

Fellowship Newslink

December 2024



**Promoting Faith and
Fellowship** across
Congregations and Beyond



Uniting Church W/A
Adult Fellowship

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Front cover image: *"This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." (Luke 2:12)*

Chairperson's Corner

Welcome to the final edition of Newslink for 2024. How quickly this year has flown by!

On October 18th, we held our Annual Fellowship Day at Noranda Uniting Church (*see Page 6 for details*). Many of our Fellowship groups are also planning their end-of-year and Christmas events as we move toward the season of Advent; a time of waiting, expectancy, and preparation for Christmas.

I have been reading a book by Sheila Walsh entitled 'The Gifts of Christmas (Devotions for Advent)'. Sheila shares some of her childhood memories of growing up in Scotland, family traditions, and the Christian stories we share each year.

One of the stories reminded me of the year our YouthCARE Area Chaplain suggested we might like to fundraise by wrapping parcels at the Galleria Shopping Centre. Wrapping parcels has never been a favourite task of mine. Some people have a gift of making the parcel look special – but not when I do it!

Sheila shares a story of "not having the gift of wrapping parcels". Fortunately for the gift buyers at the shopping centre when we discovered what would be expected of us by the management, we concluded we had neither the time nor people-power.

The author's story was about a time when she was dating a young man and his mother invited her to share Christmas with the family.

Sheila bought gifts for all the family – parents, 3 siblings, and even the dog. The wrapping wasn't the catastrophic part, but she forgot to label them!! Sitting around after the meal it was time to hand out the gifts. Looking in the bag all the unnamed boxes were the same. The family opened their gifts.

Father got 3 tubes of lip gloss; Mother 6 golf balls; the siblings – the 12-year-old a dog bone, seven-year-old a voucher for a massage, the bald-headed baby received hair ribbons. "They were very gracious and we all had a good laugh"!



Chairperson's Corner cont'd

The author concludes her story with this message: no matter what your gift-wrapping skills are, you are invited during this season of Advent to pause and remember the most precious gift ever wrapped for you and me. Jesus is the gift for EVERYONE – the greatest gift of Christmas, the grace of Almighty God.

On behalf of the WA State Committee of the Uniting Church Adult Fellowship, I wish all members of our Fellowship groups, their families, and friends the blessings of the Advent and Christmas seasons. Let us remember those who may find this time sad and difficult, and those in the worn-torn parts of our world.

God of grace and promise, we ask you to bless us in this Advent season.

This season of hope and expectation.

We are mindful of Jesus first coming,

Of His continued coming into our hearts today.

May God fill us with joy at the coming of Christ.

Come, Lord Jesus. We need You to bring Good News for our world once again.

- Sister Jacinta Shailler

Helen McMillan



Bringing joy to children around the world:

Operation Christmas Child

Imagine a child opening a box filled with surprises just for them - a small moment of joy in a difficult world. Operation Christmas Child offers Australians and New Zealanders the chance to bring such moments to children in need around the globe. By filling shoeboxes with toys, hygiene items, school supplies, and other thoughtful gifts, people here can share kindness and hope with children facing challenging circumstances.

These simple gifts travel from Australia and New Zealand to children affected by war, poverty, natural disasters, famine, and disease. Packed by people worldwide, shoeboxes are sent to over 100 countries, and in 2023, more than 11 million shoeboxes were distributed.

At Maylands-Mt Lawley UC, a group of dedicated volunteers has been creating shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child for several years, and this year was no exception. In the past month, the group came together to lovingly assemble **50** shoeboxes with a variety of items for children who don't have the same access to the Christmas festivities that our children enjoy. Each box contained new items to wear, toys to play with, and arts and crafts supplies.

The items in the shoeboxes are either bought or handmade. Notebooks, stationery, and coloured pencils were purchased, while the church's talented volunteers crafted clothes, carrying bags, and warm beanies. Additionally, the group raised funds to cover the cost of postage. After a special blessing ceremony during a Sunday service, the shoeboxes were sent on their way to make a difference in children's lives.

How You Can Help

Would you like to join this heartwarming effort next year? Your help - whether by packing shoeboxes, crafting items, or assisting with postage costs - can bring a smile to a child somewhere in the world. Reach out via email to: wa@samaritanspurse.org.au or visit the Samaritan's Purse website at: cc.samaritanspurse.org.au to learn more about how you can be part of Operation Christmas Child and help spread joy across borders.



Annual Fellowship Day 2024



On a pleasant sunny morning, we gathered at Noranda Uniting Church for our Annual Fellowship Day. We were pleased to welcome our Moderator, Rev Dr Ian Tozer, Mr Chris Walker (Deputy Chairperson of Good Sammy Enterprises) and his wife Judy, Noranda Fellowship and the State Committee members. Sadly, three of our committee could not join us due to health issues.

Our program began with the Acknowledgement of the Original Inhabitants and prayer. We were delighted to have Robbie Muir playing his clarinet and accompanying the singing of three songs throughout the morning, *'This is the Day'*, *'Morning has Broken'* and *'Come as You Are'*, John also accompanied us on the organ.

Rev Dr Tozer conveyed greetings from the Synod and awarded certificates to two members celebrating their 80th birthdays. Before our Annual Fellowship Day, we received the names of 22 recipients; 10 from the city and 4 from country congregations. Names of those aged 90 and above were shared with Kay Lockley, who sends celebratory cards on behalf of our committee.

Anne Steed shared the Bible reading from Luke 10:25-37, the parable of the Good Samaritan, a fitting message of compassion and service.

Our speaker, Mr Chris Walker, highlighted Good Sammy Enterprises' mission to provide employment and training opportunities for people with disabilities, beyond its well-known Op Shops. He shared stories of individuals achieving personal milestones, from gaining specialised licenses to roles in retail and online sales, and encouraged us to donate quality items for reuse. Chris concluded with the message *"Give thanks with a grateful heart"* (Psalms 9:1-2).

Following a Thanksgiving Offering and prayer by Bob Nicholls, Bob Lockley discussed the used stamp project for Frontier Services, which will conclude this year with the winding down of Mission Fellowship. Bob will continue to send the remaining stamps for sale.

Our morning concluded with a benediction by Gill Muir. Following a time of refreshments and conversation we gathered for the Annual General Meeting chaired by our Moderator. Annual reports were prepared by the Office Bearers. Copies of the reports are available on request to the Committee.

Helen McMillan offered words of appreciation to those present, our Moderator, and members of the Committee.

- Helen McMillan





Festive Devotions

Christmas is nearly upon us again... and you might well ask, "Where has this year gone?"

The shops are playing the traditional Christmas songs, until we are almost tired of hearing them! The shelves are piled with enticing gifts, toys, and delicacies that seem like must-haves, even though we already have more than we need. We get caught up in all the hype, preparing special meals, planning gatherings with family and friends, and buying presents for those we love.

So, where do we as Christians really fit into all of this? For us, Christmas should be a very special time - a time of praise and thanksgiving, a time of reflection and meditation, a time to remember what the real meaning of Christmas is.

So many Christmas hymns speak of a baby born... and indeed, that is true, for our Saviour was born around this time of year. But what is even more important is who that baby was to become, because we do not leave Him in the manger!

I tend to prefer the hymns that say, *"Unto us a boy is born... King of all Creation"*, or *"The First Noel... born is the King of Israel"*, or *"Hark! The*

Herald Angels Sing ... Glory to the new - born King".

These hymns take us on a journey into the future - a journey of One who would forever change how we view and understand Jesus Christ, our Lord, Master, and Saviour, and how we understand our special relationship within God's Kingdom.

Some years ago, there was a road near where I live with a bend in it. Right near that bend were three trees - a Jacaranda, a Marri gum, and an Australian Christmas bush (*Nuytsia floribunda*).

I went that way one day, just before Christmas, and they were all in bloom. It was a beautiful sight, and I remember thinking how appropriate it was - the purple/mauve of the Jacaranda, the creamy white of the Marri, and the brilliant yellow of the Christmas bush!

These colours seemed fit for a King! They also symbolized Christian themes: purple for Royalty, white for Purity, and gold for precious Gifts, or God's promise of a King born to serve.

He would not be a King of power and might but a Servant King, who would give Himself as a ransom for our sins, our faults, our failings, and our uncertainties. He came to set us free, to encourage our hopes and dreams, to strengthen our faith, and to draw us closer to our amazing Creator God.

So, in this busy pre-Christmas season, let us take time to reflect, not just on a tiny baby, but on a King - in all His Majesty, but also in His humility, His service, His never-ending love and grace... our Immanuel, with us, and our Prince of Peace!

"Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to those with whom he is pleased." (Luke 2:14)

By Anne Steed

Baby in the Shed

Luke 2:1-20
(Aussie version)



In a season, full of traditions and symbolism, the Christ story - the Christmas story is often some vague and cliched backdrop to the season's celebrations. Like any story, told over and over again, it can lose its impact and even its relevance. Sometimes hearing the story told afresh is enough to remind us of how wonderful the Christ story was, and still is, and to bring the Christmas story to the fore.

Kel Richards wrote *"The Aussie Bible - (Well bits of it anyway!)"*. He took the story retold by Jesus' disciple Luke and wrote it in Australian vernacular. We hope you enjoy this extract of the Christmas story - Aussie style:

"...God sent the same angel - this Gabriel bloke - to a backblocks town called Nazareth, in Galilee shire, to a nice young girl who was engaged to a local carpenter, Joe Davidson. Her name was Mary."

The angel said to her, "G'day Mary. You are a pretty special lass. God has his eye on you." Mary went weak at the knees and wondered what was going on. But the angel said to her, "Don't panic, don't chuck a wobbly. God thinks you're okay. You're about to become pregnant, and you'll have a son, and you're to call him Jesus. He will be a very big wheel and will be called the Son of God Most High....".

"God's in charge" Mary answered. "If that's what God wants, then it's what I want." Then the angel knicked off and left her alone....

In those days Caesar Augustus ordered a head count of the whole Roman world. (This was the first big tally when Quirinius ran the Syrian branch of the empire.) And everyone had to go back to the bit of country they were born in to fill in the forms.

So Joe hiked up from Nazareth (in Galilee shire) to Bethlehem (in Judea shire) because his spot in the back of beyond was where King David came from, and Joe's family tree had King David up in the top branches. He went there to fill in the forms and sign the register with his fiancée, Mary, who was pretty near nine months by this time. While they were there, she gave birth to a baby boy. She wrapped him in a bunny rug and tucked him up in a feed trough in a back shed because the pub was full to bursting.

There were some drovers, camped out in a paddock nearby, keeping an eye on their mob of sheep that night. Their eyes shot out on stalks when an angel of the Lord zapped into view, and the glory of the Lord filled the air like a thousand volts of electricity. The angel said: "Stop looking like a bunch of stunned mullets. Let me give you the lowdown, it's top news for the whole crew - everyone, everywhere. Today in that little town on the hill a rescuer has been born; he is the Promised One, the King, the Lord. And here's how you'll find him: the little nipper is wrapped up in a bunny rug, and lying in a food trough".

And before you could say, "Well, I'll be blown!" the whole sky was filled with more angels than you could count, all singing away at the top of their lungs (if angels have got lungs, that is): "God is great! God is beaut - and to everyone on this planet who's on God's side: peace and goodwill, and by the way, Merry Christmas." (Which rather confused the drovers because they'd never heard of Christmas before.)

Suddenly the whole choir had nipped off in the blink of an eye. The drovers said to each other, "We'd better make tracks to Bethlehem and have a squiz at what's happened and check out this message from God."

So, the lot of them shot through like a Bondi tram to Bethlehem - and they found Mary, Joe and the baby who was, sure enough, wrapped in a bunny rug and lying in a food trough. When they'd seen this they told every Tom, Dick and Harry about what happened, and everyone who heard the story was blown away...

Matthew 2:1-2 (Aussie Version)

...some egg-heads from out east turned up in Jerusalem asking everyone: "Where's this new Prince of the Jews, this Promised One, who's just been born? We saw his star out east, and we've come to say 'G'day Your Majesty'".

Matthew 2:11 (Aussie Version)

They found the baby, with Mary his Mum, and they bowed and scraped and gave him some terrific pressies: gold and frankincense and myrrh (strange pressies for a baby, but better than a hankie or a pair of socks!).



Christmas in the bush

In the Australian outback, Christmas can be quiet. In some remote communities, you won't hear Christmas carols in the air. Children may not have presents to unwrap in certain faraway places on Christmas morning. The sad reality is that children in rural and remote areas often miss out - not just at Christmas, but all year round.

According to the *2024 Child Social Exclusion Index*, a report by UnitingCare and the University of Canberra, nearly half of children in regional communities are at high or very high risk of social exclusion.

The report states:

"Many children experience disadvantage on multiple fronts, lacking the opportunities and family resources to be socially connected and to participate fully in their communities."

This finding is no surprise to Frontier Services Bush Chaplains, the dedicated frontline staff who live and work in these remote communities daily. It confirms what they've long known: children in the outback aren't given a level playing field.

Bush Chaplains work tirelessly to be the connection and support those families and children in the bush need. They travel vast distances to be there for those who feel isolated and disconnected.

And they'll be working hard this Christmas. Bush Chaplain Jennie will be travelling through the outback to bring songs, presents, and the

Christmas spirit to isolated communities in Queensland.

In South Australia, Bush Chaplains Sunny and Julia will deliver food hampers and presents.

In Western Australia, Bush Chaplain Lindsay and his teenage music students will perform a special Christmas concert for elderly people in Kalgoorlie.

In Far North Queensland, Bush Chaplain Joe will host a humble barbecue and bring gifts to children who often go without.

We are deeply grateful to our community of supporters for helping Bush Chaplains bring the spirit of Christmas to remote communities, showing children in the bush that they are not forgotten - that kind and caring people are there for them at Christmas and throughout the year.



Bush Chaplain Lindsay Ginn performing for students



Bush Chaplain David Jackson delivering Christmas gifts

Your donation of \$20 today could buy a book, an art set, or an educational toy for a child in the bush. It could help pay for 10 litres of fuel to help Bush Chaplains travel the distance to families and children on remote properties.

Please donate before Christmas at frontierservices.org/donate.

NEW HOME FOR AGED WOMEN



A section of the large crowd which attended the opening ceremony of Hardey Lodge, a home in North Perth which has been converted by the Central Methodist Mission into a guest house for aged women.

For 75 years, Juniper has been providing care and accommodation for older Western Australians. Since opening its doors in 1949, Juniper's commitment to enabling others to live life well has been the foundation of its success.

Following the aftermath of WWII, which created an urgent need for accommodation for older women, Juniper opened Hardey Lodge in Mount Lawley, welcoming 12 women. In the years that followed, the Methodist, Congregational, and Presbyterian churches continued to expand their initiatives in aged care.

In 1977, these three denominations came together to form the Uniting Church in Australia, leading to the union of Hardey Lodge, Rowethorpe, and Subiaco Memorial Hospital.

To meet the growing demand from an ageing population, the Uniting Church combined its resources, and in 1992, its ten aged care operations were unified under the name Uniting Church Homes.



In 1999, Uniting Church Homes became a body corporate and established itself as a not-for-profit aged care organisation. In 2012, it was rebranded as "Juniper - A Uniting Church community." As part of the broader family of Uniting Care Agencies in Western Australia, Juniper is driven by a shared commitment to making a positive impact on the communities it serves.

Juniper works alongside Uniting WA, which supports communities to thrive so everyone can enjoy a life of belonging, hope, and purpose; and Good Sammy Enterprises, which provides employment opportunities and pathways for people with disabilities.



Today, Juniper continues to build on its rich history of respect and compassion within the Western Australian community, offering care and accommodation that empower older people to live life well, on their own terms.



Jackson's Story

Cruising down the road, 12-year-old Jackson belts out "Greased Lightnin'" like he's headlining a Broadway show. The car transforms into his private theatre, his voice filling every corner.



Jackson is on his way to a familiar appointment. It's physio today. Tomorrow it's OT. The day after that is speech therapy.

But today, Jackson is working on getting one foot in front of the other. Most people diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy use exercises like this to improve their independence; Jackson is using them to train for his debut as a Paralympian. **Jackson is also a child in foster care.**

"He has so many challenges, I've never met a child with more challenges, but he is pure guts and determination. Everything is his favourite, and his life is an adventure."

- Ava, Jackson's case worker.

From a diagnosis of Cerebral Palsy to living every day as an adventure, Jackson's story is a powerful reminder that determination, joy – and how a little support along the way – can get you anywhere.

Now almost a teenager, Jackson has been in foster care with Uniting WA since he was six months old. With

other diagnoses including Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), Autism and global development delay, he tackles every challenge with unwavering resolve and a smile that lights up the room.

Jackson lives with long-time foster carers, Hamish and Natasha, who have been members of the Uniting family for over 20 years. They have supported 5 children during that time.

True to form, Jackson competed in the National Disability Games for swimming in 2022.

"I've done a lot of interesting things in my work life, but this is more rewarding everyday than all of those things put together. Jackson is a very talented fellow; he likes to do everything at 100 miles an hour."

- Hamish, Jackson's foster carer.

Our foster care service is a little bit different.

Like most foster care services, Uniting WA's carers step in to provide a safe and nurturing home when children can't stay with their biological families. Unlike some other services, the children in our care have more complex support needs due to illness, disability and trauma.

We call this service **Specialised Foster Care.**

Not every child in foster care has the same journey.

Jackson's journey includes a wholehearted commitment to regular physio, OT and speech therapy. Some children need mobility aids or devices to help them with daily activities that many of us take for granted, while others need more emotional support due to the trauma they have experienced.



Every single journey is important to us

Like Jackson, every child in our care has goals and aspirations that, with the right support, are within reach.

This Christmas, we will have twice as many children in our care. This means we need your support now more than ever.

We invite you to unite with us this Christmas and be a part of the journey for children like Jackson.

Follow the QR code or visit unitingwa.org.au/jackson to give this Festive Season.



Scan to find out more

Uniting

unitingwa.org.au



White Christmas with a twist!

This modern twist on the traditional White Christmas recipe uses Christmassy colours and is decorated with chocolate. It's easy to make and is a lovely edible gift.

Ingredients:

- 220g Copha
- 3 cups Kellogg's Rice Bubbles
- 1 cup desiccated coconut
- 3/4 cup icing sugar, sifted
- 1 cup powdered milk
- ½ cup raisins (dried cranberries)
- ½ cup toasted pistachio nuts, chopped
- ½ cup white chocolate chips
- 150g dark chocolate
- 30g extra Copha

Method:

1. Combine the dry ingredients in a mixing bowl. Melt Copha in a microwave on **high**, or in a saucepan. Cool slightly, pour onto dry ingredients. Mix well.
2. Working quickly, spread into a lamington tin. Chill until firm. Turn out onto a board and cut into bars.
3. Melt the chocolate and extra Copha in a microwave on **high**.
4. Dip each White Christmas bar diagonally into the melted chocolate mixture and place on a baking paper lined tray to set.
5. Keep in an airtight container.

Source: myfoodbook.com.au/

Prayer for Christmas

Loving Father,

Help us remember the birth of Jesus,
that we may share in the song of the angels,
the gladness of the shepherds,
and worship of the wise men.
Close the door of hate and open the door of love all
over the world.
Let kindness come with every gift and good desires
with every greeting.
Deliver us from evil by the blessing which Christ brings,
and teach us to be merry with clear hearts.

Let the love that shaped earth and heaven,
dwell within us this Christmas.
Let the love that created humanity,
dwell within us this Christmas.
Let the love that overcomes suffering and hatred,
dwell within us this Christmas.
Let the love that causes us to rejoice with loved ones,
dwell within us this Christmas.

Let the love that forgives and renews,
dwell within us this Christmas.
Let the love that brings reconciliation after separation,
dwell within us this Christmas.
Let the love that brings the blessing of peace,
dwell within us this Christmas.
And may we share that peace with all people near and far.
Amen.

~ Robert Louis Stevenson

UCAF WA Committee Invitation

We invite membership on the Adult Fellowship Committee to those in the Uniting Church who think that fostering and creating opportunities for fellowship is an important part of the development and life of our Church.

What we do:

- When invited, visit congregations in urban and rural areas to encourage groups.
- Organise the UCAF WA Annual Fellowship Day.
- Honour our 80-year-olds with a Commemorative Certificate.
- Send a special greeting card to our 90-year-old people on their special day.
- Accept applications for the UCAF 'Joan Stott Bursary'.
- Regularly interact with the other Australian UCAF Committees.
- Maintain links with Uniting Church National Assembly.
- Connect with the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women Groups.

UCAF WA is a member of the Synod, giving general members an opportunity to express their opinions on the Church's activities.

New Members:

When a member's situation changes or they must retire due to the Synod 10-year Rule, replacements are constantly needed. If you would like to join our committee or if you have any questions, please contact Helen McMillan or Bob Nicholls by the details listed below.

Additionally, if you know any suitable individuals who might be interested in joining, please contact us. Our work is both engaging and enjoyable.

We meet at 10:00 am, Noranda Uniting Church on the third Friday of each month. **All Welcome!**

Chairperson:

Helen McMillan
P: (08) 9279 3051
E: norandaunitingchurch@gmail.com

Bob Nicholls

P: (08) 9255 2567
M: 0419-927-638
E: wraxall@iinet.net.au

Secretary/Treasurer:

UCAF Registration

We invite congregations and groups to register with us so that copies of *Newslink* and other mailings can be personally addressed to you.

All congregations receive one unaddressed copy of *Newslink* in the Synod mailout. All registered groups receive an addressed copy/copies of *Newslink*.

Registration Details:

Group Name _____

Contact Person for Group _____

(or) Individual's name _____

Postal Address _____

Email Address _____

Phone _____

Donations

We would appreciate donations to assist with the running expenses. This assists us in covering the cost of the *Certificates of Appreciation* for 80-year-olds, Greeting Cards for 90-year-olds, and general administration.



Want Newslink mailed to your address?

For \$8.00 per year, Newslink can be sent directly to you.

Recipients Name _____

Congregation _____

Postal address _____

No. of copies _____ Postage \$8.00

Donation \$ _____ Total \$ _____

Payment details of the Treasurer, for registration:

Internet Banking BSB 036-001

Acc No: 92-1850

Reference: 'Name of group or individual'

Celebrating the Milestones of Our Seniors

We offer you the opportunity to recognise the contribution your seniors have made, celebrate with them and show appreciation when they reach their important milestones.

Eighty-Year-Olds: at the UCAF Annual Fellowship Day 2024, Certificates of Appreciation will be presented to octogenarians nominated by their church or fellowship group. All who reach their 80th year during 2024, or missed out previously are eligible.

Ninety-Year-Olds: Our Committee will send a specially designed greeting card to any person celebrating their 90th birthday, and who has been nominated by their group or congregation. The greeting card is sent out as applications are received. Please refer to the application form below.

One Hundred-Year-Olds: The Synod oversees these. Please contact the Moderator to request a special greeting for individuals turning 100 years old.

Application form for greeting cards: 90-year-olds

Send to: Kay Lockley, 20 Roediger Drive, Northam WA 6401

Email: kaylockl@bigpond.net.au | Phone: (08) 9622 1152

Please Print

Name of Congregation _____

Date of Birth _____

Name of 90-year-old _____

If there is more than one recipient, please attach a separate sheet. **Check spelling and details, please!**

Where is the card to be sent? Please (✓) tick

☐ Congregation (if arranging a presentation)

☐ Nominator (person who is personally delivering the card and/or arranging a special time for a presentation.

☐ The 90-year-old nominated person

Please provide the following:

Contact person

Name: _____ **Phone No** _____

The postal address to send the card:

Name: _____

Address _____

Dates to note

The final News & Notes for 2024 will be on Monday, 16 December 2024 and will return on Monday, 13 January 2025.

The Uniting Church Centre will be closed from Tuesday, 24 December 2024 and reopening on Thursday, 2 January 2025.

The first UCAF Committee meeting for 2025 will be held on Friday, 21 February at 10.00am, Noranda Uniting Church, 79 Camboon Rd, Noranda WA 6062. **All Welcome!**

