



Dovetales

March 2026

News and Stories from the Uniting Church WA



Rev Andy Broadbent, Rev Robert Jetta, Rev Mitchell Garlett & Rev Ken Sumner during the Welcome to Country panel discussion at Summer Spirit 2026

Walking Together, Covenanting Together

Wendy Hendry and Rev Andy Broadbent

In 2024 we celebrated 30 years of the Covenant between the Uniting Church in Australia and the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress. Summer Spirit 2026, which took place on the weekend of 20 and 21 February, was an opportunity to hear the story of Congress, listen to the joys and challenges of First Peoples, and renew our commitment to the Covenanting process.

Friday – Walking Together

It was a warm and still summer afternoon as people started to gather under the gum trees lining Lake Gwelup Reserve in the Perth suburb of Gwelup. A growing number of camping chairs began to form in rows of semi-circles facing the lake, ready for our event to begin. This was the Uniting Church's annual Summer Spirit, done a little differently this year in fitting with the theme

'Walking Together, Covenanting Together'. This year we were gifted the opportunity to listen, learn and to walk on country with the guidance of Wadjuk Nyungar elder Len Yarran.

Once we were gathered in community, Rev Andy Broadbent, on behalf of the Summer Spirit team, welcomed everyone and invited Len Yarran to begin sharing with the group. Len spoke of the cultural significance

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Len Yarran sharing stories at Lake Gwelup

Walking Together, Covenanting Together cont.

of Lake Gwelup.

Lake Gwelup is situated on Mooro country, and part of a seasonal chain of lakes. The name 'Gwelup' is said to be derived from the Nyungar word "Gwelgannow" meaning "to shift position". The lake contains four registered Aboriginal sites and is an important place of Nyungar cultural practices such as birthing and ceremonial dance. Len shared Nyungar stories from the area, and spoke of the First Peoples' connection to, and care of, country. He spoke of the First Peoples being caretakers and custodians of the lands and waters across this place we call Australia.

It was a special evening to begin our weekend of walking together, Covenanting together.

After sharing a meal, which included lemon myrtle cake and damper with Quandong jam provided by members of Congress, those who were able, joined in a cultural walk led by Len, stopping and sharing at significant points along the way.

As the sunset glow began to fade, our time together came to a close with a sharing circle

giving everyone an opportunity to reflect on the experience. Rev Mitchell Garlett was then invited to send us home with a closing prayer.

It was a special evening to begin our weekend of walking together, Covenanting together.

Saturday – Covenanting Together

Saturday began at All Saints Floreat Uniting Church with a time of worship, beautifully led by Pastor Julie Ridden and Uniting Church WA Moderator Rev David Jackson.

Following worship, Rev Andy Broadbent, Education and Resources Coordinator with UCEF, hosted a panel conversation with Rev Robert Jetta, Rev Mitchell Garlett, and Rev Ken Sumner, exploring the meaning and purpose of 'Welcome to Country'. With so much confusion in the wider community about what a Welcome to Country is, this was an invaluable chance to listen deeply and gain clarity. One insight that particularly stood out was the understanding that Welcome to Country is, at its heart, an act of care.

Rev Robert Jetta shared that

when people come onto his Country, his community holds a responsibility for them. The welcome is both an acknowledgement of that responsibility and an expression of their desire that visitors remain safe and well.

Our keynote address was delivered by the Rev Ken Sumner, Co-Chair of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC). Ken traced the story of how the UAICC came into being and spoke with great clarity and conviction about the significance of the Covenant between the UAICC and the Uniting Church. His presentation was insightful, informative, and ultimately deeply challenging.

After lunch, Len Yarran, joined by the Rev Mitchell Garlett, reflected on the importance of First and Second Peoples working together to shape a better future for all who call Australia home.

Their insights prepared the way for our final session, facilitated by Rev Bev Fabb on behalf of the Uniting Church WA's Covenanting Commission, where

His presentation was insightful, informative, and ultimately deeply challenging.

we explored practical ways congregations can honour the Covenant in their own contexts.

Our day concluded with Rev Robert Jetta leading us in communion, using damper and juice—a powerful reminder of God's reconciling love and a clear call for us to embody that same reconciling spirit in our daily lives, both as churches and as individuals.

A heartfelt thank you to All Saints Floreat Uniting Church volunteers, the Summer Spirit organising committee and UAICC WA Regional Congress, whose hard work helped make the whole weekend such a success.



Summer Spirit Friday gathering at Lake Gwelup

Summer Spirit 2026 in Pictures



Rev David Jackson



Rev Mervyn Anderson & Rev Robert Jetta



Rev Ken Sumner



Ps Julie Ridden leading worship



Rev Ken Sumner



Len Yarran & Rev Mitchell Garlett



Find the Mission Newsletter on the UCWA website: unitingchurchwa.org.au/newsletters or subscribe directly: tiny.cc/missionblog

Reflections after six months as Presbytery Minister (Mission)

Rev Luke Williams

Just over six months ago, when I stepped into the role of Presbytery Minister (Mission), I wasn't entirely sure what to expect.

My predecessor, Rob Douglas, did a fantastic job of engaging with congregations and providing resources and pathways to grow in missional engagement across our communities.

However, it had been more than 12 months since Rob concluded in the role, and during that time several things in the life of the Presbytery had shifted. A new working group had been established to give attention to one of the strategic priorities of the Uniting Church in WA: 'Strengthening Congregations'. There have also been changes in many staff and voluntary roles across both Presbytery and Synod. But what hasn't changed is the reality that congregations across WA are facing.

Many are working hard — seeking to engage their local communities and offer meaningful ministry. Over the past six months I've tried to engage as widely as possible, listening carefully and exploring creative ways forward, particularly when the future is

unclear.

I've observed a common theme: uncertainty. Many have questions about long-term sustainability, about what wise financial management and stewardship of property looks like, about the challenges of ageing members.

In some of my recent blog posts, which you can find at unitingchurchwa.org.au/newsletters I've reflected on the crossroads moments that congregations face. These can be painful, but also present opportunities. When things can no longer be done as they have been before, space opens for fresh imagination, courageous decisions and renewed clarity about why we exist.

I am deeply grateful for the work of the Thrive Mission Committee in its various forms over the past decade, championing the cause of mission in our Presbytery. The leadership of Rev Greg Ross as chairperson, along with many others, has helped us think more

deeply about our purpose as the Uniting Church in WA.

However, it seems to me that we are approaching — or perhaps have already reached — a point where reflection must give way to action. The time is now to make decisions that position us for a thriving future.

One particular theme I've noticed in conversations with congregations is the challenge of moving from loving and serving our local communities to helping people discover faith for themselves. From service and outreach to disciple making.

Disciple making is not an optional extra. It is central to our calling and reflected clearly in the Five Marks of Mission. And yet it is often the most challenging dimension of our life together. Many congregations are doing a wonderful job at practical service and community engagement, but feel uncertain about how to help others develop a living, growing relationship with God.



Building a Discipling Culture (BDC)

But this is not an impossible challenge. We can learn to make disciples who make disciples. It's hard work, but it's not rocket science. In the months ahead, I'm thrilled to begin rolling out a training process called BDC (Building a Discipling Culture). This is not a replacement for training such as Mission-Shaped Ministry, but rather something that builds on the strong foundations already laid.



Rev Luke Williams

The training involves fortnightly group coaching for between one and three key leaders of a congregation, and intensive workshops for church councils and other leaders. The goal: to equip congregational leaders to train and coach their own people in how to make disciples.

For those asking more foundational questions about what mission looks like in their local context, Rev Andy Broadbent and I will also be offering a short course produced by the Synod of NSW & ACT called "The Missional Lens", a simple five-session workshop that helps you think clearly and prayerfully about your own missional efforts. You can register your interest for these training opportunities at tiny.cc/missiontraining.

The challenges before us are real. But so too is the opportunity. I remain hopeful that as we act with courage, clarity and trust in God's leading, we will see congregations strengthened and renewed for the sake of Christ's mission in Western Australia.

Some have said this about the BDC process:

"I really found the process and group participation inspiring and rewarding and we are using the lessons to guide us in our Church at Rockingham."

Simon Cartwright,
Chairperson of Rockingham Church Council

"Being part of BDC coaching was a rich and challenging experience ... I have come away with greater clarity, renewed confidence and a deeper commitment to cultivating a discipleship culture in both my life and ministry."

Rev Sione Leaaetoa,
Minister, Mount Pleasant Uniting Church

UCWA highlights



Uniting Church WA General Secretary Announced – Welcome David Beards

The Uniting Church WA is pleased to announce the appointment of David Beards as General Secretary for the Uniting Church Synod of Western Australia. The appointment was confirmed by the Synod Standing Committee at their meeting on 16 February 2026.

David has been appointed to this position in a full-time capacity until the Synod meeting in September 2026, where the ongoing appointment will be determined.

David brings to this role a rare blend of grassroots church involvement, governance leadership, and senior executive experience. He has stepped in as both Acting, and Associate General Secretary positions in recent times, and we are pleased he will be able to continue to serve the church in this way.

David Beards has had a lifelong involvement in the Uniting Church and is deeply shaped by its ethos, mission, and people. He has served across congregational, Presbytery, and Synod life, including governance roles on Church Councils, the Board of Finance and Investment, the Resources Commission, and the Synod Standing Committee.

Drawing on more than 25 years of senior leadership in the technology and telecommunications sector, he brings strong capabilities in organisational leadership, strategy, risk, and transformation.

He is known for his practical, collaborative approach and as General Secretary is committed to strengthening relationships and supporting the mission and long-term sustainability of the Uniting Church in WA.

You can get to know David more on the Our Leaders page of the Uniting Church WA website.

<https://unitingchurchwa.org.au/about-us/leaders>



Induction of Rev Sophia Lizares

Congratulations to Rev Sophia Lizares who was Inducted into the Ministry of Deacon at Mandurah Uniting Church in a joyful service on 17 January 2026.

The service was led by Rev Ken Devereux in his role as Chairperson of the Presbytery of WA, and Rev Dr Cathie Lambert gave the sermon.

Blessings to Sophia and to the Uniting Church Mandurah community as they journey together in ministry.

News and Notes

Weekly news and events from the Uniting Church WA and beyond



Do you have email?

News and Notes is the weekly e-newsletter for the Uniting Church WA, sharing news, events and stories of our church community.

You can subscribe by sending an email to newsandnotes@wa.uca.org.au

Prayer for Peace



A call to Prayer for Peace in the Middle East

Rev Charissa Suli, Uniting Church in Australia

An invitation to prayer from Uniting Church in Australia President Rev Charissa Suli

The World Council of Churches have expressed grave concern over escalating military attacks in the Middle East and called for an immediate cessation of violence, the protection of civilian populations, and renewed diplomatic engagement.

As part of the global fellowship of churches, the Uniting Church in Australia stands alongside our ecumenical partners in prayerful solidarity. We share the deep concern for the safety of civilians, the stability of the region, and the urgent need for de-escalation and dialogue.

We recommit ourselves to being people of restraint, reconciliation and hope.

In a time when rhetoric intensifies and fear spreads quickly, I invite the Uniting Church to be what we are called to be — a praying people. We hold before God all whose lives

are endangered, and we pray for communities here in Australia who are watching these events with deep concern for loved ones.

We recommit ourselves to being people of restraint, reconciliation and hope.

Prayer for Peace

God of Abraham and Sarah,
God of Hagar and Ishmael,
God of Isaac and Rebekah,
God revealed to us in Jesus Christ,

We bring before you the lands where our faith was born, now shaken by escalating violence and deep uncertainty.

We pray for the people of Iran, for the people of Israel, and for all across the region living tonight with fear.

We pray for children woken by sirens,
for families seeking safety,
for those carrying grief, anger and anxiety.
Prince of Peace,
interrupt the cycle of violence.
Protect civilian life on every side.
Grant leaders wisdom and restraint.
Turn hearts from further destruction toward dialogue and de-escalation.
Call all nations to act with responsibility,
with care for human life,
and with respect for the obligations of international law.
Spirit of the Living God,
comfort those in Australia whose loved ones are in harm's way.

Strengthen Jewish, Muslim, Iranian, Arab and Christian communities who may feel vulnerable or unsettled.

Guard us from antisemitism, from Islamophobia, and from every form of hatred that rises in times of conflict.

Make your Church a place of safety, compassion and steady hope.

May fear give way to understanding.

May violence give way to courage for peace.

May justice and mercy meet.

In the name of Christ, who is our peace.

Amen.





Over the next 18 months, Uniting Church WA Moderator Rev David Jackson will host 10 regional gatherings across the Synod to connect with and listen to the voices, experiences, and insights of volunteers in our congregations.

The Moderator hosted the first gathering on Saturday 7 February at Kalamunda Uniting Church, where he met with 19 volunteers from eight congregations in the Metro East region.

It was a wonderful and enriching time of fellowship. Thank you to all the volunteers who attended and for all that you openly shared.

The next gathering will be in the South West region in April 2026 – more details to come.

Thank you Volunteers!

Volunteers are at the heart of our congregations, and their time, energy, strengths, gifts, and faithfulness shape and give life to ministry and mission in their different contexts.

DoveTales Noticeboard

Easter Services 2026

Share Easter with us
Find Uniting Church WA Easter services and events here:
unitingchurchwa.org.au/easter

Uniting Church in Australia Western Australia

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