



The United Church in Australia
Synod of South Australia

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From the Editor

In this Winter edition of *New Times*, you will find key highlights from the 17th Assembly meeting held in Sydney from the 11th – 16th July.

Assembly meetings are a time of worship, celebration and also a time for important decision-making to be made to guide the future of the Uniting Church in Australia.

The installation of the new President Rev Charissa Suli was a joyful and inspired worship service, enhanced by the influences of her Tongan culture, especially the choir – Tongan voices raised in song – were quite magnificent.

We also congratulate Rev Dr Paul Dongwon Goh on being elected as President Elect of the Uniting Church for the next 3 years.

I was privileged to attend the meeting in Sydney, helping in some small way with some of the work carried out by the National Communications Team.

I acknowledge and thank the National Communications Team, as they worked tirelessly throughout the Assembly, often late into the evening in order to cover every part of the meeting, keeping the wider church informed with daily updates, photography, videos and constant social media.

I also acknowledge Rebecca Beisler as this was her last Assembly meeting as National Communications Manager as she moves onto new challenges. I am particularly grateful for her kindness, professionalism and graciousness – and it has been a privilege to have worked with her.

As I had never been to an Assembly before, the meeting was also a bit of a 'fact finding' mission, given that the 18th Assembly will be held in Adelaide in 2027.

A range of important initiatives were agreed to and are covered in this issue of *New Times*. For a full update you can also review the media and articles on the 17th Assembly website, located at this link: <https://uniting.church/17thassembly>.

Bridget Ransome
Executive Officer Engagement

Message from the Moderator



Do you enjoy a good celebration, whether it be a birthday, an anniversary, a milestone or achievement? Celebrations are serious business as they acknowledge, and foster, opportunities of sharing amongst family, friends, places of work and leisure. Recently, I have been privileged to celebrate time with family, especially a 3rd birthday party with one of my grandchildren.

We also celebrate through the worship, witness, and service within our many and varied communities across our church and beyond.

Recently, I have participated in the celebration of the Installation of our National President, Rev Charissa Suli as well as sharing the joy and celebration of the election of Rev Dr Paul Dongwon Goh as our next President.

Also at the Assembly Meeting, and within our Synod, we have shared in the 30th Anniversary of the Covenant between the Uniting Church and the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) and the 15th Anniversary of the revised Preamble to the Uniting Church Constitution. These have been significant moments to acknowledge what has been achieved whilst also acknowledging there is much more to do within our covenant relationships.

In this edition of *New Times*, we share the joy of these celebratory occasions in the life of our church.

Given the challenges and seriousness of daily life we may, at times, find it difficult to celebrate. Our challenge, however, is to joyfully live and give witness to our faith as it is framed by the birth, the life, the death and resurrection of Jesus.

I pray that within our local communities of faith and witness, we will take the opportunity to celebrate. Whether we celebrate the achievements of individuals, significant events, or the seasons of celebration in the church, may we find a renewing of God's love, peace and hope, and May we be continually enlivened in the Joy of Jesus Christ.

Peter

Peter Morel
Moderator



threads of love

WEAVING CHRIST'S LOVE ACROSS
CULTURES & BOUNDARIES

Message from the General Secretary'

Rev Philip Gardner

It has been a rich time lately. On Saturday 6th of July the South Australian Covenanting Committee and South Australian Regional Congress led a service celebrating 30 years since the Covenant was signed between the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC or Congress) and the Uniting Church at the seventh Assembly. This was both a great celebration and a thoughtful consideration of the work that still needs to be done.

Two days later in Sydney a conference on the 15th Anniversary of the Revised Preamble to the Constitution was held. We also had a hub in Adelaide. The Revised Preamble reminds us that God has been present in Australia from the beginning of time, that this land was not a 'god-forsaken place.' It notes that some members of the uniting churches approached the First Peoples with good intentions and laments the more general acquiescence in the dominant culture of the day.



The Preamble celebrates the Covenant and commits us to work and pray together for the 'fuller expression of our reconciliation in Christ' (Para 10). The conference had various papers that reflected on the theology of the Preamble fifteen years since it was first written, especially in the light of changes in thought and theology since then. There was also reflection on how Indigenous theologies might inform the church more generally and some helpful insights on practical engagement with the Covenant and Preamble, including recent 'listening' and 'Walking on Country' experiences. In a letter the Moderator and I wrote to all ministers, we invited them to consider how they can live out the vows they make at their induction service to honour the Covenant.

The week was then topped off by the 17th Assembly. Each time I go to an Assembly meeting I am reminded of the cultural diversity of the church across Australia. This was particularly the case this time with Charissa Suli our newly installed President being a second-generation Tongan. This meant that leaders from Pacifica congregations participated significantly in the Assembly meeting, a rich blessing. There was a memorable Installation service at St Stephens with three choirs leading our worship!





The major work of the meeting was engaging with the ACT2 Report, which hopefully some of you have heard about. The major focus of this project has been over the last two years. ACT2 has engaged in a range of practices beyond consulting councils of the church, including the Uniting in Prayer project which runs between Easter and Pentecost, connecting congregations in prayer for one another across Australia. A number of South Australian congregations have participated. There was also the significant response to the call for papers on our 'theological culture,' which were published on the ACT2 website. Some fascinating, provocative and at times annoying articles – but an important conversation to foster.

The ACT 2 report, which is rather long, focuses on three main areas:

- Stream A focuses on congregations. 'Life giving communities of Discipleship and Mission.' The intention of this stream is to resource congregations to focus on mission and discipleship and to deal with regulations that might hinder such a focus.
- Stream B focuses on 'theological culture.' The intention of this stream is developing communities that are intentional in deepening discipleship and lifelong learning. One of the key, hoped for outcomes is significant national collaboration between the UCA Theological Colleges.
- Stream C focuses on sharing our common life and wealth. At its broadest level this stream seeks to develop ways to ensure that we are good stewards of our resources so that the whole church is blessed. How that might be done has a range of possibilities some more controversial and risky than others.

The Assembly, after long discussion and a number of amendments, agreed to continue the work of the ACT2 project for the next three years and report to the next Assembly (which, by the way, will be in Adelaide in 2027).

These weeks in July have been rich with learning and relationships, worship and reflection. I have not done justice to all that we did at Assembly, I trust that others will have picked this up in their articles.



Yanakanai: Come, let us sit together

By Graham Brice

On 6th July 2024, ninety people gathered at Adelaide West Uniting Church to commemorate, celebrate, and offer personal reflections on the Covenant journey, thirty years on.

‘Uncle’ Allen Edwards welcomed all to Kurna Country and General Secretary, Rev Philip Gardner guided the service as Master of Ceremonies.

Rev Mark Kickett, National Chair of Congress reminded us of the struggles in 1994 which led to the Covenant between Uniting Church and the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress. He paid tribute to the many giants on whose shoulders we stand and described the Covenant as a movement to bring awareness and challenges to us as ‘carriers of the gospel of love and peace.’ Dr Marelle Harisun, was also acknowledged for strengthening and shaping South Australia’s commitment to the Covenant as a former General Secretary.

Theologian-in-Residence Rev Dr ‘Aunty’ Denise Champion declared the Uniting Church, as her home! She warmly reminded us that ‘we are fragile and need support.’ Although our nation embraced policies seeking to erase First People’s identity, through the parable of the lost coin, God declared to her: all Indigenous people ‘were always a part of God’s family. God is calling us, to be always sweeping, looking for ways to restore.’



30 of the Covenant

“Through The Gum Tree Couple (her Adnyamathanha story) we heard colonisation had ‘cut through my home’ – but the Covenant represented a call to ‘never give up hope.’

Rev (Uncle) Ken Sumner, Congress State Development Officer and Dr Deirdre Palmer (former President and Moderator of the South Australian Synod) offered reflections on both achievements and difficulties of ‘living the Covenant.’

Ken reflected on the challenges in being able to incorporate Covenanting into the broader missional framework of the Uniting Church via Mission Resourcing.

Dr Palmer paid tribute to the extraordinary leaders we have lost; including Rev Dr Gondarra, the first Aboriginal Moderator of a Uniting Church Synod, who had helped shape the Covenant with his book, ‘Let My People Go.’ Such losses ‘highlight the importance of young leaders, and for the intergenerational community to support them.’

Jordan Sumner’s singing was a highlight of the evening as was Jo Palmer’s reflection. Both grew up within the life of the Covenant. Rev Jesse Size too spoke warmly of the impact of Walking on Country and deep relationships developed over time which had helped ‘form his family.’

Personal reflections from attendees were placed in a thirty-year old Coolamon based on questions - What am I hearing? How can I continue to listen? And our local church could Responses will help to inform the next chapter in the Covenanting journey (details will be available at the Uniting College, August 2024).

What’s next – I hear you ask?

The Covenanting Committee meets again on 17th August at which new directions for the Covenant will be explored; and updated information about the Covenant will soon be available on the Synod website.

Anniversary
Covenant





Installation of New President of the Uniting Church in Australia

President Rev Charissa Suli was installed as the 17th President at the Assembly meeting in Sydney from 11th – 16th July 2024.

The service was a joyous, spirit-filled celebration at a packed St Stephen's Uniting Church on Gadigal land in Sydney.

The historic appointment of Rev Suli as the youngest and first person of colour to lead the church nationally was joyfully celebrated by hundreds of people from around the country who filled the Church, while many more watched the live streamed service.

It was a vibrant, poignant and memorable service filled with symbol, prayer and joy-filled song.

The harmonised sounds of the Tongan National Conference choir rang through the Church and the worship band led the congregation in praise, with people invited to sing in their own language, a celebration of the cultural diversity of the church and the appointment of Rev Suli as the UCAs first President of Pacifica heritage and Tongan descent.

Speaking after receiving the symbols of ministry from the retiring President Rev Sharon Hollis, Rev Suli acknowledged the significance of the moment.

'As I look out into the room tonight, I see a glimpse of God's kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven, the singing of choirs, the gathering of God's people from different parts of the world and this nation.

'Tonight, we see a glimpse of God's powerful love in how we have come together to sit side by side and stand in solidarity tonight, all in the name of love and mutual respect.'

In the installation prayer, Charissa knelt and was prayed over by retiring President, Rev Sharon Hollis, the General Secretary (Interim) Rev Lindsay Cullen, the Chair of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) Rev Mark Kickett and the President's Chaplains, Rev Kath Merrifield, Jordan Sumner and Rev Seungjae Yeon, and Rev Phil Newton and Rev Dr Jason Kioa, representing the Presbytery of Sydney which will have pastoral charge of Charissa during her Presidency.

Rev Suli's theme, *Threads of Love, Weaving Christ's love across cultures and boundaries* is shaped by her vision for the Uniting Church, Rev Suli said the theme was a reminder to herself and the church that whatever we do in word and deed is rooted in the deep love of God found in Christ.

(Source: adapted from 17th Assembly website)



Assembly Standing Committee Report (ASC)

By Bridget Ransome

The Assembly Standing Committee (ASC) Report was delivered during the 17th Assembly meeting by Interim General Secretary Rev Lindsay Cullen.

Rev Cullen reported on a busy triennium period for the ASC, as they undertook a large number of meetings emerging from the COVID-19 period, into discerning the issues of the church in a different way, experimenting with both online and face-to-face meetings.

A number of special meetings were required during which specific pieces of work were progressed including advocacy on behalf of the church, in particular the advocacy around the Voice Referendum, supported by the ASC, the work of Assembly, the staff of the Secretariat and church related agencies. More recently advocacy has also been directed towards the Israel/Gaza conflict.

The ASC has had a number of task groups working on its behalf and whilst some have been completed others are on-going. In particular, Rev Cullen mentioned the Preventing Harm from Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Change Efforts (SOGICE) resource, commending it to all communities of faith.

Work continues around the Church in the Digital Age, as it continues to grapple with what it is to be the church in virtual settings. What is it to think of theology and sacraments in this context?

Other ASC items that were addressed separately during the 17th Assembly Meeting included Net Zero Emissions Steering Group; Continuing Witness; Act2 Report; recruitment of the General Secretary; and the Finances of Assembly.



The Uniting Church can and must do better

During the 17th Assembly members were challenged to recommit to the work of reconciliation and justice in a celebration of 30 years of covenant relationship as First and Second Peoples.

In a program curated by the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC), the celebration featured cultural dance, song, story, prayer and a powerful challenge to do better in committing to be in a true relationship with the First Peoples of this land.

Ngarrindjeri man Sean Weetra from UAICC Congress offered a stirring call and challenge to the Assembly and the wider Church to ensure the covenant is more than just words, but a living breathing, commitment to equity and partnership.

'The Covenant relationship is more than a piece of silverware that is polished and displayed on special occasions to make the Church look good, only to be put back in the cabinet until the next event. This is not the foundation of a strong, sincere relationship. The silverware metaphor underscores how our covenant is often treated, admired for appearance but lacking everyday utility and presence.

Today I stand here to assert that the Uniting Church can and must do better. Our people deserve more than ceremony or gestures. We deserve reparations, recognition and real support. This means being open, honest and transparent about the church's role and responsibilities in supporting Aboriginal ministries.

We need to move beyond symbolic acts to substantive change. The resources to support our ministries exist within the church yet our people continue to be on the margins. This is not acceptable and is not reflective of the values we profess as a church community.

The Church has built and maintained its wealth on stolen lands at the expense of our people and we have been displaced off our traditional lands. Our people have suffered due to colonisation and its impact on our country has been devastating.

The Covenant relationship, if truly honoured, can be a beacon of hope and a model of reconciliation for the wider Australian community but it requires more than words, it demands actions that reflects the spirit of a covenant every day, not just on special occasions.'

UAICC National Chair Rev Mark Kickett introduced the program, holding up the original Covenant Statement signed in 1994 at the 7th Assembly meeting as well as the renewed Covenant Statement signed by members at the last Assembly meeting in 2022. He called the Assembly members to a moment of silence, reflecting on the history of Congress and the deep and enduring call of the Covenant.

Wiradjuri man and artist Uncle Tom Sloane from Wellington in the Synod of NSW/ACT offered a gift to President Rev Charissa Suli as a symbol of Covenant made from the boori (wattle) tree.

Uncle Tom said the gift represented the importance of truth and honesty when we sit around the table together.

'We talk straight, not crooked or around the bend, we'll be honest at that table. We'll always get somewhere if we're fair dinkum, if we are honest.'



The President responded, thanking Congress for the sacred gift as a reminder for the whole Church of the importance of the Covenant.

'Members of Assembly, we have heard the stories and the call and invitation. Do we not feel that even though we hear them talk about being marginalised, even though we hear about how the equity is not there and limited resources. Our congress is still here. And that is what you call grace. The grace they have discovered in Jesus Christ and that came way before colonisers arrived in this country. I am moved and I am challenged, that you are also speaking truth to me as I represent the national Assembly, that we must do better. I receive this with a humble heart.'

A Call to Action Statement was read out by several UAICC members present, outlining the steps and commitments needed to move the covenant forward. The Statement calls for acknowledgment of shortcomings, confronting justice, concrete actions for reconciliation, sharing stories and perspectives, sacred trust and future accountability.

UAICC SA Vice-Chairperson Jordan Sumner, also a Ngarrindjeri man, sang Amazing Grace, and paid tribute to the leaders and trailblazers from Congress that have come before.

(Source: adapted from the 17th Assembly website)





Congratulations to President-Elect Rev Paul Dongwon Goh

The 17th Assembly has joyfully elected Rev Dr Paul Dongwon Goh as the next President-Elect of the Uniting Church in Australia. Paul will be the first Korean to serve as President.

“Beloved Assembly members, this morning God has once again surprised me through your collective discernment and call to be your President-Elect of the Uniting Church in Australia. I’m incredibly honoured and humbled. Thank you for putting your trust and support in me. We can feel secure that God is ahead of us and inviting us to a new beginning,” said Rev Goh.

“I feel incredibly hopeful for the Uniting Church and I hope I can witness and invite people to rejoice in this sense of hope. I believe in the power of love. I love the Uniting Church deeply. I believe God will continue to renew and revive us as his church in this Kairos time and in his own strange and surprising ways.”

Paul is currently Justice and CALD Multicultural and Cross-Cultural Officer in the Mission Resourcing team of the Synod of South Australia, offering leadership across the Synod. Paul is an Advocate for the Assembly’s Being a Multicultural Church Circle and has served on the Assembly Act2 Steering Committee over the past 18 months.



Paul was ordained in the Presbyterian Church of Korea in 1999 and migrated to Australia in 2010.

“I’m excited that next year we will mark the 40th Anniversary of the Assembly’s declaration, We are a Multicultural Church, and in just under three years we will celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the inauguration of the Uniting Church in Australia.

We can feel secure that God is ahead of us and inviting us to a new beginning. I feel incredibly hopeful for the Uniting Church, and I hope I can witness and invite people to rejoice in this sense of hope.”

Paul will serve as the 18th President from 2027-2030.

(Source: adapted from the 17th Assembly website)



Youthful Delegates Gathered ahead of the 17th Assembly Meeting

Youthful delegates gathered just prior to the commencement of the 17th Assembly Meeting at Leigh Memorial Church in Parramatta, and they met with incoming President Rev Charissa Suli, learning more about the procedures involved with the Assembly and enjoying time together.

Rev Suli shared that 'No matter what council of the church we come from, our common ground is our humanity. My vision for the Uniting Church is that we will be a place of more generous welcome, that we will be proud of our diversity.'

The day was facilitated by the Pulse team in the NSW/ACT Synod. In a Communion liturgy led by Pulse team's Rev James Aaron, Young Adult Ministry Facilitator. His prayer:

'May we weave these threads of thanksgiving and of sorry. May they weave a beautiful tapestry ... of God's story for all of us, of the saints of old and of the saints into the future.'

Rev Aaron also offered a blessing to the youthful delegates: 'You are the Assembly, and you will be for the next three years, so our blessing to you is, "Hold on." Your story is our story.'

Bringing together the youthful members on the eve of the 17th Assembly provided an opportunity for relationships to grow among young people in the church from across the country. All Synods were represented by at least one youthful member.

'I've really never met people from the Uniting Church outside of South Australia and the youth gathering is

an opportunity for that. Sometimes as a young Christian it can feel a little isolating to not know many other young Christians or other young people in your denomination. It's great to see there are other young people in the Uniting Church and to see they have a strong passion for the Uniting Church, which is cool,' said Emelia Haskey of Brougham Place Uniting Church.

The youthful members expressed their hope that the Uniting Church will, in keeping with the Assembly theme, continue to weave threads of Christ's love across cultures and boundaries.

(Source: adapted from the 17th Assembly website)



threads of love

WEAVING CHRIST'S LOVE ACROSS
CULTURES & BOUNDARIES

17th Assembly



th mbly



ACT 2

The 17th Assembly made a series of decisions arising out of the Act2 Project, adopting three new visions for the life of the Uniting Church; establishing two new national Commissions; and requesting a further investigation into the Uniting Church's national structure.

Substantial work was undertaken by the 17th Assembly Facilitation Committee in relation to the Act2 proposals, which were discussed at length in Community Working Groups and in the meeting plenary.

The 17th Assembly affirmed an opening statement which preceded the proposals:

We open ourselves to the gift of the Spirit, given in order that we may not lose the way. With thanksgiving for the past 47 years of our life, and after taking a long, loving look at the reality of our present, and with hope in God's faithfulness for our future, we commit to continue our journey together. We believe now is the time to reshape our life so we may better live into God's call in our time and place. By centring life-giving communities of discipleship and mission, cultivating a flourishing theological culture and deeply sharing in our common life and wealth we will treasure Christ's gift of abundant grace, share this gift with our world and pass it to future generations.

The 17th Assembly has adopted three new visions for the life of the Uniting Church and established two new national Commissions.

It adopted a vision for local Uniting Church communities:

Communities of faith will sustain a life of worship, build one another up in love, grow disciples of Jesus and participate in God's mission. These diverse communities of faith will shape their life in response to God's call in their context and deepen their relationship with God, one another, the wider church and the world.

It adopted a **second vision for a National Network for Theology, Formation and Leadership**, which refers to those institutions and communities – including but not limited to theological colleges – where people are educated and formed for discipleship, mission and ministry, envisioning:

A visible and accessible network of intentional communities engaged in life-long learning to equip people to courageously follow Jesus and participate in God's mission in contemporary Australia.

The Assembly established a **new national Commission for Theology, Formation and Leadership** to see this vision implemented across the life of the Uniting Church.

The Commission will have Terms of Reference and a skilled membership both to be determined by the Assembly Standing Committee (ASC). The ASC has been requested to ensure the membership reflects the theological and other diversity of the Church and includes people with qualifications and experience in theological education and ministry formation. The Assembly adopted a suite of principles to guide the work of the Commission.

The Assembly adopted a **third vision for the ordering and resourcing of the whole Church**:

A network of deeply connected councils responding to God's call to enter more fully into mission through healthy oversight of ministry and mission, celebrating our diverse and shared identity and being faithful stewards of our common life and wealth.



“It also resolved to ‘Call to the Church, in living out the vision for sharing our common life and wealth, to prioritise sharing our resources with one another for the benefit of the whole Church.’

The Assembly established a new national **Commission for Governance, Resourcing and Administration** to lead the work of implementing the vision across the Church.

The ASC will finalise its terms of reference and establish a process to fill the membership of the Commission, which will be drawn from the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress, Congregations, Presbyteries, Synods, Assembly and agencies.

Like with the first Commission, the 17th Assembly adopted a series of principles to guide the work of the Commission for Governance, Resourcing and Administration.

This Commission will undertake a feasibility study related to the national structure of the Uniting Church, investigating the consequences, risks and opportunities of both a three-council and a four-council model.

This process will be undertaken in collaboration with Congress leaders, Church Councils, Presbyteries, Synods, the Assembly and agencies of the Uniting Church. The Commission will report to the 18th Assembly in 2027.

Noting that some decisions made as part of the Act2 direction may require changes to the Uniting Church Constitution, **the Assembly also prescribed a process** by which the ASC will make those changes. The process ensures adequate consultation with the Legal Reference Committee, Synods and Presbyteries.

(Source: adapted from the 17th Assembly Meeting website, Act2 Decisions Summary – Uniting Church Australia.)

Rising Anxiety: A Biblical Take

By Marianne Vreugdenhil

'There are no feelings in the Dutch Merchant Navy,' is something my seaman father, Gerry, used to say. Most people knew him as a friendly, eccentric Dutchman who loved politics and spoke eight languages. Unbeknownst to most, he also had hypervigilance and night terrors, a legacy from his childhood growing up in German-occupied Holland. He was officially diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder at age 76.

Churches regularly encounter people with mental health conditions, some obvious, some hidden. This isn't surprising given over 30% of the population will experience anxiety at some point in their lives. It's not just war, hunger and violence that create it either, it's everyday stressors too. The Bible extols us to 'Fear not!' but how do we do that?

For many, our 'go to' solutions are denial (I'm fine), minimising (Others are worse off than me so I can't complain), distraction (What's on TV?), hopelessness (What's the point?) and obsessing (If I think about it hard enough, I can fix it). Unfortunately, no matter what the Dutch Merchant Navy might say, when we side-step our feelings, we only mask the pain.

Jesus directs his disciples to 'Let the little children come to me' (Matthew 19:14, NIV).

Unlike those biblical illustrations depicting sweet, well-behaved, clean children, kids are just as likely to be loud, inconsolable and grubby. They come to us at inconvenient times desperate for our attention and love. Jesus prioritises all children, bringing them into the centre and accepting them as they are. What if we treated emotions – ours and others – the same way? What if we welcomed

in not just the feel-good, socially acceptable ones such as joy and gratitude, but the uncomfortable, socially unacceptable ones like grief, shame, fear and anger? Each emotion has a God-given purpose, but when we push particular ones away, they can go a bit feral. They thump on the door wanting to be let in, and the more we resist, the more they thump. This resistance is what creates anxiety.

Jesus says of the children, 'the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these'. More than their innocence and trust, could he also be commending their authenticity? Little children don't wear masks; they are simply their unfiltered selves. If we adults could only embrace our authenticity – including all of our emotions – our anxiety would diminish, and we too could access the kingdom of heaven.

As Mental Health Week falls in October, and the hectic Christmas season approaches, rather than shutting down uncomfortable emotions, consider treating them as little children in need of our attention. Invite Jesus to be with you as you listen with compassion, and please seek professional help if needed.

Source:

Marianne Vreugdenhil is a member of Port Adelaide Uniting Church. She is a private counsellor and EFT practitioner at lighthouseeft.com.au.

Resources and support:

For assistance in a mental health emergency, contact the mental health triage service – telephone 13 14 65 available 24 hours, seven days a week.

Lifeline 24-hour hotline: 13 11 14



Volunteers Acknowledged & Celebrated

Uniting Care Copper Triangle recently celebrated the wonderful support of their 65 plus volunteers and awarded 3 of these awards for their long-term leadership and involvement at special volunteer themed services in May and June.

Uniting Care Copper Triangle's mantra is 'Locals helping Locals' through Op Shops, Micro Credit Loans, Christmas gifts and hampers, home relocation items for families/individuals in domestic violence situations and more.

Such care for the community would not be possible without incredible volunteers with three recognised for their long-term volunteering leadership and commitment.

Uniting Care Chairperson Paul Thomas shared that Brenda Cross has been a tireless worker for the Uniting Care Copper Triangle Gift Appeal.

During her 24 years of leadership the program has grown exponentially in terms of the numbers of recipients, gifts provided, involvement of volunteers and business and community awareness of the need and opportunity. This has been due to Brenda's awareness, community networking and tireless lobbying.

Rev June Ladner explained that Necia Ebert has always been part of the church and active in its life. She was secretary of the Wallaroo Uniting Church Fellowship and Church Council for more than 25 years, meticulous and reliable in her work. She was active in all fundraising activities for the Church and her sausage rolls are a delight!

In the community she was a JP, member, and secretary of the local JP Association and with another JP she sat on the bench in the Local Court. Necia was responsible for arranging for a JP to be available in the library to assist people to access support and was on the roster for that help.

She also identified and saw an on-going need for unused furniture to be made available to people in need facing homelessness and domestic violence, eventually setting up a purpose built shed near the Jerusalem Uniting Church.

Roger Norris-Green was also acknowledged with a service award in recognition of his long-term commitment to the Church and support agencies.



Necia Ebert & Brenda Cross



Kylie Milwaters from Uniting Care Copper Triangle with volunteer Roger Norris Green

In the past 28 years Roger has been actively involved in all aspects of the local Church and its mission. He preaches regularly; is an elder of the Moonta Church; organises the lay preaching plan for Moonta; for many years delivered a Christian radio program on GULF FM on Sunday mornings; and writes Christian themed pieces for the local paper.

He is not afraid to do things a bit differently, for example he has introduced the delightful puppet characters who through their enjoyable skits teach us much about the Christian message. Their shows have been performed at many local events and venues including garden parties and local concerts.

Brenda, Roger and Necia were thanked for being wonderful long term, committed volunteers and will be nominated for SA Volunteer awards in the future as their social justice conscience is strong and commitment to serve others unwavering.

Award Winning Play Group

By Sue Farrant

For the past 18 years the Playgroup volunteers at Walkerville Uniting Church have provided a safe, friendly and encouraging environment for pre-school children and their families.

During Volunteer Week 2024, the founders – Sue Clark and Merilee Hobby were awarded 'Volunteer Event of the Year' by the Walkerville Town Council. In addition, they were recently recognised by Playgroup SA as the longest continually registered playgroup operating in South Australia – quite an achievement for a local volunteer group, with the same two leaders who initiated the program in 2006!

Sue, as a former early childhood pre-school teacher with the Education Department, and Merilee as a practising nursing sister, brought their experience and abilities, combined with their caring nature, to welcome the children and their caregivers.

Over the years, the playgroup team has welcomed numerous parents and grandparents who have recently arrived in our neighbourhood, including families from South America, the Middle East, Asia and Europe. Some parents have requested baptism for their children, we have watched others grow to young adulthood, and one mother has joined our staff as office administrator. For much of their time, the Playgroup has operated with full bookings and a waiting list. During COVID lockdowns, they went online, providing stories and songs for parents to access.

The Playgroup team has reached out to the community, providing a varied, stimulating program for pre-schoolers including numerous 'theme' days – multicultural day, gratitude day, gumboots, pyjama and beach days. They also take part in the National Simultaneous Storytime event, when students and teachers all over Australia read the same book on the same day, encouraging more young Australians to read and enjoy books.

Looking outwards, they have assisted the Indigenous Literacy Foundation by participating in book and toy swaps. They have also supported the Smith Family and Treasure Boxes Inc, an Adelaide-based family support program; and they conduct a 'Biggest Morning Tea' in support of the Cancer Council.

But beyond the program, Sue and Merilee have always seen the group as a community or a family of families. They have ensured that everyone feels welcome, that they belong and that they are loved. Many friendships have been built among the children and adults over the years.



Bush Chaplaincy isn't work for me; it's my life

Bush Chaplain Sunny has a big job. His patrol area of Parkin-Sturt in South Australia includes 49 towns, around 170 farming stations, and multiple mines. But while his job may be big, he says it's the small things that make a difference.

“Mother Theresa once said, “We can't do great things in our life, we can do small things with great love,” says Sunny. ‘I hold these words dear, and I know when I do small things with great love, that's when I make a big difference.’



The communities that Sunny looks after face a range of challenges: drought, the flow-on effects of COVID-19, the cost-of-living crisis, isolation, and an overall sense of uncertainty for the future.

For Sunny, the best way to build a connection with the community is through visible and tangible practical support. On that foundation, Sunny deepens the connection by offering emotional and pastoral support.

One interaction that stuck in Sunny's mind was with a local business owner with whom he spent three days helping clean his property.

The man was struggling to find staff after the pandemic. 'At the end of three days, he turned to me and said he had never been a religious man, but to him, my helping him was the very definition of faith,' shares Sunny.

'That was so touching. He could begin exploring his faith because of something so simple that I had done for him.'

Beyond the small projects, Sunny also runs a program of big projects. This year, a particularly exciting project is Clean and Green where volunteers help the local community to deep-clean the town, plant trees, and establish new waste management processes.



'We designed Clean and Green around the feedback from our communities,' says Sunny. 'Many complained that their towns are too hot, have too many flies, and don't have enough shade. So, we're going to do something to make these things better, with sustainability for the future at the forefront.'

For Sunny, the most important part of being a Bush Chaplain is actively demonstrating to the people he serves that Frontier Services is there for them, whatever challenge they may face and regardless of their faith.

'I am there with them to witness their life's joys and successes. But more importantly, I am there with them through their sorrows and hardships,' said Sunny.

'People in the bush are not alone in their life's journey. Frontier Services - the Bush Chaplains, the Outback Links volunteers, and donors - are always with them.'

Source: Frontier Services Newsletter, February 2024.

Caring and Sharing from City to Sea

On 29th September at 10.00 am the All Saints Uniting Church at Plympton will celebrate its final service. This will complete 181 years of Methodist/Uniting Church ministry in the Plympton area.

In 1838 an announcement appeared in 'The Southern Journal' expressing the desire to form a village in a direct line from Adelaide to Holdfast Bay. A 'hamlet' called Plympton was laid out in 1839, and in 1843 some Wesleyan Methodists began meeting in one another's homes for Christian fellowship.

A small rustic chapel was built on the site of the present church (the corner of Marion Road and Mooringe Avenue). Indeed, a pine log buried in the ground, was the lectern. This simple building became the centre of social life in Plympton. In the absence of a public meeting hall, it served as a meeting place, and district notices were nailed to its door!

Over the years, as the population of the area grew, other grander buildings have been built on the same site, however always the focus of the church has been on the local community.

From Sunday School, Youth Groups, Sporting Groups of all sorts (indeed the Plympton/Halifax Calisthenics Club, which still uses the premises, had its origins in the Church in 1964), a range of social groups that the wider community participated in, and welfare support to locals (including the support of the Hungry Hare Café and the Hare's Market).

All Ministers, Lay Pastors and Lay preachers who have preached at Plympton, as well as past parishioners and congregation members are invited to join in witnessing the bell being rung for the last time, participate in worship (including the historic organ), then fellowship and reminisce over lunch.

For more information, and to express your interest in attending, please contact Mrs Jan Martin (0408 380 423) by 15th September.





Flame Festival

Proceeds support locals

Choir performing

The Kadina Uniting Church as part of the recent Northern Yorke Peninsula local FLAME festival hosted the enjoyable Adelaide Male Voice Choir.

FLAME stands for Food, Lights, Arts, Music and Entertainment.

Over 100 people attended and enjoyed the choir's rendition of 'Golden Oldies,' musicals, sacred and secular numbers. Malcolm Wilson as Master of Ceremonies ensured the audience were well informed and entertained through song details, jokes and anecdotes.

The guest artists added variety to the performance with the concert providing a memorable afternoon. The proceeds from the raffle and afternoon tea contributions, which totaled \$500, were donated to the local Foodbank to support those experiencing challenging times.

The Foodbank Mobile Food Hub visits Kadina fortnightly to provide aid in the form of low-cost grocery items for individuals and families. Free fresh fruit, vegetables and bread are also available. To use this service a voucher from a referring agency is required.

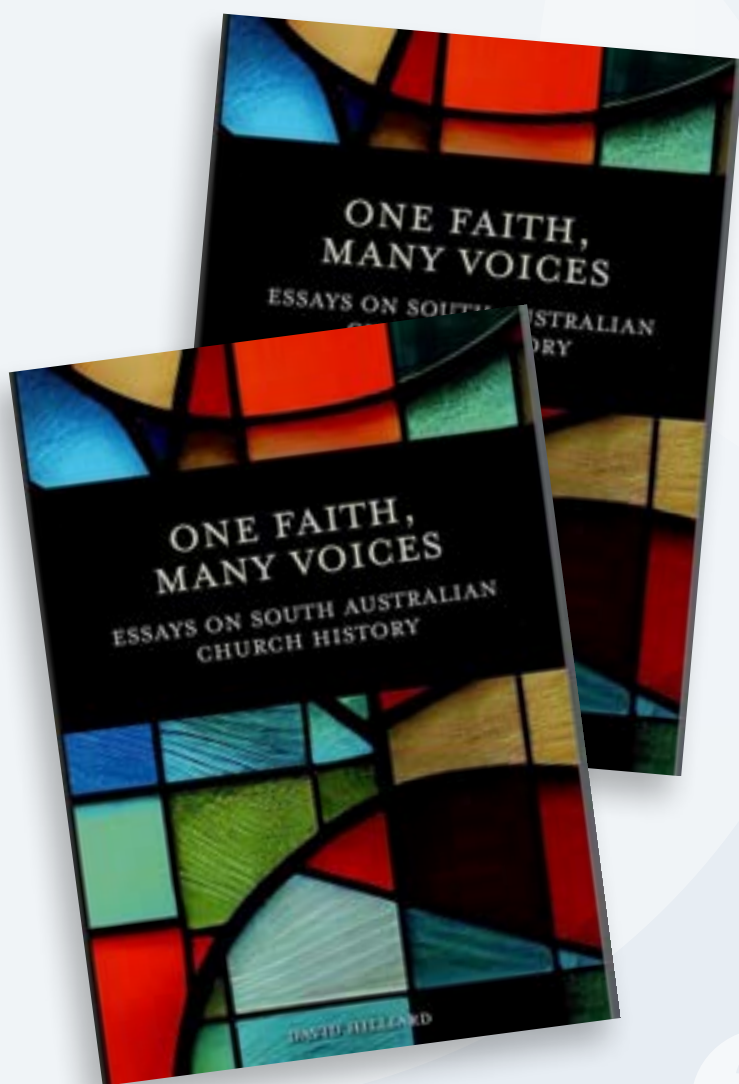
Thanks are extended to the choir, all involved in the concert/ afternoon tea organisation, the generous raffle donations and those who attended the concert enabling many in the community to benefit.



Guest artist Sandy Wandel



Foodbank donation: Left to right: Joylene Potter (Uniting Church Chairperson), Graham, Dawn Greig (Uniting Church Council member), Bonnie, Kevin and Trudy from the Foodbank Team



‘One Faith, Many Voices’

Book Review

By David Houston

Dr Hopgood was particularly taken by Hilliard's summary:

‘Clearly there was no golden age of preaching. Some sermons were spiritually uplifting, expanding the mind and soul. On the other hand, many sermons were pedestrian in content and delivery. Some were awful. Congregations sat in their pews, sometimes impassive and bored, letting their minds wander. But in this they were not very different from university lectures a century later. None of us should be quick to throw a stone.’

In launching the publication of this engaging research by David Hilliard during the final session of the recent Church History Network Conference, The Hon Dr Don Hopgood illustrated the interest and value within this new work by David.

Dr Hopgood says he unreservedly recommends this book. ‘David Hilliard has done us a great service in providing a compendium of some of his articles on local ecclesiastical history written over forty years. He ranges almost from the beginning of European settlement but with a particular stress on the 1890s and post-World War II. And having been attracted to the collection, we are beguiled by its elements.

Take for example “The View from the Pew: worship and preaching in 1890s Adelaide” source material for which was largely garnered from the nineteenth century local weekly “Quiz and the Lantern” with its often-waspish reflections on preaching. Its editor, Harry Evans, son of a Baptist minister, attended 59 mostly different church services over fourteen months in 1894–95 and was not slow to share his views in print. His attendances included at the Swedenborgians and the Unitarians.’

Read this from ‘go to ‘whoa.’ It is very useful as a reference, but it is more than that. Not strictly chronological there are none-the-less themes running through which give a liveliness and humanity to the rich field that David has mined.

And as historians right back to Herodotus have told us, without a knowledge of the past, how can we possibly understand the present?

Finding Emma

Book Review

By Gill Morel

'Finding Emma' by Valerie Volk is an interesting exploration of one woman's journey through life, as she grapples with her past, present, and future. Through the lens of Emma's personal journey, Volk skilfully delves into themes of regret, passion, pain, grief, and faith, weaving a story that is both deep and relatable.

One of the novel's standout features is its accessibility. Written exclusively from Emma's perspective, Volk draws readers into her world, compelling them to consider empathising with her struggles and triumphs. This singular focus on Emma's voice not only enhances the narrative's intimacy but also prompts readers to reflect on their own lives and perspectives.

The historical backdrop against which Emma's story unfolds adds depth and richness to the narrative. South Australian readers, in particular, may resonate with the exploration of migration, with ties to places like Hahndorf. Volk's portrayal of historical events in rural towns adds to the richness of the story, offering a glimpse into the shared experiences of communities across different regions.

Finding Emma is a testament to the power of storytelling. Through Emma's journey, the reader is invited to confront their own imperfections and complexities, and perhaps find solace and inspiration in Emma's resilience and determination.

Volk's prose is both evocative and accessible, ensuring that the novel lingers in the minds of readers long after they have turned the final page.



Church Revitalisation & Renewal

By Rev Dr Tim Hein

The scent of renewal is the smell of rain. Renewal is a profound concept, right at the heart of the gospel. The *Basis of Union* tells us that reconciliation and renewal are the end in view for the whole creation. It then says that the call of the church is to serve that end. But thankfully it also promises that the Holy Spirit will be both the pledge and 'foretaste' of this renewal. That means that Christians experience renewal personally, through the Holy Spirit. We can taste it.

It stands to reason, then, that if renewal is God's plan for the whole creation, and for individual people, then it should be the mark of God's instrument, the church. We should be familiar with it, focused on it, obsessed by it, consumed by how it flows from the gospel. It should be part of the rhythm of our very life.

The need for renewal is constant, due to several reasons: the ordinary passage of time and changing cultural contexts; in response to disruptive destructive events; and the default condition of the human heart. We all need renewal in our lives, our hearts and our churches.

It's important to be specific what renewal is not: it isn't simply increased enthusiasm or a special vibe. It's not just a fresh start or just change for the sake of it. It's not a new spiritual gift. In fact, it's not even new. Renewal means new *again*. It is God's pattern for life overflowing.

It is because renewal touches upon so many aspects of church life that it is so fascinating. It is not only a theological concept, the result of the gospel and God's plan for all creation, but it is also a dynamic for programs, structures, events, teams, buildings, and preaching. It effects the nitty gritty of congregational life, as well as the big picture of our whole purpose. I find it to be the most marvellous and beautiful framework.

I invite you to join our one-week intensive *Church Revitalisation & Renewal* from 30th September – 4th October at the Uniting College for Leadership & Theology, as we explore the principles and practical tips for renewal in your context.

Church Revitalisation and Renewal

New in Semester 2, 2024

Embrace the mission of God more deeply. Examine how aspects of church life, including preaching, prayer, pastoral care, worship, day-to-day operations, governance, and strategic planning, can contribute.

Why not come with friends, colleagues, or congregation members to begin this important thinking together? Study for credit, out of passion and interest, or as continuing education.

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Celebration of 100 years

Gelland Methodist and Croydon Park Uniting Church

310 Torrens Road, Croydon Park 5008

18th August 2024 at 2.00pm

Moderator Rev Peter Morel will attend this important celebration.

An invitation is extended to the past descendants and family members of the Sunday School and Congregational life.

Afternoon tea will be provided.

For further information please contact:
Mrs Jean Chinca phone (08) 8445 8117 or Mrs
Bettie Rundle (08) 8346 3778



— APPLY NOW

Organ Scholarship

Christ Church Uniting Church Wayville is offering an organ scholarship to support the development of an aspiring musician.

Applications are due on Friday 20 September 2024.

For further information please phone the office on 8271 0329 or email christchurch@effectiveliving.org

Placements News

Placements Finalised as at 18th July 2024

Rev Mark Dickens to Professional Development Officer (0.5) from 1 October 2024

Gary Ferguson, Specified Lay Pastor to Kimba UC (0.4) from 1 July 2024

Rev Leanne Osborne to Glengowrie UC (0.5) from 1 August 2024

Rev Ken Sumner to UAICC Development and Outreach Officer from 1 July 2024

Rev Geoff Tiller to Payneham Road UC (0.5) from a date to be advised.

Generate Presbytery

Ceduna UC (0.6)

County Jervois Parish UC

Cowell UC, Cleve UC, Driver River UC

Echunga UC

Flinders (0.6)

*Booleroo Centre UC, Booleroo Whim UC, Quorn UC,
Wirrabara UC, Wilmington UC*

Goolwa UC

Naracoorte UC

The Vines UC (0.7)

Western Eyre Uniting Parish

Cummins UC, Lock UC, Yeelanna UC

Woodside UC

Wimala Presbytery

Morialta UC

Placements Across Two Presbyteries

South West Fleurieu (0.5-0.6)

Presbytery of Southern SA and Generate

PROFILES NOT YET AVAILABLE

Generate Presbytery

Kangaroo Island Linked Congregations from January 2025

Port Augusta UC (0.5)

Presbytery of Southern SA

Rosefield UC

Seacliff UC

Pool Ministry (up to 3 placements)

For more information about placements, please visit sa.uca.org.au

Deadline for the *New Times* Spring edition 2024

Friday, 1st November

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Synod of South Australia