
UnitingWorld WA

Chairperson

Associate General Secretary (Justice & Mission)
Staff

Members

Dr Elaine Ledgerwood
Rosemary Hudson Miller (until July 2016)
Geoff Bice
Rev Eira Clapton
Lyn Callaghan
Rev Brian Thorpe
Rev Janelle Macgregor
John Jeffreys
Rev Emma Matthews
Sophie Lizares Bodegon
Lee Anne Burnett
Margaret Donovan (until Dec 2015)

1. INTRODUCTION

The UnitingWorld WA Committee has had another very busy year working to support our many international partner churches in the important development work they do in their communities. Along with conducting ongoing fundraising campaigns and education efforts

within our congregations, members of the Committee have visited Sri Lanka, West Papua, West Timor, Bali and Timor Leste to assist our partners and further strengthen our relationships across the region.

2. STRATEGIC PLANNING

The UnitingWorld WA Committee dedicated an extra session in May this year for strategic planning to bring our work in line with the Synod

(and Presbytery's) strategic directions. Further work will be done on this over time.

3. DEVELOPING A CULTURE OF OPEN COMMUNICATION

Since our last report, members of the Committee and staff have visited a wide range of city and country congregations and networks, including the Uniting Church Mission Fellowship and Uniting Church Adult Fellowship, to engage them in the work of Uniting World.

In conjunction with the Assembly, we have promoted opportunities to engage with our church partners, such as through the 'Everything in Common' gift catalogue. Staff conducted a stall in the Synod office which raised \$210.

During May, the Committee hosted some representatives from our national UnitingWorld office. Rev James Bhagwan from our partner church in Fiji who was able to provide us some insight into the challenges facing the Fijian community in the wake of Cyclone Winston and the ongoing impacts of climate change. The team and staff from the Justice & Mission unit conducted sessions under the WonTok program with students from Uniting Church and Anglican schools as noted below.

4. FAITH FORMATION & FAITH SHARING

Lent Event is one of our significant points of connecting faith formation and faith sharing to the work of Uniting World. This year, 21 Western Australian congregations participated in

Lent Event raising \$9000. Add to this two schools and various individual donations and the WA Synod contribution reached \$15,500 which is a really great effort.



The program not only helps to raise funds for our international partner churches but also provides congregations and individuals with some great resources to meaningfully engage with the season of Lent. Unfortunately it has been noticed there has been a decline in the numbers of congregations which have been

engaging with Lent Event over the last few years. UnitingWorld national and local staffs now believe we should offer multiple opportunities for engagement with UnitingWorld during the year, rather than focus on Lent Event only. We will be encouraging congregations to schedule at least one period of engagement per year.

5. EDUCATION & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The Uniting World WA Committee had planned, with assistance from First Third, a youth trip to East Timor in the July school holidays of this year. Although we had a lot of interest initially, we only had two final applicants for the trip which was therefore cancelled. We are currently reviewing the project to identify why this may have occurred. We aim to conduct a visit from some young people from WA congregations or schools to one of our partner churches, sometime next year.

The annual WonTok international development conference was held again this year for high school students. This was a great event, with students from a range of schools attending the full day conference to learn about the challenging realities of international community development.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Unusually, we have been able to facilitate three staff visits to partner churches this year, after a break of some time. This has strengthened relationships between the partners and our WA Committee members and their churches.

One visit was an opportunity for members of congregations to bring back stories of their experiences of being immersed in a different culture.

6.1 Sri Lanka

At the 2013 Synod it was agreed that we, as a Synod, would support the Supplementary Nutrition Program for pre-school children in Sri Lanka.

We continue to develop the relationship which we have as a Synod with the Methodist Church in Sri Lanka. Rev Eira Clapton visited our partner in Sri Lanka, along with a small delegation from UnitingWorld in April 2016. Through this visit and subsequent negotiations, we have signed a Letter of Agreement with the Methodist Church in Sri Lanka to provide funding of over \$9000 in 2016 for quality preschool education for children of the Northern and Eastern districts. This will include the provision of nutritious meals while the children are at school.

This agreement is an important step in ensuring greater clarity, purpose and accountability for the project into the future. We have so far sent the first installment of \$4600 in support of the program under this new arrangement, with another similar amount due in September 2016.

We acknowledge significant donations from Kardinya, Uniting Church in the City, Guildford and Kojonup congregations and a number of donations from individual Uniting Church members. In order to meet our funding requirements for this new agreement, we need to increase the level of giving to this project as compared to previous years, if we are going to be able to support the children in the preschools to the level they need.

6.2 West Papua

In June 2016 a visit to our partner church Gereja Kristen Injili Indonesia di Tanah Papua (GKI-TP) was made by members of the Floreat, Star St and Trinity North Uniting Church Australia congregations, accompanied by Geoff Bice and Christie Marsh (an international relations masters student on a field placement).

The Australian Papuan Cultural Exchange Programme (APCEP) intensive English language



program is planned again for 2017, so a key priority of the trip was to interview and select the next group of students. From 23 applicants, 12 were chosen. The preparation for the three month immersion program has now begun. A key challenge will be to find enough appropriate billets for the students during the three months they are in Perth.

Other initiatives which were progressed during the trip included support for LEMAK – a sanitation and water organisation; development of an English language program in Sarmi district; support for the Office of Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation within our partner church GKI-TP plus numerous discussions about the development of some health clinics in the Highlands. There were also a number of conversations held regarding human rights concerns. The Committee continues to advocate for justice and peace in this province of Indonesia.

6.3 West Timor

Connections with the local church in West Timor and the Christian University of West Timor (UKAW) through the Nedlands Uniting Church continue to grow. A number of WA based university lecturers continue to visit UKAW to conduct lecture intensives for students and further train local faculty members. These visits are part of an ongoing commitment to support the improvement of academic standards at UKAW. English language competency is a vital part of this development, so to assist this, two lecturers from UKAW will be hosted in Perth for an English immersion course in August.

A further visit to West Timor from some of the Nedlands Uniting Church Australia members is planned for September this year to coincide with the UKAW graduation and 31st anniversary.

The Nedlands Uniting Church congregation's team are also continuing to sponsor 10 university students currently attending UKAW.

6.4 East Timor

Our partnership with Fundação Lafaek Diak (FLD) in Timor Leste continues. FLD run a range of development activities including a scholarship program for health care students which a number of WA congregations support with regular donations. Rosemary Hudson Miller and Greg Miller visited FLD in June 2016 on behalf of the UnitingWorld WA Committee. They

reported with joy the development that FLD has seen through our long-term support for more than a decade. Students to whom we previously provided student scholarships have now returned to work for the clinic, the facilities are vastly improved and the programs expanded. Many thanks go to the Melville, Victoria Park and Districts, Kalamunda, Uniting Church in the City and Foothills congregations plus a number of individual Uniting Church members who provide regular donations to support the scholarship program and the ongoing work of Lafaek Diak.

In September 2015, after extended delays due to problems with banking transfers, a payment of over \$13,000 was made to FLD to fund their scholarship program and other general activities.

The UnitingWorld WA committee was planning a Youth InSolidarity trip to East Timor in 2016. Due to a lack of participants the trip had to be cancelled. It is still hoped the trip can be made in 2017 and preliminary discussions and project scoping were conducted by Rosemary and Greg during their visit.

6.5 Bali, Indonesia

The Uniting Church Adult Fellowship (UCAF) continues its relationship with Gereja Kristen Protestan Bali (GKPB), our partner church in Bali. Janelle Macgregor and Marie Wilson visited in April 2016 to reconnect with the women of GKPB and visit some of their projects. In return two clergy women from GKPB are being hosted by UCAF here in Perth for 10 weeks from 30 July to 8 October for an English language immersion and professional development program. The 2015-2016 focus for UCAF is a fresh water project in Bali along with the partnership with Sri Lanka.

6.6 Burma

During April we hosted the General Secretary, Ye Lwin Htoo and the President of Pwo Karen Conference, Rev Benson, who were here to begin a conversation about re-establishing the relationship between the Uniting Church and the Pwo Karen Conference. To this end, we arranged several meetings for our visitors both here in Perth and with some of our national representatives at UnitingWorld and Act For Peace. The Committee will continue these conversations through the local Burmese congregation and their pastor, S'Win Shwe.



6.7 Conclusion

The Committee is grateful for the long term support and leadership of Rosemary Hudson Miller and her dedicated service to the WA Synod's international mission work. It is through Rosemary that many of our international partnerships have been established and developed. Across our partner churches Rosemary is very highly regarded, having consistently maintained many of our international relationships over her 17 years of service.

Members of the Committee are always pleased to be invited to speak at congregations and other gatherings to share the work of UnitingWorld and our international partner church relations. We look forward to more opportunities in the coming year.

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