations and explore with members what they are learning about the Church at this time and how the future priorities of the Synod might support and resource God's ministry and mission in their communities. We met with people who have varying capacities for connectedness to the wider church, but have faithfully journeyed through drought and declining communities as well as times of hope and provision from unexpected sources.

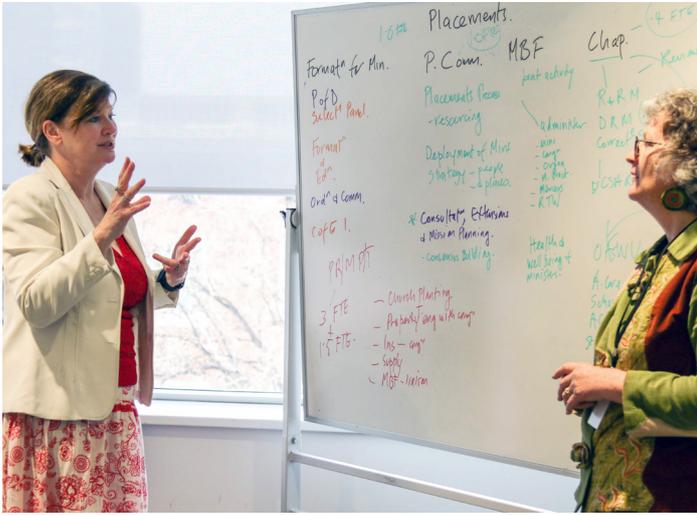
The COVID-19 pandemic reminds us that there are many challenges ahead. It has also shown us that we can change and we can do it fast, that we are resilient and can focus well on what's important. The journey of discovering God's focus and priority for the work of the Synod to support and resource the mission of the church, is a journey we can feel compelled and confident to take.

In coming weeks there will be a number of invitations and opportunities to gather and help discern the priorities and missional directions of the Synod, a journey and future that God has prepared for us, to a place we have not yet been. I look forward to listening with you ■

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Felicity Amery'.

Rev Felicity Amery

A new way of being



Caption: Bridget Ransome attending her first Executive Officers' Planning Day meeting.

As I read the June/July 2020 issue of *New Times*, I thought, how appropriate the title of the publication is at this point in history. There is no doubt that we are living through a world in transition and as we listen and watch news services we can easily lose heart and hope – and this in turn can create fear and uncertainty.

It is my belief that this also gives us time to pause and to consider new ways of living and new ways of engaging in faith.

As the Moderator Bronte Wilson and the General Secretary Rev Felicity Amery alluded to in the June/July issue, the church has had to be agile in ensuring that it continues to connect in meaningful ways as it copes with the impacts of COVID-19. Now more than ever we rely and draw on the strength that being connected can provide.

In this issue of *New Times*, you will find a focus on new beginnings and an emphasis on how we continue to embrace change. I found the interview with Benson Saulo inspiring – a young indigenous man stepped away from any potential to stereotype him, instead, guided by his father's wise words 'never think that the world is not yours,' and the foundation of his faith in God he has been set on a path which now sees him appointed as the first Indigenous Australian Consul General to the United States.

One thing Benson was passionate about is that at every turn he knew he was being divinely guided – that although change can push us out of our comfort zone, it can also bring us to a place of unexpected opportunity and impact.

Similarly, Tarlee Leondaris as a young indigenous woman provides her perspective on the Black Lives Matter movement and the way in which the movement and its impacts are being felt across the world – and here in Australia.

As COVID-19 took hold, congregations have had to become agile and responsive to their church communities, able to deliver services remotely and it is encouraging to see that people from other countries (as far away as the United Kingdom!) have been able to access the online church services provided by the Pilgrim Uniting Church.

It is pleasing to also see congregations embrace the Congregational Website Program, where they can have a website designed and tailored to the needs of their local church and its community – an important communications tool in these unusual times.

Another new beginning is the establishment of the Engagement team previously known as the Communications and Events team at the Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of SA. As the newly appointed Executive Officer, Engagement Ministry Centre, I am thrilled and excited to help guide and deliver communications and activities for all to engage in messages of faith and to be a part of bringing forth the churches sacred stories.

It is true that change of any kind is difficult, especially when thrust upon us. However if nothing changes, we invariably stay the same. Throughout this issue of *New Times* there are stories of change, but also stories of adaptability, hope and strength – and this has a way of uniting us all (pardon the pun!).

I look forward to meeting you all over the coming months and welcome you to make contact with the Engagement team through engagement@sa.uca.org.au. ■

B Ransome

Bridget Ransome

What is my purpose?

Bridget Ransome

This is the question that a young Indigenous man - Benson Saulo asked himself growing up in rural Tamworth in NSW; and he could never have imagined that the question and the journey that followed would have brought him to an appointment as the first Indigenous Consul General of Australia appointed to the United States.

'The one thing my father always said to me was "never think the world is not yours" and I have always remembered that. My belief is that we are all worthy and we are all part of God's plan,' said Benson.

“

At the end I was confronted by God, knowing I was being pulled towards something more – and who am I to fight God?

Benson is a descendant of the Weregia, Wemba Wemba, and Gunditjmara Aboriginal nations of western Victoria. His father is from the New Ireland Province in Papua New Guinea and was part of the setting up of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) in the early 80s. His mother is an Aboriginal woman from Bordertown.

Benson started his working life initially as a trainee at the ANZ bank during his Year 10 to 12 high school education. Despite coming from a rural town in New South Wales which has pockets of great disadvantage, his faith was always strong, nurtured by his parents who led the Tamworth Aboriginal and Community Church for 17 years.

He moved to Sydney to pursue his banking career and became a business banking manager and business analyst, but there was always a sense that he was just playing it safe, that the bank had become his 'safety net'

'I remember so clearly a time where I was sitting around a campfire in Arnhem Land with traditional owners, discussing culture and connection to country, and a voice said to me that the bank had become my safety blanket – it was so clear and at that time I had been in the bank seven years, I had grown so much, but I really needed to step out and to challenge myself to do so much more.'

And when he returned to his bank job destiny soon called. 'I remember one day receiving an email about an opportunity to become a Youth Representative to the United Nations. I deleted it – but you know what? That email came back to me three separate times and eventually a close friend suggested that I should apply for it. I put it down to divine intervention,' said Benson.

And so it was that in 2011 Benson was appointed to the role of Australian Youth Representative to the United Nations, and became the lead negotiator on the *Rights of the Child Resolution*, and the impacts of the global financial crisis on young people.

'During my 12 month tenure, I undertook a national engagement tour and engaged with over 6,000 young people to gain a deeper sense of young people's perspectives and their fears and their hopes for the future. I was based in New York for three months for the United Nations General Assembly.'

It is Benson's desire to really listen to young people's voices and to build connections that set him on a path to eventually take on the Consul General appointment.



However, it was back in March 2018 on a trip that he and his wife took to walk the 800 km pilgrimage of the Camino de Santiago Trail which runs across Northern Spain that he was again challenged to consider his life's journey.

'Everyday on the trail we would walk, reflect and have beautiful conversations with people from all over the world and we ultimately were all sharing a common goal,' said Benson. It is believed that the sacred pilgrimage at first challenges the physical side of completing the trail, then the emotional which eventually leads to the spiritual.

At that time Benson was challenged with many questions. *What has my journey led me to? What am I being pulled towards? What am I running away from?*

'I was reading a book called *Facing Leviathan* by Mark Sayers, the senior pastor at a Melbourne Church and author of a number of books on faith, leadership and Church communities. The book draws on leadership and social change through its foundations of Biblical leadership and theology. At the end I was confronted by God, knowing I was being called into something more – and who am I to fight God? As he put me on this path. I slowly became more willing and more accepting that I could not sit on the sidelines – that I had to do God's work and try to make an impact in this world. I really felt that God was calling me. I was being given an opportunity to step out of the busyness of life that we can easily fall into, and really give my attention and time to make a real difference in people's lives.

'It's interesting when I reflect back on my journey, because there were times when it was easy to just stay within my comfort zone, even when I was being encouraged to take on positions of leadership and I kept running away from it. Eventually, I realised that I could do more if I was involved rather than standing outside of it,' he said.

As Consul General, Benson is due to head to Houston, Texas later this year, depending on the situation with COVID-19 in the United States. He also expressed his concerns for all peoples and the unfolding and evolving global Black Lives Matter movement.

'It is so very important to raise awareness about such things as systemic racism and injustice to work towards real change. I believe that out of this movement, and the important act of truth-telling, we will gain a better understanding of our histories, the experiences of people from diverse backgrounds and knowledge of how we can create a more inclusive society.'

As the first Aboriginal person to hold the position of Australian Consul General, Benson Saulo will be able to share his culture in the US and connect with other Indigenous peoples to highlight and showcase global Indigenous cultures, issues and opportunities. ■

I really felt that God was calling me. I was being given an opportunity to step out of the busyness of life that we can easily fall into, and really give my attention and time to make a real difference in people's lives.

Below: Benson's parents, Ruth and John Saulo, are teachers at the United Church Panameco Bible College, New Ireland. They play an important role in Benson's life and are members of the Grove Uniting Church.



Below: In March 2018, Benson Saulo and his wife, Kate, took the 800 km pilgrimage walk of the Camino de Santiago Trail which runs across Northern Spain during which he was challenged to consider his life's journey.



Celebrating Mission Connections

The twentieth century saw a massive shift in how the church understood mission. From the early part of the century, when organisations like the *British and Foreign Bible Society* sent missionaries to the world beyond Europe, the shift in mission came as the church of Europe and America was on the decline and the church in Africa, South America and Asia on the increase.

By the end of the century, mission was seen to be local, and what was once the frontier of mission in the Asia-Pacific region became partnerships between the Uniting Church and the churches in those regions.

Partnerships involve mutual learning about Jesus in different cultural contexts and sharing in projects together. The South Australian Synod has had partnerships with a number of churches in the Asia-Pacific region. We relate to this region in missional activity because the *Basis of Union* confessed its belief that 'Christians in Australia are called to bear witness to a unity of faith and life in Christ which transcends cultural and economic, national and racial boundaries, and to this end the Uniting Church commits itself to seek special relationships with Churches in Asia and the Pacific.' (Paragraph 2)

In 2020, our key partnerships are with the Iksan Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK) and with the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (North and Middle Luzon Jurisdictions). We continue to have relationships with the Gereja Kristen Indonesia (GKI) which is an Evangelical Christian Church in the land of Papua, the Church of Christ in Thailand and the United Church in Papua New Guinea. South Australia has sent over 150 missionaries to overseas countries to share in partnerships, through education, medical help, theological colleges, agriculture and development projects and ministry work.

These people are responsible for the strong partnerships we have today and several churches continue to send short-term mission groups for specific work.



To celebrate these missionaries, a *Celebrating Mission Connections* event is planned for the afternoon of Sunday 11 October – God and COVID-19 restrictions willing! Past and present missionaries are invited to gather with interested people, to hear and share stories as well as to celebrate 30 years of the PROK partnership. Afternoon tea will be available. For more information, contact Rev Sue Ellis on **0427 162 009**. ■

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International Mission Update

This year it is the 30th anniversary of the partnership between the Synod of SA and the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK) Iksan Presbytery. To celebrate the anniversary, the PROK Iksan Presbytery invited members of the Uniting Church in SA to South Korea which was expected to take place between October and November. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic international travel has not been possible.

Between February and March this year the alarming rate of COVID-19 cases in South Korea was of concern for those in our partner churches. News from PROK was that in-person worship was suspended and subsequently the church moved online. At this time, it was a foreign concept for us in Australia – little did we realise that we would soon succumb to the same fate.

“
... we encourage reflection on the importance of partnerships ...

In April, the Moderator Bronte Wilson wrote to our partners in South Korea on behalf of the Uniting Church PROK Support Group. We expressed our heavy hearts for the country and affirmed that the Uniting Church in SA stood in solidarity with PROK. The Vice Chairperson of the Iksan Presbytery returned a wonderful response affirming the importance of praying for one another. This response consolidated the true importance of our partnership – to be reconciled through Christ.

To be unable to undertake international mission in the way we previously had was a difficult decision to make. The new 'normal' that we have entered into can certainly bring changes to how we as a church undertake international mission. However, despite this challenge we encourage reflection on the importance of partnerships, solidarity for social justice issues and ecumenical sharing. It opens the possibilities for many Christians to be involved in international mission in different ways into the future. ■

A light for Peace

A Light of Peace prayer campaign is one of the international mission activities which everyone can be involved in. This is a global prayer campaign that encourages us all to pray for peace on the Korean Peninsula. It commenced on 1 March 2020 and concludes on 15 August 2020.

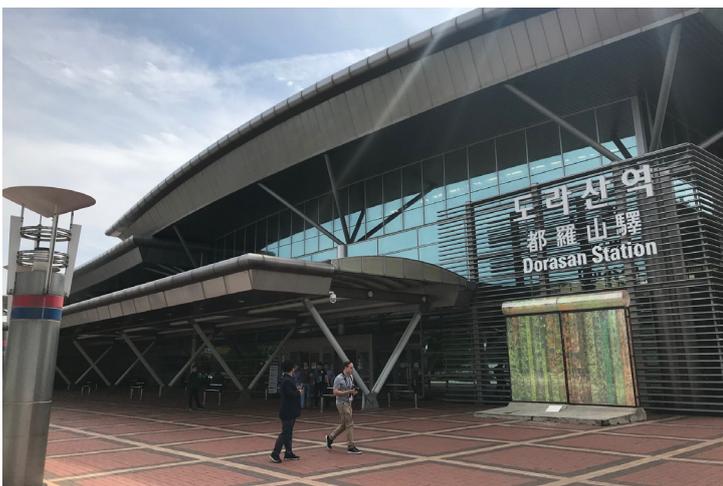
The lived experience for many people in both North and South Korea is seventy years of unresolved conflict – a lifetime for those who lived through the start of the Korean War, and for younger generations the conflict across the respective border is all they have ever known.

The World Council of Churches Asia President Rev Dr Sang Chang explained the purpose of the campaign, 'This year, 2020, the World Council of Churches (WCC) launched the Global Prayer Campaign: *We Pray, Peace Now, End the War*, as an ecumenical expression of both lament and hope. It is crucial in our ecumenical

journey of Pilgrimage of justice and peace that we invite all Christians to deepen our relationship with God and each other by joining in prayer for the formal end to the Korean War and the replacement of the Armistice Agreement with a permanent peace treaty. We do this because we believe prayer would lead us to stop the seventy-year long hostility and confrontation and help us to dream of peace and reunification on the Korean Peninsula.'

During the campaign and beyond, all Christians are encouraged to pray for peace on the Korean Peninsula. Mission Resourcing of the SA Synod will be facilitating an online prayer vigil for *A Light of Peace*. This will be available on the Synod of SA Facebook page on 15 August 2020.

To read prayers for Korea and to learn more about *A Light of Peace*, please visit oikoumene.org/en/get-involved/light-of-peace/light-of-peace. ■



Caption: Dorasan Station is the South Korean railway station in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) ready to roll when there is peace.

R U OK?

Rev Mark Dickens, Chaplain at Prince Alfred College, is an accredited instructor with Mental Health First Aid Australia.

Due to the experience of depression, Gavin Larkin's father took his own life in the mid-90s. In 2009, Gavin wanted to see something positive come from his father's death. It was that year which also marked the inauguration of R U OK? as an Australian suicide prevention organisation. Adopting the principle 'a conversation could change a life', its aim is to see people reach out to those they are concerned about so that support can be offered to those who are struggling or vulnerable.

While the second Thursday in September has become the organisation's national day of action, proponents are keen to ensure the awareness is maintained all year round.

How often is it that along with the greeting 'hi', the question is asked 'how are you?' and the response is 'fine thanks', when really the answer is something other than fine? Its common usage can lead to uncertainty whether the 'hi, how are you?' is a genuine enquiry into the other person's well-being or not. That person may decide it is easier to respond with a 'fine thanks', than take a chance on saying how they really are. When I have a sense or am aware all is not well, I (and others I know) will subsequently ask 'how are you really?'

Now, more than ever is a time for us to be asking 'R U OK?'

The extraordinary times we find ourselves in as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we live, work and communicate. In one way or another everyone has been impacted. How this has been received is experienced differently. Some people's well-being and mental health will have been shaken or still may be depending on what lies ahead, considering how quickly things can change as has particularly been experienced in Victoria.

Some of the identified effects include increased anxiety, a fear for one's health, psychological distress, social isolation, interruption to employment or study and the impact on normal daily routine and functioning. Add to this the grief for those who have lost loved ones as a result of contracting the virus.

That pandemics are not common heightens the fear and anxiety responses when they do occur; even more so when the threat and impact personally affects us.

While it is easy to be troubled by uncertainty and the unknown, it is important to hold on to the knowledge that this will pass. There are some actions we can take to see us through this period of time:

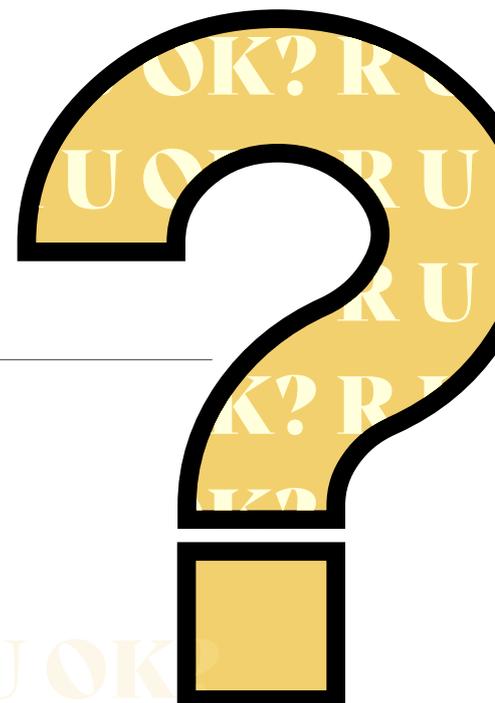
- Take one day at a time.
- Focus on what is in your control and look to manage those things.
- Ask for help if you are struggling. Help and support is available.
- Practice self-care alongside of caring for those closest to you.
- Reach out to your neighbour, remembering the response of Jesus to the question, 'and who is my neighbour?'

In closing I would like to offer this prayer:

*Eternal God, Spirit of Life,
in the midst of these uncertain and
troubling times,
where our sense of control and
good order is diminished,
may we find within ourselves the
resolve to adapt and be flexible.
Let not fear and anxiety
predominate our thoughts and
determine our actions;
but, with calm and balanced minds
approach these days ahead.
We hold on to the knowledge that
while life will be different, this
time will pass.
May we let go of worry
and embrace hope.
As we care for ourselves, we
commit to care for each other.
Amen.*

If you or someone you know is in need of crisis or suicide prevention support, please call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or visit lifeline.org.au/get-help.

“
...it is important
to hold on to the
knowledge that
this will pass.



R U OK?

OK? R U OK?
OK? R U OK?
OK? R U OK?
OK? R U OK?
OK? R U OK?
OK?

Image: Freepik.com

Black Lives Matter -

my perspective

Tarlee Leondaris

There is no doubt this year has been challenging for many people. At the end of May, First and Second Peoples were preparing to celebrate National Reconciliation Week (27 May – 3 June). Despite cancellation of regular events, those with hearts for reconciliation found alternative ways to celebrate and I was involved in a number of these.

There certainly were many positive outcomes, especially sharing and celebrating First Peoples cultures. Unfortunately, at the same time there was a troubling undercurrent which commenced on 25 May with the tragic death of George Floyd in the US. His death highlighted the on-going divide between black and white people.

When I saw the footage of the arrest, I immediately felt heavy-hearted. It was obvious Mr Floyd was helpless and his final words 'I can't breathe' have resonated globally. Watching a 'black' man die at the hands of a 'white' man brought up many emotions for me.

They are emotions that I try hard to suppress every day. I felt for Mr Floyd but he was also a symbol of every instance of racism and ignorance I had experienced in my life. Following his death, there was strong rallying by the Black Lives Matter movement. From this emerged a range of footage out of the USA and some scenes depicted chaotic looting and violence. Other scenes were in the true spirit of the Black Lives Matter movement which is about peaceful advocacy, acts of kindness and the depiction of 'black and white' Americans working together.

Whilst I watched these unfolding scenes, I felt a strange mix of anxiety and adrenaline. Anxiety because I anticipated this would bring attention to First People in Australia. Unfortunately, in my experience this is not always a good thing. Such events can often bring negative connotations and as an Aboriginal person, I feel like I have to put my armour on. I have to prepare to endure the negativity and prepare to speak out against it. It is in the 'preparing' to speak out that the adrenaline comes in.

Seeing others truly passionate about calling out racism empowers me to find my voice too, I dare say much like many other Aboriginal people, the strong rallying made me feel empowered.



The overpowering, the voicelessness, the helplessness and the lack of advocacy are the narratives many First People know all too well.

So, why does *Black Lives Matter* in the Australian context?

Whilst Minneapolis seems a world away, Mr Floyd's death resonates with many First People in Australia. The overpowering, the voicelessness, the helplessness and the lack of advocacy are the narratives many First People know all too well.

The global attention from the Black Lives Matter movement presented a prominent opportunity to speak out about injustices in Australia. Most prominent was the opportunity to raise awareness about Aboriginal deaths in custody. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders make up 2-3% of the Australian population. Conversely First People represent 28-29% of the prison population. The imbalance in these statistics is absurd and evidence of systemic failure which has led to these high incarceration rates. Just as concerning is the large number of First People that have died in custody.

The Black Lives Matter campaign provided a national stage for greater public awareness about Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and was an opportunity to call out racism and stand in solidarity with cultures that have been oppressed for too long. The rebuttal to the campaign was that 'All Lives Matter'. There is no doubt about this – all lives do matter. This was, however, a time to raise awareness about on-going discrimination that has too often been silenced.

Why is *Covenanting* important in this space?

At the heart of the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) is the Covenant with First Peoples. The Covenant asserts the Uniting Church's intention to stand in solidarity with First Peoples. Prominent is the pledge to advocate for First Peoples' struggle for justice.

The Covenant sets out that through Christ, First and Second Peoples are reconciled to God and



Caption: Tarlee Leondaris and her grandfather Rev Gowan Armstrong recording an online worship video.

one another through the Holy Spirit. This is a powerful statement acknowledging equality of First and Second Peoples to God.

We as Christians in our discipleship are encouraged to acknowledge this equality. We are called to seek reconciliation between First and Second Peoples. In doing so it is important to advocate for injustice. The Covenanting Statement of 1994 specifically stated, 'Our justice system discriminated against you, and the high incarceration rate of your people and the number of black deaths in custody show that the denial of justice continues today.'

It is quite incredible that this bold statement was made 26 years ago. Yet recent scenes demonstrate clearly that the same denial of justice continues today. To believe in the mission of our church is to believe in the Covenant. To believe First and Second Peoples deserve the equality that God intended for us. Unfortunately, this equality has not yet been fully realised but we as Christians are resilient people and we can work towards changing this together.

What can congregations *do?*



All congregations are encouraged to pray for those impacted by deaths in custody



Call out racism and ignorant comments that are offensive



Create a welcoming environment for First and Second Peoples to worship together by acknowledging the UCA's Covenant. Free Covenant posters are available to assist with this. Email the Covenanting Officer on covenanting@sa.uca.org.au to request posters. ■

.....
Tarlee Leonardis is the Covenanting and International Mission Officer within the Synod of SA's Mission Resourcing Team.

Black Lives Matter *Prayer*

God,
 Your love encompasses all people
 To you all lives matter
 For all life matters
 And the way that we live life matters.

But at this time
 When the light of truth shines on particular injustice
 And draws our attention to the inequity of racial prejudice and discrimination
 We unite in solidarity to declare that black lives matter.

We proclaim this not at the exclusion of the lives or value of other groups of people
 But because we seek to address this serious and unresolved issue
 Which is one of the many problems in society
 We intentionally single out those who have faced and continue to face the effects of entrenched and long-standing racism.

We acknowledge hurt
 We understand anger
 We feel frustration
 We grieve for the loss and suffering
 We stand alongside
 We kneel in solidarity
 We reject violence
 We reject persecution
 We reject empty words and promises.

In this time of trouble
 We call for peace
 But we call for change
 We call for justice, not revenge
 We call for action and transformation
 Of attitudes and behaviour
 And strategies which seek to address the core of the problem
 Rather than Band-Aid fixes to placate the crowd.

In this we need your help and guidance
 For, in our flawed humanity, there is some hope
 But equal failure
 So, only in your wisdom will we find a way forward.
 As Christ, you lived compassion and taught us the way.
 As Spirit, you work for reconciliation and healing.
 Be with us now
 And with all people
 Soften hearts that are hard
 Strengthen wills that are weak
 Change minds that are set
 Reshape anger into positive action
 That we might end racial injustice
 And in doing so, create space to address other issues.
 This we kneel to pray,
 Amen.

(Source: Rev Jon Humphries, June 2020)

Congregational Website program

Bec Preston

When I started my new role at the Synod of SA, coordinating the Congregational Website Program (CWP), it was the week of COVID-19 and it certainly was an eye opener! Suddenly we went from attending church in-person to having to adapt to the changing climate by facilitating online church services through our congregational websites. In my first week as we ventured into the online presence of the Church, many churches requested advice about podcasts, video services, and live-streaming platforms.

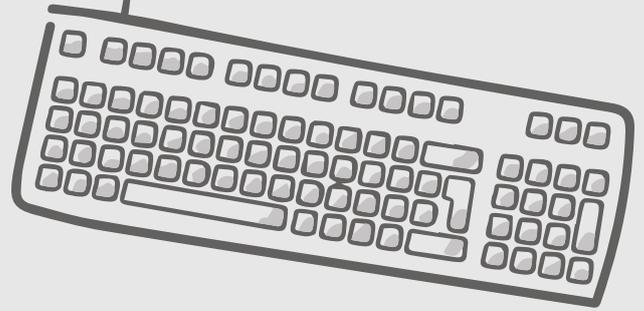
During the pandemic it was a busy time for the team and congregational websites played a pivotal role in continuing faith, learning and connection within church communities. I witnessed first-hand the integral part the websites played in enabling faith to be maintained and fostered. And it's been great to provide churches with recommendations that enable their services to continue to reach people.

As I further reflect on COVID-19 and the initial devastation for people unable to attend their usual church services, I now ponder what the situation might have been had we not had technology? There would have been limited opportunity to access worship music (unless you had a talented musician in the family!) and likely no preacher. But thanks to technology, especially websites, churches have been able to reach, and continue to reach people they have never even met with messages of hope, promise and joy.

Over the past few months, I've enjoyed providing recommendations and support to congregations so they can create a fully functioning 'virtual front door' and I believe this is something to celebrate.

It's incredible that local Adelaide churches can reach all people with their weekly services and encouraging to see that a large audience has embraced this opportunity, sometimes larger than those that might show up for a traditional service in a building. It is rewarding to see how congregations have discovered this new online space and its value in continuing to support people in their faith, especially during a time when this is needed more than ever.

I'm looking forward to seeing how congregations continue to embrace an online presence and the opportunities this will provide to continue God's work. I'm here for congregations who would like to invest in a new website through our Congregational Website Program and enhance their online presence. For more details about our website offerings please visit: ucasa.org.au. ■



Testimonial: Grange Uniting Church

Sonia

'When COVID-19 began, we started utilising podcasts on our website through the Synod of SA's Congregational Website Program and it's been amazing to see how well these have been received.

Our congregational members continuously express gratitude about how the podcasts have helped to fill the void of not seeing each other on Sundays. Our church members have found it easy to press play, hear familiar voices and enjoy listening to a full service, inclusive of worship from wherever they are.

Many of our members have also shared these podcasts with friends or family members who do not regularly attend church which is joyous on all levels. A true blessing to come out of the initial chaos.' ■

But thanks to technology, especially websites, churches have been able to reach, and continue to reach people they have never even met with messages of hope, promise and joy.



Caption: Members of Echunga Uniting Church watching the online service from their lounge room with their pet lizard. Rev Matthew Carrat brings the word which is hosted through the Congregational Website Program.

Testimonial: Echunga Uniting Church

Greg

'The Echunga Uniting Church in the Adelaide Hills is a community of all ages with a strong sense of family who are passionate about worshipping God and serving our community. We have had a "web presence" for many years to extend our reach.

In 2016 the Church Council agreed to join the Congregational Website Program. It has been a very productive relationship.

The website has great functionality and is simple to maintain. It provides a great resource for our members with ready access to newsletters, calendar and past services. The recent provision of a Facebook feed is a great initiative.

The website is the centrepiece to Echunga UC's online presence and during this time of social isolation we have received great feedback as people from far and wide have been able to keep in touch by catching up with recent online services.

The website template offered by the CWP is very contemporary and robust. It undergoes regular enhancements as new features become available. The training and prompt support offered by the congregational web team has been excellent.' ■

2020 Annual Synod Meeting date is deferred

The Synod Business Committee met to discuss plans for the 2020 Annual Synod Meeting which was scheduled for 29-31 October at Adelaide West Uniting Church and Uniting College for Leadership and Theology (UCLT) campus.

As the Synod Business Committee discussed the options, it became clear that the overwhelming desire was for the Annual Synod Meeting to gather in person to celebrate, lament, receive reports and discern a way forward as a community. The members of the committee considered it unlikely that it would be possible to have a large gathering of over 300 people at the end of October due to the uncertainty of the COVID-19 restrictions. With a few other alternatives considered, the Business Committee suggested a change of date of the Annual Synod Meeting to February 2021. The recommendation was proposed during the Synod Standing Committee meeting on 12 June 2020.

At this meeting, it was agreed that the 2020 Annual Synod Meeting will be held in the same style as the previous meetings from **Thursday 11 February – Saturday 13 February 2021** as the deferred date from what was previously planned. It is preferred that the meeting be conducted at the Adelaide West Uniting Church and UCLT campus. In the event that this style of meeting cannot be conducted due to on-going government restrictions, the Synod Business Committee will plan a modified meeting for those February 2021 dates. ■



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Pilgrim Uniting Church in COVID-19 Times

Patricia Rademaker

Pilgrim Uniting Church has used a combination of technologies including Zoom, uploading pre-recorded videos of services to its Pilgrim Uniting Church Adelaide YouTube channel, and live streaming, along with virtual morning teas and Zoom meetings since COVID-19 restrictions came into place.

As churches have had to adapt to new conditions and many have transitioned quickly to online church services we have developed new skills and become very flexible during challenging times.

When services resumed in the church building on 12 July, there was a buzz of excitement. Pilgrim UC's COVID-Safe Plan was implemented and people were able to gather for morning tea. Many onsite activities have also resumed including the re-commencement of Pilgrim's schedule of art exhibitions, beginning with the SALA art exhibition that opened on Tuesday 21 July.

During these last few months, Geoff Boyce, Chaplain at Large, is hosting a new online series, *The Pilgrim World Service*. He has gathered music, reflections and inspiring stories from around the world. The aim is to connect with people who would not normally come to a church building but who still wish to be attentive to their spirituality.

'We used the theme #churchwhereweare during the time of isolation, reinforcing that the church is not the building, but the people of God – both gathered on Sundays for worship and on other occasions, as well as being equipped to be the scattered church, communicating God's love for the world by being involved in God's mission in the world,' said Rev Sandy Boyce, one of the Pilgrim UC Ministers.

Many congregations would have found their online services were being viewed by those who would not normally come to church on a Sunday, and those separated by distance including people overseas.

'I just wanted to say how grateful we are for your streaming of the Sunday services. We are in the UK and have been locked out of our churches for many months. Thankfully we know of Pilgrim

UC in Adelaide. The 11 am services are uplifting, the address thoughtful and meaningful, and the music is simply marvellous! Our heartfelt thanks from the other side of the world to the Ministers and we shall continue joining you virtually.' (Brian, United Kingdom)

'Thanks for the wonderful services and sermons. I may be absent in person but always part of the Pilgrim Uniting Church in spirit. All glory to God!' (Kana, Malaysia)

Faith is a continual learning and expanding process in growth and understanding,

The Pilgrim Uniting Church Council agreed Communion could be shared online, with participants preparing elements at home. The experience has been profoundly moving, as God's Spirit has been weaving us together – though physically apart.

'I have been worshipping each Sunday via Zoom. I have found the experience to be quite similar to worship at church. We set our worship table next to my computer. We have been able to see all present, joined in with Communion, responses, readings and singing during the service. I plan to continue to worship from home due to health concerns. The Ministers' reflections, the YouTube services and Geoff's World Service have led me in new directions. Faith is a continual learning and expanding process in growth and understanding,' said Dianne from the Pilgrim Uniting Church.

Parishioner Sandy concludes, 'These past few months have been a catalyst for creative responses. It has also offered an opportunity to share in worship with other congregations, and to enjoy the incredible depth and diversity of the Uniting Church – local and national. There has been a real sense of collegial connection as we have journeyed together through this challenging time.' ■



Caption: Pilgrim Uniting Church services resumed in the church building on 12 July with a buzz of excitement.

Mwandi OVC Project, Zambia

Bridget Ransome

When COVID-19 hit, along with all of its implications and changes, the Mwandi United Church in Zambia was faced with a big challenge – how to feed 140 children (22 of them with HIV/AIDS) on a daily basis?

It wasn't the case that they could continue to congregate in the feeding hall and for the first five days children were isolated in their huts, with Councillors checking in, especially on the most vulnerable families in the village.

'We thank God that we received an initial letter from the Office of the President giving permission to feed the orphans and vulnerable children, with the District Commissioner giving us some guidelines,' said Deaconess Judith Nyuma Lunga, head of the Mwandi Consistory.

The feeding team established a 'take-away' system with children monitored for hand-washing and physical distancing as they received their package of food. The care and safety of the children and the staff has been paramount throughout these challenging times.

The Port Lincoln Uniting church has been a long-time supporter of the Mwandi project, working closely with the United Church of Zambia in their Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) project.

Providing clothing, blankets and more nutritious meals to help improve the lives of children within the Mwandi village is an essential part of the churches mission.

It is hoped that in 2021 a team of volunteers can head over to Mwandi. We thank God for his love and protection of the feeding program and pray for continuing safety for all.

Further information about the Orphans and Vulnerable Children's Project is available via the Mwandi newsletter by contacting Leonie Dixon-Thompson on 0457 704 660 or by email: mwandisupportteam@gmail.com



A UnitingCare Emergency Relief Centre Theology of Service

Julianne Rogers

At 33, Zelda had just mustered up the courage and resources to leave a long-term domestic violence situation. Then during the COVID-19 lockdown, she lost her job. She just wasn't sure where to turn. Living out of her car and having drained her savings, with tears glistening on her cheeks she came to UnitingCare Glenelg at St Andrew's by the Sea Uniting Church. She'd been barely holding it all together and the caring team at UnitingCare Glenelg were able to load her arms full of food and her heart full of hope. She left with a smile and the assurance that she could find support there again.

Zelda's situation is just one of the reasons that Uniting Churches run UnitingCare Emergency Relief Centres (ERCs). The expectation that God's people are those who will welcome strangers and care for them runs throughout the Bible. This is presented as a moral imperative for those shaped by the Hebrew Bible and New Testament and is a response from knowing the love which God has shown to us.

In Matthew 14, Jesus and his disciples enabled all of the crowd of 5,000 to be fed

until they were filled. In Matthew 25, Jesus said, 'I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink ... truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

The Widow of Nain in Luke 7 shows us that Jesus was someone who was moved by compassion. He hands the son back to

“
UnitingCare ERCs have offered around 17,600 examples of help to people in need in the community.

his mother. He never asks her anything about her faith, or that of her son. It doesn't matter to him. He reaches out to human beings for no other reason than his compassion and desire to release them from their state of affliction.

Our faith is an embodied faith. Our Saviour is one of flesh and blood. Both Jesus' incarnation and the Christian understanding of community, which describes the church as the Body of Christ, put physical bodies at the very centre of our understanding of the world and our role in it. As such our very faith requires of us to honour our bodies. But we cannot care for our bodies by ourselves – apart from the rest of the world. Body vulnerability is something that all people share. Even the wealthy fall ill; hunger doesn't discriminate between men and women.

Twelve Uniting Churches have now answered the call to serve as a UnitingCare ERC with two more coming online soon. Since the COVID-19 crisis began, UnitingCare ERCs have offered around 17,600 examples of help to people in need in the community.

As the economic recovery begins and to help us reach more people, donations over \$2 to our UnitingCare ERC Relief Fund are tax deductible. Find out more at: sa.uca.org.au/foodhelp.

We are also always looking for community partners – businesses and community groups – any connections to Uniting Churches can help make ERC services more sustainable for those trying to cope with an uncertain economic future. ■



Caption: Over 1000 food items were collected for UnitingCare Modbury during the Pedare Christian College Junior School 'Food Drive Fortnight' in June.



Para Hills Uniting Church recommenced face-to-face worship on Sunday 19 July while maintaining a good two square metre distance between each other. More photos can be seen on the Para Hills Uniting Church Facebook page: www.facebook.com/parahillsuc.



Broadview Uniting Church members celebrated being at church together again in the actual church building on Sunday 28 June. During the COVID-19 pandemic, church service was available through *Drive through Church* but now it is open for worship every Sunday at 10.30am.

Do you have a photo of your event that you would like to see featured here? If so, please send it to us along with a description of what happened, where it happened, and who is in the picture. We can only print high resolution photographs sent as attachments to engagement@sa.uca.org.au. Keep them coming!



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Everything happens somewhere



Rev Prof Andrew Dutney

Everything happens somewhere – even online learning! You’ve still got to have somewhere to open up your laptop, or tablet, or smart phone. Somewhere to be physically present while the Internet delivers its uncanny gifts.

For most of this year the students of Uniting College for Leadership & Theology have been online-at-home, in some version of the COVID-19 quarantine, strict or eased. They’ve been doing the student’s version of what all our congregations did. It’s been a challenge, but not as big a challenge as it could have been. That’s because, more than a decade ago, the Synod directed the College to reorganise itself so that ordination candidates could complete their education and formation requirements in situ – from wherever they lived and served. It was a challenge, but fairly quickly the College and the candidates worked out ways to make it happen. Soon we had candidates completing their programs in places such as Port Lincoln, Mount Gambier and Broken Hill. And we were delighted with the results.

It was made possible by a change of mindset that the College didn’t have to be the centre of a candidate’s life and experience for truly effective ministry formation to occur. Then, the College had to develop really accessible distance education options, supplemented by more regular intensive units in Adelaide. We also had to learn to partner with experienced ministers who could provide supervision and mentoring for candidates wherever they were.

About five years ago the College began to add online learning to this blend of educational approaches. By the time 2020 came around, the faculty and students had become pretty comfortable with online learning. When we had to close the campus and go 100% online, it wasn’t too big of a jump into the unknown.

We still had a lot to learn but it has actually been a rich, exciting experience to be fully immersed in this medium and overall has worked very well. We have even found that our program of Leadership Formation Days with candidates, Pastors

and people in the Period of Discernment have translated into a Zoom format with a healthy mix of gains to compensate for the loss of face-to-face community building.

Now we’re able to welcome students and staff back onto the campus although we’ve found a great majority of students

“It was a challenge, but fairly quickly the College and the candidates worked out ways to make it happen.”

are continuing to enrol in the online versions of units. With the continuing state of uncertainty around the progress of the pandemic, the faculty has agreed that it would be wise to stay with an essentially online approach to teaching and learning. We might have to close the campus unexpectedly again, and we don’t want to disrupt the student experience unnecessarily.

While online learning can turn any room into ‘the room where it happens,’ sometimes it’s nice to be in a physical learning community. So, one of our larger

class-rooms has been turned into a comfortable place for students to listen to their online lectures and participate in Zoom tutorials. They will have access to the library, their lecturers and, most importantly, each other.

Prior to the pandemic this was unimaginable – a physically in-person learning community with 100% of its classes online! We think it might be a hint of the future that God is leading us into.

Rev Prof Andrew Dutney is the Principal of Uniting College for Leadership and Theology. He is a Past President of the National Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia and teaches Systematic Theology within the Adelaide College of Divinity and Flinders University.

Caption: Uniting College for Leadership and Theology’s faculty meeting was conducted online via Zoom.





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The Presbytery is seeking people who have a heart for the country and who would be excited about working in a team to help large and small congregations develop their worshipping life, in their mission to their communities and in their intergenerational ministries. A profile will be provided upon request.

Contact: Rev Siotame Paletu'a 0408 996 255 or
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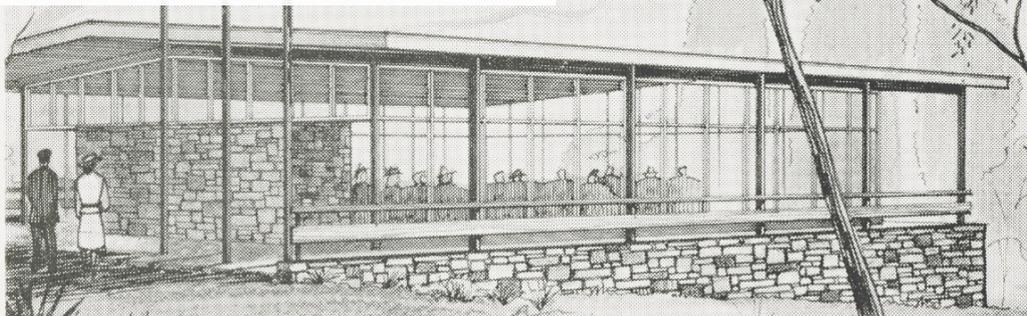
Nunyara Chapel won an award

Mark Lee

On Thursday July 2nd, 2020, the Australian Institute of Architects announced the winners of the *2020 SA Architecture Awards*. The Uniting Venues' Nunyara Chapel at Belair was nominated for and awarded the *Jack Cheesman Award for Enduring Architecture*.

This is the second architectural award that the chapel has won, the first being for outstanding architecture shortly after its construction in 1966. The chapel is now being considered for a national award for enduring architecture.

The Nunyara Chapel was built in 1963 for the then Methodist Church (now part of the Uniting Church) and designed by Maurice Doley of Cheesman, Doley, Brabham and Neighbour Architects. The chapel is an outstanding example of ecclesiastical architecture nestled in a site of natural beauty and the site includes the belltower and freestanding cross (which



were transported from the Maughan Uniting Church site when that building was demolished in 2016) and contributes to the overall heritage significance of the site.

The Nunyara Chapel was officially opened on 12 May 1963. It has three glass walls to capture the view and was home to a worshipping congregation for 21 years, primarily consisting of weekend campers. Soon after its opening, Rev C T Symons announced, 'The addition of the chapel is a significant step forward for Nunyara and it could be used for daily devotions and for Sunday services by campers and members of Conference.'

Due to its architectural design, in 2012 the chapel was added to the *South Australian Heritage Register*, and today it is used for a variety of gatherings, including a large number of church groups and schools holding camps and retreats. The chapel is the largest of Nunyara's seven meeting areas and an upgrade of the heating and cooling as well as the roof and ceiling is planned for 2021.

The Award presentation can be viewed on [youtube.com/watch?v=57aTrgl2TDM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=57aTrgl2TDM) To find out more about Nunyara and Uniting Venues SA, follow the UnitingVenuesSA Facebook page or contact enquiries@uvsa.org.au. ■

New Lay Leader's Resource

Many of you would be familiar with the Adelaide-based, not-for-profit, MediaCom Education. The publishing company turns 40 this year, having served the Uniting Church, and other denominations with a wide range of worship planning materials, books and other resources, to equip people on their religious journey.

MediaCom Education will release a brand new worship resource for lay leaders, just in time for Lectionary Year B, which launches on 29 November 2020. A free sample resource will be emailed or posted to all those who would like to experience it (email admin@mediacom.org.au to be on the mailing list). This sample will outline a lay leader's service for Holy Communion on Sunday 4 October.

MediaCom Education CEO/Pastor, Bindy Taylor reflects on the need for this new resource. 'MediaCom Education is finding there is more demand for worship planning material for lay leaders, particularly in rural and remote areas of Australia as they rely more and more on lay leaders to lead their congregations.'

This new resource is aimed at educating, resourcing and equipping lay leaders to lead a weekly service. It uses the Revised Common Lectionary for Year B and will be available in print or online.

'Featuring an overall theme for the week, this resource will provide lay leaders with many creative ideas for preparing the worship space, with suggestions for participation and engagement by using props, visual images and simple activities.

'There will be two suggested readings along with a reflection and discussion piece. Different versions of the resource will be made available – one for "at home" worshippers and those leading bible studies or connect groups. For "at home" worshippers and bible group participants, there will be prompts and reflection ideas to consider or discuss especially for group sharing.

'Different prayers will be included, and for those not familiar with the different types of prayers used by church leaders, explanations will be provided. Although the



Caption: From left to right: Ps Bindy Taylor, Alan McKee, Marion Davis, Pia Lapidge & Jaye Harkin of MediaCom Education

resource will have a Uniting Church focus, other denominations can also benefit.

'This lay leader's resource has been created to empower and resource lay leaders without being prescriptive. It will gently educate and help lay leaders. It will use simple, concise, but meaningful language and will have an intergenerational focus.'

MediaCom Education is also seeking potential writers for this resource, if this is something that interests you, please email admin@mediacom.org.au. For more information on MediaCom Education, please visit our website mediacomeducation.org.au.

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PROTECTIVE
PRACTICES

PROTECT
PRIVACY

RETURNING TO
A SAFE YOUTH

SECURE
ONLINE CHATS

ESTABLISH
GROUND RULES

COMMUNICATE WITH
PARENTS & GUARDIANS

If you want to chat more about developing clear protective practices in youth ministry, please contact Tim Littleford on intergen@sa.uca.org.au



INTERGEN
TEAM

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