

## UnitingWorld WA

*Chairperson*

*Staff*

*Members elected by Synod*

Dr Elaine Ledgerwood

Geoff Bice

Rev Eira Clapton (until July 2017)

Lee-Anne Burnett

John Steed

Kerry Povey

Sophie Lizares Bodegon (until April 2017)

Lyn Callaghan

John Jeffreys

Brian Thorpe

### **I. 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 conducted visits to West Papua, West Timor, and to assist our partners and further strengthen our relationships across the region.

### **2. STRATEGIC PLANNING**

The UnitingWorld WA Committee has been consistently working through issues of strategic planning and governance this year. Some of this has been to simply reshape what we are already doing and to connect it to the strategic priorities identified by the Synod and Presbytery of Western Australia.

An Action Plan was developed and is still requiring more work. The Commission is full of vision, but resourcing remains an issue. This resourcing has been exacerbated recently with the retirement of Rev Eira Clapton, whose contribution has been invaluable.

In addition to the strategic planning, we have commenced a process of risk management monitoring. This has connected back to our planning as it has raised issues about our main focus and the relationship we have with congregations. We anticipate that once completed, the risk management process will

have generated useful tools for congregations who are seeking to connect with our partner churches. As part of our risk-management process, we are requiring all UnitingWorld WA committee members and those who are actively visiting partner churches to sign UnitingWorld's Code of Conduct as well as providing police clearances and Working with Children Checks.

### **3. DEVELOPING A CULTURE OF OPEN COMMUNICATION**

As a Commission we have been actively developing our communication strategies within the Uniting Church. Lines of communication with the Assembly have been challenging and recently has increased in difficulty due to their changes in staffing. Recently we have seen some encouraging signs from the Assembly and we hope we can develop this relationship further to the benefit of both our Synod's Commission and the national UnitingWorld.

UnitingWorld nationally have made adjustments to their focus and funding priorities due to reduced government funding and donor contributions. This includes changes to the Experience and InSolidarity programs whereby there will be no further volunteer program at UnitingWorld, except by specific request by partners. UnitingWorld will no longer have dedicated staff fulfilling the roles of Volunteer co-ordination or InSolidarity co-ordination.

UnitingWorld have created some new Synod-based "Australian Partnership Co-ordinators"

and are looking at the possibility of appointing one in WA. We had a visit in June from the South Australian Co-ordinator, Alexandra Bingham, to promote UnitingWorld's new campaign "Solidarity, Not Charity!" We anticipate this will allow us to have closer ties with the Assembly and to promote the work of the WA Synod through UnitingWorld (WA).

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 close to \$400.

Additionally, we have continued to engage with local congregations, with Commission members occasionally visiting various congregations. This has given us the opportunity to educate people about how the Uniting Church in WA is connecting to our partner churches overseas as well as ways that local congregations can be involved. All the Commission members would welcome an invitation to talk at congregations and many of us are prepared to travel into rural areas. If you would like a member of the Commission to visit your congregation, please contact Geoff in the Church Office.

#### **4. FAITH FORMATION & FAITH SHARING**

Lent Event is one of our significant points of connecting faith formation & faith sharing to the work of UnitingWorld. This event continues to be run by the national UnitingWorld and is supported by the WA Commission. The resources produced for Lent Event challenge people to consider their faith in the light of the experiences of Christians in developing countries. Through worship resources, Bible studies and personal prayer and reflection, there are many ways that individuals can expand their faith. Of course for those who want to have a different theme for Lent, there is always the ability to use these same resources at a different time of year.

2017 saw another increase in Western Australian contributions to Lent Event. \$19,507 was donated (up from \$15,502 in

2016), with the single largest organisational contribution coming from Bicton UC, followed by Swan View UC – thank you to all the congregations, groups and individuals who made contributions!

#### **5. EDUCATION & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

The annual WonTok international development conference was held again this year for high school students, but UnitingWorld were no longer involved following a review of their strategic priorities.

As part of our strategic planning, we are reconsidering how we can best contribute towards education and leadership development within Western Australia. For churches that engage in a partnership, there is a natural education and leadership development that occurs through the relationships, overseas visits and other activities that occur to support those partnerships. Several congregations who engage with church partnerships have found this has been a connecting point for young people on the edges of the church community.

#### **6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Where possible the Commission has supported the Campaign for Australian Aid, advocating for the Federal Government to reinstate funding that has continually been cut from Australia's international aid budget.

The Commission has active engagement with a number of international partners which forms the basis of our work:

##### **7. 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. We have signed a Letter of Agreement with the Methodist Church in Sri Lanka to provide funding of over \$16,000 in 2017 to provide quality preschool education to children of the Northern and Eastern districts, including provision of nutritious meals while the children are at

school. To fulfil our commitment for 2017 a further \$2000 is still required.

We acknowledge significant donations from Uniting Church in the City, congregations and a number of donations from individual Uniting Church members. In order to sustain our funding contribution for 2018, we need to find new donor sources if we are going to be able to support the children in the preschools to the level they need.

Thanks also goes to Lyn Callaghan who hosted a fundraising dinner which raised \$1162.

## **8. WEST PAPUA**

The Black Pearl Network conducted another visit to West Papua in June 2017 to visit our partner church Gereja Kristen Injili Indonesia di Tanah Papua (GKI-TP) including members of the Floreat, Star St and Trinity North UC congregations, accompanied by Geoff Bice.

The Australian Papuan Cultural Exchange Program (APCEP) intensive English language program was conducted again in 2017 for 10 students. This was a highly successful program organised by a dedicated co-ordination team of Lee-Anne Burnett, Kerry Povey, Jan Thorpe, and Heather Hee. There were many other voluntary contributions of time, households, expertise and money that made the 2017 APCEP course such a successful experience. Thanks to everyone involved.

English language courses have been established in the Sarmi and Nabire districts of West Papua with local teachers employed to run classes.

Alumni of the APCEP course have set up their own foundation to co-ordinate implementation of development projects with the main goal of teaching English in Papua.

Initial introduction of the Days for Girls program was begun to demonstrate the process of making feminine hygiene packs.

Support for the LEMAK water and sanitation organisation continues with the aim of building their capacity and ability to become self-sustaining.

Geoff met with UnitingWorld and Papuan partners in Sydney in November to discuss human rights concerns and responses.

## **9. 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.

Professor David Scott went to West Timor at the invitation of the university to assist with the water harvesting program in the curriculum of the Faculty of Agriculture. Bostang Radjagukguk, a professor of agriculture who is on the Nedlands team, travelled with him to provide expertise and translation services.

Some of the academic staff of the Faculty of English at UKAW will come to Perth for some training in the methodology of teaching ESL as this is a key area they wish to improve.

## **10. 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. Many thanks go to the Melville and Foothills congregations who continue to provide regular donations to support the scholarship program and the ongoing work of Lafaek Diak.

## **11. BALI, INDONESIA**

A 10 week visit from 2 Balinese women was co-ordinated in late 2016 and they experienced a significant increase in their English proficiency.

The Uniting Church Adult Fellowship (UCAF) are currently having a hiatus on their relationship with Gereja Kristen Protestan Bali (GKPB), our partner church in Bali.

## **12. CONCLUSION**

The Committee is grateful for the support and contribution of Rev Eira Clapton and her dedicated service to the WA Synod's international mission work. It is through Eira that our international partnership with Sri Lanka has been formalised and advanced. Eira has been an invaluable source of wisdom and expertise for the improvement of the Commission's processes and procedures.

If you are interested in being involved in the work of the Commission or would like to

explore ways for your congregation to engage with our international partners, please contact Geoff Bice or any of the Commission members. Members of the Commission 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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