



Uniting Church in Australia
Western Australia

Issue 72
June 2021

Revive

a fresh perspective on faith, church and life



Yuko Tonai-Moore:
Keeping the light on

Disaster
relief updates

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The Uniting Church WA acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands and waters on which we live and work. *Revive* is produced at the Uniting Church Centre, which sits on the lands of the Wadjuk Nyungar people. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge the Nyungar people as the sovereign First Peoples of this place.

Opinions expressed in *Revive* do not necessarily reflect those of the editor, or the policies of the Uniting Church.

Revive welcomes contributors. Contact the editor in the first instance at revive@wa.uca.org.au.

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Can We Be Reconciled?

It is often said the two highlights of the Christian calendar are Christmas and Easter, that in many ways could be described as 'bookends', coming at the beginning and end of the Jesus story.

However, as we all know, it is what came afterwards that is critically important, not only for the life of the church, but for our individual lives as well.

Personally, the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, which we now celebrate, is at the core of my understanding of the Christian faith.

Acts 2:5-13 tells how there were devout people from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. Suddenly, they heard a rushing, violent wind, accompanied by an ability to speak in tongues, yet leaving all bewildered and amazed. Despite coming from totally diverse backgrounds and cultures there was the realisation that God was speaking to them as if they were one, bringing dazzling clarity to the life, suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus.

At Pentecost, we hear the declaration from Acts 2:16-21, with its link to Joel 2:28-32, that God "will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh

and your sons and daughters shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams."

For me, today's contemporary Australia is the 21st Century equivalent of those gathered in Jerusalem, from "every nation under heaven". It is reflected in public sentiment, for regardless of religious, cultural or political affiliation, we can all mime the words of our unofficial anthem: 'We are one, but we are many; and from all the lands on Earth we come; we'll share a dream and sing with one voice 'I am, you are, we are Australian.'

The question remains if this is truly so?

I believe we are at a sobering junction within the life of our nation and also within our Uniting Church. We might sing enthusiastically 'we are one', but the reality is, unfortunately, starkly different.

Often our First Nations People are too often ignored and overlooked in the sharing of the dream. The 30th Anniversary of the *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* report highlights Aboriginal people still marginalised, often invisible, unseen, unnoticed, in the much-vaunted claim that Australia



In March, Susy Thomas (Centre), Moderator of the Uniting Church WA, and Rev David Jackson (right), Convenor of the Uniting Church WA Disaster Relief and Community Recovery Working Group, presented a \$20 000 donation to Basil Zempilas, Perth Lord Mayor, for the Lord Mayor's Distress Relief Fund, supporting those recently affected by bushfires in the Perth hills.

is the most successful multicultural nation on earth.

Our first Moderator and fifth Assembly President, the late Sir Ronald Wilson, devoted much of his life to championing human rights, co-authoring with (now) Senator Mick Dodson the 1997 *Bringing Them Home* report, into the Stolen Generations. He would be urging us to be far more vigilant in changing cultural and racial attitudes, even within the life of our church.

The people of Pentecost realised suddenly that only by being 'as one', could God's healing and reconciling Spirit be released on all people, not just some.

My prayer for our Uniting Church people at this time is, let it be so!

Susy Thomas
Moderator of the Uniting Church WA

Moderator's Diary

June

- 13 June Preaching at Leeming Uniting Church
- 14 June Synod Standing Committee Meeting
- 16 June Lunch with Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress
- 16 June WA Heads of Churches Meeting
- 29 June Synod of WA Business Committee Meeting

July

- 4 July Preaching at Pinjarra Uniting Church
- 6 July Presbytery Standing Committee Meeting
- 18 July Preaching at Star Street Uniting Church

August

- 3 August Presbytery Standing Committee Meeting
- 9 August Synod Standing Committee Meeting
- 18 August WA Heads of Churches Meeting
- 24 August Synod of WA Business Committee Meeting



With so much happening around the place, your June 2021 edition of *Revive* is filled with a vast range of topics.

In the last few months, WA has experienced two devastating events that have destroyed land and properties: bushfires north east of Perth, and Cyclone Seroja.

In both of these situations, the Uniting Church WA Disaster Relief and Community Recovery Working Group has supported a response from within the local communities. Our Faith in Action section on pages 14 and 15 reports on these issues, and how you can support the Working Group as they provide this important work.

Our profile this edition is Yuko Tonai-Moore from Bridgetown Uniting Church, who shares with us her faith journey, inspirations and hopes for the future. I love stories like these because we learn so much. I've seen Yuko around at various Uniting Church WA events, as you may have too, and listening to her talk in-depth about her journey reminds us that we all have an interesting story to tell. Read Yuko's profile on page 10.

We switch tones entirely for our feature story, where we look into WA's inhumane practice of imprisoning children as young as ten. The Uniting Church WA supports the 'Raise the Age' campaign, which is calling on government to raise the age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 14. It's something Australia has been urged to do by countries around the world through the United Nations, and you can read more about this issue on page 16.

Ashley Macmillan's reflection on page 20 is a nice reminder for Uniting Church members that a lot of the work done through the church is actively working towards peace. Ashley is currently studying her PhD on the effects of 'proactive peace' – or the wars that don't happen, and why.

And for Refugee Week this year, the Centre for Asylum Seekers, Refugees, and Detainees (CARAD), has shared a recipe from their social enterprise, the Fare Go Food Truck. It's a spicy, cheesy, deep fried treat that looks amazing. Find the recipe on page 25, and let us know if you try it!

We are always on the lookout for new recipes to try. If you have a favourite you'd like to share, or want to contribute any other news, events, letters or reflections to *Revive*, get in contact at revive@wa.uca.org.au.

As always, it's been a pleasure to bring this variety of stories together for you, our reader. Hopefully there is something for everyone this edition.

Heather Dowling, Editor

5 minutes with...

Cephas Issa



Cephas Issa spent time working in the Uniting Church Centre recently as an intern for the University of WA's McCusker Centre for Citizenship. He takes five minutes with us, to share a bit about his current project with the Uniting Church WA and Uniting WA researching differences between charity, relief and social justice.

What are you studying?

I'm currently studying a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Political Science and International Relations, and am also on a direct pathway into Law.

Where would you like this course to take you?

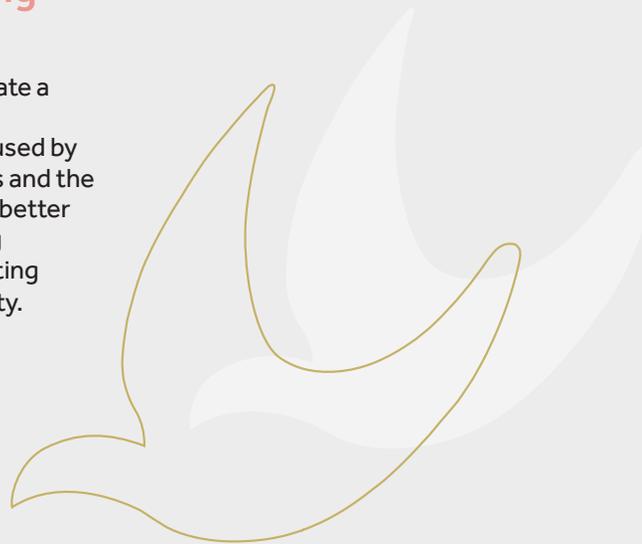
I'd love to be able to use my passion for political science and law to work in an environment where I can tackle real world policy and legal problems and help make our community a better place.

What is the project you're working on with the Uniting Church WA?

I hope to be able to create a community education document that will be used by schools, congregations and the broader community to better understand the Uniting Church's role in promoting justice in our community.

Tell us something interesting that you've learned while working on the project.

One thing I've learnt is how much Uniting WA and the Uniting Church WA actually does! From providing shelter to so many vulnerable members of our community in the Tranby Centre to co-ordinating the annual 'Justice for Refugees' on Palm Sunday. It has been a great pleasure learning about how Uniting WA and the Uniting Church WA is working towards helping those who need it most.



India's 'Corona Tsunami'

devastating for a church on the front-lines

**Mardi Lumsden,
UnitingWorld**

India's COVID-19 surge has overloaded its struggling health system and is causing thousands of deaths per day.

Uniting Church partners, the Church of North India (CNI), are not immune. Battling to keep people fed as a second lockdown wreaks havoc, and spreading critical health information to help beat the spread of the disease, they're on the front-line of the response in their communities.

"The 'Corona Tsunami', if one could say that, has left all of us paralysed," Bishop Khimla of the Diocese of Durgapur told UnitingWorld. "There is immense suffering as the medical and social infrastructure struggles to cope with the pandemic. The church has also lost many ministers, both Pastors and Bishops."

Project Officer, Sanjay Khaling was recently hospitalised after contracting COVID-19, while several staff of the Durgapur Education and Social Empowerment project have contracted COVID-19 along with family and friends.

Despite the dangers, the church continues to serve the community as best they're able. Bishop Samantaroy of the Amritsar Diocese said the church is working on immediate interventions, including free distribution of cooked food, dry rations and hygiene products like masks, sanitiser and soap.

Schools have been closed across the area, so girls attending the hostel project in Amritsar have gone home to their villages for at least a month and possibly two.



Uniting Church partners, the Church of North India, supporting their community with food distribution.

At the Amritsar Social Empowerment and Education project, study centres will continue in each village and the team are doing what they can to support people remotely.

"There has been a drastic rise in cases everyday here in Punjab," Project Co-ordinator OP Prakash said. "In some [rural] villages people have tested positive, but the situation seems under control."

While this team has experience from last year's lengthy lockdown, the pandemic is reaching new heights in other areas.

The Eastern Himalayas Education project has had to close the school and move all activities online.

Teachers are navigating the difficult task of teaching online while resourcing children who have little or no access to internet or devices.

"We are assured that UnitingWorld continues to be with us in spirit and prayers and believe that this too shall pass," Bishop Khimla said yesterday. "We very much appreciate your prayers."

UnitingWorld is supporting church partners to divert project funds to their COVID-19 responses where needed. Donations will be very gratefully received to support their work.

Donate now at unitingworld.org.au/india-covid-19-crisis.

KCO dreaming

This year, Kids Camp Out (KCO) was postponed in March due to significantly lower registrations. Unfortunately, this was not unexpected as the number of campers have been noticeably declining over the past five years due to Uniting Church WA children growing up and being in high school, with some now being young adults.

KCO has been a Presbytery wide event for primary school aged children in the Uniting Church WA for around 40 years. Its first inception was KUCA, you may remember its big blue bird mascot?

Around 2010, KUCA morphed into Kids Camp Out. Over the years, KCO has become a more family-friendly and intergenerational camp for congregations to join with Uniting Generations, and previously First Third Ministry, in an overnight camp at Advent Park in Maida Vale. Not too long ago, attendance numbers were in the hundreds.

There is still enthusiasm amongst some of the leaders involved in bringing groups to KCO each year, and from the children and families who have participated in previous years. They do not want to see KCO come to an end.

Janine McDonald, Uniting Generations Co-ordinator, said the team behind KCO are currently working out the best way forward.

"The next few months provide the perfect opportunity to rediscover the meaning and importance of KCO and determine if it is still a

valuable ministry in the Presbytery of WA," she said.

"I have started talking with several leaders in congregations to hear their thoughts and dreams about what could be, and I am especially interested in hearing from leaders in Messy Church congregations and leaders in congregations with Girls' Brigade associations etc, to determine if and how KCO, or some other Presbytery wide ministry might be valuable for them."

Intergenerational ministry highlights the truth that all people are valuable and important members of the Body of Christ (Romans 12:4-5).

"Children and young people need relationships with adult members in the church so they can grow as involved faithful members," Janine said. "Adults need relationships with the children and young people in the church so they can grow as fruitful, courageous members.

"Together, the church is a vibrant and purposeful community where all members feel valued. Intergenerational Ministry helps to build and nurture these relationships between the different generations."

To get involved in this conversation, or for more information, contact Janine McDonald on **9260 9800** or email janine.mcdonald@wa.uca.org.au



Members of the Uniting Church WA have enjoyed Kids' Camp Out (KCO) for around 40 years.



Social Justice Church: living the Gospel everyday

A climate change rally gathered outside Uniting Church in the City, Wesley Perth, supported by Social Justice Church.

Mikaela Turner

Years ago, Alison Xamon began to envisage a new kind of ministry. A church community that would be truly welcoming and safe for all. A group that would see the fight for justice as simply part of being Christian.

It was a type of worship that Alison longed for, but over time it became clear that if she really wanted it to happen, she would have to make it happen.

So, she did. Alison's dream became the Social Justice Church, which has now been gathering for two-and-a-half years.

While it wasn't all smooth sailing, the path was cleared considerably when Rev Craig Collas, former minister of Uniting Church in the City, Wesley Perth offered Wesley as a venue for this new ministry.

"Wesley was a perfect fit for me because being in the middle of the city was ideal and Wesley itself is a welcoming congregation," Alison says.

"I also have a personal connection as my dad was ordained there and my grandfather generations back helped build it."

Then Alison went to Geoff Bice, Social Justice Consultant at the Uniting Church WA with her idea and together they formed a core team of about 5 or 6 people who were responsible for organising and running the monthly services.

"Since then we've had more people join the core team and we've effectively consolidated what is now a regular service and regular worshipping congregation that continues to grow," Alison says.

The congregation is mostly made up of Generation X and Millennials. In fact, Alison, at 51 years old, says she is the oldest person there. But Alison wants to be clear, the demographic of the congregation does not mean Social Justice Church is a rock band, lightshow type of worship service.

"The style of the worship is quite different to what people intuitively assume younger people want," she says.

The service draws from a Taizé style of worship, where candles are used to form a warm atmosphere, encouraging quiet meditation and reflection. It includes traditional liturgies, hymns and benedictions,

not unlike a typical Uniting Church service.

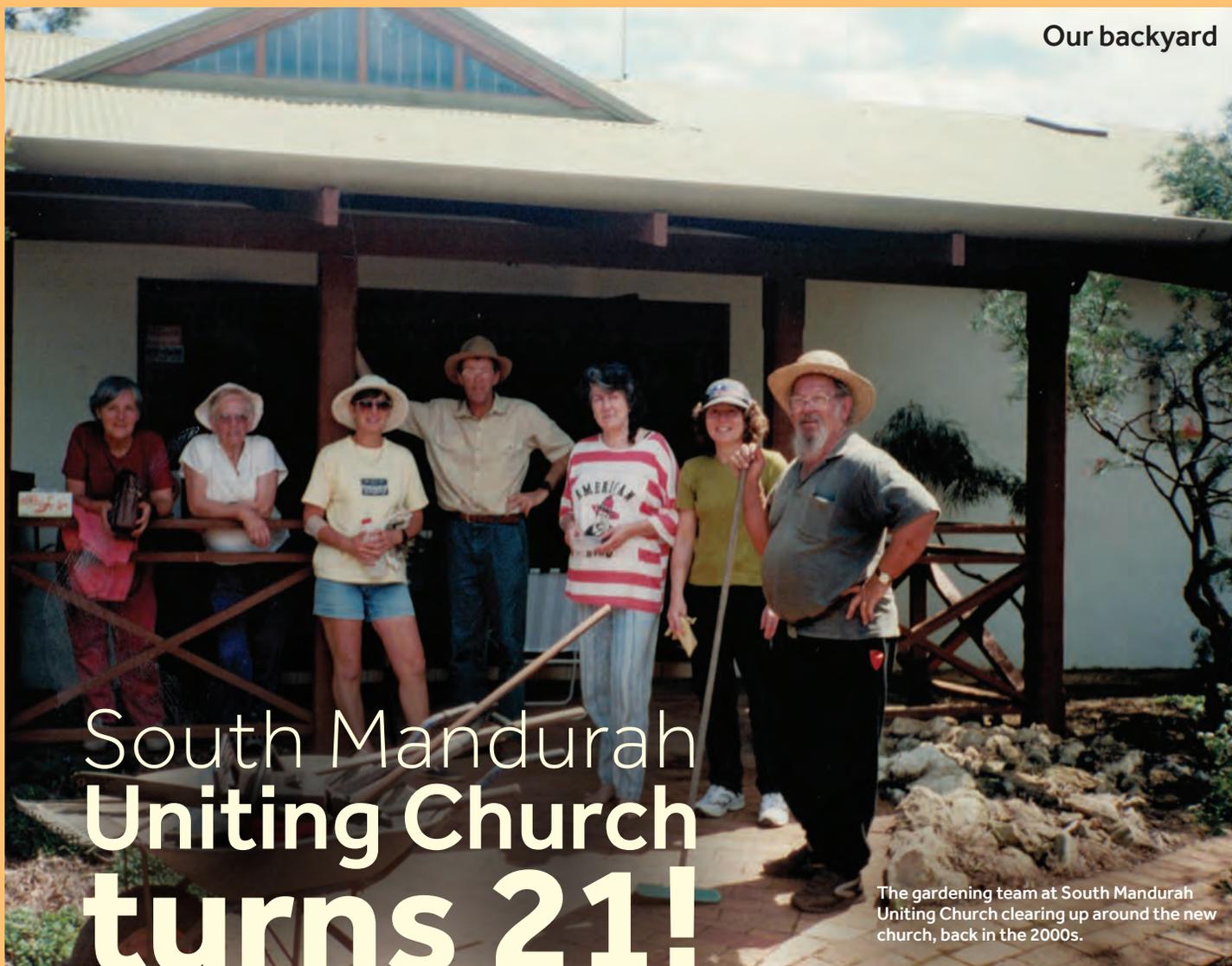
Where Social Justice Church differs slightly is in its staunch position as an all-inclusive congregation. It's expected that members and visitors respect that the service is a safe place for all, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, race or life circumstance.

And as the name suggests, the congregation focuses on issues of social justice.

"The core of the sermons promote the praxis of the gospel, that is, the idea that we can't just turn-up to church once-a-month, but must actively fight for justice everyday," Alison says.

"We encourage people to reflect on what we are called to do as Christians in terms of how we work towards care for others and care for the earth."

Social Justice Church is held on the second Sunday of each month, 6.00pm, at Uniting Church in the City, Wesley Perth. Follow their Facebook page for more information, or contact Alison Xamon at xamon@westnet.com.au, or Geoff Bice at geoffrey.bice@wa.uca.org.au.



South Mandurah Uniting Church turns 21!

The gardening team at South Mandurah Uniting Church clearing up around the new church, back in the 2000s.

Kerry Lawson

It was an exciting day on 20 August 2000 in Wannanup. The Uniting Church WA Moderator at the time, Elizabeth Burns, along with the help of a very young Jaren Picking, turned the key on the new South Mandurah Uniting Church front door and led the congregation and visitors into the service for the commissioning of the building.

Fast forward to 2021 and the South Mandurah Uniting Church (SMUC) congregation are getting ready to celebrate the 21st anniversary of the commissioning of our building on the weekend of Saturday 21 and Sunday 22 August, 2021.

We are currently gathering photographs and stories about the SMUC congregation.

Do you have any photos of SMUC events, camps, youth group or services that you can send us? Do you have a funny, sad, or adventurous memory that you would like to share with us?

Better still, how about you plan to visit us over the weekend and come and say 'hello!'

Originally, the South Mandurah congregation met on Sundays in the old Falcon Hall which was located where the Falcon Library now stands. It was realised that with a growing congregation we needed a more permanent home.

In 2000, the empty Threfall Art Gallery building, on Rees Place in Wannanup, was purchased and with the able assistance of local builder Merv Trotter it was fitted out as South Mandurah Uniting Church.

Over the years the building has been extended with a storeroom and an enclosed children's play area. Revamps have included an upgrade

to the kitchen, a larger stage, new carpets, steps, handrails and a prayer box.

While the building has been upgraded, there are many aspects at the core of SMUC which remain unchanged, including our faithfulness, wonderful hospitality and friendliness. We look forward to sharing our celebration with everyone who can come on 21 or 22 August. If you can't attend, please say a prayer acknowledging our gratitude for the past 21 years and the years to come.

For more information contact Kerry Lawson on 0409 885 988 or at rlk11@bigpond.com, or Raelyn Punch on 0429 685 908 or at prpunch@lasar.net.au.





Yuko Tonai-Moore: Keeping the light on

Heather Dowling

Yuko Tonai-Moore often brings fresh air to Uniting Church WA gatherings. She's bright, kind and gentle, and passionate about her journey with God.

Growing up in Japan, Yuko came to Perth, Australia, with her family as a teenager. She didn't grow up Christian, but her childhood was influenced by Buddhism, Shintoism, and Christianity.

"My grandfather was a Buddhist painter," she said. "So, I had lots of contact with Buddhist teaching and philosophy.

"Also, my mother gave me the story of the both the birth of Jesus and the story of what he did, and the story of Buddha and what he did. So, I had ideas of amazing people and an amazing God that appeared in the human race, from the time of a child.

"Also being Japanese there is Shintoism, which is a belief in lots of Gods. Some of the stories are very interesting; there's a parallel to some of the things that Christians believe."

When the family moved to Perth, Yuko connected with the Uniting Church without realising it, through friends in both high school and university. But it was after moving back to Japan that she became a Christian.

Married with small children, Yuko started attending a Bible study group for young mums. She wasn't particularly concerned with studying the Bible at the time, and

was initially keen to go just so she could meet other young families.

"God changed the situation very quickly," she said. "Through that Bible study I learnt who God is and that it's okay for God to have a human character – that's one way for us to have a close relationship with God. It's not confining God, but opening the door to a way in which we can have a personal relationship with God."

Yuko moved back to Perth while her children were still young, and then experienced the painful path of marriage breakdown.

"In that time, I was looking for the church and I thought, 'well

somehow, Uniting Church people have been in my life, so it's time to go back to there.' So that's what I did.

"I went to South Perth Uniting Church and there I asked a lot of questions about marriage, separation, divorce, and what God is wanting me to do. I wanted to do the right thing and I wanted to make sure I was doing what the Bible says. So, I was looking through the Bible really hard and asking 'What is the Bible telling me? What is God wanting me to do here?'"

While sitting with her minister, he encouraged her to listen to what God was saying to her, before opening the Bible.

"That was an indication for me to start the journey to have that personal relationship with God, and that God speaks to me, not just through the Bible, but through the conversations that we have with God," she said.

"It was a really wonderful journey. Although it was very painful, I learned so many things: how to forgive, how to choose love instead of hate or anger."

"I'm still on that journey, it takes time. Forgiving is not necessarily an easy thing, but it's not for the benefit of the other person, it's really for the benefit of yourself. To understand that took me a while. It's lifelong learning.

"I've found God to be quite humorous sometimes, and unpredictable. Sometimes that puts my world upside down – purposely, I'm sure. God is teaching me to be humble, to more and more relying

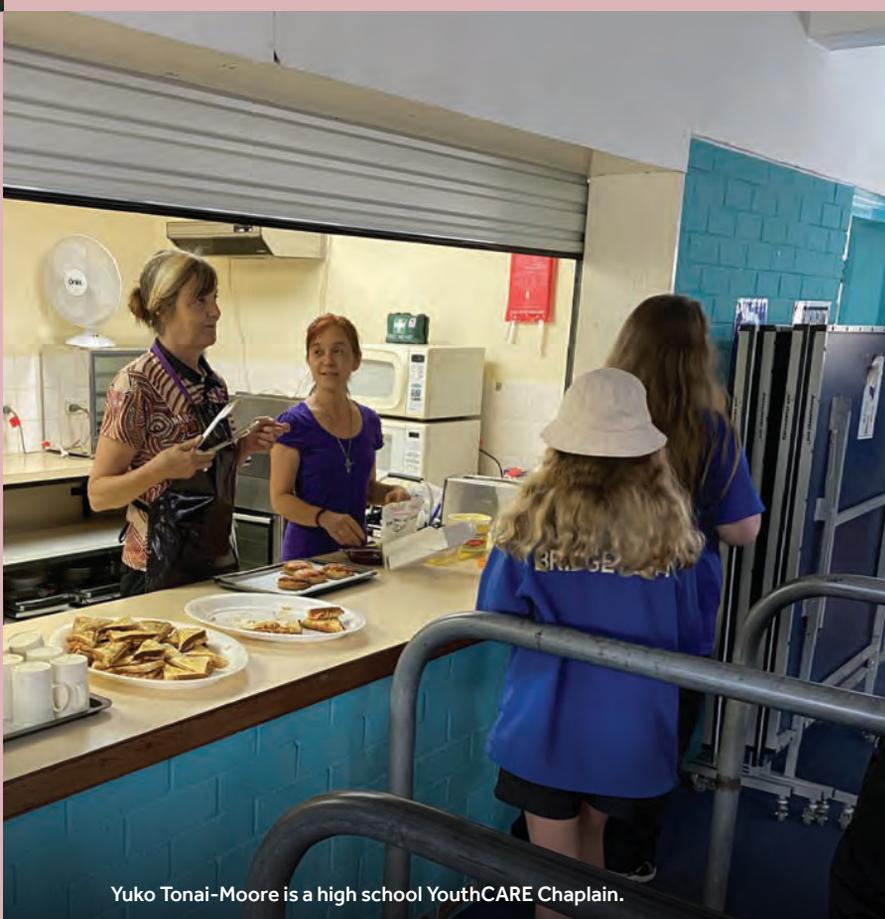
on God's provisions, and let go of my own control."

While this was a painful time, it shaped Yuko's faith immensely, as painful times often do. Yuko's story was nowhere near over however, as she eventually remarried and moved to Bridgetown, in Western Australia's South West.

Yuko and her husband have lived in Bridgetown for 26 years, with much of that spent living on an 80-hectare property with another family, protecting the forest and enjoying an eco-friendly, simple lifestyle.

Yuko's lifestyle is influenced by her parent's commitment to the environment, and her faith.

"Buddhism and Shintoism connects to nature," she said. "Nature has its own spirit. And if you look at the Bible too, the Gods created everything, and if everything comes from God's spirit, God's energy, then everything is God.



Yuko Tonai-Moore is a high school YouthCARE Chaplain.



Yuko's first baptism service at Bridgetown Uniting Church.

Profile

"So therefore, we're all interconnected with everything. If you're not looking after things around us, we're not looking after ourselves in the long run – it's all God's, and we as human beings have a responsibility to take care of it as best we can.

"God is a wonderful ecologist. God doesn't waste anything, and everything is for God's beautiful plan. Everything is beneficial when it is being used in God's work."

In Bridgetown, Yuko became involved in the local Uniting Church and now is an integral leader in the congregation. She also works in a local primary school as a Japanese language teacher, and in the local high school as the YouthCARE Chaplain.

Years ago, the congregation could no longer afford a minister, so joined a 'cluster' with other Uniting Churches in the region. Yuko is a Lay Leader for her church, and says the small, rural Bridgetown congregation 'minister to each other' in an informal setting.

"I really believe that Jesus is wanting everyone to be a minister," she said. "Everyone has a very special gift

that needs to be exercised for God's purpose – God's plan.

"Ministering to each other doesn't need to only happen on a Sunday. It happens everywhere, in different forms and shapes. That is something we need to explore: how we can look after each other, and minister to each other and the local town.

"So therefore, we're all interconnected with everything. If you're not looking after things around us, we're not looking after ourselves in the long run – it's all God's, and we as human beings have a responsibility to take care of it as best we can."

"We are committed to wonder together what Jesus is all about and how to live the way Jesus asks us to live today.

"I really believe everyone has a gift and whatever we do – no matter how small an act of kindness or love – when we do it in the name of Jesus Christ it's all going to be wonderful and it's a very important part of God's kingdom.

"I also organise really great different ministers to come and give us a formal service sometimes. For some people that beautiful formal service is still very precious to us.

"We need ordinary people to be extraordinary with God. We need ministers, deacons, pastors and all sorts of different people being part of God's body and using whatever gift they have to support and help each other."

Yuko began her working career as a high school science and mathematics teacher, a career she had wanted since childhood. Now, years later, she feels she is still living out her childhood dream of supporting kids, as a YouthCARE Chaplain.





Members of Bridgetown Uniting Church, including Yuko Tonai-Moore front right.

"I've been a teacher on and off for thirty years," she said.

"As a child, I remember what I wanted to be in the future, was to be in a job to teach children to keep dreaming, and have their dreams come true.

"I thought, at the time, teaching would be the easiest job – I was wrong," she laughed.

"As a child, that's what I wanted to do, and I'm still doing that as a chaplain."

Yuko said the role allows her to listen to the student's dreams and hopes, and support them as they believe in themselves as somebody unique and precious.

"I like the idea of chaplaincy. It's ministry of the present. You're not there to solve the problem for them, but to be present in a moment of their struggles or their life and walk alongside them.

"It's a different kind of ministry. It's not a ministry to bring people into church, it's a ministry of finding the real person. It's a ministry of unconditional love, a ministry of hope, a ministry of letting people know they're worth so much more than they know."

As a member of the Uniting Church WA Thrive Committee, and the Assembly Standing Committee, Yuko also believes in the grassroots voice in the bigger picture of the church.

"I think it's important to have a voice from a congregational point of view," she said.

"We often assume what people are thinking and where they are at, rather than actually asking. It's important to always think about the grassroots and put different perspectives and views into a situation.

"When we get so used to one particular way we think everyone thinks a particular way. Having the opportunity to hear each other is really important."

Yuko's biggest passion lies in journeying with God, and being welcoming for others to join her in that journey.

"We actually journey with God and need to keep the light on for people to find the truth," she said. "For people to find God's love is still a very important part of me doing what I do.

"Keeping that light on inside of me is important. For that light to be seen is important, and an open invitation is important. So, the light is shared, absorbed, re-emitted, and strengthened to help us with our journey together. It is a great adventure. I am grateful for God placing people to journey with me.

"I am not sure what I will be doing in five years, ten years time. I know God knows and I am happy about that.

"I pray my inspirations, motives and actions are always from God's love, and I keep moving with God to see the world around me more and more from God's perspective."





Recovery after the storm

Debris and destruction in Kalbarri, following Cyclone Seroja, which hit the town in April.

Mikaela Turner

Cyclone Seroja crossed our coast at about 8.00pm on Sunday 11 April, beginning its destructive journey in Port Gregory, just south of Kalbarri. Winds of up to 170km/hr, the strongest recorded in more than 50 years, tore homes, businesses and trees apart, leaving behind masses of debris.

Coastal areas south of Kalbarri saw about 70 per cent of homes damaged. Residents huddled in bathtubs or hid in pantries and toilets. Yet, miraculously no-one was injured.

Even before the cyclone hit, the Uniting Church WA's Disaster Relief and Community Recovery Working Group was preparing for the coming storm. Rev David Jackson, Convenor of the Working Group, was calling local congregations to ask how they were preparing and to establish a connection in case future involvement was needed.

Those connections have proved invaluable.

"Our contacts are helping us ensure the effort we make is in the right area and that we don't cut across

areas that others are already doing very well," David said.

"We're shaping our response around where there is no other help and where additional assistance is needed."

One of those areas is helping farmers clear their land. Forecasted rain had triggered these farmers to sow their land, but with debris now covering their fields, they are unable to plant.

"They only have a small window in which they can plant after rain has fallen," David said. "If they can't sow their crops, they're looking at 24 months without any income, so it's an urgent state."

Frontier Services has joined this effort, sending volunteers through their Outback Links program to assist farmers in the clean-up.

Northampton Uniting Church has already established a line of credit at the local hardware store, allowing people to buy what they need to repair and restore their infrastructure. The Disaster Relief and Community Recovery Working Group also joined the congregation in providing vouchers to the local fuel station for people to refuel their generators while their power was out.

Recovery for an event of this scale is long-term.

"Years, not months," David said. The clean-up is only phase one. And although clearing debris is urgent and necessary, David is already planning ahead.

"We will roll out the 'Seasons of Growth' program to help children, youth and adults process the trauma and loss they've experienced.

"Kids were covering with parents screeching with terror at the storm. It will indelibly be imprinted on those kids' minds for a long time."

Support the Disaster Relief and Community Recovery Working Group by donating to the Uniting Church WA Disaster and Emergency Relief Fund. Send funds to the Uniting Church in Australia Property Trust (WA) – T&SP, BSB 036001, Account 698310, Reference WA Disaster Relief. Please also mention the congregation or name of donor.

To provide hands-on assistance, consider volunteering through Frontier Services Outback Links. Email outbacklinks@frontierservices.org for more information.

Long-term support for bushfire affected communities

Mikaela Turner

In early February, bushfires tore through properties in the north-east of Perth, destroying 86 homes along the way. But since February, news of the fires has been trumped by lockdowns, an election and a cyclone. For affected communities, however, the fire is still very much front of mind.

Carolyn Ebell-Taylor is a Lay Preacher at Gidgegannup Community Church, in a town where the fire took many homes, including the home of two congregation members. She says one of the greatest blessings of the Uniting Church WA is its willingness to just say “yes”.

“It makes such a big difference to people’s perception of the church when you have a church that backs you and doesn’t require millions of forms to say yes to what’s needed,” she says. “Can we fund a community breakfast – yes.”

That community breakfast happened on Saturday 27 March and according to Rev David Jackson, Convenor of the Uniting Church WA’s Disaster Relief and Community Recovery Working Group, it was a resounding success.

“It was very valuable to be there to provide resources and stand alongside the community,” he said.

“In communities like Gidgegannup, people see themselves as resilient, self-



Volunteer firefighters enjoying a community breakfast for the community of Gidgegannup.

sufficient and not needing outside help, so making yourself and your services known in a non-threatening way is important.

“Just to say we care and we are here if you want to make contact with us.”

Carolyn says the community breakfast was also fantastic for the many firefighters who attended.

“We tend to forget that many volunteer firefighters are members of the community too,” she said.

“One firefighter saw his own home go up in smoke, so it affects them deeply when they feel they’ve failed to stop a fire.”

The Disaster Relief and Community Recovery Working Group also committed \$4 000

to help kit out 45 Temporary Accommodation Pods that were donated by the Minderoo Foundation for those who lost their house.

“The pods are really important because a lot of people have horses and livestock, so they can’t just move,” Carolyn says.

Bushfire recovery is a long journey and there is still much to be done. But that, Carolyn says, is where the Uniting Church is so valuable.

“The support is long-term,” she said. “Things move on so quickly in the news cycle as the next crisis occurs, but just because it’s gone from the news cycle, doesn’t mean it’s all fixed.”

“I think it will be about five years before everything is restored.”



Keep our kids out of prison: Raise the Age

Heather Dowling

Most Australians don't realise that we put kids in prison. In a public opinion poll by the Australia Institute, 73% of Australians had no idea that children as young as ten are currently locked up in our prison system.

It's not surprising, since most people imagine kids at that age to be, well... kids.

But the facts tell us that for some, this is not the case.

The Commissioner for Children and Young People in WA reports that in 2018-2019, 143 children in WA spent time in unsentenced detention. This unsentenced detention can range from an average of 25 days for non-Indigenous children and 46 days for Indigenous children – keeping in mind that 78% of kids in detention are Indigenous.

The Uniting Church WA is calling for the age of criminal responsibility to be raised from 10 to 14 in WA, and has joined Social Reinvestment WA in their 'Raise the Age' campaign.

"Too many of our young people are being taken away and put in care or entering the prison system. It means this generation are reliving the trauma of many years ago," said Rev Robert Jetta, Chair of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress WA (Congress).

"We want the Government to support us to look after our young

people. The funds that are being used to take kids away and lock kids up, we need to be spending that money on prevention, on supporting young mums and families to keep their kids."

Social Reinvestment WA is a coalition of 25 non-government organisations, including the Uniting Church WA. It aims to create a safer, more harmonious community by sending less people to prison, and campaigning for more support for at risk individuals and families.

Sophie Stewart, Campaign Co-ordinator at Social Reinvestment WA said we have a responsibility to look after children, and our current legislation just doesn't do that.

"The young people who are in our prison system – primary school aged children – they're also among the most vulnerable population in

our state. They're from the most vulnerable communities," she said.

"A significant number of the kids who are in prison in WA are also in the child protection system, over 55% percent. So, these are kids who have already been let-down by families, and then they're being let-down further by the system.

"These are some of the most traumatised vulnerable young people who often don't have anybody to advocate for them.

"We also know that the over representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is incredibly significant. Aboriginal communities are already facing incredibly difficult barriers, whether that's to do with discrimination, entrenched disadvantage or intergenerational trauma.

"So, when we're talking about these young people, these are children who need our community's protection. We have a responsibility to take care of young people as a community, but we're failing to do that."



Australia is globally behind

Despite knowing that a child's brain is not fully developed, and that even the United Nations (UN) along with countries such as Canada, Germany and Switzerland, are calling Australia to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 14 at a minimum, we are still imprisoning children. With our minimum age at 10 years old, Australia is well behind global standards on this issue.

Disturbingly, in 2018, Telethon Kids Institute found that 89% of incarcerated children had significant cognitive impairments, including Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

"We also know that there's a huge number of children with disabilities in our prison system," Sophie said.

"Nine out of ten of the young people in WA prisons, in Banksia Hill, have significant cognitive disabilities and a significant amount of them have Fetal Alcohol Disorder. Which means their cognitive functioning and their

ability to control their emotions is so much more difficult.

"All of the medical consensus and scientific consensus, supported by the Australian Medical Association, the Royal College of Australian Paediatricians, and other significant medical bodies, is that children under the age of 14 do not have the neurological development to be held responsible at the level of criminal responsibility.

"All children are learning and growing. What the science tells us is that they do not have the necessary understanding of consequential behaviour. They also don't have the emotional capacity yet to regulate their emotions and behaviours – they're susceptible to peer pressure and risk taking at much higher levels.

"These are children that need guidance and support, they're not people that we need to punish and lock away."

Social Reinvestment WA believe that Australia has an international

legal responsibility to provide children with the right to a safe, happy childhood.

"The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child really lays out what children are entitled to," Sophie said. "And by incarcerating children and putting them through the criminal justice system, we're often denying them those really basic rights that young people around the world should have.

"We're an advanced society and community. How do we measure ourselves as a community if we're not protecting our youngest, our littlest, our most vulnerable members?"

Prevention is key

Sophie explained that a lot of kids that end up in the justice system do so under WA's mandatory three strike rule. She believes that we need more prevention measures, to help kids who may be at risk of entering the system.

"We have mandatory sentencing for three strikes in Western Australia, and that's law," she said.

"Often it's the most vulnerable people that end up in detention because there isn't necessarily a responsible parent or safe place designated that they could go to. So, if we had more safe bail houses, if we had more places and support for kinship carers and foster carers, you'd see less people ending up in the prison system.

"We don't have enough early intervention and prevention. Most of the young people who've come into our justice system have come up on the radar of multiple other service providers before then.

"If we had a more connected system of support, and a more community-based system of support, we'd be able to recognise the unique needs of struggling young people and their families earlier on, and respond to the underlying causes of offending before they end up in the justice system.

"Where there is poverty, disadvantage and trauma, people are more likely to end up in the criminal justice system. We can avoid that by resourcing and

responding to people earlier. And that means resourcing organisations that work with struggling young people and their families."

Once a child has been incarcerated, they are more likely to be set up on a path of self-destruction. Sophie said that putting children before police, judges and through the system in a negative way institutionalises them.

"When a child goes through the criminal justice system, there's a whole lot of really detrimental impacts," she said. "Putting young people not just in detention but through the justice system, causes them long-term psychological harm.

"Juvenile detention and prison is like 'crime university'. When we put young people into a prison system they associate with older people, they associate with other people who are involved in criminal behaviour and what we really want is to be encouraging pro-social behaviour in these young people.

"We want to be surrounding them with influences that are going to help lift them up. And our current criminal justice system, that punishes and criminalises people who don't have the capacity to make decisions, really fails to do that.

"The stigma from the rest of the community about going into a juvenile detention centre and having been in there, and the separation from family and community is incredibly damaging to those young people. Especially when you've got young people who are flown from the Kimberley, hundreds of thousands of kilometres away, to be in juvenile detention in Banksia Hill where it's a huge culture shock."

Not only does being in detention separate children from their communities, the current system doesn't offer a suitable level of reintegration back into their outside lives.

"There's a real lack of reintegration, and that integration is critical to someone succeeding and building a better future for themselves and for thriving on the outside. People seem to think that people are going into prison and coming out fixed, but that's not the case. Fifty five percent of young people in our system go back within two years.

"We're really not effectively rehabilitating these young people. If you look at the services that are provided in prison, they're not getting intensive rehabilitation support.

"If we care about our young people and think imprisoning them is the way to fix it, then surely at least we should be doing that."

We can raise the age right now

If the campaign is successful, and the age of criminal responsibility is changed to 14, there needs to be a plan for kids under that age who find themselves in trouble with the law. Sophie believes that could look like community support through programs and early intervention. Some of these programs are actually already in place for children under the age of 10, meaning the age could be lifted immediately.



Glenda Kickett and Daniel Morrison, Co-Chairs of Social Reinvestment WA.



The Uniting Church WA joined other community organisations at the Perth Children's Court on Monday 3 May to call for the West Australian Government to raise the age of responsibility in WA from 10 to 14.

"There are already children under the age of ten who come into contact with the justice system. So we don't have to change the entire system, we can just raise the age."

Currently, police divert at risk children under the age of ten to programs run by various departments, such as the Department of Communities. Sophie wants to see more effective diversionary methods in place. She also wants to see a 'no wrong door approach' where other people within the community – not just the police – would be able to divert at risk youth, such as teachers and health workers.

"We have to have the right programs funded, and we have to get the right support to the right young people at the right time," she said.

There are already a number of successful programs in place, like

the Youth Partnership Project in Armadale and Gosnells, which identifies at risk youth between the ages of eight and twelve who haven't yet offended, and engages them in holistic support; and the Olabud Doogethu (All of Us Together) reinvestment project in Halls Creek, delivering alternative education models for local Aboriginal at risk children.

"There are programs that we know work, the evidence base is there, it's really about resourcing them," Sophie said. "There really needs to be partnership with communities on the ground to develop their own community based approaches that will work for those particular communities."

"We need to use common sense: these are children. As a community we have a responsibility to take care of children, especially the most vulnerable."

Get involved

Find out more on the Social Reinvestment WA website at socialreinvestmentwa.org.au/raise-the-age

Sign the national Raise the Age petition at raisetheage.org.au

Read the Uniting Church WA's call to Raise the Age at revivemagazine.org.au/2020/09/14/reduce-the-number-of-aboriginal-children-in-care

Write to your local MP and tell them you care about this issue.

Listen to Social Reinvestment WA's *Stories From the Inside* podcast. The second season is out now and available from wherever you listen to your podcasts.

Follow Social Reinvestment WA or Social Justice UCWA on Facebook to keep up-to-date with all the latest news from the campaign.



Proactive Peace

Ashley Macmillan, member of Wembley Downs Uniting Church, is a PhD student at the University of Otago's National School of Peace and Conflict Studies, in Aotearoa/ New Zealand. She shares a reflection on her studies so far.

Recently, I began researching how wars don't happen, and this subject feels important to share with the Uniting Church because the kinds of things that prevent war are the kinds of things that the Uniting Church supports – often without realising it's war prevention.

Aside from that, when we consider that in a modern war, 90% of victims are civilians (many of them children), it becomes clear that following the teachings of Jesus includes preventing war from ever having call to start.

War prevention doesn't receive much attention in academia... or anywhere really. There is plenty about what communities do to create peace, however the focus is mostly on communities currently or recently affected by violence. What stands out here, is that when we only look at what communities do in mid or post-violence

situations, we miss out on the ability to learn from communities who successfully prevented violence from ever starting.

For example, we hear many stories about violence and war in Africa, but did you ever hear about the war that never occurred in Botswana?

Despite being surrounded by apartheid, economic collapse and warring neighbours, different ethnic and language groups, large refugee inflows, colonisation and starting out its independence as one of the poorest African nations, Botswana didn't collapse into violence. This story receives little attention, even though it represents an opportunity to learn from and about communities that have successfully avoided war.

Of course it's much more difficult to tell stories of what hasn't happened, than stories of what has.

Successful war prevention and the actions that bring it about are essentially invisible whilst the failure to prevent war is highly visible. This phenomenon influences many things including what receives funding, what receives media



attention and what is easily measurable for research. Yet, it is not an insurmountable problem, and peace is not the only area that faces it.

Public Health is a concept that seeks to make visible the processes required for both disease prevention and maximising health, allowing us to consider lives saved through anti-smoking campaigns, vaccinations, and drink-driving education. In short, it allows us to study and further our successes.

In my research, I developed the concept of Proactive Peace, which I hope will provide a similar addition to Peace and Conflict Studies that Public Health has for Health Sciences.

Proactive Peace refers to the variety of different community projects and process that address conflict risk factors, fostering an environment that diminishes the likelihood of violent responses to conflict sparks.

A conflict spark is an event or crisis which has the potential to directly trigger a violent response. Risk factors indicate a region's vulnerability to conflict. Basically, a conflict



spark is the lightening strike and the risk factors are the dry forest that easily catches ablaze. The approach of Proactive Peace is to address the dry forest, creating a situation where if lightening strikes, it won't start a fire.

Of course, the presence of risk factors does not guarantee war, but they do make war more likely. In the same way that smoking, not exercising and a poor diet do not guarantee you will become unwell, but they do make it more likely. Public health measures address these health risk factors.

Proactive Peace takes the same approach, seeking to address the risk factors for violent conflict, rather than trying to resolve conflict after it has already started (which, to continue the medical analogy, is equivalent of focussing all your resources on the intensive care unit and the emergency department).

Importantly, Proactive Peace is the actions undertaken to address conflict risk factors, be it through development, community organising, lobbying, cultural revival, or activism. Of course, the exact actions undertaken will vary greatly across time, place and culture. However, as long as actions undertaken are addressing risk factors in that community, it is Proactive Peace – regardless of how similar or different it is to Proactive Peace actions we may be familiar with in our own communities.

For example, if conflict risk factors included: water, food and land scarcity; limited educational opportunities; and high youth unemployment, then Proactive Peace actions could include: planting along a riverbed, so the banks aren't washed away after heavy rain; lobbying to stop a nearby mine discharging pollutants into the water to ensure it remains drinkable; providing toilets in schools to support girls to attend; and starting an agro-forestry project to provide youth employment and prevent the desertification of land.

I say that the Uniting Church supports actions which prevent war 'without realising it', because so many of our actions of development, protest and advocacy address conflict risk factors, both at home and in the world. By making visible this important work that occurs preventing wars Proactive Peace gives the world a way to see (and support) peace, before we see violence.

If anything in this introduction interests you, please get in touch with me at ashley.0110@protonmail.ch

Thanksgiving and passing the baton

Stan White

On Sunday 18 April, the worshipping community of Uniting Church in the City, Wesley Perth celebrated a unique combination of achievements and milestones in a very moving ceremony, toward the end of our Sunday morning service.

It was unique because we can't recollect another occasion where we have been able to celebrate the end of a long ministerial supply, at the same time as welcoming the commencement of a ministerial placement – let alone on top of a change of minister in association.

That we were able to come together and do just that and give thanks to God for the gifts and service of two of our long-time members, who have not only held us together, but brought us ever closer to each other and to God simultaneously, became quite an emotionally uplifting occasion.

The outpouring of love to both Rev Frances Hadfield and Rev Geoff Blyth brought many a tear to the eye as we were able to freely express our great debt of gratitude to both of them for their superb and successful guidance through quite a difficult time for our community.

To be able then to witness Frances pass the baton (bearing as it did the membership roll of our community) as supply minister to our new Minister in Placement, Rev Hollis Wilson, was a very rich experience and brought forth a full volume rendition of the Aaronic blessing for the three of them.

We offered our friendship, encouragement and support to Hollis and hoped his time with us would prove to be uplifting and joyous. Before the service was closed with the benediction, our three ministers walked (or waltzed) to the front of the church to Elgar's

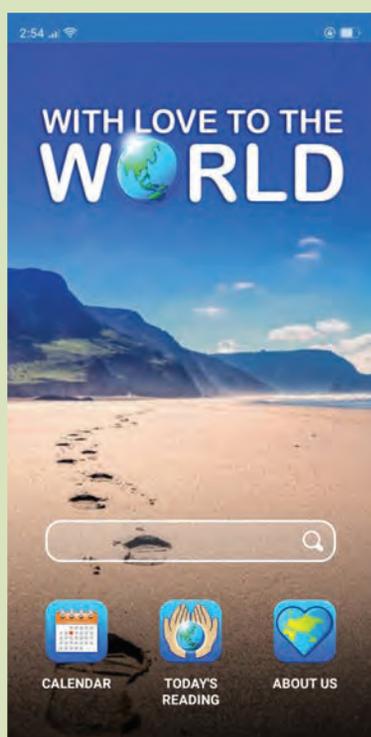


Rev Francis Hadfield passing on the baton of ministry to Uniting Church in the City's new minister, Rev Hollis Wilson.

Pomp and Circumstance where we gathered for a celebratory morning tea.

Uniting Church in the City, Wesley Perth also celebrated its 150th anniversary on Sunday 30 May, with a special celebratory service featuring the music from the Wesley Scholars, and guest preaching from Dr Deidre Palmer, President of the Uniting Church in Australia.

With love in an app



With Love to the World: A Daily Bible Reading Guide, first published in 1976, is now available as an app that includes access to the daily biblical texts and commentary in an easy-to-use format.

Many people seek meaning, encouragement, and hope for life. *With Love to the World* has been meeting these needs for the past 46 years with its daily commentaries on lectionary and associated Bible passages, prayer suggestions, and questions for individuals and groups.

Designed to help users prepare for Sunday worship, nurture their faith, and strengthen us to live faithfully amidst the hopes and hurts of everyday life, *With Love to the World* is a resource for individuals, as well as for leaders of worship and small

groups. It is widely used in the Uniting Church across the country, and in other churches.

"*With Love to the World* is an inspiring Australian resource which supports the daily practice of prayer and reflection on Scripture and the light it shines on our daily lives," said Dr Deidre Palmer, President of the Uniting Church in Australia. "I commend this resource to local churches and individual members of the Uniting Church."

To subscribe to the app visit the App Store or Google Play Store. The cost is \$24 per year.

For booklets, email wluuca@bigpond.com or call (02) 9747 1369. Visit the website at withlovetotheworld.org.au or email the Editor, Dr Peter Butler, at editorwlw@bigpond.com.

Interim General Secretary announced

Rev Andrew Syme has been appointed as the Interim General Secretary of the Uniting Church WA. He began his role on Monday 17 May, and will stay in the position until the 45th Annual Meeting of the Synod of WA, in September this year.

Rev David de Kock retired as General Secretary on Monday 31 May after five years in the role.

Andrew comes to the role with a wealth of experience with the Uniting Church, most recently as Executive Officer Schools and Residential Colleges for the Uniting Church WA and Interim Principal of Tranby College. He has also served as Deputy Headmaster of Wesley College, Headmaster of Scotch College, Principal of Caulfield

Grammar School in Melbourne and as a previous member of the Synod Standing Committee.

Susy Thomas, Moderator of the Uniting Church WA, announced the decision to the church.

“The Uniting Church WA is blessed that Andrew has faithfully responded to this call to be the Interim General Secretary, along with our wonderful staff and volunteers of the Uniting Church Centre who will continue to work together to discern God’s will for the church in Western Australia.

“Please uphold David and his wife, Margaret, and Andrew and his wife, Joan during this time. Please also continue to pray for our church during this time of transition as the Synod Standing Committee works



Rev Andrew Syme

to recommend a new General Secretary to the Synod.”

The Synod Standing Committee has now started a process of recruiting a new General Secretary, with a name hoping to be placed before the Synod of WA, in September.

Conversations about the End-of-Life

As reported in the last edition of *Revive*, a discussion kit resource on end-of-life care, *Conversations about the End-of-Life* is now available on the Uniting Church WA website.

The resource has been created by the Uniting Church WA End-of-Life Task Group, for people who are processing end-of-life issues, either in relation to themselves or someone they are caring for. It comes in response to recent legislation in WA to allow Voluntary Assisted Dying, however it does not offer an opinion, but a means to encourage discussion on the topic.

The booklet includes ten case studies, which can be used individually or as themes for group discussions.

A companion resource, Resources for End-of-Life Care will also be

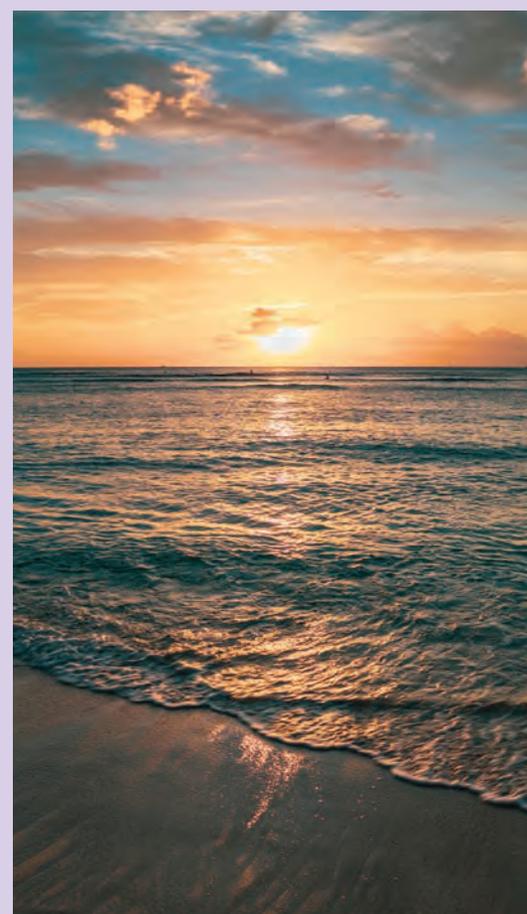
available soon, discussing related medical, legal, ethical and faith issues in more detail.

In their introduction, Susy Thomas, Moderator of the Uniting Church WA, and Rev Ken Devereux, Convener of the End-of-Life Care Task Group write:

“Many people have never actually seen a dead body or sat with a dying person. Rather than engaging in a conversation about the challenge to live and die well, people often change the subject by saying, ‘Don’t be morbid’ or ‘Let us leave that topic for further down the track’.

“We feel such avoidance is not healthy, either emotionally or spiritually. It does not help a family cope if one of them is suddenly and unexpectedly at the point of death.”

Download the resource now at unitingchurchwa.org.au/uniting-church-centre/endoflife



Courageous Spirituality for Ministry: School of Ministry 2021

**Monday 28 June – Thursday 1 July
at Mt Pleasant Uniting Church**

Where does courage come from? Are some people just born courageous? Or does God parcel out courage when we need it? Is there anything we can do to be more courageous?

Do we need different kinds of courage for different situations? A Google image search for courage will turn-up a myriad pictures of people climbing steep cliff faces and jumping over chasms. But showing up to meet with hurt and angry people also takes courage.

It takes courage to move forward into an unknown future where our tried and true go to responses are irrelevant, and we need to learn patterns and pathways of responding to the world.

It takes courage to sit and take stock of our own failures, brokenness and weakness in order to act through our vulnerability and

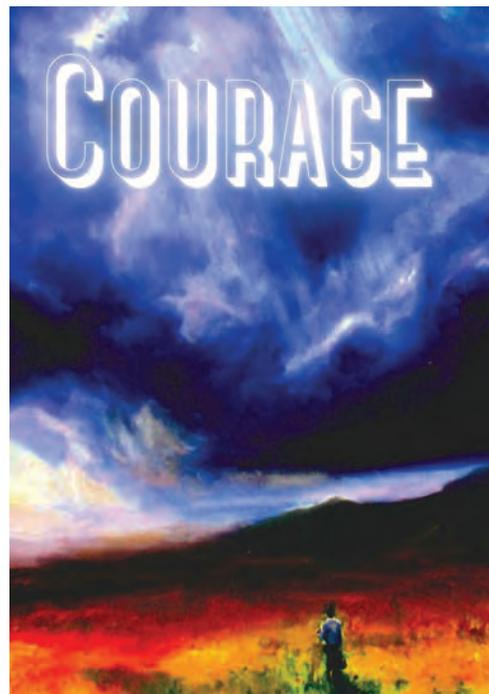
integrity in new ways of being.

Those in ministry know that we need courage to face our rapidly changing world, to respond to the challenges of our daily lives of ministry, and to explore the fears within that sap our ministry engagement.

School of Ministry 2021 aims to help us grow a spirituality of courage and expand our repertoire of courageous behaviour.

Keynote speaker Rev Dr Sean Gilbert, faculty member at UCLT Adelaide, will explore what courage means out of his research around the development of dispositions, and ministry in our secular world. Afternoon workshops will drill down to practicalities for harnessing internal, everyday, and future facing courage.

Together, we will meet and eat, talk and listen, worship and pray, and be prepared with fresh courage for the ministries in which we engage.



Register now at
eventbrite.com.au/e/2021-school-of-ministry-exploring-courage-tickets-151006944837 or email
PA.education@wa.uca.org.au

News

A safe home for all refugees



The Uniting Church WA, alongside the Uniting Church in Australia, is part of the 'Time for a Home' campaign, a sector wide campaign seeking the release of people in immigrant detention and permanent resettlement solutions for these people.

Rob Floyd, Uniting Church in Australia's Associate General Secretary and Chairperson of

the Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce, is encouraging Uniting Church members to join the campaign.

"From 13 August 2012, Australia has been sending people who came by boat to Australia seeking asylum to Nauru and Manus Island in Papua New Guinea (PNG) under a policy of offshore processing. Since then, a total of 4183 people have been sent to these destinations," he writes.

"About 950 of this number have returned to their country of origin and a similar number have been resettled in the United States or another country.

"Almost eight years later, staggeringly, 1428 remain in our offshore detention regime.

"Of this number, 130 remain in PNG, 109 are on Nauru and around 1200 are in detention in Australia. Some of this group are in locked

detention, others are in community detention and others, including people recently released from hotel detention in Melbourne, Brisbane and Darwin are in the community on final departure bridging visas. This last group is given virtually no support, expected after eight years in detention to be able to find work and look after themselves in this post-COVID world, until they can be deported or another resettlement solution can be found.

"We know the mental health implications of long-term detention, the Royal Australian College of Physicians have been speaking about this for years.

"Our Government must do better."

Join the Time for a Home campaign at timeforahome.com.au and read Rob's article in full on the Assembly website at uniting.church/a-safe-home-for-all

IRAQI CIGAR



CARAD's Fare Go Food Truck serves up delicious food at markets and events around Perth, while employing and empowering refugees and asylum seekers. To celebrate Refugee Week, Sunday 20 to Saturday 26 June, CARAD have shared this fantastic recipe from their food truck menu.

Try this recipe at home, or if you're in Perth, keep an eye out for the Fare Go Food Truck at an event near you.

Find out more about CARAD's Fare Go Food Truck at carad.org.au/fare-go-food-truck

We want to share your recipe!
If you have a recipe you'd like to share, send it in to revive@wa.uca.org.au.

Iraqi Cigar

Ingredients

- 1 packet of spring roll pastry (20 sheets per packet)
- Fresh mint to taste
- Fresh parsley to taste
- 3 tablespoons of dried onion flakes
- ½ a teaspoon of Lemon zest or lemon pepper
- ½ teaspoon of Baharat spices
- ½ teaspoon of garlic powder
- 300g feta or ricotta cheese
- 300g cheddar cheese
- Salt and pepper to taste

Method

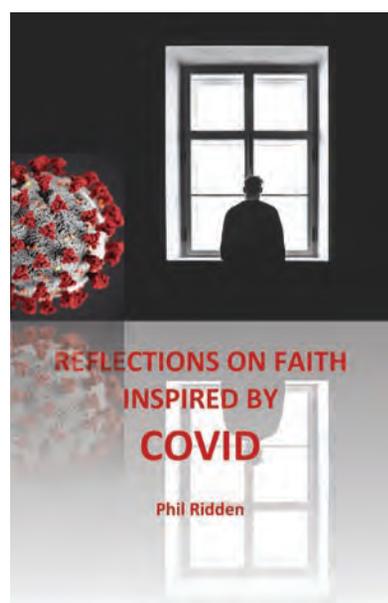
Chop the parsley and mint finely and mix with the cheeses with the Baharat spices, dried onion flakes, lemon pepper, garlic powder, salt and pepper. Mix to a dough consistency.

Place a small amount of filling in the centre of the spring roll pastry, and roll up.

Deep fry three cigars at a time until they are crispy and golden. Serve with salad, topped with tahini sauce.

Reflections on Faith: Inspired by COVID and Inspired by Seniors

By Phil Ridden, Edwest Publishing, 2020



Sue Thompson

I recently read two of the volumes from Dr Phil Ridden's 'Reflections on Faith' series: *Inspired by Covid* and *Inspired by Seniors*. Phil is a retired Head Teacher and now works as a consultant and writer, based in Joondalup, Perth WA.

Phil writes that 'if we seek God, we will see Him revealed in the people and events in our lives,' and

the purpose of these books is to support and stimulate spiritual reflection and meditation through everyday experiences.

In the *Inspired by COVID* volume, I found 'Restrictions' resonated with me in particular.

But there are other things that restrict our lives, Father:

*A focus on ourselves,
our own needs and desires,
our obsessions and passions;
the absence of you.*

As suggested by the author, it inspired me to write my own reflections on these strange times amid the COVID-19 Pandemic.

I found Phil's style of writing, as if in dialogue with God, was helpful. It reminded me somewhat of writing by British actor David Kossoff in the 1970's and early 80's, and his books such as *You have a minute, Lord?* with their easy, informal relationship with God.

Indeed, as Kossoff called his book 'a sort of prayer book,' so too these volumes by Phil Ridden could provide the basis for prayers, both private and public.

In the volume *Inspired by Seniors*, the meditation 'Appearance,' reminded me so much of recent

conversations with my elderly mother and friends in my congregation.

I'm shocked at my appearance, Father.

My face has changed.

The experience of ageing can be both confronting and rewarding, of course, and this little book could provide stimulus for some very rich discussion within faith communities. Again, using the meditations as prayers in services or smaller group meetings would also be helpful.

At the end of each meditation, there is a Bible verse relevant to the theme. In the 'Seniors' volume, the reflection on Grief is poignant and I could imagine sharing it with friends who are anticipating bereavement.

That's how life would be for me, Father,

if I lost you.

*I would weep for myself,
and struggle to make a life
without you.*

Phil Ridden ends the reflection with a quotation from Hebrews: "Live content with what you have, for you always have God's presence. For hasn't he promised you, 'I will never leave you alone, never! And I will not loosen my grip on your life!'" (Hebrews 13:5, NIV).

When We Pray:

The future of common prayer

Edited by Stephen Burns, and
Robert Gribben, Coventry Press, 2020

Rev Dr Christine Sorensen

The keyword in the title of this book is 'we'. What is going on when we gather together and pray in unison?

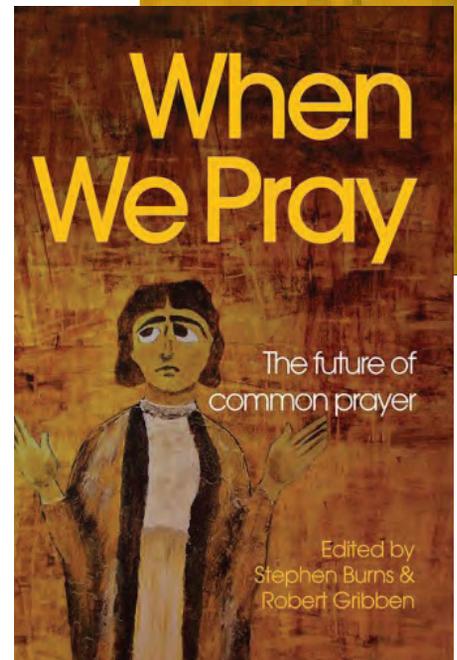
The Editors both have strong links with the Uniting Church. Stephen Burns currently works at the Uniting Church's Pilgrim Theological College in Melbourne, and Robert Gribben is a retired Uniting Church theologian and long-term contributor to practice and conversation around liturgy.

They have gathered a range of papers to encourage us to think through the ramifications of prayer together as the church moves into the future. While there is a strong Australian presence there are contributors from the United Kingdom, United States and New Zealand.

In the first part of the book, the authors gather essays looking at the tradition of a prayer book and how that might affect our future. The church has moved a long way from a prayer book tradition where only authorised people may say authorised prayers.

The Uniting Church's 'Uniting in Worship' prayer book comes with directions of what must be part of worship and what can be omitted, but comes with a CD of extra resources. There is a bit of chequered history in how we in the Uniting Church have arrived at this place where the shape of the liturgy on any given Sunday (or worship event) will be influenced by Uniting in Worship 2, the plethora of prayer books and internet resources, and the liturgist's own creativity and knowledge of their own context.

The second part of the book called 'liturgical themes and foci' looks at six different situations that we can learn from as we grow into fresh traditions of common prayer. These topics stretch from creation, ritual apologies and reconciliation, the body and prayer, confession and lament, chanting and prayer, and multicultural expressions of liturgy and prayer. For instance, a chapter on confession deals with how people may confess together, in a situation where understandings of sin have changed markedly.



This is a book to read and be challenged about how to have fresh contextual liturgy, taking into account where we are, who we are, and how nuances in our theology affect our prayer together. It is recommended to anyone who longs for worship to be true to our past and deeply grounded in our present and future.

Life in our time and place

Rev Mark Illingworth

My wife Deb and I moved to Como and joined South Perth Uniting Church just before the first Pandemic lockdown in 2020. Typically, such a transition would have involved spending time adjusting to our new neighbourhood and faith community. Instead, we had the unique opportunity to be part of a congregation that rapidly adopted to new ways of meeting online, on-site and adjusting to an influx of new people.

The challenge has been navigating through different expectations, styles of communication and age ranges that includes four generations. We experimented a lot, in order to deepen and grow fellowship together as followers of the ways, works and words of Jesus.

The pandemic constricted all of us to local places, as well as accelerating a bunch of societal changes. How are we meant to think, talk and act as followers of Jesus in our 'new normal' time?

I often remind myself of Jesus' promise that the Holy Spirit will teach and guide us at the right time with what needs to be said and done (for example, in Luke 12:12).

As I look back over the past 18 months, I'm struck by Bible stories, set in a very specific time and place, that we explored – and which became meaningful to us – in our time and place.

Using the Godly Play material's 'core stories' we started with Creation, Noah's flood and Tower of Babel, before exploring the journeys of Abraham, Jacob and the Apostles, and finishing with the stories of saints like Eric Liddell, Amy Carmichael and John Wesley.

We have discovered that each of these witnessed to God's presence, protection and provision and have acted like anchors in our own stormy season of change.

Is it strange that the unique experiences of people in their place and time can help us in ours?

Generation after generation have discovered and rediscovered the Bible as a valuable "light unto our path" (Psalm 119:105) with its ability to "equip (us) for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

One claim for the Bible's power to bring peace and hope is that it's God's overarching revelation and explanation of history to humanity. We are the beneficiaries of that slow and intentional unveiling that culminates in Jesus, and is unpacked in the early church and subsequent disciples by the Holy Spirit.

Suppose when you die, you come to God with a list of questions regarding the point and purpose of creation and specifically humanity. You might ask God:

- why did you create us, particularly if you knew we were going to rebel and be so destructive? or
- why did you not just wipe-out all the bad people and start again? or
- why are there so many languages that makes communicating so hard between people? or
- why didn't you choose a good family to be your spokespeople on the earth? or
- why didn't you send someone to tell us directly what we are meant to do?

And so on and so forth.

All these questions and many more are answered in the Bible. Of course, we might not like the answers and in that case we might want to read Job Chapters 38 to 41 and find God's response to such a disagreement.

I wonder what stories from distant places and long ago times encourage, comfort and challenge you?

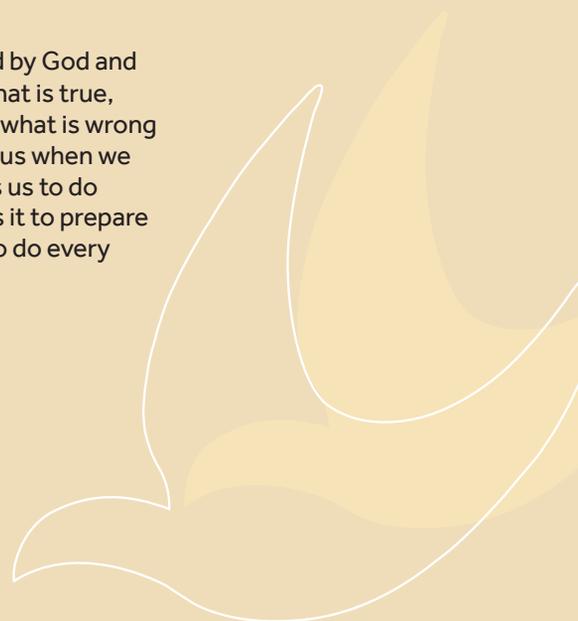


Its winter here in the Southern Hemisphere, making it an ideal season to curl up with the most popular book in the world, the Bible, and refresh yourself for the days ahead.

You must remain faithful to the things you have been taught. You know they are true, for you know you can trust those who taught you. Many of you have been taught the Holy Scriptures from childhood, and they have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus.

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true, and to make us realise what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.

(1 Timothy 3:14-17)



Sharing in the journey of the Covenant

Nathaniel Taylor is a current Candidate as a Minister of the Word with the Uniting Church WA, who recently attended the Covenanting Intensive, reflecting on the covenantal relationship between the Uniting Church and the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress. Nathaniel shares the experience with Revive.

After getting the all clear from our Premier after a three day lockdown, the long anticipated Covenanting Intensive was able to go ahead on Sunday 2 May. And so, 17 of us converged on a beautifully situated property atop a hill in Chittering.

This portion of the Darling Scarp, just south of Bindoon, has stunning, rolling hills that would be reminiscent of other regions of the world if it weren't for the smell of the bush and the sight of rugged Marri, Karri, and Jarrah throughout the landscape. Even though the area is painted in muted tones of greys and browns, it is still a wonderfully welcome place to escape for the weekend and discuss the work ahead of us in the Formation Program, as well as with those joining us from other walks of life in the Uniting Church WA.

It was in this setting that we started our time with a Welcome to Country, offered by Mitchell Garlett – a Formation student with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress here in WA. We were reminded of the longstanding relationship God has with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family, and with the land we now call Australia.

We gave thanks for the good stewardship of creation this country has experienced alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and celebrated the fact that now here, all Second Peoples are invited to share in the responsibility of that stewardship. The language of 'First and Second Nations Peoples in Australia' is an apt reminder that we have 80 000 plus years of First Nations history to learn from, and 200 plus years of Second Nations history to improve on.

From this beautiful setting of gracious welcome, we started the work of understanding the true and historical experiences of invasion, colonisation, and genocide our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family were subject to. Through both personal accounts and stories lovingly learned and passed on to us, our hosts from Congress held a mirror to our society that was often hard to look at.

It is often difficult to do, but important work to process.

So, I wonder where you are on this journey? Have you read the Uniting Church in Australia's Covenant with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress? Do you know its history in relation to our Basis of Union? Have you read the Revised Preamble to the Uniting Church Constitution?

Are these documents and their place in both church and Australian history a topic of discussion for your community of faith? Is this something you could journey on together as a community about, or something you could study alongside your quiet time/ personal devotional?

I wonder how you feel about this history, these documents. Are they too bold, too conservative? Does their place in our church fill you with joy, excitement, happiness, boredom, frustration, listlessness, sadness, or an uncomfortable mixture of all the above?

I found sitting with these stories and documents hard work.

These documents are part of what drew me to the Uniting Church, yet the experience of my own guilt, shame, and fragility rose to the surface so readily – almost like a reflex. It made me feel ugly and it felt wrong, but I had to keep reminding

myself that processing these thoughts and feelings is the work of dismantling white supremacy, it is the work of decolonising our church.

Now that we have these documents, and this relationship with Congress, many want to treat our work as individuals, communities, and as an institution to be done. It is not.

This work is forever ongoing and important to be vigilant about as individuals, communities, and institutions.

We have the work of Reconciliation, National Treaty, Closing the Gap, opposing incarceration rates, protesting Aboriginal deaths in custody, opposing the ongoing and systemic displacement of Aboriginal kids from their families, and much more to do.

That feels overwhelming, but there's a simple place for us to start as recommended by Assembly: do an Acknowledgement of Country in your meetings, and in your services. Every time.

Complete a Covenanting Action Plan in your faith community, and look for ways to support our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family in meaningful ways.

You could also tithe to Congress WA as individuals and as a faith community, you could volunteer some time and skills to support Congress WA, you could stop and think before speaking about our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family and ensure what you're saying is coming from a place of genuine love and respect.

Chittering is a beautiful corner of our state, I encourage you to journey to it. And I encourage you and your faith community to journey on the road alongside our gracious family in Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress. We are so lucky to be welcome on this land, and in such a unique relationship with its First Nation Peoples in our church.



Mitchell Garlett, Ministry Candidate and member of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress, led a smoking ceremony at the recent Covenanting Intensive.

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