

Fellowship Newslink

August 2025



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



Uniting Church WA
Adult Fellowship

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Front cover image: Colourful umbrellas brighten a dreary winter's day, Hay Street Mall, Perth. Photographer - Marcus Albor.

Chairperson's Corner

Welcome to this winter edition of Newslink.

The UCAF State Committee members trust you will enjoy the various stories of events in Congregations as well as the thought-provoking articles. The use of mobile phones as seen from a child's perspective, and one of the growing concerns of our age, loneliness, is included.

Loneliness was once thought to mainly affect older people who may not be as active and involved as they once were, but research has found that many people, both young and old, experience loneliness.

We hope you will enjoy the read and consider how our Fellowship groups and Congregations can be places where friendship, care, support, and love are generously shared with all.

One of the ways we can include some of the senior members of our Fellowship and Congregation is to send their names and birth dates when they are celebrating their 80th and 90th birthdays. Forms to record this information have been sent to Congregations in the Synod mail-out.

In this edition of *Newslink* and *News and Notes*, there are reminders of how to register and find a form if you have not received one from the mailout. **We require these forms to be sent to the Synod office by 1st September 2025.**

The **80-year Certificates** will be posted to the person who provides the information to arrange for the presentation or delivery following the Annual Synod meeting in September.

The **90-year cards** are sent by Kay Lockley to the person who provided the information or to the person's home address.

The UCAF State Committee has been a Committee of the WA Synod and prepared a report for inclusion in the Synod papers each year. The 2025 report to Synod will be the last time the State Committee will prepare a report. Due to fewer people being available to carry out all the positions on Boards and Committees, the Synod is trying to reduce the workloads of some groups.

UCAF has appreciated the support of the Synod over the years with the preparation and printing costs of our *Newslink* magazine. The Moderators



Chairperson's Corner cont'd

and General Secretaries have attended our Annual Fellowship days and chaired the Annual General meetings.

The State Committee and Fellowship Groups within Congregations will continue, as will the *Newslink* magazine, but costs may be reviewed in the future.

One of the ways the State Committee has financed its expenses has been through the trading table at our Annual Fellowship Day. As you may know, this event will no longer be held due to a significant decline in attendance. It was also becoming increasingly difficult to justify the commitment of our guest speakers, whose time and contributions we deeply value.

We greatly appreciate the Fellowship groups and individual people who send donations to support UCAF activities.

Our Church is facing challenging times where decisions about our future need to be made, which can be challenging and upsetting for some people.

I would like to conclude with the following prayer for our **Fellowship Groups and Congregations:**

Let us take time to hold one another in prayer.

We may not know each other's struggles, but God does.

Please pray for those in our Fellowships and Congregations, and beyond – who are feeling unwell, anxious, or burdened.

Pray for healing, peace, strength, and comfort.

Let us lift each other up in love, Keeping every heart in our thoughts,

And trusting each will feel surrounded by God's care.

Amen

Helen McMillan



Loneliness has become a growing concern in today's world, so much so that experts now refer to it as a public health challenge of the 21st century. While older adults are often thought of as the most affected, loneliness can touch anyone, regardless of age, especially during times of change or personal hardship. The good news is that there are many ways to reconnect and build meaningful social ties.

Reach Out to Others

It can feel difficult to make the first move, but reaching out to a friend, neighbour, or family member can lift your spirits, and theirs too. A simple phone call or friendly message might be just what both of you need.

Stay Physically Active

Movement is not only good for your body, it boosts mental wellbeing too. Going for a walk, attending a class, or even browsing at the local shops can help clear your mind and improve your mood.

Enjoy the Company of Animals

Pets can bring comfort, affection, and a reason to get out and about. Simply chatting about pets can open the door to new conversations.

Give Your Time

Volunteering offers the chance to connect with others while contributing to your community. Many find a renewed sense of purpose through helping others.

Join a Group or Community

Getting involved in a local group or hobby club is a great way to meet new people and share interests. Whether it's a walking group, book club, or volunteer role, connecting with others in a shared activity can make a big difference.

Did you know that many Uniting Church congregations offer friendly community groups? Most are free, and all are warmly welcoming! From casual coffee mornings and arts and crafts to youth and family gatherings, there's something for everyone. Why not drop into your local Church to see what's happening near you! - **Andrea Garvey**, *Newslink* Editor

At home with Pinjarra UC



A Warm Welcome in Pinjarra

At the invitation of one of our UCAF WA Committee members, Kerrie Birch, fellow committee members Helen McMillan, Gill Muir (along with her son Robbie), and I headed down to Pinjarra for their annual At Home event.

From the start of the morning and throughout, we were serenaded by the lovely choir *Voices in Harmony*. Every song was a joy to hear, and I was especially delighted by one of my sentimental favourites, *Wind Beneath My Wings* by Bette Midler.



The Guest Speaker was John Coman from Pinjarra Community Kitchen. Every Tuesday between 11:00 AM and 1:00 PM, the Community Kitchen provides a hot meal for people in need within the Shire of Murray.

Pinjarra Community Kitchen also supplies small food parcels, free clothing and household goods (as donated), as well as a safe and welcoming space for friendship and support. All this happens in the front hall and on the lawns of the Pinjarra Alliance Church.

Run entirely by volunteers, the Community Kitchen was founded by members of the local churches and

is now an incorporated group. During winter, they serve

hot soup, sausage sandwiches, burgers, and tea or coffee, and distribute donated warm clothing (including pyjamas and jackets) and blankets. In recent years, they've also provided Christmas Hampers – laundry baskets filled with goodies, gifts, and pantry staples – to local families.

Each week, Year 6 students from St Joseph's School lend a hand by setting up and cleaning up. Their efforts were recently recognised with a Merit Award in the Catholic Identity Category, winning across all four pillars in the Primary School – Student Led Initiative.

Throughout the year, Pinjarra Community Kitchen welcomes donations of:

- Tinned food
- Cereal
- Spreads
- Muesli bars/snacks
- Rice and pasta
- Baby supplies
- Crackers
- Tissues and toiletries
- Personal hygiene items (e.g. shampoo, conditioner, body wash, soap, baby wipes, deodorant, sanitary products)



Donations can be dropped off at:

- **Pinjarra Alliance Church**
59–61 George Street, Pinjarra. Tuesdays from 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM
- **Pinjarra Uniting Church**
37 George Street, Pinjarra. Tuesdays from 9:30 AM to 11:00 AM

Or call **Kerrie Birch** on **0409 530 327** for more information.

Following John Coman's inspiring presentation, we enjoyed a delicious luncheon reminiscent of the Country Women's Association (CWA) spreads I attended with my mother. The tables were laden with beautifully presented food that tasted every bit as good as it looked – and it's hard to beat a good ol' curried egg sandwich!

A heartfelt thank you to Pinjarra Uniting Church for your warm hospitality, inspiring service, and delicious food. It was a privilege to witness the love and care you pour into your community.

Andrea Garvey
Newslink Editor

Devotions: Disconnect to Reconnect

Capturing the Moment—or Missing It?

How often do we see people at events, phones held high, trying to capture the moment instead of putting their phones aside and experiencing it fully?

In 2022, former White Stripes frontman Jack White organised a phone-free tour of the UK. In an Apple Music interview with Metallica's Lars Ulrich, Jack White explained his reasoning:

"The crowd was more pumped and enthused than any I'd seen in the digital age. Instead of screens in the air, there were hands. Instead of lit-up faces lowered like a 4G prayer meeting, there were bobbing heads entirely engaged with the show."

White continued:

"What I don't like is this [people using mobile phones], how do they really feel? Are they even paying attention, or just texting? When you go to the movies, to a symphony, or church—those are the moments people put them [their phones] aside and get involved."

A Common Scene

Or, perhaps you have been out to a cafe/restaurant and noticed others scrolling on their phones rather than engaging with those beside them. It begs the question: do others feel overlooked or less important than a phone?

The Impact on Children

It's not just adult interactions that suffer. Studies (McDaniel & Radesky, 2018; Corkin et al., 2021; Coyne et al., 2022) show that parental phone use affects early childhood development.

Eye contact, shared attention, and responsive communication, all vital for a child's growth, drop significantly. One study found that parents speak to their children up to 26% less when using a phone.

A Child's Wish

A moving story originating from Japan brings this home. A teacher was marking her students' essays after dinner, an assignment asking what they wished for. Her husband sat beside her, scrolling on his phone.

One essay read:

"My wish is to become a smartphone. My mom and dad really love their phones. They pay attention to them, not me."

When they come home tired, they spend time with their phones, not me. If the phone rings, they answer right away—but not when I'm crying.

They play games on their phones, not with me. When I'm excited and want to tell them something, they hush me or tell me to go away.

That's why I want to be a smartphone, so maybe they'll love me like they love their phones."

The teacher burst into tears. Her husband, alarmed, asked what was wrong. She handed him the essay. "Which student wrote this?" he asked. She replied. "It was our son."

Being Present Matters

Moments like these remind us how easily we become distracted from what matters most. Whether it's a grandchild tugging at our sleeve, a friend sharing a story, or simply sitting together in silence, real connection happens when we are fully present.

Technology has its place, but it should never replace our relationships. By setting aside our devices, just for a little while, we open the door to deeper conversations, shared laughter, and meaningful memories.

As we reflect on how we spend our time and attention, may we be encouraged to reconnect with each other, with ourselves, and with God.

A Prayer for Being Present

Loving God,

Thank You for this time together.

Help us treasure these moments, sharing stories, laughter, and love.

Sometimes it's easy to let screens steal our attention.

We catch ourselves reaching for them, even with loved ones beside us.

Please help us set them aside more often,

To truly see, hear, and enjoy each other's company.

Teach us to pause in quiet moments,

To connect with one another, not just the world online.

May we build healthy boundaries with our devices,

And remember: nothing on a screen is more important

Than the person right in front of us.

May we be fully present, with open hearts and listening ears.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

Andrea Garvey, Newslink Editor



Mingling at the Market

On the morning of the first Saturday of each month, from April through to December, Kalamunda Uniting Church is abuzz with activity.

In the kitchen, fresh sandwiches are being prepared, the urn and coffee machine are being filled, and crockery and cutlery are being laid out. Meanwhile, scones are readied to be served with jam and cream.

In the church lobby, trestle tables are set up to display handmade arts and crafts, jars of jam, relish and chutney, and a tempting range of baked treats. One table is brimming with greenery, offering a cheerful mix of well-established and freshly potted plants in colourful containers, each one lovingly nurtured and ready to find a new home.

In the main hall, tables and chairs are arranged, while more trestle



UCAF Committee member Anne Steed manning the condiments and craft stall

tables line the walls, ready to be filled with books and bric-a-brac. All around, the air is alive with chatter, good cheer, and camaraderie!

While hosting church market days is a large undertaking, they play an important role in the life of the congregation and wider community. They offer something for everyone!

Dedicated volunteers and generous donors who provide the items for sale experience a sense of purpose and achievement, the church receives valuable funds to support its projects and community groups, and visitors enjoy a warm and welcoming connection to church life, especially for people who are new to the area or want to know more about the church and its congregation members.

Rev Sophia Lizares remarks:

“Our market day offers a wonderful opportunity to share a cuppa, catch up with old friends, and even meet new ones. We’re often joined by regular visitors from nearby single-resident dwellings, who value the welcoming atmosphere. It’s a lovely way to connect with familiar faces and serves as a warm, informal introduction to our Church.”

If you’d like to get involved in a Market Day, whether as a volunteer, attendee, or by making handmade goods, you can find details via our congregations’ websites, Facebook pages, or by using the Uniting Church WA’s Find-A-Church (<https://unitingchurchwa.org.au/find-a-church/>) search tool.



A cheerful moment as a visitor explores the plant stall

We hope to see you soon, mingling at the market!

Andrea Garvey
Newslink Editor



How your kindness showed up in a pool in the Pilbara

When you run the swimming pool in a remote town, you get to know the local kids well. That was Kristy Brown's role for three years in Marble Bar, a remote town in the Pilbara region of Western Australia.

When you run the swimming pool in a remote town, you get to know the local kids well. That was Kristy Brown's role for three years in Marble Bar, a remote town in the Pilbara region of Western Australia.

The town sits alongside the First Nations community of Binya, and Kristy regularly welcomed many children from Binya to the pool.

"In the three years I've been there, I have become very close with the kids



Coming together for a meal is key for community and connection

in the community," Kristy shares. "I was aware of the need to guide and support these kids as they grow up".

A Safe Yarning Place

Kristy realised many of the children were facing difficult challenges, ones that would likely continue if they didn't learn vital life skills. "Things like managing money and savings," she says. "Things like healthy eating, personal hygiene, even computer skills."

This is when your kindness appeared, through Bush Chaplain David Jackson. Kristy shared her passion for helping the local children, and together, they launched what is now the Marble Bar Youth Project.

Thanks to your support, David and Kristy have created a safe space where young people can come together to learn, connect, and build a sense of community. "They call it *yarning*, where they tell stories, so I wanted a safe *yarning* place for them," Kristy explains. "A program where the kids could learn life and work skills. So, when they do leave Marble Bar, they're able to join the workforce and be confident".

Alongside storytelling, the Marble Bar program includes learning to sew, writing comic books, growing veggies, and connecting with their culture through Language and cooking. The children are also developing leadership skills.

Your Support is Needed

Kristy hopes that the program will one day be owned and led entirely by the local community.

However, funding challenges now threaten its future. Kristy no longer lives in Marble Bar, so she travels there every fortnight. She would love to visit weekly, but with a round-trip costing around \$150 in fuel, it's simply not feasible.

Ongoing funding is also needed for essential project resources such as arts and crafts materials, cooking ingredients, and food for shared mealtimes.

David and Kristy are determined to show just how life-changing your support can be: "If we can prove to everybody just how great this program is," they say, "maybe in the future we can get a little bit more funding." So together, through this program, you are helping nurture and grow the next generation of leaders.

To support Bush Chaplain David's work and continue showing care to the children of Marble Bar and Binya, you can send a gift via our website at frontierservices.org/donate.



The pursuit of happiness

What makes you happy? That’s the question we asked older Western Australians as part of Juniper’s commissioned study by CoreData WA - and the answers revealed some interesting insights into what brings joy and fulfilment as we age.

For senior Western Australians, happiness is deeply rooted in relationships, staying active, and giving back to others.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, family tops the list when it comes to happiness, with a remarkable 71% saying that spending time with loved ones is essential to their well-being. Close behind, socialising with friends (59%), staying active through exercise (57%), and engaging in meaningful hobbies or activities (56%) are also key contributors to happiness. Additionally, caring for family members brings joy to 50% of respondents.

While not as high on the list, other factors still play a role in people’s happiness, including volunteering (30%), religious or spiritual faith (23%), travel (22%), and outings within the local community (21%).

When it comes to happiness in specific areas of life, the results are mixed.

More than half (56%) say they are extremely happy with their mental health, but only 24% feel the same about their physical health.

On a positive note, 54% are happy with their standard of living, and 53% feel good about their personal safety.

Maintaining good health, independence, and strong relationships are all crucial to happiness. However, declining health, pain, and mobility issues remain significant barriers.

As people age, their lifestyles and priorities shift.

While most people in their 70s see their family regularly, this declines for those in their 80s. Additionally, nearly three in five people in their 80s report not exercising as much as they would like.

Despite these challenges, many older Western Australians continue to find joy in their lives, with a strong score of 67.9 out of 100 on Juniper’s 2024 Happiness Index.

Ageing comes with its challenges, but it’s clear that meaningful relationships, good health, and a sense of purpose all play a vital role in ensuring happiness later in life.



“Interestingly, women tend to be happier with their friendships and sense of community, while men are more satisfied with their personal safety and sense of purpose.”



There is a path home

The year Paul turned 60, he lost his mother. He was completely devastated. A casual fly-in-fly-out (FIFO) chef, Paul couldn't take leave to deal with his grief. He returned to work the day after her funeral.

In a moment of sadness, he withdrew some of his superannuation and spent it.

“Before I knew it, I had nothing in the bank. It's my own fault. I did those silly things”.

Paul's life was thrown into disarray. Penniless and homeless, he slept on the streets, in bushes, and in hospital car parks.

Nights were terrifying. And when he finally managed to sleep, his phone, iPad, ID, and even his Australian citizenship papers – all he had left – were stolen.

Desperate for help, Paul called a helpline. They suggested he visit Uniting WA's Tranby Engagement Hub.

“Becoming homeless at 60 really rocked me to the core.

I looked at the trains and thought: one step onto the rails and I'd be gone, but then I thought of the train driver carrying that burden for the rest of their lives”.

“If it wasn't for Tranby, I don't know where I'd be - a little kindness goes a long way.”

They put Paul in touch with Street Law, who assisted him in replacing his ID. The Tranby team then supported Paul in finding temporary accommodation at Tom Fisher House and the Salvation Army's Beacon.

Things were looking up when Paul found another FIFO job – but just four months in, he was suddenly overcome with pain. He was diagnosed with a life-threatening bowel condition and placed in an induced coma at Royal Perth Hospital.

Paul faced a long road to recovery, but he knew he could turn to Uniting WA for support. He recuperated from surgery at the Medical Respite Centre, and later, Homeless Healthcare helped him secure a unit in Fremantle.

Today, Paul is hopeful about returning to work. In the meantime, he volunteers in various kitchens, saying it's the least he can do to give back.

Paul's journey is one of three powerful stories featured in our short documentary film, *The Path Home* – a film that reveals a simple truth: human connection can change everything. To watch the documentary and learn more, visit unitingwa.org.au/path-home.



Chicken and Cheese Soup



We were treated to this delicious homemade soup by our next-door neighbour, Rex, who served it with thick slices of freshly baked bread – and oh my, it was simply divine! Rex was more than happy to spill the beans (or in this case, the recipe)!- Andrea Garvey, Editor.

Ingredients:

- ½ BBQ roast chicken (skin and bones removed, meat shredded) **
- 1 pkt (45g) chicken noodle soup
- 1 large onion, finely chopped
- 1 stalk of celery, finely chopped
- 1 carrot, finely chopped
- 1 parsnip, finely chopped
- 700mls water
- 25g butter
- 2 Tbsp plain flour
- 200mls cream
- 300mls milk
- 20g grated cheese
- 2 Tbsp grated Parmesan cheese

Optional

- 1 small can of corn kernels, drained
- 2 tsp whole grain mustard
- 1 tsp smoked paprika

Method:

1. Put vegetables in 700mls of water, bring to a boil. Add soup mix and simmer until vegetables are cooked – about 10 mins.
2. Mix cream and milk in a jug. Melt butter in another saucepan, and add flour.
3. Cook flour gently for 1 minute.
4. Add about a third milk/cream mixture, stirring all the time, then another third and finally the last of the milk. You should now have a smooth white sauce.
5. Simmer sauce for about 5 or 6 minutes, stirring occasionally. This prevents having an uncooked floury taste. Add mustard, corn kernels and paprika (if using).
6. Now stir in the cheese until all is melted. Add cheese sauce to the soup and stir until combined. Check and adjust seasoning if necessary.
7. A little extra milk can be added if deemed too thick!

** Just ask at the deli counter—both Coles and Woolworths staff will cut a hot roast chicken in half for you. (Serves 3-4).

Source: Rex, Editor's next-door neighbour

Be a Blessing!

Be present.

Let the day flow with grace.

Expect joy. Be positive.

Serve with compassion.

Speak only kindness.

Impart only love.

Never forget you're not alone.

Give thanks for everything.

See goodness in others.

May your day be filled with blessings!

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.
- Honour our 80-year-olds with a personalised commemorative certificate issued in their name.
- Send a special greeting card to our 90-year-old people on their special day.
- 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.
- Produce and distribute the triannual newsletter "Fellowship Newslink".

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

Secretary/Treasurer:

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

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: Certificates of Appreciation may be presented to octogenarians nominated by their church or fellowship group. All who reach their 80th year, or missed out previously are eligible. Please refer to the UCAF web page (on the UCWA website) or contact Reception at the Synod centre for a registration form.

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 centre 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 _____

Uniting

**FROM HOMELESS
AND ALONE AT 61**



**TO COOKING IN MY
OWN KITCHEN AGAIN**



THERE IS A PATH HOME →

**SEE THE FULL STORY AT
UNITINGWA.ORG.AU**