

Fellowship Newslink

December 2025



Promoting Faith and
Fellowship across
Congregations and Beyond



Uniting Church WA
Adult Fellowship

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Front cover image: An Aussie Christmas with a heart-shaped candy cane, amongst an Australian gum tree in bloom.

Source - iStock

Chairperson's Corner

Welcome to Fellowship members, friends, and readers to the last edition of Newslink for 2025.

How quickly this year is moving to a close. This is our Christmas edition, arriving in November before the busy season of parties, shopping, and group break-ups.

At the Annual Synod meeting in September at Wesley College, the Uniting Church Adult Fellowship (UCAF) submitted their final report. As noted in the August *Newslink*, changes have been taking place at both Assembly and Synod levels, affecting committees and elected members. UCAF was warmly acknowledged for its many years of service and contribution to the life of the Uniting Church. Our Moderator, Rev Dr. Ian Tozer, offered a prayer of thanksgiving for past achievements and a blessing for the continuing work of Fellowship groups.

In September, we were delighted to receive the names of 27 people who have, or will, celebrate their 80th birthday in 2025, along with some who reached special birthdays in previous years, including several turning 90. By the time you read this edition, certificates will have been presented - either personally at home or during worship in local congregations.

Another important development from Synod was the election of Rev David Jackson as Moderator Elect. He was installed into his role of Moderator at the end of October. Please keep David and the WA Synod in your prayers as they navigate the challenges ahead.

At a recent Church Council meeting, one member shared a reflection from *The People's Friend*, an English magazine, written by Rev Andrew Watson. He reflected on the brief Christmas season when we sing our favourite hymns and shared the story of *Child in the Manger* (TIS 319), written by Mary MacDonald. Mary, who spoke only Gaelic, lived in a village on the Ross of Mull, off the coast of Scotland. She would spend her hours at the spinning wheel, singing hymns and reciting poems.

If you visit the Isle of Mull today, you can still see the ruins of Mary's house and a roadside memorial near Caignure. As a devout Baptist, she summed up much of the Christian faith in the three verses of her hymn.



Chairperson's Corner cont'd

Perhaps you have your own favourite Christmas hymns or songs that bring meaning to the seasons of Advent and Christmas. One of mine is *Christmas Isn't Christmas*, written around 1980 by Jimmy and Carol Owens from the USA, which our Church Choir has sung. I'd like to share the words with you as you prepare for Christmas:

*Christmas isn't Christmas till it happens in your heart,
Somewhere deep inside you is
Where Christmas really starts.
So give your heart to Jesus,
You'll discover when you do
That it's Christmas, really Christmas for you.*

*Jesus brings warmth like a winter fire,
A light like a candle's glow;
He's waiting now to come inside
As He did so long ago.
Jesus brings gifts of truth and life
And makes them bloom and grow,
So welcome Him with a song of joy,
And when He comes, you'll know:
That it's Christmas, really Christmas
for you.*

The State UCAF Committee wish you all a blessed Advent and Christmas season as you share the love, joy, and peace with family and friends.

May 2026 be a year of blessings for you all and for those in our world who have suffered during this year. May we all know and experience God's peace.

Helen McMillan



According to the *Collins English Dictionary* (HarperCollins Publishers, 2025):

- **Countable noun:** A fellowship is a group of people who come together for a shared purpose or interest.
- **Uncountable noun:** Fellowship refers to the warm sense of camaraderie people feel when engaging in shared activities or meaningful conversation.

For Christians, fellowship is more than spending time together. It is an expression of faith; sharing meals, activities, joys, struggles, prayers, and encouragement in Christ. Scripture reminds us that believers are called into fellowship with Jesus and, through Him, with one another (1 Corinthians 1:9).

Church fellowship has long included Sunday services, Sunday School, and the friendly cup of tea after worship. Through to the 1970s, 80s, and 90s, parishioners and local communities also gathered for church dances (later discos), picnics, and fetes, where faith and friendship went hand in hand. These gatherings strengthened bonds and created a sense of connection.

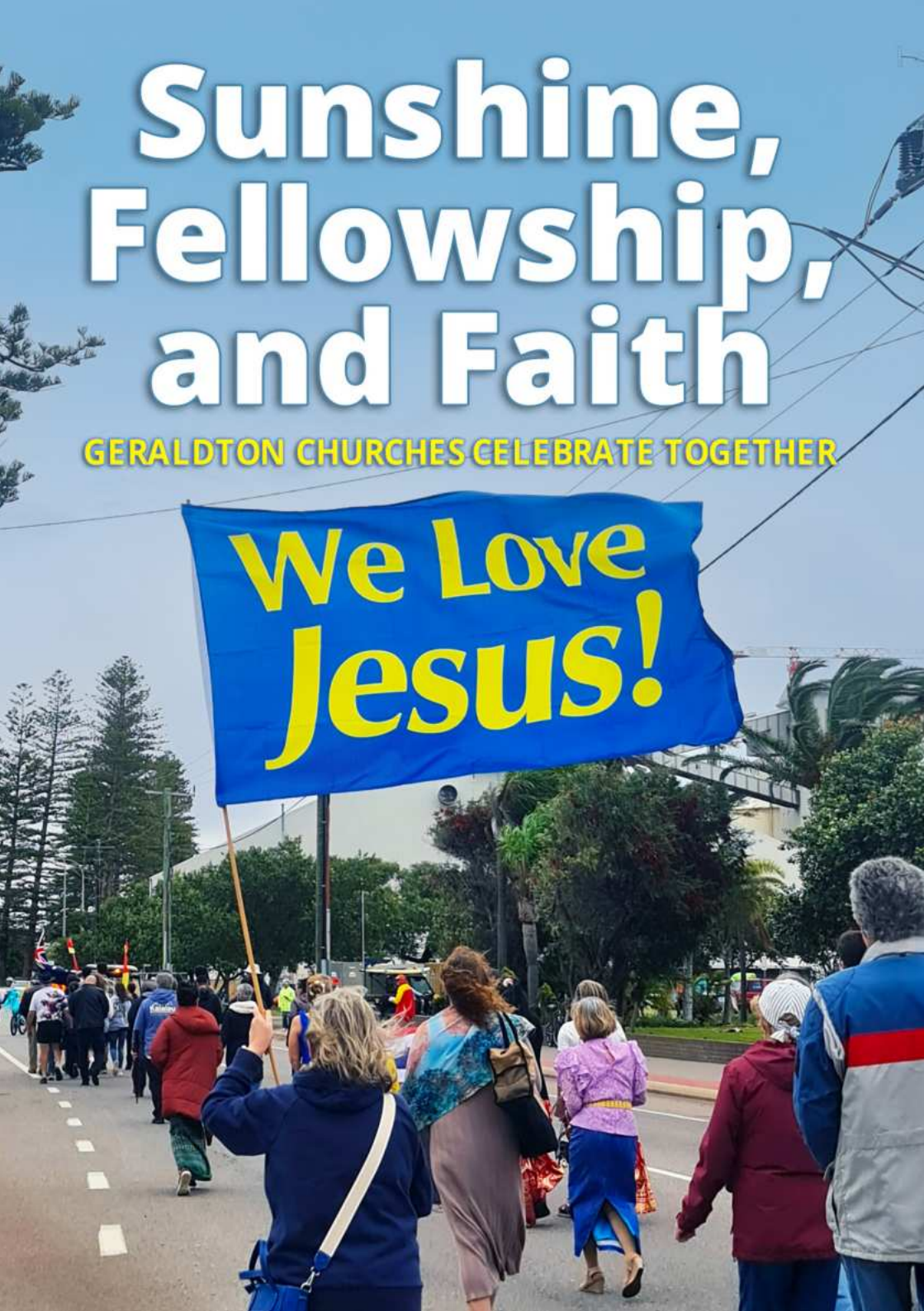
Today, fellowship in the Uniting Church has expanded to encompass a wide range of creative forms. Coffee and chat mornings, walking groups, shared meals, arts and crafts, board games and quizzes, movie nights, and gardening groups all offer fresh ways to connect.

Fellowship extends to youth as well, from toddlers to teenagers, through playgroups, Messy Church, or Kids on Sunday services, and youth groups that nurture faith and foster friendships.

Whether in a regional congregation from Albany to the Pilbara or a metropolitan church, there are countless opportunities to share faith, laughter, and life. In every setting, fellowship reminds us that Christ walks with us as we walk with one another. - **Andrea Garvey, Newslink Editor**

Sunshine, Fellowship, and Faith

GERALDTON CHURCHES CELEBRATE TOGETHER



We Love
Jesus!

Spirit, smiles and song filled the Sunshine Festival 2025 as Geraldton's churches came together to celebrate faith, friendship and community, rain or shine!

At Lighthouse Church in Geraldton, we were excited to be part of the **Sunshine Festival 2025**.

Since its beginning in 1958, the Sunshine Festival has been a cherished part of Geraldton's life, bringing people together in a joyful celebration of community spirit. This year, Lighthouse Church was delighted to take part, joining with the Geraldton Baptist and Salvation Army churches to hold a special church service. It was a wonderful opportunity to celebrate our town, our culture, and, of course, our famous sunny climate, while standing together in faith and declaring that we follow Jesus.

Originally planned for the foreshore, the morning's gathering was quickly moved indoors when rain was forecast. Despite the change of plans, the joy and sense of unity were undampened. Around 180 people filled the Lighthouse Church building for a time of shared worship, prayer and encouragement. The service centred on Jesus, celebrating the extravagant love that God has for us, and was followed by a time of fellowship over morning tea.

This time together was a beautiful reminder that church isn't about a building or a location; it's about people coming together in faith. Even though the weather changed our plans, it didn't change our purpose.

Later in the day, the celebration continued as around 90 people from churches across Geraldton came together once more, this time for the Sunshine Festival Float Parade. Walking through the streets, they represented the Christians of Geraldton, united in their love for God and their community.

With banners, smiles and a shared message of hope, the group's presence in the parade was a public expression of faith and fellowship. It was a reminder that while local churches may meet in different buildings, they serve one God and one community.

The day was filled with warmth, laughter and connection — a living picture of what it means to be “one church” across the city. As followers of Jesus, we are reminded to live out our faith with joy and confidence, unashamed of the Gospel and proud to be part of the Geraldton community.

- Lighthouse Church, Geraldton



Devotions: Christmas in the Mall

Amid the Festive Hustle

The mall was alive with a frenzy of lights, music, and chatter. Shoppers hurried past, laden with bags, their faces reflecting a mix of excitement and fatigue. Amidst the swirl of activity, a young woman named Clara paused, feeling the weight of the season pressing in. She longed for the quiet peace she remembered from Christmases past, before the bright displays and endless advertisements had overtaken the heart of the celebration.

A Spark of Light

As she wandered past the glittering stalls, her eyes caught a small, hand-painted ornament tucked among the tinsel and ribbons. It depicted a simple manger scene, with a single star shining above. Beneath it, a small sign read, “*Let your light shine.*” Clara felt a gentle tug at her heart. She remembered the story of the star that guided the wise men to the newborn Jesus, a light that shone through darkness and brought hope.

Acts of Kindness

She paused to reflect on the angel’s announcement of Christ’s birth, a message of joy and peace for all people. And in that moment, Clara realised that the light of Christmas was not in the elaborate displays, the costly gifts, or the noisy celebrations, but in the quiet, tender moments of love and connection.

Determined to embrace this insight, Clara began to look for ways to share light in the midst of the mall’s chaos. She offered a warm smile to a weary cashier, carried bags for a struggling shopper, and struck up a conversation with an elderly woman sitting alone on a bench. Each small gesture, each act of kindness, felt like a spark, and soon Clara felt a warm glow spreading through her own heart.

The Real Glow of Christmas

By the time she stepped out into the crisp evening air, the mall seemed different; its lights brighter, its music softer, its energy somehow gentler. Clara understood that the true glow of Christmas did not come from the spectacle surrounding her, but from the love and light she could share with others, no matter how small the act.

A Christmas Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for the light of Your Son, Jesus, who brings hope, peace, and joy to our hearts.

Help us treasure the simple acts of kindness and the warmth of moments shared with others.

May our lives reflect Your love, and may we be a light to those around us, especially the lonely and the weary.

Bless us this Christmas with Your peace, Your joy, and the quiet glow of Your presence.

Amen.

Story source: Adapted from “*Why the True Meaning of Christmas is About Giving*” by Divine Word Missionaries.

AUTHORISED
ACCESS ONLY

SMD MAIL ROOM

Good Sammy's Open Employment Trials

Keisha is participating in the Open Employment Trials at Western Power. She is pictured in the mail room with her Good Sammy Mentor and Offsite Supervisor, Ben.

Breaking Barriers: early success from Good Sammy's Open Employment trials

At Good Sammy, our purpose is simple: to create job opportunities for people with disability across Western Australia. One powerful way we do this is through open employment - mainstream jobs that reflect individual strengths and aspirations, supported by the right tools and guidance to thrive.

Thanks to grant funding, we launched the *Open Employment* project, trialling new support models designed to open more doors for people with disability. Our 2025 Interim Report captures early results, and the findings already show strong progress.

For Participants

Interim results show most participants are not only securing roles but keeping them. In fact, 85 percent of those placed in open employment have remained in their positions - a sign the trial's matching process and supports are working well. Around 60 percent reported greater self-confidence and independence, and many also described feeling more included in their communities.

Training in digital skills has had a big impact, with 70 percent improving their employability and moving into roles such as administration, retail, and logistics.

“

"I really enjoy working at Western Power. I come in two days per week and help in the mail room. I have learned about data entry and processing. The people here are really nice." - Keisha

”

For Employers

Employers involved in the trials reported clear benefits. Many noticed stronger collaboration and higher satisfaction across their teams after hiring people with disability, showing how inclusive employment strengthens culture and challenges misconceptions.

What works

Mentoring and job coaching proved critical, with over 90 percent of participants saying consistent, personalised support was key to sustaining employment. Employers echoed this, recognising that tailored assistance helps individuals succeed and contributes to healthier, more engaged workplaces.

Building inclusive workplaces

These findings show inclusive employment delivers value for everyone. Participants gained skills, confidence, and independence, while employers experienced stronger teams and greater cohesion. Early evidence suggests the models being trialled could be scaled to create lasting, sustainable pathways into open employment across Western Australia.

Collaboration is key

This work is only possible through collaboration. We acknowledge the Paul Ramsay Foundation and an anonymous funder for supporting the project, and thank our research partners - the Social Policy Research Centre (UNSW Sydney), the Centre for Social Impact (UWA), and Valued Lives - for capturing insights and learnings.

Together, we are shaping new opportunities for people with disability - helping them thrive, contribute, and be seen for their strengths.

The full Good Sammy Open Employment Trials Interim Report is available by searching *Open Employment Trials* on our website.



Hope across this wide brown land

- with Rev David Jackson

As Christmas draws near, we're reminded of the message at the heart of the season: hope born in the most unexpected places.

Based in the Pilbara, David has spent recent years serving as a Frontier Services Bush Chaplain, travelling vast distances to visit families, pastoral workers, and isolated communities. Wherever he goes, he brings friendship, practical help, and the gentle reminder that no one in the bush is forgotten.

Ordained in 1978, David began his ministry with the Uniting Church in Tasmania and later served as a Patrol Padre with Frontier Services in 1985. After three decades in military chaplaincy, supporting defence



Bush Chaplain David Jackson delivering Christmas gifts

personnel and their families through challenging times, he returned to Frontier Services in 2022 as a Disaster Recovery Chaplain, helping Mid-West communities rebuild after Tropical Cyclone Seroja.

He later moved north to the Pilbara, where he and his wife, Diane, have worked closely with First Nations communities, supported the Fijian congregation in Port Hedland, and helped nurture a new worshipping community in Marble Bar.

"Christmas in the bush is definitely different. Frontier Services enabled the Bush Chaplains to provide hampers and gifts, which we delivered throughout our patrols. In an aged persons facility in Marble Bar, the gifts received were completely unexpected. The joy on their faces tells it all."

Now preparing to take on his new role as Moderator-Elect of the Uniting Church WA Synod, David carries the same spirit of hope, compassion, and connection that has defined his ministry. He hopes to bring the heart of Frontier Services into this next chapter of leadership, ensuring that care for people in remote Australia remains a vital part of the church's mission.

"As Moderator of the Uniting Church, I have been deeply grateful for the placements I've had as a Frontier Services Bush Chaplain. Flynn's vision of a mantle of safety and Frontier Services' motto of 'Standing with people in the bush' both remind us why we are present in remote areas. People's gratitude that we show up and stand with them is the reason we are supported so generously by the public. Without their support, we would be poorer for it."

At Christmas, David often thinks of those far from home. The families on outback stations, young people chasing work in distant towns, and chaplains and volunteers who travel long roads to bring care and kindness. For him, these are the people who reflect the true heart of Christmas: ordinary Australians sharing extraordinary hope.

"The Marble Bar Youth Project, established in the remote Pilbara this year, has been a gift that keeps on giving. The community has been enriched and enlivened, First Nations families have been supported, and the program even led to 10 baptisms and the establishment of a local church service."

Through it all, his message remains clear: *"We are called to walk together, no matter the distance"*.

This Christmas, Frontier Services gives thanks for David's service. And, for all who continue to share the light of hope across the wide brown land.





Frances Hadfield (left) and Lynn Koehler (right) at Juniper Rosemount Retirement Village, where a shared love of Wagner's Ring Cycle sparked a lasting friendship.

From Wagner to Scrabble, Frances and Lynn have discovered the joy of shared passions and new friendship.

A firm friendship between two classical music fans living at Juniper Rosemount Retirement Village in Dianella is all thanks to a simple tote bag.

Lynn Koehler (79) was heading into a craft class at the village earlier this year when she spotted fellow resident Frances Hadfield (80) holding a bag promoting performances of Wagner's Ring Cycle.

For those not in the know, The Ring Cycle is a series of epic musical dramas composed by German composer Richard Wagner in the mid-19th century.

"I was delighted to look at Frances' bag to see The Ring Cycle. I said, 'Oh, a fellow Wagnerian!' We then discovered that we had both worked in the justice system, too," Lynn said.

With a background in education and training, Lynn delivered programs at prisons across WA, including Bandyup Women's Prison, to help

participants develop their skills for the job market.

During her years serving as a minister with the Uniting Church, Frances held a chaplain role at Bandyup Women's Prison for over a decade.

"I'm meant to be retired, but there's still plenty I do as a minister. People want me to, and I don't mind," Frances said.

Although their roles at Bandyup never overlapped, Lynn and Frances have made up for lost time by joining a University of the Third Age (U3A) choir and attending concerts and movie screenings together. Lynn also plans to join Frances and fellow Perth-based Wagner fans at Richard Wagner Society of WA gatherings.

"When I think of our friendship, I am so glad to have discovered someone who loves music, and who's in a choir with me – I'm happy about that," Frances said.

The duo also agrees that other shared interests, such as reading and hobbies like Scrabble, continue to strengthen their friendship.

"I think if you have an open mind and explore the wonderful opportunities here at Rosemount, there's so much to do that I have to limit my activities," Lynn said.

"I'm not in a retirement village to retire – I'm out every day!"

"When I think of my friendship with Frances, it's been one of the most valuable things I've found here."

– Lynn



Why Christmas matters to Bernie

Every Christmas, thousands of West Australians turn to Uniting WA for help. Bernie is just one of them – and her story reminds us that Christmas can be about connection, creativity, and the power of chosen family.

For Bernie, Christmas is not just a date on the calendar; it's a personal reminder of connection, resilience, and the power of chosen family.

“Christmas means family. And that’s not necessarily blood. I have some people in my life who have been more family than blood family”.

Bernie’s understanding of family has been shaped by a life marked by hardship and healing. Growing up in a household where emotions were rarely discussed, she faced repeated trauma from those who were meant to protect her. By 16, she was homeless.

Christmas during those years was stark.

“Being homeless... you don’t have a Christmas tree you carry around. It was just getting cards and hoping there was money in it so that I could get some drugs or alcohol. You would be focusing on where you can get food. And everybody used to go off if you were squatting in a big house. It was very detached”.

Everything changed when her daughter came into her life. Bernie was squatting in a house without electricity or hot water when she discovered she was pregnant. She wanted to bring the joy of Christmas to her child.

“You had to be more Christmassy. I did the best I could. A lot of the time, it was just trying to make sure that I had a gift on the day”.

Eventually, she made the heartbreaking decision to sign over custody of her daughter, believing that she would only *“bugger it up”*.

For the next 40 years, Bernie was caught in a relentless cycle of finding temporary refuge, only to lose it again.

Today, she lives in the same home she’s had for five years through Uniting WA’s Independent Living Program (ILP). She has reconnected with her daughter and three grandchildren, who live in Melbourne. Her art room is a sanctuary, and her bills are prepaid.

“Being called Nana for the first time — it was just so special. I welled up, and it was like, ‘Oh my god’”.

- Bernie



Christmas is now a time of creativity and community for Bernie. She attends the ILP Christmas parties at Trigg Beach, always hoping to win the raffle.

“Just going down near the beach and being around others and not really knowing anybody – but by the time you leave, everybody knows you.”

She plans to return to Melbourne to see her family this year (although perhaps after Christmas when flights are a bit cheaper).

“It’s times like that where I’ll have people in mind – I’ll make gifts. I’ll try and do nice things for my neighbours because that makes me feel better.”

Bernie’s humour and wisdom shine through in everything she does. Whether she’s sharing her story as an advocate or telling us about her latest craft project, Bernie reminds us that when the basics are taken care of, Christmas can be a time of warmth, creativity, and connection – no matter where you’ve come from.

Head to unitingwa.org.au to support more people like Bernie this Christmas!



Christmas trifles have long been a favourite on festive tables – from the classic sponge and custard many of us grew up with, to more modern creations like tiramisu. This year, why not try a new twist? A rich and indulgent Chocolate Christmas Trifle – layered with all the goodness we love, and sure to be remembered long after the last spoonful is gone. - Andrea Garvey, Editor.

Ingredients:

- 1 packet of strawberry jelly crystals (Aeroplane or similar)
- 1 punnet of strawberries, sliced
- 600 ml custard
- 1 store-bought chocolate mud cake **
- 300 ml thickened cream
- 3 Flake chocolate bars
- 1 punnet fresh cherries

Method:

1. Prepare the jelly according to the packet instructions and pour it into the base of a trifle dish/large glass bowl.
2. Add the sliced strawberries to the jelly and place in the fridge until set.
3. Once the jelly has set, remove it from the fridge and spread the custard evenly over the top.
4. Crumble the chocolate mud cake (with or without icing removed) over the custard.
5. In a bowl, use electric beaters to whip the cream until soft peaks form.
6. Spoon the whipped cream over the crumbled cake layer.
7. Crush the Flake bars over the cream, then finish by topping with fresh cherries.**

Notes:

1. If you'd prefer a homemade touch, you can use Green's Deluxe Chocolate Mud Cake Mix (available from Coles or Woolworths) instead of a store-bought mud cake. Just follow the packet instructions; no need to add the icing.
2. ** The original recipe suggests removing the icing from the mud cake. Personally, I don't think it's worth the effort - why waste the good bits?

Source: Recipe courtesy of Australia's Best Recipes (Kelsie Heemskerk), available at bestrecipes.com.au.

Christmas Blessing

Hope Peace Joy Love Christ

At Christmas, may *Hope* guide
your days,

Peace rest gently upon your heart,

Joy lift your spirit with gladness,

Love warm every home,

And *Christ*, our Saviour, be your
everlasting Light.

*Wishing you a blessed and
holy Christmas.*



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.
- Share information and updates about the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Womens' Groups.
- Produce and distribute "Fellowship Newslink" magazine.

Note: For information regarding the *Joan Stott Bursary*, please contact the Uniting Church National Assembly office.

New Members:

When a member's situation changes or they must retire, 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:

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UCAF WA 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 _____



Outback Links volunteers provide practical help and heartfelt connection where it's needed most.

Whether fixing fences, lending a hand on a farm, or simply listening, your kindness changes lives.

Join our team



frontierservices.org

An agency of the Uniting Church in Australia, Frontier Services supports people living in remote Australia. Established by Rev. John Flynn, we have provided practical, emotional, and spiritual support to Aussies living on the land for more than 110 years. Through your gift, you'll help send Outback Links volunteers and Bush Chaplains to people in the Outback who have been doing it tough.



Frontier Services
Standing with people in the bush

www.frontierservices.org
call 1300 787 247
ABN 77 231 384 646