



The Uniting Church in Australia
Synod of South Australia

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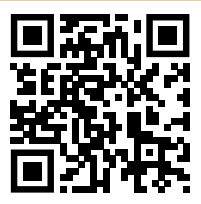
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2026 Uniting Church SA Calendar

The 2026 Uniting Church SA Calendar is now available! You can order yours via the link below and either pick them up from Synod Office or have them mailed to you.

The calendar provides congregations, individuals, and church related agencies with lectionary readings and important dates in the life of the church. This year’s theme is Open doors, open hearts, and we are showcasing just a few of the many examples of hospitality, generosity, and caring service happening throughout the SA Uniting Church, its schools, communities and agencies.

ucasa.org.au/calendars/



From the Moderator

Open hearts, Open doors

As I write this reflection, the 2026 Synod Calendar has just been sent to the printers. The calendar celebrates generosity and hospitality in the life of the Uniting Church. The catchphrase 'Open hearts, Open doors' captures practices to which we are called as followers of Jesus Christ. The pictures each month will hopefully remind and challenge us that generosity is not measured by the size of the gift, but by the posture of the giver. In like manner, hospitality is a commitment to creating a community where every person, familiar or unfamiliar, confident or fragile, feels and knows how much they are valued and loved. Hospitality extends far beyond inviting guests into our spaces, as we are invited to go beyond the doorways of our homes and church communities to be agents of welcome.

The story of Jesus' birth could be described as the story of God opening the door of heaven and stepping into the fragile places of our world. This narrative highlights Bethlehem crowded with travellers, where doors were already shut for the night and space was scarce. In this unexpected and what appears to be a 'less than ideal' setting, God chooses to enter human life. The stable becomes the first sign of the gospel where, despite closed human doors, God still finds a way to open grace, hope, and possibility.

Mary and Joseph have welcomed God's promise with open hearts long before anyone opens a door for them. In this place, God's welcome creates space for the needs of others, with joy-filled love that extends beyond comfort. The shepherds, the ordinary and overlooked ones, respond and become not only recipients, but heralds of God's welcome. Likewise, the magi, having journeyed great distances, are received with open hearts as they present their gifts.

The nativity is more than a birth; it is a doorway and invitation to live with the same openness God shows us. In Christ, God's heart is wide open. As followers of Jesus, we are called to reflect that same generosity: to open our doors to the weary, our hands to the vulnerable, and our hearts to the transforming love that began in Bethlehem and continues in us today.



As we celebrate this Christmas, there will of course be many expressions of joy and affirmations of peace. At the same time, many of us will know people for whom this is not a time of joy or peace. May we never forget those who struggle and who may be experiencing heartache. If we have full fridges and overflowing tables, may we find ways to support those for whom this is a season of scarcity.

May our homes and churches be places of welcome and friendship.

As followers of Jesus Christ, may 'Open hearts – Open doors' be more than a catchphrase as we seek to offer hospitality in ways which bring relief and healing in body, mind, and spirit.

Peter

Rev Peter Morel
Moderator



From the General Secretary

God with us

Joseph is struggling with the right thing to do. His betrothed is pregnant and he knows he is not the father. He decides to do the 'right' thing and not expose her to public humiliation and danger, but rather to "dismiss her quietly". An angel appears to him in a dream, encourages him to take Mary as his wife and quotes from the prophet Isaiah,

"Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us." (Matthew 1:23)

'God with us' is an important theme in Matthew's gospel. Here at the beginning of the gospel it helps us grasp the meaning of the coming of Jesus. The birth, life and ministry of Jesus is God drawing near to us, sharing his life with us, and experiencing the joys and sorrows of human existence. Unlike the popular song from the 1990s, God is not watching 'from a distance' but drawing near to us; becoming one with us.¹

The theme of God with us is picked in Chapter 18 of Matthew's gospel which deals with the formation of Christian community. In verse 20, Jesus says, "where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them". Where people intentionally gather in Jesus' name, we can trust that Jesus, through his Spirit, will be present with us. We can also expect that the same things that occurred in Jesus' life and ministry will happen in our midst when we gather. People will hear God's word to them, they will have insight into Scripture and the world around them, they may sense God's presence and experience healing and forgiveness – not all the time, but we gather with eager expectation. God is with us in community.

The theme is picked up again in the final verse of Matthew's gospel, 28:20. The remaining disciples are gathered around the resurrected Jesus, and he sends them to continue his mission in the world. The commissioning finishes with a promise,

"And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

So, God is with us in mission too. That is, when we live and act with the authority that Jesus has given us to share the good news, baptise people and teach them the way of Jesus, we will know God's presence and power with us. Jesus as Emmanuel – God with us – is a theme that runs from beginning to the end of Matthew's gospel. God is with us in the birth and incarnation of Jesus, when we gather intentionally in Jesus' name in community and when we go in his name in mission.



Samuel Wells, Church of England Minister and theologian, wrote that "'with' is the most important word in the Christian faith".² Wells explores the rich ways that God is with us in the life and ministry of Jesus, and how this continued in the ministry of disciples of Jesus. At its most basic, it is being present and paying attention to the other, being with people. Then the relationship grows as we ponder the depth and mystery of the person before us and delight in God's unrelenting creativity. This is just the beginning of the rich exploration of 'being with' in Wells' excellent book.

As we begin this Advent/Christmas season I invite you to rejoice in the gift of Emmanuel, God with us, in the child Jesus. And as we travel with 'God with us' throughout the year, may you experience Jesus in community, in mission and being with others in Jesus' name.

Rev Philip Gardner
General Secretary



¹ "From a Distance" written by Julie Gold in 1985, and famously released by Bette Midler and Cliff Richard in 1990. According to the Wikipedia page for the song, Julie Gold understands God as "imminent and beneficent" but "from a distance" sounds further away to me!

² Samuel Wells, "Incarnational Ministry: Being with the Church" (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017) p7.

From the Editor

Peace on earth – a call to action!

Each year, as Christmas approaches, we hear the familiar refrain from the Gospel of Luke. It rings out in Christmas Carols over shopping centre speakers; it leaps from Christmas cards:

“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!” (Luke 2:14)

But the peace heralded at Christ’s birth is not sentimental or superficial. It is not a Christmas decoration. Instead, it is deeply rooted in justice and relationship. The Hebrew concept of *shalom* encompasses wholeness, harmony, and right relationships with all people and all things. It is social, spiritual, and ecological.

This angelic proclamation is more than a seasonal greeting – it is a divine summons. ‘Peace on Earth’ is not a passive hope but a call to action. In a world torn by violence, racism and division, the birth of Jesus Christ, God made flesh, is not merely a theological cornerstone but a profound invitation to engage with the brokenness of our time with compassion, hospitality and generosity.

God with us – in the midst of brokenness

The Gospel of John opens with a declaration that reverberates through history, “And the Word became flesh and lived among us ...” (John 1:14).

This is not a distant or abstract God. This is Emmanuel – *God with us* – choosing to dwell in the midst of human vulnerability, poverty, and oppression. Jesus was born not in a palace but in a manger, to a marginalised family under Roman occupation. His birth was announced not to the powerful, but to shepherds – outsiders in their own society.

Through this act, God affirms the dignity of the poor, the displaced, and the forgotten. The Incarnation is a divine protest against systems that dehumanise and a divine embrace of humanity in all its complexity. It speaks directly to the wounded and the marginalised. Jesus consistently crossed social boundaries – touching lepers, dining with tax collectors, speaking with Samaritans, and elevating women in a patriarchal culture.

Paul writes in Galatians, “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus”. (Galatians 3:28)

This is not a denial of difference, but a complete reimagining of community. In Christ, difference is not erased but celebrated. Emmanuel – *God with us* – challenges us to build communities

The Work of Christmas

“When the song of the angels is stilled
When the star in the sky is gone
When the kings and princes are home
When the shepherds are back with their flocks
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among the people,
To make music in the heart.”

– Howard Thurman

where justice and equity are not something to strive for – a utopian dream – but at the heart and *right now*. Churches are called to become sanctuaries of inclusion, where the marginalised are not merely welcomed but at the centre.

The healing of creation

Christ’s birth is not only about human redemption – it is cosmic. The Word became flesh in a specific place, among animals, under the stars, affirming the sacredness of creation. The Incarnation invites us to see the earth not as a resource to exploit, but as a beloved part of God’s story.

Climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental degradation disproportionately affect the poor, women and children. If we are to reimagine ourselves and our communities, we must also reimagine our world. The Incarnation speaks even here, as Colossians reminds us:

“For in him all things in heaven and on earth were created ... and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things.” (Colossians 1:16, 20)

Responding to God’s Christmas invitation

Answering the Christmas invitation – living incarnation – is about being agents of reconciliation, hospitality and welcome in divided communities. It is speaking truth to unjust systems, caring for creation as sacred. It is loving as God loves – radically, inclusively, and courageously.

In every act of justice, generosity and hospitality, every moment of compassion, every step toward healing, Christ is born anew. This is the work of incarnation – making God’s love visible in the world.

Clive

Clive Conway
Editor



Community Connections: Weaving Lives Together

At the *Community Connections: Weaving Lives Together* conference in August, more than 70 people from across the Uniting Church in South Australia came together to explore some different questions: What does it look like when a church community listens to and engages with the needs of the community around them? How do we hear the longings and the hopes of our communities? What does it mean to serve our communities? What does it mean to be church in the communities in which we find ourselves?

We were assisted in our explorations by people who have been asking these questions and exploring possible answers. Rev Dr Karina Kreminski, Mission Catalyst – Formation and Fresh Expressions with the Synod of New South Wales, was our guide from away. Locally, our guides were Peter Riggs from Playford, Haydn Lush from Mount Barker, Peter Cranwell from Blackwood, Nina Luscombe and Carolyn David from The Corner Church in Warradale, Anna Wilson, Graduate Disability and Advocacy Officer, Placements and Safe Church, Allen Edwards (Snr) from Pilgrim, and Frances Bartholomeusz from Semaphore. Each of them shared the thoughts, joys, and struggles of their congregations as they respond to these questions.

Weaving Lives Together was the inaugural conference hosted by the Community Connections Collective (CCC). It was an exciting time of conversation and inspiration that the CCC is eager to host again next year. We hope you will join us.

The CCC is a fledgling network of community ministry practitioners across the United Church in South Australia, who meet regularly to encourage and support one another in community mission and ministry.

If you'd like to know about our field visits where we get to grips with community ministry in particular locations, contact Paul Turley (paulturley@icloud.com) or sign up to the CCC mailing list at communityconnections1.substack.com.



Sign up to the
Community
Connections Collective
mailing list.

"Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could attract more people to attend worship in our church?"



Loxton's Reflective Church Garden

by Nola Schulz

The newly renovated and updated reflective garden next to Loxton Uniting Church was re-launched in October with Devonshire Tea morning in the church Hall.

The celebration was part of the 10-day Riverland Rose and Garden Festival, held from October 10th–19th.

The reflective garden began in the late 1960s when new land was acquired next to the Church. Much thought and planning went into creating a restful and inspiring place to visit.

The garden features plantings mentioned in the Bible including pomegranate, fig and olive trees, a grapevine and some rosemary. Talented volunteers built a stone water well, pathways, and in 2014 a wall mural was completed, depicting plants and animals from the Bible. More colour was added through a wall mural facing the main street and a brightly coloured outdoor seating.

Enthusiasm for the project grew again this year, leading to a new roof on the well, updated signage, a dove on the existing birdhouse, much repainting and some new red and white rose bushes. A vision corner of an early house frontage from biblical times has given the garden a homely feel.

This garden is not locked, and visitors can explore and relax there at any time during the day.

If you'd like to know more about the church's history, please email nolaschulz@gmail.com.



Dean Kerley, Don Good, Jeff Harvey and Ken Ellbourne at the early house.



Renowned home cooks Pam Kerley and Di Viney made scones and helped in the kitchen for the Devonshire Tea.

What is Renewal?

by Rev Dr Tim Hein
Minister at Malvern Uniting Church

"For there is hope for a tree,
if it is cut down, that it will sprout again,
and that its shoots will not cease.
Though its root grows old in the earth,
and its stump dies in the ground,
yet at the scent of water it will bud
and put forth branches like a young plant.
—Job 14:7

The word renewal has traction again. It's worth taking a moment to clarify what it means. It can be used for many things, such as a new project, a new strategic plan, or a even new Minister. Everyone wants renewal, so what is it?

The word only appears a few times in the New Testament, including in Titus 3:4–7:

But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

The Greek word for renewal is *anakainos*, which literally means 'new again'. How can something be new *again*? One can hear an echo of Nicodemus in that question, asking Jesus how a human could possibly be born a second time? That echo is appropriate. Let me give an example to explain.

Next to our church on Cambridge Terrace in Malvern is a century-old home that had fallen into disrepair, barely habitable. The owners had three options:

1. They could demolish it and build a new home.
2. They could do a restoration.
3. They could do a renewal.

What is the difference between options 2 and 3, I hear you ask? Well, a restoration would mean taking it back to the way it was when it was built. You may think that sounds great – until you had to live in it. Consider the kitchen, and the cooling, and the electrical wiring. A restored home would be for nostalgic value only – like those perfectly preserved 1960s houses, with orange and green cupboards. You don't really want a literal restoration.

The owners instead did a renewal. They restored the best of the old stonework and floorboards but also introduced new appliances, wiring, plumbing plus a massive new pool. It's an old house, but also a new house – again!

God is in the renewal business. The entire trajectory of God's plans is the re-creation, re-demption, and re-conciliation of all things – renewal for individual people, and for the whole cosmos. Indeed, the *Basis of Union* says it is the "end in view for the whole creation". God's plan is renewal. Which means it is God's plan for the church too. The purpose of the church is to participate in the mission of God, to "serve that end". Therefore, the church should be in a constant process of renewal, seeking to enter more fully into God's mission.

But too often, we say we want renewal, when in our hearts, we're hoping for a restoration – to take us back to how it was when we first fell in love with it. But God wants to do something new with old things.

How does that happen? This is where we must be careful. Once we're ready and willing, it can be tempting to think that renewal itself comes from participating in mission. But that's a mistake. It doesn't start with us at all.

While a new enthusiasm and focus in mission activity can bring energy to a congregation, especially if they are ready and willing to make some changes, it won't last unless the true source of renewal is rediscovered afresh.

Let's look carefully at the *Basis of Union*, a document Rev Professor Andrew Dutney called a "manifesto for renewal". Paragraph four reads,

The Uniting Church acknowledges that the Church is able to live and endure through the changes of history only because its Lord comes, addresses, and deals with people in and through the news of his completed work. Christ who is present when he is preached among people is the Word of God who acquits the guilty, who gives life to the dead and who brings into being what otherwise could not exist. Through human witness in word and action, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ reaches out to command people's attention and awaken faith; he calls people into the fellowship of his sufferings, to be the disciples of a crucified Lord; in his own strange way Christ constitutes, rules and renews them as his Church.

Everything we need is here. It's Jesus Christ who renews the church, in "his own strange way". That should be a clue to us that our committees and energetic efforts are not enough.

What strange way? It's there in the first sentence, "through the news of his completed work". Jesus renews the church through the gospel.

It's strange because new life comes through death. It is Christ who "acquits the guilty, gives life to the dead and who brings into being what otherwise could not exist". This was the beginning of a new creation, of a new humanity. You can personally experience that renewal. The Holy Spirit is a taste of renewal, an experience of renewal as our faith is awakened to the reality of what Jesus did for us.

Davis McCaughey, the first president of the Uniting Church, and the primary author of the *Basis of Union* reflected on this in his commentary,

"It (the Church) comes into being and continues to be brought into being afresh because that Jesus Christ is preached in the life of the church. It is as the completed work of Jesus Christ is announced to people that the same Jesus Christ comes in judging and renewing power, generation after generation."

Renewal flows from the news that we are saved by Christ's works, not our own. It is an experience of the grace of God, enabled by the Holy Spirit. We are justified, born again, reconciled and renewed by grace, through faith. It's the strange truth, our primary message.

New projects, plans, visions are crucial. But if we want true renewal and we start anywhere but here, we're on the wrong track. From a single individual to the biggest revivals of history – every movement of renewal begins with a rediscovery of the gospel.



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Renew

A huge thank you to everyone who made the recent *Renew* event such a great success - those who worked so hard to make the event possible, and those who attended in such wonderful numbers and participated so enthusiastically.

In the next edition of *New Times* we plan to have more coverage of *Renew*, including people's reflections on the event, and how some of the seeds that were planted are bearing fruit across our Church.

But for now, here are some links to the Keynote sessions and photos of the event.

Keynote videos



Photo gallery



Community Ministry Pathway

By Scott Litchfield

Lecturer in Ministry & Theology, Uniting College for Leadership and Theology

We need distinctive Deacon topics in our formation

I had heard this for many years. Since the renewal of the diaconate in 1992, other than the occasional Deacon intensive, there were very few subjects with a *diakonal* focus taught in our colleges. In 2023 the opportunity arose to develop the Community Ministry Pathway at the Uniting College of Leadership and Theology (UCLT) – a suite of 3 topics with a *diakonal* ministry focus. What emerged as we delivered the first cycle of the pathway is that it wasn't just Deacon candidates who appreciated this community-focused, relationally-shaped approach to ministry. As we explored *diakonal* ministry our students realised community ministry made connections they had never considered in church-based ministry.

"I tended to see a problem, come up with a solution and run a program. Community Ministry taught me to listen to and learn from my community, and from there offer ministry in new ways." [Student]

Each topic includes a 3-day intensive and a number of synchronous online sessions across the semester. The topics connect with ministry practitioners through field visits and curated group and individual conversations that ground our theoretical considerations.

"The best part of the course were the concrete examples we witnessed through the visits" [Student]

"The time with practitioners inspired me to imagine myself doing the ministry we observed" [Student]

The church is facing an uncertain future, and Community Ministry is one way to imagine a different way of offering ministry going forward.

The Community Ministry pathway begins again in Semester One 2026 and is an opportunity for students in formation, lay and ordained ministry agents in placements, and interested church leaders to sharpen their ministry knowledge and skills.



Community Ministry in 2026 begins with

Intensive 15 to 18 February

Online synchronous sessions

Tuesday evenings March 10 and 24, April 14 and 28, and May 5.

Contact UCLT today on **08 8416 8420** or **info@unitingcollege.edu.au**

The UCA Historical Society – on the move in 2025

by Dean Eland

President of the UCA SA Historical Society

For members of the UC SA Historical Society, 2025 has been a year like no other. Achievements included a major upgrade of the History Centre at 44A East Ave, Black Forest, including a new access ramp to a new south side entrance that leads to a welcoming reception and display area. Thanks to floor reinforcement in the main hall, a second compactus unit has been installed, allowing for more workspace and extra storage capacity.

In May, a number of congregations took part in SA's History Festival and we supported the SA Church History Networks Saturday session on the theme, *Christian Churches and social welfare in South Australia 1995–2025*. The AGM in June was hosted by Clayton Wesley congregation and we shared reports and a presentation by well-known SA historian, Dr Geoffrey Bishop.

In October, five members from SA presented papers at the Canberra National UC History Society conference on the theme, *The Church as a prophetic voice in Australian Society: past, present and future*. Assembly president Rev Charissa Suli, and society President, Dr Judith Raftery welcomed those taking part.

A week later, 30 members took part in all all-day bus tour to Meningie and Raukkan. Don Hopgood spoke about government water policies and actions taken to preserve and keep the Murray River, Lower Lakes and the Coorong safe. Local Elder and guide Clyde Rigney shared with us the commitment of his community to sharing the story which began well before George Taplin arrived in 1859.

Our ongoing commitment provides encouragement and support to those undertaking family and local history research. Feature articles in the newsletter have included stories of congregations and church leaders over three centuries! Biographies have focused on evangelists, servants, and innovators, including Gordon Davison, Charles Biggs, Gowan Armstrong, Ann Roberts, Mary Aldersey and Norah Norris. Feature articles about the life of congregations have include Seaton, Elizabeth, Henley Beach, All Saints Plympton, Whyalla, Western Link, Noarlunga and mystery window Burnside.



A plaque remembering George Taplin.



Bus tour arrives at Pt Malcolm on the Coorong.

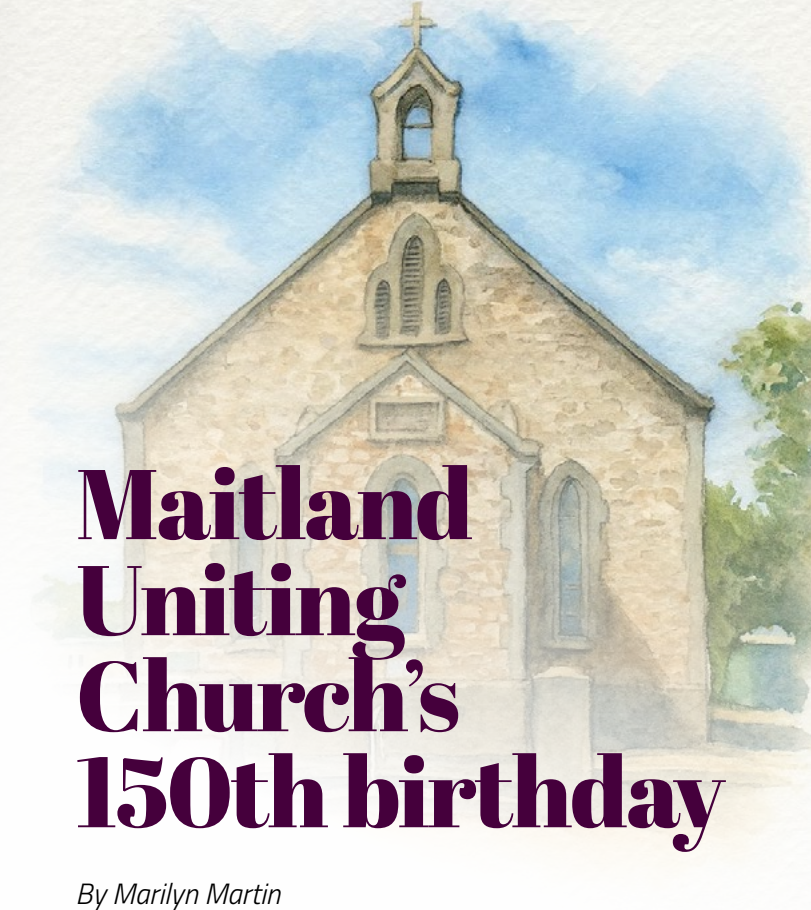
The Society's web page has been updated and links include FAQs (e.g. how do I find a baptism record?), UCSAHS lectures (now digitised on Illuminate), and a brochure that outlines UCA's policy about recordkeeping.

Our Facebook page has been active for more than five years, and thanks to Leanne and Rosemary we are now in our third year of 'On This Day' – daily posts highlighting events, commemorations, celebrations and memories of the life of the Uniting Church (and its predecessor denominations). It is one way we are able to highlight what is in our collection, and to improve the information we have about various places as followers of the page share information with us. <https://historicalsociety.unitingchurch.org.au/on-this-day/>

Our grants program continues to encourage research and publications. We are not stuck in the past but planning for the future, including several projects for the next two years including UCA's Jubilee year 2027.

The continuing ministry of the society is about learning and helping us to see what is best in the past, insights to help us respond to present challenges and what we need to be with us for the life and well-being of those coming after.

*For the love which has sustained us,
Guided us throughout the days;
brought us joy and inspiration,
blessing us in countless ways,
Hear, O God, our heart-felt praise.
– Paul Trudinger*



Maitland Uniting Church's 150th birthday

By Marilyn Martin

Maitland Uniting Church celebrated 150 years of service to the community on October 12th 2025 with the Moderator of the UCA in SA, Rev Peter Morel delivering a very relevant message.

We began the weekend's festivities with a Family Quiz on the Friday night. With the church hall full, there was a lot of chatter and laughter. Rev Jane McDonald did a great job finding some interesting questions to test us. All money raised on the night went to support Friends of Maitland Hospital.

On Saturday we had a car boot sale, which although not quite as successful, had many visitors passing through.

Sunday saw a very well attended worship service with members of the Church Council taking leading roles. This was followed by the Moderator blessing and opening our brand-new kitchen, which was finished just in time for the weekend. We all then enjoyed a beautiful pooled lunch.

A lot of work was done by many of our members, and the effort was worth it for the joy we experienced on Sunday, with many people catching up with old friends.

Malcolm McCauley cut the birthday cake which was made by Marilyn Stock. Helped by Ashley McCauley's design, Will Stock cut out artistic metal designs that now grace the fence along Robert Street.

The new electronic sign was also completed just in time for the weekend thanks to Ted Beare who is so good with all things electronic, and will be used to advertise community events as well as church services.

The future of our Church now depends on what we do to include our community and build on the Christian values of helping and supporting others.



Church Council members with the Moderator and the new metal signs. Catherine Dinnie, Marilyn Martin, Rev Peter Morel (Moderator), Rev Jane McDonald, Malcolm McCauley, Jean Wheare, Lin Morris.



Malcolm McCauley cutting the birthday cake.



The beautiful new kitchen.

Missional Reflections at the Royal Adelaide Show

by Maria

I thoroughly enjoyed my day at this year's Royal Adelaide Show. It was an opportunity to volunteer at the much-loved Red Dove Café and participate in Missional Reflections with Scott Litchfield.

The Red Dove Café was a place of high energy, an abundance of nourishing food and plenty of fun banter. Before the gates opened to the public; the café was abuzz with long queues of hungry exhibitors lining up for their hot breakfasts and barista coffee, before they headed back to tend to their animals and various exhibits. Despite the large crowds, there was a friendly calm among the patrons. They knew they were going to be served a generous, nutritious hot meal at old fashioned prices, and the smiles were free.

Before and after our café shift, a group of us met with Scott for missional reflections and were encouraged to 'Wander and Wonder' around the grounds to take in the vibe, smells, sights, and sounds.

Here's what I observed while I wandered and wondered:

It welcomed all patrons – geographically they come from far and wide – metropolitan, rural and even remote areas. Children squealed with anticipation, wonder and delight. Agricultural students exhibiting their animals and produce walked in groups during their break, enjoying each other's company and dressed in their finest jeans, boots, shirts and iconic Akubra hats, not a mobile phone to be seen in their hands – instead, they were simply enjoying each other's company.

I saw a teaching space in which visitors learned where food and textiles come from, while caring for all of God's creation – the animals, crops, flowers, and gardens.



It highlighted the season of Spring – the show is scheduled on the cusp of Spring, a time of renewal, change, transformation and new beginnings and possibilities.

It captured creation through the medium of art – painting, photography, flower arranging, baking, weaving, knitting and sewing.

Exhibitors were keen to chat when I engaged them, from the dairy farmer who was having breakfast in the animal stall with his family and makeshift country kitchen, to the lady spinning wool, representing the Hand Spinners and Weavers Guild of South Australia, who delighted in telling me her hands were smooth from the lanolin on the yarn she spun all day. I then met a 90-year-old farmer who was delicately clipping his prized Merino ram. He told me it weighed 180 kg of which 25 kg was wool. This ram was a large example of the breed, displaying a combination of wool quality and meat production potential.

It was a joyful and spiritual experience!

This excerpt from Mary Oliver's poem Sometimes summed up my missional reflections of the day:

*Instructions for living a life:
Pay attention.
Be astonished.
Tell about it.*

Sportswashing

The ugly shadow of global sport comes to Adelaide

by Clive Conway



Some of my friends think I'm sports obsessed. Of course, I deny it. I admit that I watch just about every game played by Arsenal's men's and women's teams, spend many of my waking hours scouring the latest football news, and own about a dozen Arsenal shirts. Then there's my beloved Sturt Football Club, and cricket, motor racing, and ... well, maybe they have a point.

Over the last several years, I have become increasingly concerned about the growth of 'sportswashing' in my beloved game of football, and in many other sports around the world, including right here in Adelaide.

If you're not familiar with the term, sportswashing is the practice of using sporting investments – such as sponsoring events or buying clubs – to direct public attention away from unethical conduct. It's often employed by regimes accused of human rights violations, or corporations whose activities might have a negative social or environmental impact.

Bread and circuses

There's nothing new here, of course. The Roman poet Juvenal coined the phrase 'bread and circuses' to critique the Roman regime's method of pacifying the masses through cheap food and gladiatorial entertainment.

In the modern era, Adolf Hitler used the 1936 Summer Olympics in Berlin to portray to spectators and journalists an image of a peaceful, tolerant country, while disguising his plans for territorial expansion and antisemitic agenda.

A more recent example is that of tobacco sponsorship. The popularity of smoking began to decrease in the late 1960s, coinciding (unsurprisingly) with bans on television and radio advertising in many countries, including the UK in 1965, US in 1971 and Australia in 1976. To counter this trend, tobacco companies poured vast amounts of money into high visibility sports sponsorship such as motor racing, golf, tennis, rugby league, Australian Rules Football and cricket.

The word 'sportswashing' was probably first used in 2015 when Azerbaijan hosted the European Games amid criticism of its human rights record. Since then, it has been applied to events like the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia, the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing, and the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar.

English Premier League: A case study in sportswashing

The English Premier League (EPL) is the most watched sports league in the world, with an audience reach estimated at 4.7 billion people. With a global population of 8.3 billion, that means 56% of the planet is a potential audience for attempts at sportswashing.



So far, two major clubs have effectively been taken over by foreign governments:

- **Manchester City** is a member of the City Football Group, which is 81% owned by Abu Dhabi United Group, a private equity company owned by Sheikh Mansour, a member of the Abu Dhabi Royal Family and Vice President of the United Arab Emirates. The government of the UAE have been shown to directly manage the company's accounts. The City Football Group also owns the football clubs Mumbai City, New York City and our own Melbourne City.
- **Newcastle United** is owned by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF), the sovereign wealth fund of Saudi Arabia.

The dire status of human rights in both UAE and Saudi Arabia is well documented and widely condemned by organisations including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the Cato Institute. Both countries have authoritarian regimes which significantly curtail fundamental freedoms, suppress dissent and discriminate against women and LGBTQI+ communities.

Beyond the ownership of these two clubs, sponsorships are also a significant problem in the EPL. My research shows that 11 out of the 20 Premier League clubs are currently sponsored by on-line gambling companies, two by government-controlled gulf airlines and one by a beer manufacturer.

How about Australia?

The English Premier League is a cautionary tale, but here in Australia sportswashing is already a serious issue. The Abu Dhabi United Group that owns Manchester City also owns Melbourne City; mining, resources and fossil fuel companies continue to 'greenwash' their climate impacts by sponsoring AFL clubs such as Fremantle Dockers (Woodside Energy), West Coast Eagles (BHP and Mineral Resources Limited) and our very own Port Adelaide Football Club (Santos).

Equally concerning is the influence of alcohol and gambling on Australian sporting leagues. A 2023 study by the Australian Gambling Research Centre showed that 87% of AFL teams and 96% of NRL teams had official gambling partners. According to figures published in the Australian Financial Review in early 2025, the NRL makes more than \$50 million and the AFL up to \$40 million from agreements with bookmakers. Almost every AFL and NRL club also has 'partnerships' with at least one alcohol or gambling company.

There can be little doubt that the proliferation of alcohol and gambling sponsorship through sport normalises gambling and drinking for children as well as associated domestic violence, criminality and mental health issues. It has also been proven that domestic violence incidents rise measurably around the AFL Grand Final and similar major sporting events.

LIV Golf: a new frontier in sportswashing

The new game in town is LIV Golf, launched on the world in 2022 and once again owned by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund. LIV Golf has disrupted the golf world with its lavish payouts and a party-like atmosphere. In a way it is to golf as 'Big Bash' is to cricket.

Human rights organisations and journalists have condemned LIV Golf as a blatant attempt by the Saudi Arabian monarchy to cleanse its human rights record. Yet right here in South Australia we have hosted a LIV tournament since 2023 and human rights concerns have been largely drowned out by political backslapping and a swell of public enthusiasm. In fact, no LIV Golf tournament in the world has been more successful than the event in Adelaide.



Can anything be done about it?

The good news is, there are many examples of both fans and sportspeople driving change.

In 2022, Australian cricket captain Pat Cummins, a member of the Cricket for Climate group, decided he was no longer comfortable appearing in adverts for Alinta Energy, then the sponsors of Cricket Australia. Although Cummins experienced a backlash from several quarters, his principled stand led to the end of Alinta's involvement in Australian cricket.

In the same year, a single member of the Australian netball team, Indigenous player Donnell Wallam, refused to wear a jersey bearing the logo of Hancock Prospecting, as a protest over comments made by Lang Hancock decades earlier. Other players backed their teammate, leading to Gina Rinehart, Australia's richest person, withdrawing her \$15m sponsorship of Netball Australia.

In recent months, my own beloved Arsenal FC has chosen to end its £10m a year sleeve sponsorship from Visit Rwanda. This decision was greatly influenced by a groundswell of opposition from fans angry over the Rwandan governments ongoing suppression of political opposition and more recent support of the M23 rebel group in neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo.

So what can we do?

1. Own our own complicity. Doing nothing, or continuing to do what we were doing before, can actually be supporting injustice. I'll need to remind myself of that next time I wear a sponsored Arsenal shirt.
2. Spread the word and educate people. Let's make the internet awash with conversations about sportswashing.
3. Engage with the media and journalists and encourage them to shine a light on cases of sportswashing in our own state.
4. Encourage other sports fans to voice their concerns to their clubs and sports organisations, and demand transparency.
5. Challenge prominent sports people in receipt of contracts and sponsorships to look into them at both club and personal level and not just take the easy money.
6. Challenge government decisions through the media and by contacting your local MP. Jesus' ministry was marked by a willingness to speak truth to power and lift up the marginalised.



An amateur football club in Tanzania, playing in Real Madrid shirts, advertising sponsors from whom they receive no income.

Conclusion

Sportswashing poses a profound challenge to the integrity of global sport, and society as a whole. Sport undoubtedly has the power to unite and inspire people, build community and deliver long-term health benefits, but equally sportswashing can normalise or even directly encourage injustice, and health and social problems.

Further reading

[The Guardian: Ethical considerations drowned out as Adelaide's LIV affair continues](#)

[Golf Monthly: Why Is LIV Golf So Controversial?](#)

[The Conversation: What can sport fans do if their team, or league, is being sportswashed?](#)

[The Conversation: The horrifying human cost of big sporting events](#)

[The Conversation: Is Saudi Arabia using 'sportswashing' to simply hide its human rights abuses – or is there a bigger strategy at play?](#)

[House of Lords Library: Sportswashing and English Football](#)

[Human Rights Watch: LIV Golf and Saudi Sportswashing](#)

[Deutsche Welle: Manchester and Newcastle as Sportswashing Targets](#)

[JSTOR: Turning Sportswashing Against Sportswashers](#)

QUICK BITES

UCA Stamp Group

Every week, the volunteers of the UCA Stamp group gather at Synod office to sort through donated stamps and prepare them for sale to raise funds.

This year alone the group's generous and faithful service has seen \$2,000 donated to Frontier Services, \$2,850 to South Pacific School Aid Inc, \$1,000.00 to The Grove UC (Kids Craft Club) and \$1,000.00 to Packing Day.

Well done Alison, Maxine, Colin, Don, Keith, Kaye and everyone else who contributes to this wonderful ministry.



Connect Women's Conference

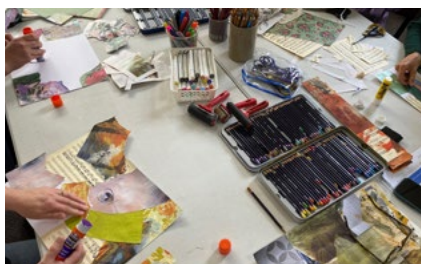


A group of more than 80 women, girls and babies (aged 10 weeks to 92 years old) gathered on **Saturday 11 October** at Westbourne Park UC for the *Connect Women's Conference*. The theme 'For such a time as this' was explored in different ways.

Charis Button from Hope Valley provided encouragement through her teaching across two worship sessions, exploring a passage from Ecclesiastes and looking at Mary, the Mother of Jesus. It was also a joy to have Charis share at all three worship services on the following Sunday at Westbourne Park, on the book and person of Esther.

The conference was full of chatter (old friends connecting and new friendships blossoming), electives (learning, art, power tools, crafting), food (and more food!), resource tables (from eggs to baskets to books and everything in-between) and a prayer/retreat space for quiet reflection.

The wonderful organising team hopes and prays that all in attendance left the conference knowing that God has placed them where they are 'for such a time as this'.



At the Still Point

On December 1, Uniting College of Leadership and Theology hosted renowned medieval historian, poet and theologian **Professor Mark Burrows**. With his profound gift of being able to present gently to a group as if he were talking to you alone, Mark led us through a journey of poetry and mysticism to help us engage with mystery and connect with the 'radiance' of God in our daily lives, and so be better equipped to navigate these fraught times.

Some of our guides along the way included mystics Meister Eckhart, Hadewijch and Julian of Norwich; and poets Friedrich Hölderlin, Hilde Domin, AR Ammons, Adam Zagajewski, Mary Oliver and TS Eliot.

"Don't grow weary, but hold your hand out softly to the miracle, as if it were a bird."

– Hilde Domin



Julia's Dream

Renewal and hope for her Oodnadatta community

by Rev David Houston

I was inspired ... Inspired by the vastness and beauty of this remarkable country ... inspired by what is possible when we come together across all the different parts of our church and beyond with a shared vision and a desire to show Christ's love in the world.

"... A dream has been realised in Oodnadatta, as a new church and garden was opened, brought to life through faith, vision and the joyful collaboration of many hands and hearts."

So wrote Rob Floyd, the National Director of Frontier Services, on leaving this isolated historic town following the opening and dedication of the new church.

Oodnadatta is a small town of mostly First Nations people, located on Arabana land about 1,000 km north of Adelaide. Once a stop on the famous Ghan railway, the town is now bypassed by the train, with the decommissioned rails still embedded in the hard dirt, a reminder of this legacy. Today, it is the start of the famous Oodnadatta Track which attracts people looking for adventure and a chance to experience the inland of this huge continent.

A fair stretch of the road is unsealed, passing through red gibber desert, no trees visible and barely a small shrub or tuft of grass

in sight. Once there, the small town welcomes you with the iconic Pink Roadhouse, and more importantly, one block across, the new church with a large white cross displayed clearly, welded together from steel to withstand the harsh climate. Add to these landmarks, one shop, a small hotel, and a school with fewer than 20 children, and you've quickly covered a large portion of the town's community infrastructure.

Julia's Dream

The Oodnadatta church has been an amazing project, dreamed of by First Nations Bush Chaplain Julia Lennon. For over 20 years, Pastor Julia has faithfully served this community. Without a permanent space, she led Sunday School and services from lounge rooms, sheds and open paddocks, often under harsh outback conditions. Her quiet, engaging presence within the opening service reflected her profound belief in the presence of God within this special event and her community's future. Her singing and sacred dance with the children, her praying, her background story and participation in the service was part of the inspiration of the moment that Rob Floyd describes.

After the service, Pastor Julia said, "This church isn't just a building. It stands on land with deep meaning and serves as a place for healing, connection, culture and country". She was referring to the new church being built on the land where the first Colebrook Home had been established in 1924 by the United Aborigines Mission (UAM). It became the first of the locations where a Colebrook Home received Aboriginal children removed from their families by the policy of the State Government of the day.



While Colebrook moved to Quorn in 1927 and to Eden Hills in 1944, Oodnadatta will always be a special place for the descendants of those affected by that policy. This is the place where separation from family, land and culture began and continued for years. In September of 1934, a two-year-old Lois O'Donoghue, along with her sisters Amy (four) and Violet (six), was taken from their mother Lily who lived in a camp on the outskirts of Oodnadatta, and she would not see her mother again for 30 years. Lois (or Lowitja) refers to the deep sadness that 'forced separation' brought to her people in her biography *Lowitja* written by Stuart Rintoul. She describes the harsh removal conditions that existed for all Aboriginal and half-caste children from 1909 under the Department for Aborigines established by the South Australian Government.

Pastor Julia's belief is that 100 years later, the new church will be a place of healing and restoration for her people. She said, "This is sacred ground and now it's a place where people can heal, belong and believe again ... We've walked a long road to get here and now our young people will carry it forward".

Reflecting on the journey across the 20 years of her ministry, she went on to say, "We never imagined we'd have a building. We just knew we needed a place to gather, to worship and to hold community events. Now that it's here, it feels like hope and a home for the future. Even for locals who aren't churchgoers, they know it is a place of peace and community where all are welcome".



Helping the dream come true

The South Australian Regional Council of Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) believed in Julia's dream and began raising funds 10 years ago, and, along with the SA Synod, managed the project from inception to completion. Frontier Services has supported the project by funding Julia's ministry and accessing grants provided by philanthropic partners who were inspired by her vision. This additional funding has allowed for a kitchen on the side of the church, a satellite link and four computers for the community to access and learn, and a community garden as a place of gathering, sanctuary and learning about food plants and native flora – an actual oasis in the desert and a good and ready resource for a deserving people.



The service

The service was a mix of unhurried, ordered segments of welcome, story, prayer, praise, scripture and proclamation. Pastor Julia welcomed First Nations people from many places, and led her young people in a sacred dance with song and prayer. Ian Dempster, Support Officer to the SA Congress of UAICC, welcomed people from near and far, and described some of the great background stories of preparation for the day. Rev Ken Sumner, the State Development Officer of UAICC in South Australia, presented the greeting message of the Rev Mark Kickett, the Assembly UAICC Chairperson, centering on the words from Isaiah 43:19, "The Lord says, behold, I am doing a new thing in this place". They were words of inspiration for what was happening in Oodnadatta.

Bush Chaplain Rev Sunil (Sunny) Kadaparambil from the Parkin-Sturt Patrol moved seamlessly behind the scenes to ensure the Service orders and microphones were ready for the participants on what was a hot and windy day. The congregation was seated under three very large shade spaces set in place the day before.

The inspiring message from the Assembly President, Rev Charissa Suli, was full of affirmation and encouragement for this new moment in the Oodnadatta community and the wider Uniting Church family. Speaking of Pastor Julia and her faith community, the President said, "For twenty years they have waited, they have hoped and they have kept the faith. And Oodnadatta I want you to know this day is not just about a building but a people and a promise and the presence of God. And I want you also to know you are inspiring the whole nation

to take seriously what it means to walk together, to tell the truth, and to seek justice, and so weave Christ's love across cultures and boundaries.

"Indeed, this Church is not just a building but a sign of who God is. God is a shepherd who walks with you, a hero who restores you, and a creator who brings life from dry land. Friends, as we look to the next generation, we must also reflect on what it means for us as a Church and as Christians, locally and nationally, to truly walk together. This is a holy moment for the whole Church."

The celebration of Holy Communion carried a rich image of a congregation coming from the four corners of the country. People with great love and interest in this moment were recognising together the presence of Christ and the 'new thing' God was doing in Oodnadatta. The SA Moderator, Rev Peter Morel and the Assembly President, shared the conduct of this special observance.

Remember, there is a story to this place

Pastor Julia spoke about turning the earlier 'forced removal of children' history around by seeing both the new church and garden as sacred spaces that will provide hope in the healing and connection with culture and country that will be felt by all who come and spend time in this 'special place'.

Rob Floyd described how, in the week preceding the opening of the church, Rev Sunny led a team of Frontier Services' wonderful Outback Links volunteers in establishing an arid land garden





with built shaded areas, fire pits and wicking food crop garden beds. The garden also has spaces for recreation, storytelling, cultural gatherings and reflection – particularly between Elders and young people. As he witnessed the children doing some of the early planting he said, “This is what Frontier Services is all about; walking alongside remote communities, supporting local leaders and cultural histories and helping people build the future they both desire and deserve.” The Outback Links volunteers plan to visit again next year to work with the local men and set up a reticulated watering system.

Sustained SA Synod, Mission Fellowship and Congress support

Ian Dempster, the SA Congress’s Resource Officer, has described the spirit and intent of the commitment of South Australian congregations in their support ‘to make all things new’ for this wonderful community. Members of the Mission Fellowship Group gifted 80 chairs and multi-purpose folding tables. Members from Blackwood made the lectern of Acacia Blackwood timber; from Noarlunga – the Communion Table; and a member from Rosefield has made a chalice and plate for Communion.

With the immediate future in mind the Congress will be able to employ a part-time men’s worker and a part time youth and children’s worker, thanks to the generosity of the SA Synod’s Uniting Foundation. The men’s worker will mix and meet with the men in the town and create a team to look after the community garden with the children from the school. And, among the

tomatoes, fruit and olive trees, native shrubs and bushes, there will be a separate area set aside for a monument and fountain as a place of reflection. When the fountain is built in the next stage by the Outback Links team, the waters will flow as people come, think, pray and find healing.

A joyful summary reflection.

On his return to Adelaide, the SA Moderator, Rev Peter Morel said, “I’m deeply grateful and privileged to have participated in the opening of the Oodnadatta Church, meeting Pastor Julia and working with the Outback Links work party on the wonderful garden ‘gathering space’. It was a significant time of community and joyful celebrations as we partnered across the life of the local community, UAICC, Frontier Services, Assembly, and SA Synod. For every story told there are many people, including the SA Synod Property Team, who contributed to bringing this project to fruition”.

A version of this article appeared in the SA Uniting Church History Society Newsletter, September 2025.





Mission as God's Wounded Love

A theological reflection on Palestine, justice, and resurrection faith

by Rev Dr Paul Goh

In a world where bombs still fall and innocent lives are lost – many of them women and children – the cry of those who refuse to abandon their land or their hope echoes with profound theological power.

At the recent General Council of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) in Chiang Mai, Rev Dr Allan Boesak lifted this cry, speaking of Palestinians who, in the face of relentless destruction, choose to stay. "To stay," they say, "is to love."

This act of staying is not passive endurance. It is a declaration of resurrection faith – a witness that perseveres amid wounds. To stay is to plant trees, raise children, heal wounds, and welcome strangers even in devastation. It is to follow Christ the Peacemaker, whose peace is not quietism but the fierce labour of liberation, justice, and mercy. In the places where Christ still suffers with the wounded of the world, the Church is called to be salt that heals and light that refuses to be extinguished.

Boesak drew a powerful parallel with the South African struggle against apartheid, reminding us that the global Reformed family once heard and responded to those cries. Now, he urged, the same courage and obedience are demanded in the face of Palestinian suffering – "greater than what we endured in South Africa".

A persevering witness of wounded love

In that spirit, the WCRC General Council adopted a series of resolutions that express a persevering witness of wounded love:

- **Reaffirming the Leipzig Declaration**, which insists that the integrity of Christian faith and praxis is at stake in the face of injustice in Palestine.
- **Naming the continued oppression** of the Palestinian people as a sin against both God and humanity.
- **Rejecting Christian Zionism** as it is fundamentally evil, racist, and a travesty to the Gospel. (Christian Zionism which is understood "as a political-theological ideology that distorts the biblical witness whenever it justifies violence

or occupation in the name of God, while making a clear distinction between this and Judaism with which we share the First Testament and the prophetic values of justice and compassion”).

- **Confessing that any theological justification of oppression** is a distortion of God’s truth and justice.
- **Calling on the State of Israel** to act in accordance with UN resolutions, human rights, and international law.
- **Urging both the Israeli government and Hamas** to turn from violence and seek restorative justice, repentance, and reparations.
- **Appealing to the international community** to support Gaza’s reconstruction and the healing of trauma, including humanitarian work by member churches and Palestinian partners.
- **Committing to work for just peace and reconciliation** across the region in partnership with ecumenical and international organisations.

Quoting Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Boesak reminded us that to stand with God and God’s people is to draw near to God’s light, where “our joy is hidden in suffering and our life is in death”. This is the paradox of God’s wounded love – that divine solidarity is not distant compassion but cruciform perseverance.

Persevering in our own context

As followers of Jesus, we are called to listen deeply to these cries, to reflect on our own complicity and silence, and to act in solidarity with those who suffer. In the spirit of our Covenant with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress and our commitment to justice, we must ask, “what does it mean for us to ‘stay’ with those who are suffering in Palestine? How do we embody resurrection faith in our own context?”

The WCRC reminds us that “mission continues to be disruptive and transformative, a hope and a future that calls the Church to address the growing needs of the world around us. Mission is the Church in action. Through our commitment to mission, we live out the call to be disciples of Jesus Christ, bringing food to the hungry and water to the thirsty, freedom to the captive, liberation to the oppressed, binding the wounds of the broken-hearted, the Church bringing the good news to the poor.” (Hope Beyond the Tears – Vision Message adapted by the 27th General Council of the WCRC).

This is the shape of mission as God’s wounded love – costly, courageous, and compassionate. It is not a strategy of success but a vocation of solidarity. It is the Church’s call to be present where the world is hurting, to proclaim that even in the shadow of death, life is rising.

To stay is to love. To love is to resist. And to resist is to persevere in our witness that even in suffering, the land is holy and all life is sacred.



Introducing the 2025 Synod Standing Committee

We continue our series introducing the 2025 Synod Standing Committee, and getting to know the gifts and talents of its members.



Rev Elissa Inglis
Generate Presbytery

Where do you worship?

Sunset Rock Uniting Church

What's your current role?

Minister

Why did you want to join Standing Committee?

This is my second consecutive term of serving on SSC. The first term was about gaining a broader understanding of the Uniting Church, seeing how the wider body works together and how decisions made at that level shape ministry across our communities. In this second term, my focus is less on learning and more on serving. With a clearer sense of how the Committee operates and what the Church needs, there's a real sense of

being called to contribute, to offer experience, perspective, and prayerful discernment to help the Church listen to the Spirit and move faithfully into the future.

What are you looking forward to on Standing Committee this year?

Serving on the SSC is really about the opportunity to serve the wider Church and be part of discerning God's direction for us in South Australia. It's an opportunity to support congregations, ministries, and leaders, and to help ensure our decisions reflect our calling to mission, justice, and community. It's also exciting to work alongside others who are passionate about the Church's future, to learn from their experiences, and to contribute collaboratively as we prayerfully seek the Spirit's guidance in our decisions

What are the key issues you think the Uniting Church in SA is facing?

I think one of the big challenges for the Uniting Church in South Australia is that a lot of our congregations have aging membership and leadership. There's incredible faith, wisdom, and commitment in that, but it also means many people are carrying a heavy load after years of faithful service. At the same time, most congregations are not seeing as many younger or newer people stepping into leadership roles, which makes it difficult to sustain the same level of activity, creativity, and energy for mission. It's not just about numbers, it is also about how we disciple, nurture and release new leaders who can help shape the future of the church.



Jeff Wright
Presbytery of Southern SA

Where do you worship?

I worship at Meningie Uniting Church where life is better by the Lake. The Meningie congregation has not had a minister in placement for 23 years, so we identify ourselves as an all-member ministry congregation.

What's your current role?

I am currently congregation and leadership team Chairperson along with being on the POSSA Standing Committee and here on SSC. Being in a small country town I am involved with community and sailing club commitments too.

Why did you want to join Standing Committee?

Throughout the years of being a farmer I have always tried to advocate for rural and regional communities. We often seem to have a voice that is not heard. When nominations for Synod Standing Committee came around, I thought, that's not for me but God kept prompting me to put my name forward so here I am!

What are you looking forward to on Standing Committee this year?

It has been a steep learning curve which I have enjoyed. The complexity and management that is required to keep all the areas of ministry of the Uniting Church functioning has been eye opening. To allow us to continue as disciples of Christ in the mission that he has called us to there are legal, regulatory and community standards that must be adhered to and we need people to make sure we are all good.

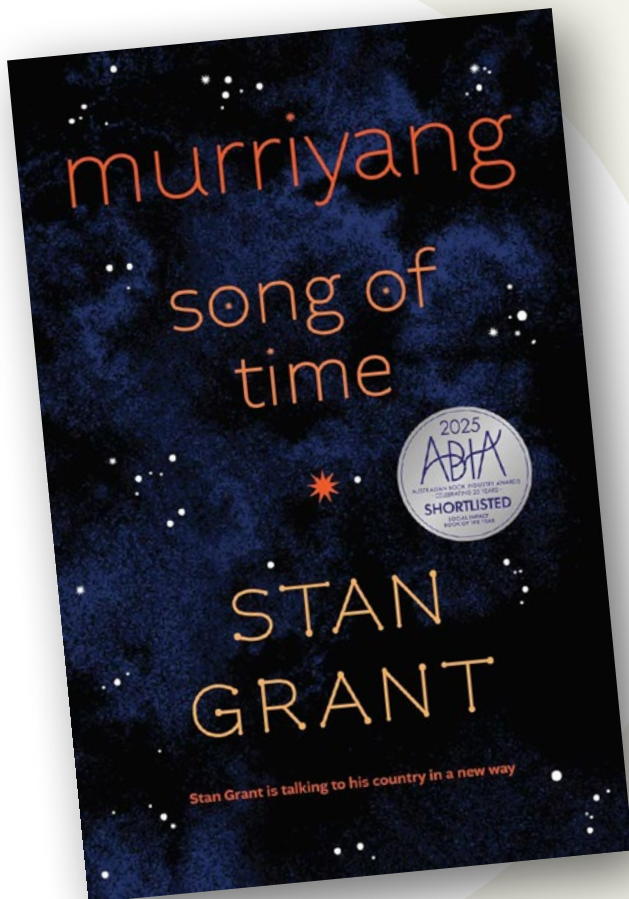
What are the key issues you think the Uniting Church in SA is facing?

Even though it has been a few years since moving from the one presbytery to the three we have today, we still seem to be sorting out what's what in the zoo, but as we communicate and understand each other's roles, we look forward to a mutually efficient way of being a part of God's great mission of love, forgiveness and salvation to the world that will bear fruit. Our urbanised and social media society, ageing church members, the lack of building maintenance over the years, different ways of ministry, and succession planning are all issues that I see will need to be addressed in the near future.

BOOK REVIEW

Murriyang by Stan Grant

Reviewed by Graham Brice



We think history is something grand, but it is very small; small enough to fit into a teardrop.

Offered as a “psalter – a Wiradjuri Book of Prayer”, **Murriyang** (Bundy 2025) is an invitation not just to walk in the shoes of a remarkable public figure who has found insight and solace in his Wiradjuri Christian life – but to examine our journey as ‘second peoples’; to broaden our understanding of God.

In *Murriyang*, Stan Grant offers us this remarkable gift: a taste of *Baiyaame* (God) and *Murriyang* (sky-world or heaven). In so doing, he gives us a glimpse into God’s work over aeons with his Wiradjuri people.

A ‘gift’ dripping in rich poetic and philosophical vignettes, this is a cutting critique of everything that underpins our comfortable modern lives, grounded in immense gratitude for his beloved Wiradjuri father, his *Baabin*. *Baabin* in turn grounded him in God, in the Wiradjuri’s inheritance that mysteriously survived the frontier wars: *Yindyamarra*, a way of “being Wiradjuri: quiet, respectful, kind and forgiving”. His love for his father is palpable and shapes the entire book.

This, and the rich stories unique to each chapter, suggests *Murriyang* could be a source of daily meditation and faith expansion as Stan hopes, a launching pad for reflection especially for Second Persons in this ancient sacred land we call Australia. In all humility we could at least admit we have lots to learn.

Grant’s ‘deep listening’ arose out of his reconnection with sacred Country; and Catholic mass too has at times been a vehicle for mystical encounters. However, we learn not just about ‘ancient culture’ per se, but of *Mowaljarlai* who ‘haunts’ him with his encapsulation of an erased story: the fiendish axe of colonisation. “And that is hard to bear ... With no past, no future”, as David Mowaljarlai had written, illustrating with painful insight a view of philosopher Simone Weil, quoted at the beginning of the book: “We are abandoned in time. God is not in time”. Elsewhere, Grant had put it this way – it isn’t the absence of God in the modern age that is the problem; it is the absence of the absence of God, and all the gods we have erected to fill the void.

Thus, with a PhD in Theology, Grant erupts in a raw, almost visceral critique of modernity and its reliance for its very sustenance on ‘time’. For he pitches time as the pre-eminent social construct of the post-Enlightenment era; the era that built

the Empire that came with ill intent to erase aeons of the Spirit's unfathomable presence with First People (as recognized in the UC Constitution Preamble: the Spirit was always in this land). This is not a point that Stan labours, but his view is profound. "Today we see the desultory culmination of the combined genius of Rousseau, Hume, Kant and Hegel in the unimaginative posturing of modern humans". Ouch!

For God was seen to leave the world when time appeared: "time is the thief of eternity".

It is impossible to do justice to such an enthralling, inviting book which demands to be referenced for decades to come if we are not to continue to "live the lie", as Stan puts it. Readers may not agree with everything, but isn't that the case with any commentator of our times, and especially one who fearlessly speaks from a broken heart? A few quotations which stopped me in my tracks, to whet your appetite:

Time ... could be marching us to extinction. ... We were made to kiss the Devil's hand with every tick of the clock.

The love God promises is astonishing: love that empties us. It does not fill us.

We think history is something grand, but it is very small; small enough to fit into a teardrop.

Land breathes us in to being.

God is everywhere. I am God my father is God my mother is God the stranger at the door is God ... be still and know that I am God (the last, from Stan's poem Scarred Grace).

Oh, and this one: "Australia is a contradiction – the black milk I drink at dawn".

This is a book you will drop in astonishment over one sentence; that last one was such for this reader. However, hopefully the bigger impact will be to ease us into hope-filled, 'deep listening', and to reflect on the land beneath our feet, and God's reconciling work throughout and beyond our churches. Surely, the Wiradjuri were/are gifted with prophets calling us to forgiveness and fairness; and to hear their lament. Does that sound familiar? What a gift to 'followers of the Way' in a nation that would rather forget and move on!

Murriyang was Shortlisted for the 2025 Queensland Literary Awards, The University of Queensland Non Fiction Book Award and the 2025 ABIA Awards, Social Impact Book of the Year

Letter to the Editor

Clive,

A belated thanks to you for an outstanding article that you prepared and printed in the New Times spring edition, to advertise our Church's 140th Anniversary of Service to God and the Community on Sunday 7th December 2025. The Ministry Team and Congregational members were thrilled.

Can't thank you enough. To God be the glory.

Kind regards and Grace and Peace from our Lord Jesus Christ,

Heather Dunstan on behalf of the Port Broughton Uniting Church Ministry Team and Congregation.



Send your letters to:

engagement@sa.uca.org.au
or GPO Box 2145,
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FROM THE VAULT

New Times



View the
solutions
to the
crossword

10 ways to help your new minister settle in

by George Iles

When a minister moves to a new parish it is a time of major readjustment for the whole family. Close friendships have been virtually suspended for the minister, spouse and their children. A loving parish will be well aware that there is a need for support and understanding. Here are some suggestions:

1. Resist being influenced by first impressions.

Beginning in a new parish is like going on a honeymoon with someone you don't know. Instant intimacy and rapport are not normally possible. Rather it will take time for the kind of adjustment to take place wherein parish and minister are at their best.

2. Pray for your new minister and family

Prayer is the most spiritual form of loving. Pray for God's enabling grace to help the new family feel at home. And let them know they are being prayed for.

3. Don't compare ministers

If you do, keep it to yourself. It will not help a minister to be reminded that a predecessor always put out the chairs before a meeting. Nor will it help if a momentum builds up in the congregation which emphasises a new minister's superiority or inferiority to the predecessor.

4. Don't lobby

Your minister is here to serve God first, not you. They can best be helped to do that as they see situations from their own angle, despite the importance you may attach to a certain matter.

5. Accept your own grief and that of your minister

Usually both are going through a sense of loss. Recognise this. It will help to ease tensions when you see why you are irritated when they do something differently.



6. Accept that God has sent you the minister you have.

Every pastor, by God's grace, has a ministry. She/he is God's gift to you. Discover why.

7. Ensure that financial matters are organised

Have your treasurer establish, early on, how your minister wishes to be paid and how often. Don't leave it to the minister to hunt around for signatures or be dependent on whether a key signatory is away on holidays.

8. Make brief visits

Call and say hello. Bring a preserve or something to signify your love and interest as well as helping to stock the larder.

9. Reflect on what tasks undertaken by your previous minister could be handled by lay persons.

For example, most ministers were not trained as typists or duplicator operators. There may be someone who would be pleased to take on a job which will help free your pastor a little more for ministry.

10. Establish important lists

An up to date parish register should be available. It should list names, addresses, phone numbers, membership status, levels of involvement in the church, and any gifts it would be helpful to know about. At least as important is a list of all church families which have had a bereavement over the past three years.

Any parish that tries to assist their new minister in these kinds of ways will not only be helping their pastor. They will also be helping to lay a foundation for a healthy shared ministry.

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George Iles is a Uniting Church minister from SA, at present studying at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. This article is re-printed with permission from "On the Move," published by the Joint Board of Christian Education.

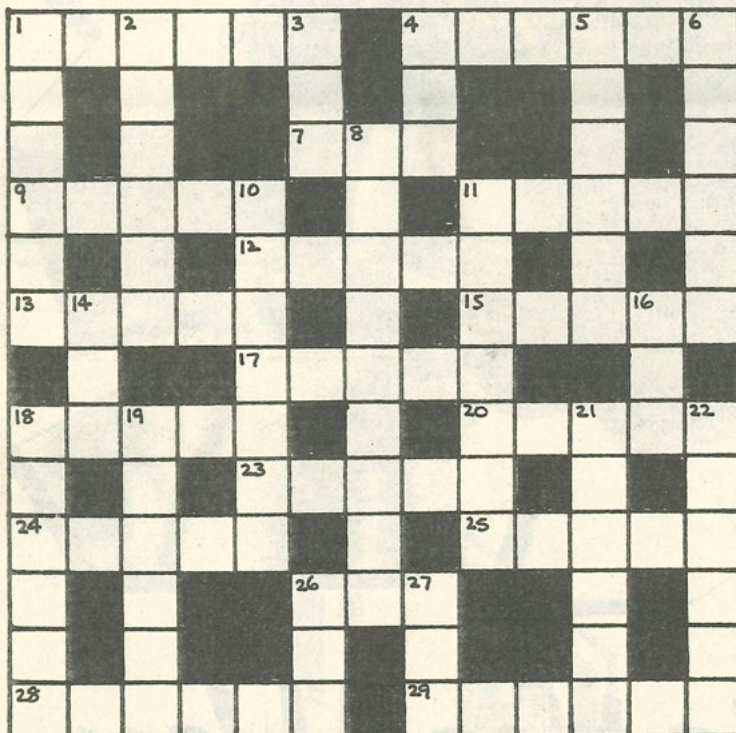
NB: Rev Dr George Robert Iles died in 2009 and is much missed.

ACROSS

- 1 Elijah's home ground (1 K. 17:1).
- 4 Biblical river.
- 7 Subside.
- 9 Plod.
- 11 Creator.
- 12 This tooth is no good for chewing (Prov. 25:19).
- 13 The end.
- 15 Like a false accusation (Prov. 25:18).
- 17 Often linked with Tyre.
- 18 Allow.
- 20 Objects of worship.
- 23 One of the cities of Judah (Josh. 15:52).
- 24 This room was the Most Holy Place (2 Ch. 3:8).
- 25 River flowing from Eden (Gen. 2:13).
- 26 Native of (suffix).
- 28 Oil used in beauty treatment (Esth. 2:12).
- 29 Hezekiah dug one (2 K. 20:20).

DOWN

- 1 Forbidden by the Law (Lev. 19:28).
- 2 Beastly.
- 3 First lady?
- 4 The epitome of patience?
- 5 Blacker.
- 6 Gate that leads to life (Matt. 7:14).
- 8 A heavy drinker's eyes (Prov. 23:29-30).
- 10 A human hand wrote on it (Dan. 5:5).
- 11 Sense.
- 14 Some people's assessment of Jesus.
- 16 The foolish girls ran out of it (Matt. 25:1-13).
- 18 Father of Ahimelech (1 Sam. 22:9).
- 19 Kind of labour not favoured by men of Tekoa (Neh. 3:5).
- 21 Father of Pagiel (Num. 1:5-16).
- 22 Settled the matter of Ruth and Boaz (Ruth 4:7-8).
- 26 Southern city of Judah (Josh. 15:29).
- 27 Consume.



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Placements Finalised as at 5 December 2025

Rev Scott Cadman (Baptist) to Seacliff UC from 1 January 2026

Rev Dr Tim Hein as Uniting Communities Minister of Public Theology, Uniting Communities (0.5) from 1 January 2026

Rev Dr Cathy Lambert, as UCLT Director of Pastoral Theology & Ministry Practice from 1 January 2026

Rev Craig Schultz to Brighton UC (0.8) from 1 January 2026 and Pool Ministry Committee (0.2) from 1 November 2025

Rev Beth Seaman as Synod Staff Chaplain (0.1) from 1 January 2026

Advertised Placements: Please see Positions Vacant for more details: sa.uca.org.au/uc-positions-vacant

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Pilgrim UC

Wimala Presbytery

Wesley UC Kent Town (0.5)

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