



Dovetales

June 2026

News and Stories from the Uniting Church WA



Launch of the WCC Pacific Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action in Togoru, Fiji - photo Marcelo Schneider/WCC

Moderator Reflects on Pacific Churches Meeting

Rev David Jackson, Moderator

Uniting Church WA Moderator Rev David Jackson attended the Pacific Conference of Churches, Pacific Churches Leaders Meeting in Suva, Fiji in April as part of a Uniting Church delegation which included UCA President Rev Charissa Suli and Co-Chair of Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress Rev Ken Sumner.

The Pacific Churches Leaders Meeting (PCLM) opened with worship, with the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Prof. Rev Dr Jerry Pillay setting the stage for a week of intensive engagement on the big themes that confront the Pacific Churches and their leaders.

During the meeting the WCC Pacific Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action* was launched in Togoru, Navua, a regional community that is losing one metre of coastline every

year. At this community, a call for climate justice was given as a matter of urgency.

The theme of the PCLM was that God is actively shaping the life and vocation of the Pacific churches by transforming them into prophetic, eco-conscious communities that blend indigenous wisdom with Biblical theology, particularly in response to existential climate threats.

Underpinning the meeting was a shared theology developed by previous meetings around the

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UCA delegates of the Pacific Churches Leaders Meeting – photo supplied by UCA Assembly

image of the Pacifica Household of God. This shaping is driving a shift from purely evangelical theology to a functional or living theology that emphasises social justice, environmental stewardship, and regional unity (the Pacifica Household of God). This image was further developed through the meeting.

The Pacific whole-of-life perspective recognises land, ocean and all living beings within networks of sacred interdependence.

Speakers called the churches to move from stewardship toward custodianship and guardianship, challenging anthropocentric approaches that assume humans stand above creation. The Pacific whole-of-life perspective recognises land, ocean and all living beings within networks of sacred interdependence.

In essence, God is moving the Pacific churches to understand that “to not have the church, to not have spirituality, is to lose your soul”, by linking cultural identity and spiritual survival directly to the care and protection of their environment.

It is recognition that eco-systems are legal entities with inherent rights to exist and thrive, shifting nature from ‘Property’ to a rights-

bearing partner. It empowers communities to enforce these rights through courts.

‘Do-Kamo’ pathway

‘Do-Kamo’ pathway: the true human or authentic person embodies the traditional Melanesian values, humanity and a person’s relationship with their ancestors and environment.

Like any household there is good and there is bad. The Pacific nations are amid a drug epidemic with Methamphetamine addiction being harmful to the society. The drug problem has led to changes in health, with AIDS/ HIV being at exceptional high levels. You see billboards around the city of Suva highlighting the issue. Governments are reaching out to Church leaders to help them combat the issues. In countries that are over 90% Christian they are aware that churches are going to be a part of the solution.

The repeated theme was that the Household must not become silent or reactive. It must cultivate truth-telling, restraint, solidarity and courage so that the churches can remain faithful in a context marked by polarisation, colonising pressures and competing political loyalties.

I sat with a church leader from the nation of Tuvalu. Halfway

between Hawaii and Australia, Tuvalu is made up of three reef islands and six atolls. It is a low-lying island nation and is extremely vulnerable to sea level rise due to climate change. I got his firsthand experience of the existential threats that climate change brings to his community.

Climate Migration and the PALM scheme were issues that were addressed in the PCLM. Among the points made by contributors was the importance of preserving worship, language, kinship and identity among diaspora communities.

I got his firsthand experience of the existential threats that climate change brings to his community.

Practical concerns raised in relation to labour mobility included isolation, wage deductions, safety, alcohol and other drug use, gambling, abuse of women, accidents and the vulnerability of workers far from their support networks.

There are over 2000 workers currently on the PALM scheme in WA coming from 20 Pacific nations. Many of these workers come from churches the Uniting Church has an international partnership with. To accompany smaller or displaced communities with greater intentionality so that people do not lose connection with their culture, faith or sense of home is important.

There were many other issues this meeting covered. I’ve picked out just a few to give a sense of what happened, and the importance such meetings have to bring home the issues that we need to be across as a church focussed on pastoral care for vulnerable populations.

**Read more about the Pacific launch of the Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action on the WCC website here:*
<https://bit.ly/4o6vzb3>



Listening for Peace, Confronting Racism

Wendy Hendry

Over recent years, the Uniting Church WA Social Justice Commission have been exploring a new model of working, creating opportunities for engagement on matters of social justice for the wider church through the Justice Hive (the Hive).

The Hive is a gathering held three times a year, bringing together interested people in the Uniting Church WA to explore social justice topics, and contribute to the work and focus of the Social Justice Commission.

Each gathering centres on four elements: Grounding in Christian spirituality, build relationships, sharing ideas and strategies, and develop skills.

Listening for Peace

On Saturday 2 May, the Hive held a special focus topic - 'Listening for Peace, Confronting Racism', asking *'In the face of escalating war, racism and intolerance of the Other, how might our congregations and communities build peace?'*

This was an open opportunity to hear from, and engage with, three guest speakers each invited to share from their perspective and experience.

The speakers were John, a Palestinian Christian; Maryam, an Iranian Baha'i; and Kevin, a Malaysian Christian, who is currently a candidate for ministry with the Uniting Church.

As each speaker shared aspects of their story, the gathered group were given an insight into their experience as Palestinian, Iranian and Chinese Malaysia migrants, the grief and loss arising from both subtle and systematic erasure including genocide, as well as other-ing in their own homelands and in Australia. They shared about ways their faith helps them, and discussed how we might all work towards peace.

After each guest speaker shared, discussion arose in the gathered group who explored concepts such as what it means to 'love our enemies', and the power of the media. We discussed how we define racism, the different forms it can come in and the need to distinguish between

racism and genuine curiosity.

An open time of sharing followed where the group discussed how we might continue to build peace. There was an agreed emphasis on the value of learning about each others' histories in order to understand conflicts. People shared the importance of making space for people to gather, to build friendships, to join together in the simple act of interfaith prayer and devotion, to experience moments of hospitality and connection.

The Justice Hive was a listening circle of care and hope.

In thanking the speakers after the event, Rev Sophia Lizares, Social Justice Commission member said:

"May this just be the beginning of a circle of friendship and courage.

May the seeds planted grow into a great tree to shelter many."

Thank you, John, Maryam and Kevin for lending your hearts and voices in this intercultural, ecumenical and inter-religious conversation.

Find Out More

The full version of this article can be found on the Uniting Church WA website here:

<https://bit.ly/43JLhiU>

The next Justice Hive will be on 25 July. To stay informed about the next Justice Hive event contact the Social Justice Commission Chairperson:

chair.socialjustice@wa.uca.org.au





Strengthening Congregations

Listening, Learning, and Discerning Together

Rev Claire Pickering, Presbytery Minister (Strategic Priorities)

Across our Presbytery, in diverse settings, congregations and faith communities gather each week – large and small, busy and steady, full of energy and sometimes weary. There is faithful worship, deep care for one another, a commitment to outreach and service, and a strong sense of belonging.

Amid this, honest questions are emerging – some unspoken, others shared in conversation. Questions about leadership capacity and sustainability, connecting with a changing world, and the future of our church.

This is not unfamiliar ground for the people of God. Time and again, in Scripture and throughout the life of the Church, we see God meeting and guiding people and communities in moments exactly like this – in times of uncertainty, transition, and possibility. It reminds us that the story unfolding in our church today is not separate from God's presence and work among us, it is part of it.

In recognising this moment in our shared life, four Key Strategic Priorities for the Synod and Presbytery have been shaped.

Strengthening Congregations

One of these priorities is Strengthening Congregations, which encompasses several interrelated areas: understanding the realities of congregational life; nurturing intercultural and intergenerational communities; exploring future forms of ministry; considering how properties can support mission; and providing leaders with fresh learning opportunities.

Last year, a Strategic Priorities Working Group, including the Chairs and staff of Presbytery Committees, was appointed to lead this work – to listen to congregations and faith communities, understand the present moment, and discern together where God is at work and may be calling us.

At its heart, the work of Strengthening Congregations

holds a significant question: *what does it look like to be a faithful and life-giving Christian community in this time and place, and into the future?*

Over the past year, this listening has begun in practical ways. One expression of this has been the development of the Health and Vitality Toolkit, which invites congregations and faith communities to reflect on key markers of church life, including faith development, younger generations, mission and outreach, and leadership. More than a tool to complete, it encourages leaders to name strengths and challenges, and to begin deeper conversations. In time, we will share what has been heard across the Presbytery.

The Working Group also initiated table discussions at recent Presbytery meetings, creating space for open conversations about the realities of congregational life, hopes and concerns people are holding, and possibilities for faithful change into the future.

Experiences of Ministry

In April, the Moderator held a ministry forum where Ministers and Pastors in active ministry shared openly about their experiences of leadership and ministry in this season.

Across these different conversations, we hear a deep love for the church and a strong commitment to ministry and mission, alongside a sincere recognition of the challenges facing many churches. There is a sense of hope and energy around new possibilities – especially new forms of ministry and developing leaders – as well as real concern about the ageing profile, fatigue, limited volunteers, and the impact of change on communities.

Within this, many Presbytery members expressed a need for more open and prayerful conversations with one another, and the courage to face questions about sustainability and legacy. Many members spoke about the importance of relationships and not navigating these challenges alone, as well as finding ways to share resources, leadership, and support across congregations and faith communities.

From Ministers and Pastors,

there is a strong sense that the church is at a pivotal moment, and a call for clear conversations about decline and for prayerful, courageous decisions about how people, resources, and legacy are stewarded. They spoke of increasing pressure on leaders and the need to invest in leadership development and shared models of ministry, and the importance of an outward-facing, mission-focused culture.

Across both voices, there is a willingness to engage these realities, ask difficult questions, and explore new possibilities together. There is a recognition that God is already at work – often in unexpected places – and a desire to listen carefully and respond with faith and courage.

A Shared Journey

These conversations have been invaluable. They remind us there is no single path forward – our churches are in different places: some thriving, some steady, and some vulnerable. Yet across all of this, there is a growing openness – sometimes, tentative, sometimes bold – to exploring new ways of being church. The work of Strengthening Congregations is a shared journey and your experiences, insights, questions, and hopes

are central.

In the months ahead, the Working Group will continue to listen, learn, and explore what support and resourcing is needed, sharing updates and reflections as this unfolds.

Above all, we hold onto the promise that God is present and at work among us. In every conversation and every step of faith, the Spirit is moving. Together, we are discerning what it means to be a faithful and life-giving church in this time and place, and into the future, trusting that, as we do, God will meet and guide us.

Find Out More

Information about Strategic Priorities can be found on the UCWA website here:

unitingchurchwa.org.au/about-us/strategic-plan

Find the Health and Vitality Toolkit here:

unitingchurchwa.org.au/congregation-hub/congregation-resources/health-vitality

Contact Rev Claire Pickering:

claire.pickering@wa.uca.org.au
or phone 08 9260 9800



UCWA highlights



West Timor Partnership Visit

Nedlands Uniting Church has an established partnership with Universitas Kristen Artha Wacana (UKAW), Christian University in Kupang, West Timor. This partnership is one of the three currently supported by the WA Synod's International Partnerships and Development Commission (IPDC).

The West Timor Team, who handles the scholarship program funded by the church, recently had the great pleasure of hosting a visit from two academic staff members from the University, Dr Filmon Polin and Dr Jolly Ledo.

The visit was an opportunity to revise the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Letter of Agreement (LOA) between Nedlands Uniting Church and UKAW, and enjoy several social gatherings.

The main event for the visit was a breakfast at Nedlands Uniting Church where Filmon spoke about the scholarship program, and Jolly gave a presentation related to her PhD research thesis "Contextual Pastoral Care for Female Pastors Experiencing Domestic Violence". As part of her presentation Jolly spoke of her appreciation of the support she received from the West Timor Team for her University fees.

At the worship service the following day Jolly presented the congregation with a red cloth

embroidered with the University crest (pictured) thanking the congregation for their support.

The West Timor Team shared that the visit was very successful in strengthening their relationship with UKAW, hearing about important social issues, and revising the partnership agreements.

To learn more about our Synod partnerships go to:
bit.ly/UCWAPartnerships



Building Healthy Church Communities

In early May, the Uniting Centre for Education and Formation hosted a Residency Week with Rev Joan Wright Howie with the theme - *Building Healthy Church Communities*.

Gathering across Perth, Busselton, and Bunbury, participants engaged in thoughtful conversations around conflict, spiritually informed care, pastoral practice, spirituality, and healthy church communities.

The week created space for learning, reflection, encouragement, and connection, with many rich insights shared along the way.

During the visit our Uniting Church WA Synod and Presbytery staff spent a day away from the office for a team building session with Joan who led them through a day of reflection and connection, helping explore the practice of spiritually informed ways of relating and working

together.

We give thanks for Rev Joan Wright Howie's wisdom, generosity, and faithful leadership throughout the Residency Week, and for all who participated in these meaningful workshops.



Lay Preacher Commissioning

Pepetafoou (Pepe) Luivaie was commissioned as a Lay Preacher with the Tapu Niue Faith Community on 3 May 2026. The Commissioning held at Star Street Uniting Church, where the Faith Community has their monthly service, was led by the Chairperson of the Presbytery of WA, Rev Ken Devereux.

Pepe has been a life time member of the Congregational Christian Church of Niue - one of our partner churches in the Pacific. Since the recognition of the Tapu Niue Faith Community within the Uniting Church in WA Pepe has been actively involved in prayer and Bible study groups, pastoral care and mentoring of new leaders.

Congratulations Pepe!



More than a meal



“A meal alone won’t get you out of homelessness.”

Matt’s Letter shared by Uniting WA

Nine years ago, I couldn’t have imagined writing to you from inside a home again.

My name is Matt. I’m not usually the talkative one. That’s Jodie, my partner of 16 years. She tells the stories while I stand beside her, listening and supporting. But I wanted to share this with you.

We had a home once. Jobs, routines, five kids. Then in 2017, everything fell apart in a single night. There was a violent home invasion. I ended up in hospital, and the damage to the property left a mark on our rental record. After that, doors started closing.

We didn’t fight it. Not because we didn’t care, but because we were in shock and just trying to recover. Jodie focused on the kids. Friends took them in, and as long as they were safe, we told ourselves we could cope with anything.

People often ask why we didn’t stay with them. We did, sometimes. A night here or there. They fed us and gave us a place to wash. But you can

only ask so much. Our kids were building their own lives, and we didn’t want to put that at risk or wear out the kindness around us.

So eventually, we moved into our car.

What we thought would be temporary became six years of sleeping rough, not by choice, but because of circumstance.

When you live on the streets, you don’t really sleep. You listen. You stay alert. Your body doesn’t switch off because it can’t. Things most people don’t think about suddenly matter. A shower. A bathroom. A hot coffee. A safe place to keep your things.

That’s why Uniting WA’s Engagement Hub became our safe place.

That’s why Uniting WA’s Engagement Hub became our safe place. We came every day. For food, yes, but also to shower,

charge our phones, and stay connected to our kids. That mattered more than anything. Even without a home, it helped us feel like we were still parents.

What made the difference wasn’t just the meals. It was the consistency, the conversations, and the trust that built over time. Knowing we could come back the next day and be met with the same care gave us stability and hope.

After years of waiting, we were finally offered a home.

Looking back, I know how much harder those years would have been without that support. It gave us something steady when everything else felt uncertain.

These days, I volunteer in the Hub kitchen, helping others who are where we once were. The need is still there every day.

I’m proud of how far we’ve come. I often think about my Mum, who worked in community services and believed people deserve dignity, not judgement. That is exactly what I see in places like Uniting WA. Real change that happens over time, with care.

Thank you for being part of our story.

Matt

Uniting

Find out more and donate to Uniting WA:



unitingwa.org.au/more-than-a-meal/ or phone 9220 1222

Prayer for the 49th Anniversary of the Uniting Church in Australia

Rev David Jackson, Moderator

Gracious God, we thank you for the 49 years of the Uniting Church in Australia.

We look back with gratitude for the pioneering spirit that united Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian traditions, trusting in your call to be a pilgrim people.

As we mark this anniversary in 2026, we remember the 1977 Statement to the Nation.

We renew our pledge to uphold the dignity of every human being, to seek corrections of injustices, and to challenge greed and self interest within our nation.

In the Spirit of that inaugural promise, we commit again to standing with the poor, welcoming the stranger, and caring for your creation.

Lord, you call us to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly.

Guide us to be a reconciling presence in a divided world, and to walk together as a First and Second Peoples in truth and healing.

As we look toward our 50th year, empower us by your Holy Spirit to go forward in self-giving love, serving as a sign of the kingdom you are bringing to all humanity.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord, who gives us life and hope, Amen



Dovetales Noticeboard

50th Annual Meeting
of the
Synod of Western Australia
11 - 13 September 2026

 *We are a*
PILGRIM PEOPLE

IMPORTANT DATES

Friday 31 July	Closing date for Reports and Proposals
Monday 31 August	Closing date for Registrations
Tuesday 1 September	Closing date for Nominations
Friday 11 September	Opening Worship Service Commencing 7.00pm All Saints Floreat Uniting Church
Saturday 12 September	Synod in Session - Day One 8.30am to 8.00pm The Hub - Bentley Technology Park
Sunday 13 September	Synod in Session - Day Two 8.30am to 4.00pm The Hub - Bentley Technology Park

Our 2026 Annual Synod meeting will be in Seminar Rooms 1 & 2, The Hub - Bentley Technology Park, 2 Brodie-Hall Drive, Bentley

For meeting updates go to our website: <https://bit.ly/WASynod26>

 Uniting Church in Australia
Western Australia

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