



The Uniting Church in Australia
Synod of South Australia

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From the Guest Editor

When the Synod's former Executive Officer, Engagement, Bridget Ransome stepped down from her role late last year, I was very privileged to be asked to be the Guest Editor for the first edition of *New Times* for 2025. It has certainly been a challenge, and I had big shoes to fill – but I am pleased to present a collection of articles celebrating new life and new beginnings in the Synod of South Australia this year.

In this issue, we hear about Rev Rob Cartridge's first few months since ordination, the establishment of the new church plant Encounter Henley, the amazing work of the Inter-Faith Matters Forum, and many more initiatives from around our Synod. It was also a pleasure to chat to President-elect of the Uniting Church in Australia, Rev Dr Paul Goh, who shared some key insights into his preparation to lead our church, commencing in 2027.

As we approach March 2025, we begin preparations to enter the season of Lent and a time of reflection, prayer, and discernment in our own spiritual journeys. Rev Dr Sarah Agnew meditates beautifully on this in her reflection on the valleys and shadows which Lent brings to us. Our next edition of the *New Times* will debut a week before Easter, and we hope to provide thought-provoking stories and articles to challenge and surprise you.

Blessings to you and your loved ones as we begin 2025!

Emelia Haskey
Candidate for Minister of the Word
Synod of South Australia

Message from the Moderator

Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?

Isaiah 43:19

I wonder how you feel about the beginning of a new year.

For me, I have become resistant to the constant pressure to make New Year's resolutions which inevitably lead me to a place of heightened and unrealistic expectations. Such resolutions often fail because they can be vague and lack a clear plan. Ultimately, they often result in feelings of failure and discouragement.

A resolution to do something about our physical, emotional and spiritual selves requires ongoing commitment to forming new and life-giving habits. A resolution encourages us to focus on our own efforts and courage to follow through. It is as though the New Year's resolution is mostly about us - our willpower and determination.

I wonder whether, rather than focusing on the 'new things' we can do, we might become more attentive to recognising and remembering that it is God who can make all things new. (Revelation 21:5)

Rather than the focus being on our own initiative, we would seek to become more aware of God's loving initiative in us, our families, friendship circles, workplaces and wider communities. In doing so, we are therefore encouraged to embrace this year with hearts open to God's guidance, seeking to embody Christ's love in every interaction.

As we reflect in this issue of *New Times* on new things which God is doing, we can carry forward lessons from the past and give thanks for the breadth of ministries and service across the life of the Uniting Church. In our worship, witness, and service, we are reminded of the unique gifts each member brings to the body of Christ, as together we are called to be people of hope, compassion, and reconciliation.



“In our worship, witness, and service, we are reminded of the unique gifts each member brings to the body of Christ as together, we are called to be people of hope, compassion, and reconciliation.

The challenges of the past year - whether personal, communal, or global - will have shaped us. They have most likely tested our resilience and hopefully strengthened our reliance on God's provision and grace. As we look ahead, let us ask how we might build on these experiences to deepen our awareness of God's love. How might we better serve those around us, advocate for justice and care for God's creation, whilst all the time recognising God's initiative and resolve?

I pray God's joy-filled blessings to you all in this new year.

May it be a year filled with love, faith, hope, and abundant grace.

Rev Peter Morel
Moderator

Message from the General Secretary

Rev Philip Gardner

In the lead up to the next Synod Meeting in 2026, we will be conducting conversations about a range of important issues related to the health and wellbeing of the Uniting Church in South Australia.

We will capture much of this dialogue in what might be called a Strategic Plan. It will be an opportunity for Synod and Presbytery leaders to hear what is going well in our communities, what dreams and visions God is planting in people's hearts, and the issues which are challenging for people.

We anticipate that we will be holding conversation sessions in regional areas over the next 18 months, so please look out for invitations to attend them. We will also hold focused sessions on more specific issues. We will give notice of these discussions and invite participation. Topics are likely to include:

- Developing processes for helping people grow as followers of Jesus.
- Practices that help develop leaders in our communities.
- Thinking through the shape of Rural and Regional Ministry in the future.

There are also conversations occurring nationally, such as the next steps in the Act 2 Project process. These include:

- Rethinking expectations of congregations to remove some of the administrative burden and release leaders for mission (Pathway 1)
- How we might continue developing and deepening our theological culture (Pathway 2)
- How we collaborate and work together nationally (Pathway 3).



“Learning to listen and speak with grace and insight is an important Christian practice.”

Other important national conversations will be taking place around renewing the covenant between the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress and the Uniting Church. How we respond to Climate Change and work towards Net Zero is also a national issue.

All these questions and more involve thinking through what it means to follow Jesus in our world. How can our lives, both individually and communally, reflect the good news embodied in Jesus of Nazareth?

I imagine that some of you will be impatient with all my talk about conversation! “Just more talk!” you might say. Dialogue on critical issues, seeking to listen to one another, and to the Spirit in our midst, does make a difference. Learning to listen and speak with grace and insight is an important Christian practice. But we don't have to wait for 2026 to put some of the key ideas and themes into practice. Please pray for us as we talk and listen together – and keep an eye out for opportunities to join with us.

Lenten Reflection:

Valleys and Shadows

By Rev Dr Sarah Agnew

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death ...

Well, that is how we could view this whole thing called life, isn't it? Lived in death's constant shadow, as a threat to be feared? So much messaging in our world seems to play to our fears of death and dying, or at least ageing, especially in order to sell us something.

What if we consider the Celtic Tree of Life, with its roots and branches connected in a circle? Above and below are connected, light and dark are connected: life and death are both part of the great cycle of life.

The Christian calendar offers us the gift of seasons, each with its particular focus. The season of Lent invites us to focus on the shadows, on the hard parts of life we might prefer to ignore. With such themes, and with Ash Wednesday's remembrance of our dustiness and our inevitable return to ash or dust, it could become a very uncomfortable season, where we inhabit an oppressive darkness.

However, let's remember the symbol of the Tree of Life: the cycle, the circle of life that includes death, darkness and shadows. If darkness belongs with and not against light, I wonder how that might change our journey through it? If valleys are part of the mountains, not their opposites, can we find gift in the depths as much as in the heights of mountaintops, so symbolic of epiphanies and closeness to God?



Sarah's stole with a Celtic Tree of Life stitched by Chris Mitchell

*For, yea, though I walk through valleys and shadows, **you are with me...***

Life is all of it: the valleys and the mountains, the nights and the days, the shadows and the lights that create them. The seasons are the gift of the Christian calendar, with its invitations to pay attention to the hard parts of life we want to avoid.

How will we embrace the invitation from the season of Lent this year? I pray we will pay attention to the fullness of life, and rather than giving into the temptation to skirt around the valley of shadows, find that God is with us as we travel through it.

Sarah has composed a study guide for Lent:
Through the Valley. Studies and Meditations on the Psalms for Lent

Available from sarahagnew.com.au/shop
and wayzgooseprint.com.au/s/shop



Journeying Forward, Building Bridges

Getting to Know President Elect Paul Goh

By Emelia Haskey

In July 2024, at the 17th National Assembly of the Uniting Church, Rev Dr Paul Goh was elected as the incoming President of the Uniting Church, serving from the 18th Assembly in 2027. For Paul, becoming President-elect is a monumental role in the life of the church, especially as we will celebrate 50 years of being the Uniting Church in Australia in 2027.

It was a privilege to chat to Paul about how he is preparing on his journey to the Presidency, his hopes and dreams for the future, and how his life has changed since he was elected. We sat down at the Uniting College for Leadership and Theology, where Paul currently works as a Mission Activator in the Mission Resourcing Team.

Having been ordained in South Korea, he became fascinated by the Uniting Church in Australia whilst studying in the USA. This fascination has led him to become a passionate advocate for the Uniting Church and a leader in ecumenism as well as in the development of an intercultural church.

"After reading the Basis of Union, I realised that this is the church I could come into wholeheartedly, it was so compelling. I felt a sense of God calling me in, and it happened outside of Australia!"

Paul is deeply appreciative of the support he's received since his election but is also aware of the magnitude of the role.

"The implications weigh very deeply on me in my own personal life as well as my public life. After 1 or 2 months I started to realise that this election is not just for my term, but it requires a 9-year commitment (3 years as President-elect, 3 years as President, and 3 years as ex-President), so I need to see, dream, and develop my network of connections across Australia and internationally," he reflects.

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"I believe I need to be willing to offer my gifts, my leadership – theological leadership – into what God is calling us to be on our 50th anniversary, and what the Holy Spirit is saying to us as a Church in terms of spiritual, institutional, and congregational renewal. How do we respond to the call of God in new contexts?"

For the last 6 years, Paul has served as the Justice and CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) Multicultural and Cross-Cultural Officer, working towards Synod resolutions such as Justice for Asylum Seekers, Raising the Age of Criminal Responsibility, putting together a Synod Climate Action Plan, and launching an Intercultural Neighbourhood Congregation Pilot Project, *Awaken Adelaide*.

Paul also keeps busy with his love affair with reading. He's currently been inspired by Episcopal Bishop of Washington Marian Edgar Budde's book *How We Learn to Be Brave*, and Stan Grant's *Murriyang: Song of Time*. The difficult political climate has also been on his mind, as he reads about political extremism online in Naomi Klein's book *Doppelganger*, and the nature of violence in South Korean author Han Kang's books *The Vegetarian* and *Human Acts*.

Apart from wisdom gained from reading, Paul has many great sources of advice.

"I'm supported primarily, from my own Mission Resourcing Team, including Executive Officer [Rev] Jenni Hughes, and some former Presidents as well, such as Dr Deidre Palmer and [Rev Professor] Andrew Dutney. They have been very kind and offered their time for me to have conversations so I can learn from their experiences. I'm so grateful, and I feel very blessed!"

There are many different visions for the future of the Uniting Church, and Paul has his own plans for how he will approach the Presidency.

"I hope to be a bridge-builder, whose mandates are intercession and reconciliation between heaven and earth, north and south, first peoples and second peoples. I'm excited about what God will be doing in the years ahead – I'm reforming the mandate of heaven through God's calling to me to be a bridge-builder."

In December 2024, President of South Korea Yoon Suk Yeol suddenly announced martial law, leading to clashes in the streets between protestors and the army, before the order was abruptly withdrawn hours later. Having lived through the struggle for democracy in South Korea in the 1980s, Paul was also in the country during the announcement of martial law and was shocked by what occurred.

However, when asked what has brought him joy and hope in the last few months, he focused on the young people in South Korea and around the world.

"People who are faithfully responding to the call of God in their own contexts...and I feel privileged to be called to join what God is doing in this world and in creation."



“I believe I need to be willing to offer my gifts, my leadership – theological leadership – into what God is calling us to be on our 50th anniversary, and what the Holy Spirit is saying to us as a Church in terms of spiritual, institutional, and congregational renewal.



The UC Synod of SA has an international partnership with the Iksan Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of South Korea (known as PROK). Iksan is a city of about 250,000 people, 200 kilometres south of Seoul on the western side of the Korean peninsula.

The partnership began with the former Mount Lofty Presbytery in 1991 and is now the longest continuing partnership of its kind in the Uniting Church of Australia. The Korean Partnership Team works to promote the partnership in the life of the Synod and of the PROK to fulfill our shared goals. Objectives of the partnership include praying for each other's churches and ministry, the unification of the Korean peninsula and the relationship between the Uniting Church in Australia and the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress. The partnership is also focussed on sharing resources, research and ideas which will help each other in our mission, visits that promote cultural awareness and understanding of each other's customs and lifestyles.

Later this year, a group of Korean young people and leaders will be visiting South Australia, where we will continue to build our partnership. They will experience our Church, our culture and language. If you are interested in becoming involved in this unique ministry, then the Korean Partnership Team would love to hear from you. They can be contacted via Mission Resourcing based at Yartu Apinthe, Uniting College for Leadership and Theology.



Partnering Together with Joy

By Hayeon Kim

A Reflection on the 2024 Synod of SA Youth Trip to South Korea

As an Australian with a Korean background, returning to Korea with a team of 16 and serving as the translator for the group, was both a privilege and a learning curve, giving me a new-found appreciation for my cultural ties to the country. For 4 days in Seoul, we immersed ourselves in Korea's vibrant sights, the bustling streets of Gangnam, and the flavours unique to Korean cuisine. These 4 days afforded us a glimpse into the dynamic city of Seoul, allowing us to appreciate the cultural contrasts with Australia.



Experiences included a traditional Korean meal *Han Jung Sik* (a Korean tabletop filled with endless side dishes), *Gyeongbokgung Palace* (the main palace of the Joseon dynasty), countless shopping trips, nightlife adventures and street foods. We were privileged to be able to visit the DMZ: the border between South and North Korea. We were incredibly lucky as we experienced the first winter snowfall in Korea for 2024 and a first for many of us as well.

However it was while we were with our partners in Iksan that we fully encountered the cultural distinctives of Korea. Throughout the trip, I found myself thinking about the word “정” (Jung). When I asked Google to define it, the answer was predictable and didn’t quite capture the essence of the word. Google defines Jung as “love, affection, sympathy or attachment”. However, I’d like to question Google on this translation, as to me Jung is so much more than that. Jung isn’t a concept which can be captured with a single word or a neat definition. It is a difficult idea to express; however throughout this trip, I felt as if I finally understood the true meaning of Jung, or at least how it presented itself to me during this time.

For me, Jung came alive in Iksan. Jung was how I saw strangers become friends in an instant, conversations which felt like reunions between long lost friends rather than introductions – even with the presence of language and cultural barriers. Jung was in the care and warmth of our homestay hosts, who went above and beyond, treating us not as guests but as family. They ensured we felt like we were home, even when “home” was 9,000 kilometres away. Jung was felt in the food prepared with love. Every meal was more than nourishment – it was a labour of love. Jung could be seen in the careful presentations, the effort that went into meeting our various dietary requirements, and the joy as they watched us enjoy their cuisine. Jung was seen when bidding farewell to our Iksan partners who had driven with us all the way from Iksan to Seoul. That was when I truly understood the meaning of Jung.

What struck me the most about Jung was that it isn’t bound by time or certain circumstances. It lingers in the smallest gestures: a laugh shared in awkward situations when Google Translate didn’t quite do its job perfectly. It isn’t something that can be forced, but something that exists naturally, weaving itself into memories and experiences.

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“God's love is one that lingers, a presence that filled moments in Korea with meaning. His love allows us to bond and connect with others.

Although we didn't have a common language, we shared the love of God. Throughout this trip, I learnt that God is full of Jung. God's love lingers and is a presence that filled moments in Korea with meaning. God's love allows us to bond and connect with others. I believe God's Jung is a gift, and I was grateful to be able to realise this more fully throughout the trip.

Yes, Korea was better than words can express. However I found myself thinking, "Would it be the same if it weren't for the people I was with?" Every single member of the team brought a unique gift to the trip. Our leaders (Rev Naomi Duke, Rev Lawrie Linggood, Moderator Rev Peter Morel and Adrian Duke) were more than leaders. Their dedication to this partnership was inspiring and the efforts they put into the trip made it so memorable. I cannot thank them enough.

Lastly, I don't think this trip would have been the same without the young adults with whom I had the absolute privilege of sharing my culture. Watching them becoming acquainted with Korea for the first time was so heartwarming. From trying unfamiliar foods to attempting to communicate with our partners, they most definitely embodied courage, strength and heart.

I will treasure the memories I made throughout those twelve days, the valuable lessons, and the personal growth I have gained. It was nothing short of incredible.

Anna

Koreans are so generous and I will remember this trip for a long time to come. My favourite day was when it snowed.

Christian

Even without a shared language, the presence and love of God transcended all, and was felt across the whole trip!

Emelia

My lasting memory of visiting South Korea was the meaningful connections I made with the youth of Iksan, and their willingness to open their hearts and homes to total strangers.

Hayson

Whilst the trip was nothing short of incredible, I can't forget the deep connections I have made with the people of Iksan and the PROK group. A trip I will treasure forever.



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Reflections

Holly

I learned on this trip that it's much easier than I thought to make friends without a common language - it's a skill I hope to practise more in the future!

Leanne

The people of Iksan have redefined hospitality for me.

Liam

I initially thought I would be overwhelmed by the social and cultural differences between the two countries but it was the opposite. I was surprised by the similarities we share. Witnessing and participating in the coming together of both cultures enabled me to broaden my understanding of the world.

Rachel

Through my trip to Korea, I discovered not only a new culture, but a deeper connection to my faith, as I witnessed the power of prayer and community across borders and culture.

Megan

I was genuinely surprised at the joy of making and strengthening connections with the lovely people in Iksan and Seoul. God's love was most definitely present throughout the trip.

Steph

South Korea is a beautiful country. It's been a privilege to visit such a complex and exciting place where the efforts of Christians before us have created such a wonderful and generous group of people who further the work of Jesus today.

Michael

God's love was here long before we arrived in Korea.

Tara

I was amazed by the boundless kindness of the people in Iksan, reminding me that true generosity and compassion know no borders.



Christmas Hamper Packing Day

A Community Effort Brought Joy to Those in Need

By Johanne Manning



Christmas Hamper Packing Day 2024 was a shining example of community spirit and generosity. Thanks to the collective efforts of several organisations and volunteers, 250 hampers were packed and delivered to Relief Centres across Adelaide, bringing hope and joy to families in need at Christmas.

Special thanks go to ACHA Health (Memorial, Flinders Private and Ashford Hospitals) for their dedicated participation in this initiative. Their involvement, along with the support of Annesley College, Uniting College for Leadership and Theology, Coromandel Valley Uniting Church, and the Synod Office, made this event a resounding success.

The 250 hampers were distributed across a number of Relief Centres: Glenelg, Mount Barker, Enfield, Woodville, Taperoo, and Noarlunga. These Centres serve as vital places of support for individuals and families facing financial hardship, particularly at a time when the pressure of the holiday season can make life even

more difficult. Thank you once again to all who participated – your generosity has truly made a difference.

Last year Dunn Memorial Church in Mount Barker distributed a further 200 Christmas hampers as part of their Hungry No More program, together with the 50 which they received from the ACHA Health initiative. These hampers provided much-needed support to the local community during the festive season.

Shana and Sharon (seen in the photo) assisted with distributing hampers, making a real difference to those in need in the Mount Barker community.

The Noarlunga Uniting Church Relief Centre also partnered with the Department of Human Services (DHS) to distribute 40 ACHA Health hampers to families and individuals impacted by domestic violence. The DHS has expressed their heartfelt thanks for the hampers which provided some hope for their clients at Christmas.



A Big Thank You to Our Relief Centre Volunteers

By Johanne Manning



UnitingCare SA held two special Thank You events to recognize the incredible work of the volunteers who support the Relief Centres across Adelaide.

On Saturday 9th November 2024, volunteers from UnitingCare Glenelg, Noarlunga, North Adelaide (closed in August 2024), The Grove, and Taperoo gathered at St Andrews by the Sea Uniting Church at Glenelg to celebrate their collective contributions to assisting those in need.

We were also pleased to have regular supporters of UnitingCare Glenelg in attendance, and we extend our heartfelt thanks for their ongoing assistance with this vital work. Special thanks to Helen and Heather from The Corner Uniting Church, who generously volunteered to assist on the day, allowing our regular volunteers to relax and enjoy the celebration.

A delightful High Tea was held on Friday 29th November 2024 at Uniting in Care, Salisbury to honour the dedicated volunteers from Uniting in Care Salisbury, Modbury, Enfield, and UCare Gawler. This event provided a wonderful opportunity to celebrate their hard work and commitment to supporting those in need.

A special thank you to those who baked some of the wonderful treats, and to Michelle, Miranda, Marlene, Kirsten, Jan, Harry, Rev Peter Riggs (from Playford UC), and Rev Cate Baker (from Para Vista UC), who served on the day, ensuring the regular volunteers had the opportunity to relax and relish the occasion.

To all our volunteers and supporters, we truly appreciate the time and effort of everyone involved – your support makes a meaningful difference in the lives of many.



Looking Backwards, Moving Forward:

Mission and Property Strategy Working Group Update

By Rev Philip Gardner

At the October 2024 Synod meeting we shared a major report on the work that the Synod and Presbyteries had been doing on developing our Mission and Property Strategy. Assuming that not all readers of the *New Times* have read that report, in this article we want to highlight some of the key points and share a few insights into our ongoing work.

This Working Group began its work after the report to the 2021 Synod meeting, "God's Church and its Buildings – Are They Fit for Mission?" The report followed a 3-year project in which all our church properties were inspected, and the conclusion was reached that a range of issues needed to be addressed: in particular, asbestos, fire safety, accessibility, and electrical issues. Moreover, in 2021 it would have cost at least \$30 million to bring our buildings up to an appropriate standard. This money was needed to make them safe, and even more was needed to make them fit for purpose and in line with current standards. Furthermore, in the 2021 report we were told that, "84% of our buildings are over 50 years old, and nearly 40% over 100 years old, including 21 buildings which are State Heritage listed."

The Working Group soon realised that the issue was not just about whether buildings were safe and fit for purpose, but also about the locations of our buildings and the vitality of the congregations in those buildings. We concluded that our goal outcome was "vital congregations in safe buildings that are fit for purpose." To help explore congregational vitality, we surveyed congregations about their life and mission, using the Basis of Union's description – "worship, witness and service" – as our guide. We were greatly blessed in these endeavours by the expertise and generosity of leaders from our congregations with skills in town planning, statistics and data.

In the last 12 months we have been working with the presbyteries to develop guidelines for conversations with congregations about mission, property and strategy. We have been able to access funds to support this ongoing work over the next couple of years. We are looking forward to what we might continue to learn from this engagement across the presbyteries and are grateful for their cooperation.

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We are also repeating the questionnaire this year. The last one provided us with a wealth of material about the life of our congregations which can serve as a baseline for subsequent questionnaires. This also gave us helpful insights into areas which need some focused attention. Many congregations informed us that they had no plan for how to help people grow as disciples of Jesus, nor had they given any attention to how they develop emerging leaders. My hope is that the questions posed last time might have prompted some work in the last year or so. My hunch is that most congregations, given the appropriate conversation partner, could talk about their current models and think about steps to develop those models further.

A related exploration is around “metrics.” As I stated in the report to the Synod Meeting in 2024, I have been helped by the writing of American Methodist leader Gil Rendle¹. Rendle helpfully differentiates between “counting” and “measuring”. For example, many congregations count the number of people attending worship, but it takes thought and intention to consider how many of these people are growing as disciples of Jesus. Some may protest that it is impossible to measure what are essentially private and internal matters. Yet, if your Church Council and/or Elders Meeting were to take some time to discuss what being a follower of Jesus should look and sound like, you might discover a whole range of expectations. I remember once working on a project like this for a Church Council and realising that when we name such expectations, we then need to think about how we help people grow into them. For example, something as simple as “We expect our members to engage meaningfully with Scripture,” might lead us consider how we could resource such engagement.

This Mission and Property Strategy work is not easy. It keeps raising new questions which deeply challenge our thinking. For

“Ultimately, we are hoping to have a sustainable number of church buildings, with vibrant congregations, which are placed strategically around our state.

example, one of the tasks for us as a Synod Standing Committee will be to develop consensus around what might be reasonable expectations around “missional metrics” – an article for another day!

Ultimately, we are hoping to have a sustainable number of church buildings, with vibrant congregations, which are placed strategically around our state. That sentence alone, however, raises questions about what a sustainable number might be. It causes us to think about congregational vitality and which locations are strategic for us. We will need to think about the continuing work of renewal for our existing congregations, and how we can plant sustainable communities where we are yet to have congregations. This is work that will continue long beyond the tenure some of our current leadership.

I look forward to this continuing conversation and to your participation. We will be informing you of opportunities to be involved as they arise.

¹Rendle, Gil. “Doing the Math of Mission.” (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014)

Introducing the 2025 Synod Standing Committee

In the next editions of the New Times and across UC e-News throughout this year, we'll be introducing the 2025 Synod Standing Committee, and getting to know the gifts and talents of our members.



Rev Anne Hewitt
Presbytery of Southern SA

Where do you worship?

Blackwood Uniting Church.

What's your current role?

I'm the Minister of the Word at Blackwood Uniting Church, and I'm studying a Diploma of Professional Pastoral Supervision with Dr Michael Paterson.

Why did you want to join Standing Committee?

I was asked to consider joining Standing Committee, and after prayerful consideration, felt called to be part of SC at this time. I am fortunate to have been involved with our UCA SA decision-making committees over the last 40 years. I love our prayerful consensus decision processes, where as a team, we prayerfully receive, listen, consider and work for God's continuing ministry in our Church.

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

Being with God's beautiful people, who bring a diversity of understandings, experiences and faith expressions, as we covenant together to discern God's vision and call for our state and our congregations. What's not to like?!

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

A considering time in how we live and be church in our rapidly changing society; being courageous to look at our properties and use our resources wisely; continuing to covenant with our First Peoples and lean into their wisdom and theology; learning to be invitational and hospitable with wider community members who are seeking a deeper spirituality; listening deeply to God's calling as we journey together as one church.



Rev Leanne Davis
Wimala Presbytery

Where do you worship?

My answer to this question is often "it depends" or "here, there and everywhere". I'm often visiting other congregations and worshipping with them as part of my role with Wimala Presbytery, so each Sunday will find me with a different group of people.

On the odd week that I am not visiting somewhere else, you can find me at Playford UC.

What's your current role?

I'm one of two Regional Coordinators for the Wimala Presbytery. My role is to provide support and encouragement to congregations, faith communities, and ministry agents within my 'patch' of Wimala Presbytery. It's quite a broad description of what I do as the support and encouragement needed or wanted varies from congregation to congregation.

Why did you want to join Standing Committee?

I have served on the Synod Standing Committee for a number of terms. In the last few years, I have been encouraged by people across the church to continue to nominate for the Standing Committee to help provide some continuity between each committee. I continue to want to serve on the Standing Committee as I believe the work of the wider church is important, and I have a deep interest in this as we all strive to support congregations and faith communities in their mission.

It is a place where I can exercise the skills I have in oversight and governance, which were developed in my 20 years as a Commonwealth Public Servant. It also serves as a good reminder that, aside from whatever congregation I might be part of, there is a wider, bigger church to which I belong.

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

I'm looking forward to working with a great bunch of people from across the breadth of the church as we continue to build the UCA in SA into the church God is calling us to be.

There is a lot of work to do around our property and our finances, and sometimes the conversations will be difficult, but I believe God has some amazing things in store for us as a church.

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

The key issue (or maybe opportunity) I think we are facing is one that has come up at almost every Synod meeting in the last few years - that of property: how we care for our property, how we keep it safe, how we make the best missional use of our property, etc...

The Assembly Act2 Project will also impact on how we look and function as the UC in South Australia in the coming years, although we may not see a lot of changes in this Standing Committee's 'term'. Act2 will bring changes that we will need to work through and help our congregations and faith communities through as well.



New Era of Australia's Oldest Annual Church Based Tournament Bringing Ballers Together



For 54 years the Australian Baptist Basketball Carnival Championships have run annually around the country, bringing together community, faith and basketball. Now known as the **New Year Classic** in 2025 and beyond, the carnival continues to bring together players from all over the country and even the world to compete in a one-week tournament. A change in name but still with its church roots intact, this presents opportunities for impact across all areas of the lives of basketballers.

The New Year Classic is an inclusive, faith-based basketball tournament which began in 1971 in a sheep shed, now bringing together the local social player with NBL1 representatives and has even featured past WNBA and NBA players at times. Each player pays their own way, with many registering immediately after the previous tournament concludes to ensure they'll be present again the following year.

Many of our South Australian Church Basketball Association (SACBA) clubs and teams have had players attend and actively participate in "carnival" (as it is still affectionately known). For the SACBA, it is the ideal tournament to invest in on an annual basis, because of the values and purpose it represents.

"I'm involved in both planning and playing in the New Year Classic because it's more than just a game—it's about building a sense of community," said Lauren Whitbread, new head of the South Australian organisation group.

"This will be my 7th year participating, and every year, the energy, support, and shared excitement continue to strengthen the bond between us. It's an opportunity to connect, celebrate and inspire each other, making our community greater with every event."

This year South Australia sent 6 teams to Victoria for the tournament - over half the players who attended had found



connections in previous tournaments, which led to more teams joining the SACBA community competitions, keeping the spirit, community and memories alive on a weekly basis.

"There's no doubt the level of involvement by SACBA community players has grown in the tournament. Having been around for 17 years, I've seen the tremendous impact the community has had for one week every year - it's why I keep coming back and implore everyone to come and join in," said long-time carnival attendee, life and committee member Tristan Prentice.

"For me it's the closest you'll get to state representation and a level of basketball that maybe you won't have the chance to reach - the competition is fierce. However, off the court is where I have the best memories: cheering all the other players, storming courts after a B Women's team achieves 20 points in a match and celebrating it like they'd won a championship, and getting to mix with some of the most talented players in the country both young, in their prime and veterans."

The tournament includes "Team Time" sessions for growth in understanding life-lessons and is a faith-sharing opportunity. The sessions take into account the background and lifestyle of all attendees, meaning it is inclusive, providing space for growth for each person on their individual path.

"The Team Times, which reflect on both personal and team goals, struggles and how we can encourage and support each other for the week, are great times too," states SA Church Stars Juniors' Coach Kevin Bateman.

This year SA also sent its first junior team to compete in the U15s, consisting of several past and present SA Church Stars juniors. Coach Kevin Bateman, after seeing the tournament in Adelaide, saw

the opportunity to invest in something that aligns with the values of the district club for SACBA.

"To be part of the New Year Classic is an amazing experience whether as a coach, a player or to have the family involved. Games are played in a great spirit and we get to support other SA State Teams - the chanting and encouragement are awesome."

The A Reserves Men's Team took out the title in their division in 2025 and featured players from current church clubs, CityLight and Corner Uniting, bringing together two clubs of different denominations.

SACBA invites you to prepare for New Year Classic in Western Australia, 2nd – 8th January 2026 by playing for churches, schools and community groups, participating in a longstanding organisation that values community, faith and basketball.

Ways to get involved include attending introductory basketball programs and camps, becoming an official and playing with junior or senior teams in the SACBA community competition. The competition has multiple locations across metropolitan Adelaide and takes place on Saturday afternoons and Tuesday nights.

There is also the opportunity to become a player or coach for SACBA's district club, the Stars, who participate in the Basketball SA district competition.

SACBA is about 'more than basketball' and encourages the spirit of community and teamwork. For more information and to get involved, visit www.sachurchbasketball.com.au.

Flip for a Cause

Pancake Day 2025 Launches March 4

By Mark Waters

It's time to start organising your plans for Pancake Day 2025!

For decades, UnitingCare SA has launched its Pancake Day fundraising campaign on Shrove Tuesday each year. All money raised this year will help UnitingCare SA Relief Centres and care organisations give hope to people in need.

In 2024, 30% of South Australian metropolitan households were struggling to put food on the table, with 21% of these households missing multiple meals or having no food for an entire day. (Foodbank Hunger Report, 2024)

Whilst the need is great and demand is growing, UnitingCare SA is very grateful for all congregations and Uniting Church supporters who dig deep into their pockets to raise funds.

This year UnitingCare SA is calling upon everyone to go the extra mile. As well as holding a fundraiser in your local congregation, we are calling upon individual members of congregations to seek opportunities for Pancake Day activities or Relief Centre fundraising in the wider community such as their workplace, sporting club, service club, or friendship network.

We are asking for you to extend the effort so that we are not relying on the same people every year to keep donating.



Drawing:
Annesley Student, Age 6

Resthaven's Support to Older People at Risk of Homelessness

Resthaven Community Services supports older people living in the community. They used their Pancake Day 2024 funding in the following ways to supply food and toiletries:

One recipient, who was socially and financially disadvantaged with no family support, has been found permanent accommodation.

Another recipient has been living in temporary motel accommodation since August 2024, due to a violent home invasion. Preparing meals and eating a balanced diet was challenging and very expensive. As he had moved 30 kms away for safety, he had additional transport expenses to see his regular doctor and to visit his wheelchair-bound brother. Funding raised by Pancake Day has helped support him during this difficult time.

Register your events here:

<https://unitingcaresa.uksa.org.au/Pancake-day-registration>

Pancake Day Donations will be accepted until the end of June 2025.

Encounter Henley

By Emelia Haskey

Encounter Henley, a new church plant launched in May 2024, has been a passion project for Rev Tim Littleford, Ash Littleford, and Tex Horner, who founded the church with a small team of other members from Encounter Prospect. Starting a new church from scratch is an incredible effort, requiring a great amount of planning and discernment. But as I sat down with Tim over coffee, he emphasised that it was the skills of his launch team that had brought everything together.

"We just have such great people: they're all so gifted and I love seeing them use their gifts and stepping out of their comfort zone, growing and seeing that maybe God has a lot more in store for them than they first thought," Tim reflects.

What's been really pleasing for me is in these 8 months, the growth we've seen has been in people from this area: those who walk to church, some who have come back to church or come for the first time.

Not only did he help establish Encounter Henley, in September Tim was ordained as a Minister of the Word, the end of a long journey of discernment and candidacy – the last leg of which has been supported by his new church.

"It's been a wonderful blessing...in ordination something kind of shifted for me. I realise I have permission to do things...it feels like there's a certain level of the church which now trusts me in a way."

"I find it easier to back myself in calls, whereas beforehand I might have been checking with others and being unsure."

Encounter Henley started with 20 adult attendees and 6 kids and is slowly expanding.

"What's been really pleasing for me is that in these 8 months, the growth we've seen has been in people from this area: those who walk to church, some who have come back to church or come for the first time.



"Part of the reason, I think, is that we moved into the neighbourhood, our kids are going to school here – but there's also a sense that God's drawing people in. It's not just about good marketing!"

Grange Uniting Church has partnered with Encounter to provide them with a worship space, and Tim sings the praises of the support and community that Grange Uniting has offered. It's another way of strengthening community connections.

If there's one thing that has been an integral part of the whole process of church planting, it's prayer.

"The beauty of a church plant is that you can set the culture from the ground up, and we're doing that through prayer especially. I would love to see that grow in the wider Synod as well.

"It's part of our purpose – we exist to see every person from city to beach have an encounter with Jesus."

Celebrating the Work of Bruce Spangler AM

*By Rev Beth Seaman
Member, Annesley College Council*

In 2010, the future of Annesley College was uncertain. Needing new and strategic governance, the Uniting Church asked Mr Bruce Spangler AM to chair the Annesley College Council, leading decisive action to envision the school's future.

Bruce reflected on his own family's history in a rousing speech he gave at an event during this time.

"35 years ago, a 12-year-old girl was preparing for the first day of Year 8 at her new school. You can all understand the excitement. Her father had died 8 years before and this was her mother's old school. Unfortunately, her mother died that day.

"Going to live with her 3 older brothers, she wanted to continue her mother's wish to be educated at her beloved school. The Headmistress immediately sent her a letter, stating that the school was waiting for her with open arms when she felt ready to come.

"That Headmistress was Ruth Watts. That school was Annesley College. That girl was my sister, Ann."

At the end of the 2024 school year, and after 14 distinguished years, Bruce completed his time as Chair of Annesley Council.

Current Principal of Annesley Jo Rossiter remarked, "If Bruce did not commit to Annesley during its most complex of days, the school would not be in existence today.

"To say his wisdom, discernment and strength saved the school, is to speak the truth. To this day Bruce's continued legacy is a flourishing school, because of his wise, pragmatic, creative and enabling leadership of Annesley since 2010."

If Bruce did not commit to Annesley during its most complex of days, the school would not be in existence today



Annesley is only one of many organisations blessed by Bruce's leadership. His involvement has been at all levels from volunteer to executive leadership - his work has had far-reaching outcomes at local, state and national levels.

As the Uniting Church recognises Bruce's recent contribution to Annesley College, we also recognise his former commitment to Prince Alfred College as Council Chair from 2000 -2009, as Treasurer for more than 10 years, and Council Member for 23 years. He was also the former Deputy Chair of Seymour College Council and a Council Member from 1993 - 2003. Bruce was an Executive Member of the Independent Schools Board of South Australia (now AISSA) and Former Chair of the Governors' Group.

Bruce's interest and commitment to the wellbeing and education of young people extended to serving the community through basketball as Chair and President of Basketball SA (Adelaide 36ers and Adelaide Lightning), Chair of the National Basketball League Commission, Deputy Chair of Basketball Australia, and President and Life Member of the South Australian Church Basketball Association.

There are many young people and families whose lives have been unknowingly enriched and guided by the ways in which Bruce has expressed his many gifts and offered them to benefit others, and we all are deeply grateful for his service.

Newly Ordained and Hitting the Ground Running

By Emelia Haskey

Rev Rob Cartridge has been in a bit of a whirlwind since he was ordained as a Deacon in September 2024, as reported in the last edition of *New Times*. When I caught up with him in January this year, he had just celebrated his wedding to his wife Tayla and was plugging away at his new role as Community Connections Worker at Woodville Uniting Church.



Balancing his other role as a Chaplain at Flinders Medical Centre, Rob has a lot on his plate. But he's deeply grateful to be able to bring his ministry of presence wherever he goes.

"Once you're ordained it's that life-calling which follows you. You can do a job and say, 'Yep, I knock off now', but once you have that title 'Rev', people say, 'that's someone I can talk to about this question or that question.'"

"I still forget that I can be called 'Rev' sometimes – but it's nice, it's a public acknowledgment of my call. The congratulations on my ordination that I received from people who aren't churched (from the Jamie Larcombe Centre, a mental health precinct for veterans where Rob also works) was really something special."

Ministry is constantly changing and adapting, as many people experienced during COVID-19, and Rob's work at Woodville has exemplified Christian outreach which goes beyond the Sunday service. Tables and chairs have been set up outside the church to give the community and staff from the nearby Queen Elizabeth Hospital a place to sit down and have a chat.

"There was one person who walked into the Op Shop absolutely in tears, sobbing, and I tapped them on the shoulder to ask, 'Would you like a chat?' So we sat out there and they gave me the story of what had happened. I was in the right place at the right time; you always have to be open to those moments."

“... always trust that if God's calling you, you should follow that call.”

"The idea that I think we need to try to break down at times, is that people think ministers are 'up there' and everyone else is 'down here'. Actually, ministers are just one part of the church's life and we have the same things going on in our lives as everyone else."

Rob also has strong supporters who help look after his own mental health.

"There was a really strong group of Deacons when I was going through formation and having those good voices who have also been on that journey, as well as older voices, has been a great help."

Reflecting on the long and sometimes very challenging process from first hearing God's call in his life, to entering his Period of Discernment and being formed throughout his candidacy, Rob has some wisdom for candidates and also for those discerning their own call.

"Be willing to learn, be willing to have knockbacks, know to speak up if you see injustices, because sometimes other people don't see it. But always trust that if God's calling you, you should follow that call."



The 2024 gathering. Trevor Semmens is 2nd from the right.

Keeping Faith and Friendships Strong with the Port Augusta Methodist Youth Group

By Trevor Semmens

“The annual reunion has been a special time of sharing friendships which were formed over 60 years ago in an enthusiastic Youth Group, the members of which were taught and nurtured in the Christian faith in the Port Augusta Methodist Church.

I was a member of a very active Methodist Youth Group at Port Augusta from 1957 to the early 1960s, before my transfer away from that town. The minister at the time was the well-known Rev Gowan Armstrong, who was able to attend the reunion gatherings mentioned below until he was in his nineties.

It was as a member of this Youth Group that I attended Rev Billy Graham's Crusade meeting in 1959. Billy Graham, the famous American evangelist, came to Australia and spoke to more than 3 million people across the nation. The Crusade was relayed from Adelaide to the wider public and we attended at Port Augusta Town Hall. Along with other members, I went forward in response to Graham's message, giving our lives to Christ.

In 2008 I pulled together a list of members from the 1960s. Obviously many of the young men and women had married, some to others within the Youth Group, so when we had our first gathering, I knew 15 of the 21 attendees. We met at the Rosefield Uniting Church in Fullarton for afternoon tea, chatting and sharing photos from those earlier years. Some members and partners who attended were still connected with Christian churches.

So here I am, a resident of Hobart, Tasmania, organizing a luncheon get-together of this disparate group from Port Augusta. It was held in Adelaide (where the bulk of attendees were now living) at the Arkaba Hotel, which was very central, provided good parking, and had great food.

From 2008 to 2024, we have gathered annually, except for 2021 and 2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. When we were taking the attached photo of the 2024 event, someone commented, "This must be the oldest Methodist Youth Group in Australia". The number of people attending has varied over the years from 12 to 16, with 17 attending in September 2024.

The annual reunion has been a special time of sharing friendships which were formed over 60 years ago in an enthusiastic Youth Group, the members of which were taught and nurtured in the Christian faith in the Port Augusta Methodist Church.



The Inter-Faith Matters Forum in 2024 and Beyond

By Liellie McLaughlin

“Most attendees are searching for more meaningful ways to understand human expressions of spiritual formation. A few have found a new space of belonging for their soul and are deeply relieved to have encountered a place to call home.

We started around a table with a meal cooked by an Afghani chef, while a motley crew pondered and reflected on our spirituality. Now 7 years later, with regular monthly meetings, we connect at the centre and at the edges of diverse expressions of faith.

We meet in church halls, community centres, at Beit Shalom Synagogue, Baha'i Centre for Learning, Colebrook Reconciliation Park, Unitarian House, the Greek Orthodox church...any place where 30-50 people can share a meal. Topics may include ways of prayer from Buddhist, Islamic and Christian perspectives, Jewish festivals, fasting as a way of life practised by Hindus, how atheists find spiritual nourishment, and the truly diverse range of people who make up the Unitarians.

We discuss worship practices, how culture may significantly influence ways of seeing God, and how humans as spiritual beings struggle with social cohesion. Most attendees are searching for more meaningful ways to understand human expressions of spiritual formation. A few have found a new space of belonging for their soul and are deeply relieved to have encountered a place to call home.

Memorable moments have included an evening at Pilgrim Church where we built an actual bridge (Leonardo Da Vinci style) to unpack how we, as a spiritually compassionate group, may practise belonging in Australia. Auntie Rosemary Wanganeen, Allen Edwards, Rev John Hughes and Mahboobeh Aryanpad (Baha'i) facilitated an inclusive conversation about 'living our being' on Kaurua land. On one occasion at Unitarian House candles were used to celebrate and deepen liturgy by reflecting on the layered symbolism of light. At another event we danced the Lord's Prayer with Dances of Universal Peace, led by two committed Sufi practitioners. We warmed to the practical, interactive exploration of social cohesion with Play Lab and we created a 'Wall of Joy', introduced by 2 young people who thoroughly enjoyed their participation in the evening of the Young People's Voice.

In 2025 we hope to focus on Ways of Appreciative Enquiry and how we may celebrate, reflect and practise curiosity, courage and compassion. What a privilege to be able to know and love our neighbours in this way!

Being a Green Being

By Rev Jill Lienert

In September 2024, Scots Church Adelaide, assisted by funding from City of Adelaide, had CCTV and wicking beds installed on their forecourt on North Terrace where local students can grow vegetables and shrubs.

Cared for by Scots Church Adelaide's Saturday Club, the garden has produced bok choy, pak choi, spearmint, beans, zucchini (by the tonnes) and we are carefully tending to our pumpkins which are now in fruit.

Vegetables are used by Saturday Club for lunchtime meals, some students take home produce for cooking, others are distributed through our congregation and Op Shop for a donation to Saturday Club. Some vegetables have also been shared with a city-based community garden collective whose own crop of beans was vandalised.

Students have learned about wicking beds, how to care for plants, lifecycles of vegetables including when fruits are ready, and how to cook tasty meals with vegetables (including the very Australian dish, zucchini slice). Our forecourt has been transformed from a stark hot spot in the city to an interesting space where passers-by, including children, keep an eye on the progress of the plants and fruits.

The project aims to increase the greenery on our property and to improve wellbeing for students through access to gardening and fresh foods.

As the community members who live and work in this area become acquainted with the individuals who water and tend the gardens, they can be heard asking an unfamiliar face, 'Are you allowed to do that?' In addition to our CCTV, the locals are keeping a fine watch on our plants and their security.

1. Antoine at the Bean Planter

2. Rev Jill Lienert harvesting zucchini

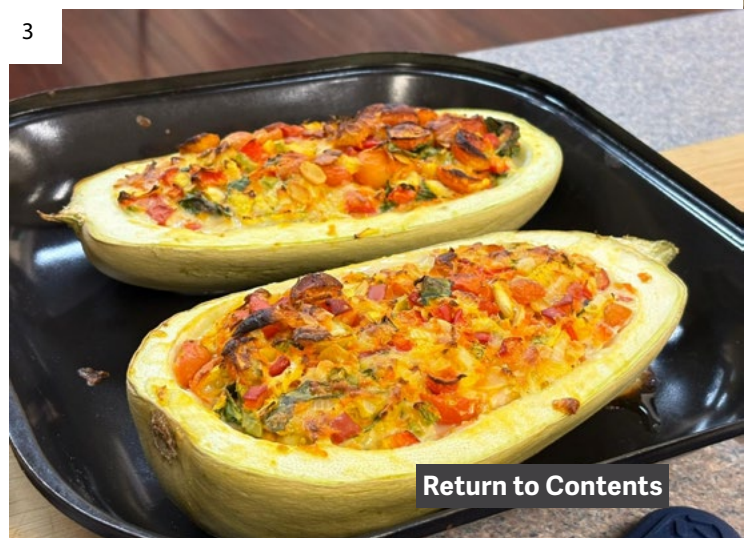
3. A meal for 20 at Saturday Club Adelaide: Baked Zucchini



1



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New Graduate Certificate at UCLT

By Rev Nick Patselis

Last year I participated in a new Graduate Certificate in Leadership, offered through the University of Divinity. This program, designed for individuals with busy schedules, was a transformative experience that stretched me both personally and professionally.

One of the standout features of the program was its flexible delivery. The online tutorials and Saturday Intensives made it possible for me to continue working while pursuing my studies. This structure allowed me to immediately integrate new knowledge into my leadership.

I learned valuable insights about myself, which in turn strengthened my leadership abilities. Throughout the course, I had to confront my own leadership shortcomings. Although it was difficult to reflect on these moments, doing so ultimately led to significant personal growth and healing.

The Graduate Certificate in Leadership program includes units such as Self-Leadership, Leading Others, Leading Change, and Ethical Leadership. I found Ethical Leadership incredibly impactful as it encouraged me to think critically about the values and ethical considerations that underpin effective leadership: how to process complex and multifaceted situations where the resolution isn't always clear.

Another aspect I truly appreciated was the cohort of participants. Being part of a community added richness to the experience. We were able to learn from each other's experiences, share insights, and build a network of support throughout the program.

The program is now led by Rev Dr Tim Hein, and enrolments are open for 2025. If you're looking to develop your leadership skills in a flexible, supportive environment, this could be the perfect opportunity for you.

If you're interested in enrolling or learning more, I encourage you to reach out to UCLT for further information. The Graduate Certificate in Leadership is an investment in both personal and professional development that will benefit you for years to come.



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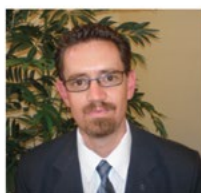
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Placements News

Placements Finalised as at 29th January 2025

Graham Burgan (MOP) (0.4) as Chaplain Helping Hand Whyalla from 1 January 2025

Rev Nola Gibbons (0.6) to South West Fleurieu from 1 January 2025

Rev Nick Patselis (0.5) to Woodside UC from 1 March 2025

PROFILES AVAILABLE

Generate Presbytery

Ceduna UC (0.6)

Echunga UC

Flinders (0.4 - 0.6)

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

Goolwa UC

Kangaroo Island Linked Congregations (0.8)

Lighthouse, Port Pirie UC

Naracoorte UC

The Vines UC (0.7)

Presbytery of Southern SA

Rosefield UC

Seacliff UC

Unley UC (0.3)

Pool Ministry (up to 3 placements)

Presbytery Minister (see Advertised Positions)

Wimala Presbytery

Morialta UC

Wesley UC Kent Town (0.5)

Placements Across Two Presbyteries

-

PROFILES NOT YET AVAILABLE

Generate Presbytery

Port Augusta UC (0.5)

Waikerie UC (0.6)

Presbytery of Southern SA

Noarlunga UC (0.8)

Yilki UC (0.3)

Wimala Presbytery

Goyder Ministry Area (0.8) from 1 November 2024

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

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Friday, 21st March 2025

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