



Uniting Church in Australia
Western Australia

Issue 69
September 2020

Revive

a fresh perspective on faith, church and life



Obedient to God's
call: Susy Thomas

Indigenous
Lives Matter:
Australians march
to end injustice

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Revive is published quarterly for the Uniting Church WA. The Uniting Church WA acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands and waters on which we live and work. *Revive* is produced at the Uniting Church Centre, which sits on the lands of the Wadjuk Nyungar people. We pay our respect to their Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge the Nyungar people as the sovereign First Peoples of this place. Opinions expressed in *Revive* do not necessarily reflect those of the editor, or the policies of the Uniting Church. *Revive* welcomes contributors. Contact the editor in the first instance at revive@wa.uca.org.au. The contribution deadline for the December 2020 edition is Thursday, 15 October.

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Revive
Magazine
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revivemagazine.org.au

Printed at Vanguard Press
Uniting Church in Australia, Western Australia
GPO Box M952, Perth WA 6843



Sheesh it's been a huge year so far. But you don't need me to tell you that.

Once again, I feel so lucky to have been born, and still living, in WA. I'm not sure why I was this lucky, but it's definitely not lost on me.

Due to all the COVID-19 restrictions earlier this year, we didn't publish our June edition. With Good Sammy stores closed and worship moving online, we felt a printed copy of *Revive* was not viable. During this time, we published regular stories on revivemagazine.org.au, which are all still there if you want to catch-up on a whole lot of activities the church, and our networks, were getting up to during physical isolation.

COVID-19 has highlighted so many things for our world, particularly for me it reinforced the line between the haves and have-nots.

With a virus initially spread because of our globalised world and our infatuation with over-travel, our essential workers went from being undervalued to some of the most important people in our communities. Many of whom possibly could never afford to travel in the same way.

We heard about the loss of jobs and how hard that's been for so many. But also, those who were already vulnerable in our communities became *really* vulnerable. People experiencing homelessness, people experiencing family violence, and people living with health conditions or disability suddenly have even more to deal with.

On the surface, panic buying showed us how greedy we can be, but also I think it showed us how good we have it and how scared we are of losing it all at the drop of a hat.

And in non-COVID news, Black Lives Matter protests have shaken the western world. You can read more about that in our feature on page 16.

COVID-19 added another dimension to protesting in 2020, with people in face masks showing they're not ignoring the virus, but proving just how important this issue is. Personally, I'm so proud of my son for attending a Black Lives Matter rally in Perth, organised by a grassroots network of young people, Boorloo Justice.

With all of this, and more, going on, the church continued to care for those who needed support through our schools, agencies and congregations. Some of these stories are featured in this edition, and more are available on the *Revive* website.

At the time of going to print, COVID-19 is fairly under control in WA, but as we've seen, this can change in a moment. While I sit and write this in safety, I'm thinking of all those around Australia and indeed the world who are going through so much.

I can't change this situation, but I can take it seriously and do all I can to keep those around me safe by taking all the necessary precautions. I hope you enjoy the edition and are able to do the same.

Heather Dowling
Editor

5 minutes with...

Rev Dr Christine Sorensen



Rev Dr Christine Sorensen began as the Uniting Church WA Presbytery Minister (Formation and Discipleship) back in February this year. This edition she shares some of her passions for theological education with us.

What is your role at the Uniting Church WA?

The role of Presbytery Minister is mainly working with candidates for ministry with other lay education and continuing education responsibilities.

I have worked in theological education for lay and ordained ministries for nearly 40 years. Nearly 20 of those years were in Pakistan in women's theological education, working with the minority church in a majority Muslim context.

What are the most significant changes in the sector and why?

I think in theological education there has been a shift to a more person-centred and transformational educational focus, where we are more intentional about formation.

Secondly, as the church continues to struggle to respond to missional changes in the world, we need to form people for ministry in a wholistic way and, at the same time, form them for a missional response.

What's your favourite quote?

There are many quotes that catch my imagination as I read, but one I read many years ago, and have lost where it came from, is a challenge to all of us in the church: "we already know far more about Jesus than we ever put into practice."

For me this is a challenge for myself to live my faith, but also to help others to continue to think through what it means to follow Jesus, knowing that we are never going to exhaust either knowing or doing what we know.

What are you currently reading?

At the moment I'm reading *Laughing at the Devil* about Julian of Norwich by Amy Laura Hall. I'm fascinated at how, in an age of plague and destruction and in a highly stratified hierarchical society, this turn of the 14th to 15th century woman could speak with such theological clarity. Her deep trust in the love of God in the midst of all that is happening in her world infiltrates a theology that is gentle yet practical and political.

Letters

Stay connected online

Fortunately during this pandemic our church has held weekly services online.

Someone I know, who is not a Christian but acts like one, has seen these every week. She appreciates these services although she has not become a Christian. She has told me that after the pandemic she would like to continue to view the services, but does not feel comfortable about attending church in person.

If churches continued to stream their services online after the pandemic, it could be a valuable opportunity to spread God's word. Also, this could be useful for believers who perhaps because of illness or advanced age were not able to attend in person. Aged people might find using the internet challenging, but perhaps a church representative or a young relative could show them how to link up.

Marguerite Marshall, Eltham Victoria

Looking back, looking forward



As my time as Moderator is coming to a close, I was asked to write a reflection looking back over the past nearly six years and looking forward into the future.

When I was first elected Moderator at Synod in 2014 someone shook my hand and said "Condolences". It was like they thought I got the booby prize in a raffle or worse.

The experience of being a two-term Moderator has had some dark and deep disappointments. There have been moments when I felt something of the pain and struggle of being a church that is in slow decline and in danger of reaching a tipping point when renewal seems almost out of reach.

However, for the most part it has been an enormous privilege and a great joy. I have felt loved, prayed for and supported – a big heartfelt thank you.

I have made some mistakes along the way and not pleased everyone. Such is part of the lot of leadership.

I have seen the church at its glorious best and at its depressing worst. Allow me to make three parting observations.

Part of our reality is that we still find it hard to get on with each other. Being the Uniting Church on paper looks terrific: an emphasis on every member ministry, a rich heritage of faith and property, lots of talented and faithful people and a Basis of Union that calls out the best in us. How could we fail? Too often we see the speck in our brother's eye and miss the plank in our own.

Occasionally, I have encountered ungracious leadership that is brittle and opinionated. I have found that rarely do people admit their mistakes, all of which adds to friction and outbreaks of disunity. We still need to learn how to live in humble, honest and generous harmony. Thank God for the cross, where sinners like you and I can find forgiveness and reconciliation.

We are also not good at being a contemporary church. So often our stiff formal liturgies, our dated hymns, our clerical attire and traditional ways of worship have little contemporary relevance. Only a few of our churches have any appeal to younger people.

We at times seem culturally in a time warp and therefore somewhat irrelevant. We are reluctant to learn from healthy churches where younger people celebrate and are nurtured in larger numbers. They are written off as being shallow or emotional or fundamentalist.

Somehow the fresh life changing good news about Jesus has become stale and dull in some of our congregations. The age demographic of our church is at times alarming. We have many pensioner churches, bless them, but few truly contemporary expressions of Christian community. Revive us, O Lord.

Lastly, we have elevated the scholar and demoted the evangelist. The Basis of Union makes it very clear that we need both. Yes, we need to learn from the best scholarship around, but we also need holistic evangelists to call people to faith



Students at Methodist Ladies' College (MLC) farewell Rev Steve Francis as Moderator of the Uniting Church WA during a Chapel service in June this year. MLC year 12 service prefect Clare, presented Steve with a gift from the college.

and discipleship. Ideally we need well-educated, humble Christlike evangelists.

Rarely in our prayers for others do we pray for the conversion of our neighbours, family and friends. We do talk about mission, and that's great, but there seems little urgency or passion for spreading the gospel and making disciples. We prefer to talk about church structures, property, finance and lesser things.

The church does need prophets and poets; it does need champions of justice and advocates for the environment and the poor. But God's mission is seriously incomplete without the call to follow Jesus, in a life of worship, witness and service. Holy Spirit come.

History teaches us that God has a wonderful and costly way of bringing new life; we are a resurrection people. God is not finished with us yet.

May God lead us forward. The best is yet to be.

Rev Steve Francis,
Moderator Uniting Church WA



Fire up the barbie for Aussie farmers

With 2020 having already delivered the worst bushfire season on record, floods, a pandemic, and little relief from a nine-year drought, Frontier Services, Australia's oldest bush charity, is calling on Aussies far and wide to re-unite with family and friends and host a Great Outback BBQ this September to December, in support of our farmers doing it tougher than ever.

All funds raised will go towards supporting Frontier Services' programs, which provide practical and pastoral support to farmers across Australia suffering from severe financial strain, physical and emotional stress and social isolation, while dealing with the fallout of a relentless period of droughts, fires, floods and now the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"After months of isolation, we hardly need an excuse to catch-up with family and friends, but this is a really good one, allowing you to play

a critical part in helping our Aussie farmers in need," says Jannine Jackson, CEO of Frontier Services.

"Gathering around the barbie and sizzling up some snags while raising funds is a fun and easy way to show our Aussie brothers and sisters in the bush that we are with them."

For the past two years, Steve Binnie has helped organise a Great Outback BBQ at Trinity North Uniting Church. Each year, Rev Mitch Fialkowski, Bush Chaplain for Remote Area Ministry Meekatharra, has attended the event to share stories and challenges facing both the people living in the bush, and the Bush Chaplains themselves.

"Whether it's a small BBQ with family and friends or a simple sausage sizzle after a church service, the Great Outback BBQ is a wonderful way to reflect on both the history and ongoing essential service that Frontier Services and their Bush Chaplains bring to our families and communities in the bush," said Steve.

Jannine believes there has never been a more challenging period in

history for Australian farmers and their rural communities.

"The financial, emotional and mental health repercussions have been devastating and the pandemic has made providing the support and services so sorely needed by our farmers and their communities even more difficult," said Jannine.

"Our farmers have endured so much for so long. The reality is, it's going to take years for them to get back to even half of where they were before the drought hit, let alone the more recent natural disasters including COVID-19 and the bushfires.

"We're in it for the long haul and the more Outback BBQs are held this year, the more we can do to help."

Anyone can host a Great Outback BBQ by registering at greatoutbackbbq.com.au or calling 1300 787 247.

For more information, or to find out how you can support Frontier Services, visit frontierservices.org

To read this article in full visit revivemagazine.org.au.

Paintings hang in Mount Pleasant Uniting Church and Maaman "O" Miya Uniting Church to represent their covenantal relationship. These two paintings hang at Mount Pleasant.



Congregations invited to journey with the Covenant

Uniting Church WA congregations are encouraged to explore how they can walk on the covenanting journey with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC).

In 1994, the Uniting Church in Australia entered a covenant with the UAICC, agreeing that together they will work towards justice and forgiveness.

Mount Pleasant Uniting Church and Maaman "O" Miya Uniting Church, in Coolbellup, have had a covenantal relationship for more than 20 years, which began with a friendship between the late Rev Dr Les Brockway and the late Rev Garlett. The congregations worship together sometimes, share each other's spaces, and do activities together.

Cheryl Lawson, member of Maaman "O" Miya and of the UAICC, said both congregations hang paintings in their buildings which share part of the story.

"You go to Mount Pleasant Uniting Church and you'll see two big paintings; they tell a story about the crow and the magpie. From the connection into Christianity for Nyungars, this story came," said Cheryl.

"And when you come to Maaman "O" Miya you see on the wall a picture of a bowl and a light. In this wooden bowl you see ripples through the grain of it and that tells the story of the ongoing journey of who we are. And we walk together."

Kalamunda and Foothills St Martin's Uniting Churches have also recently started a 'Yarning Circle', to discuss how they can actively work in covenanting among their congregations. While the group is new, it is a step the Covenanting Commission would like to encourage.

"Reaching out is one of the biggest things congregations can do," Cheryl said. "Wanting to learn what the Covenant is about, how can we implement that within our congregations – as all congregations

are different – and also respecting each other in doing that.

"One way we do things is we like to sit and yarn. You get more out of a person when you ask them how they have been, or where they have been. They'll sit there and tell you a story; it's storytelling.

"People have their own journey, but within this covenant, what journey do they want to take, how would they like to do that, and how will they action that not only within their congregations, but within their life when they walk out into the world."

Find out more about the Uniting Church in Australia's covenantal relationship at assembly.uca.org.au/covenanting.

To discuss forming a covenanting group or yarning circle in your congregation, get in touch with the Uniting Church WA Covenanting Commission by emailing Geoff Bice, Social Justice Consultant, at geoffrey.bice@wa.uca.org.au or call 9260 9800.

Faith in action



Throughout COVID-19 physical distancing restrictions in March and April this year, congregations got creative to stay connected to their communities. Here's just a few stories from that time.

To read more head to revivemagazine.org.au.



Finding guidance through gospel meditations

A weekly meditation session that is usually held at Willetton Uniting Church went online for the duration of COVID-19 restrictions, with positive results.

Rev Lorraine Stokes, Minister at Willetton Uniting Church, regularly runs the meditation sessions on Thursday mornings in a corner of the worship space, with a handful of people. When COVID-19 restrictions meant they could no longer meet in person, Lorraine started up an online session via Zoom technology.

Using guided gospel meditations from Norma Woodcock and a PowerPoint presentation prepared by Lorraine, the Zoom sessions ran fairly smoothly. What surprised Lorraine, was that more people joined the sessions online than when it was held at the church building.

"It's working well," she said, during the restriction period. "The thing I find the most interesting is that we're getting people who weren't participating before. They're finding that it's far easier to join in with

Zoom than to have to get up and go to the church building.

"I've found it quite fascinating actually. It's allowing people to participate.

"I'm really quite thrilled in the way it's morphing into something new. It's not something I thought would happen."

After the session, those present were invited to share some of the things that came up for them during the meditation.

"We usually have our chatty time as we get together, we go in and do the meditation, then we have a quiet time afterwards. People talk about stuff that's come home to them during that meditation; something that's related to them. So it's quite a personal group.

"And then we have morning tea. We all just get up and come back with a cuppa and just natter. So it's also social."

Meditation, Lorraine said, can be a way of helping people get through the week.

"People are finding that the meditation helps them get through

the week and helps them keep their feet on the ground. And because they're based on gospel stories, you take yourself into the story – so you're actually participating in the gospel story.

"People just find it quite enriching. They really wanted it to keep going, hence we did. We found a way to do it which was the biggest challenge."

Willetton Uniting Church also offered a short worship service and a cuppa via Zoom on Sunday afternoons while restrictions were in place. For some, it was a challenge to get used to the online technology, but Lorraine was pleased with how many people in the congregation took it up to stay connected.

"They're all saying its helping them keep a sense of community and for me that's the essential element though all of this isolation," Lorraine said.

Willetton Uniting Church's meditation sessions are held each Thursday morning at 9.00am, back at the church. For more information, or if you would like to join the group, email Lorraine at lkstokes@iinet.net.au.



Staying messy

For almost ten years, Messy Church at Bunbury St Augustine Uniting Church has been an all-ages worship connecting families to the message of Jesus. The monthly gathering usually consists of craft, songs, a story, prayers and a shared meal.

During COVID-19 restrictions, Messy Church in Bunbury looked a little different. Instead of gathering at the church, people ran Messy Church activities in their own homes over the Easter long weekend, connecting as a group via live stream to share in some of the activities together.

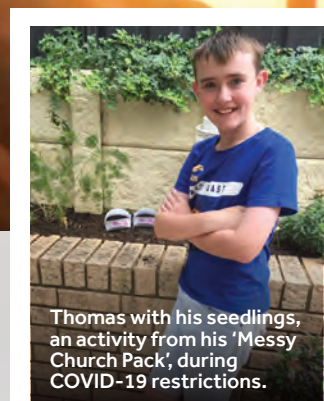
'Messy Church Packs' were delivered to those houses who lived in the City of Bunbury, and were also available to download for those who lived further away. Each pack contained a recipe, a planter with some seeds and soil, resources to make Easter cards, instructions, and a storybook and puzzle. Twenty seven packs were personally delivered, with a further ten emailed to families.

Families were invited to share photos of their crafts online so that the community were still engaging with each other. The approach meant that families were not only leading the activities themselves within their homes (with the guidance of the resources), but that they were able to participate in the activities at their own pace.

Rev Greg Ross, Minister at Bunbury St Augustine Uniting Church, said about 80 to 90 percent of their regular Messy Church families got involved in the virtual experience. Not only that, but they were extremely grateful for it.

One family shared that doing Messy Church in the home was one of the few ways they were able to bring their blended family together over Easter. Others loved the casual nature of church, and being able to share the experience online with extended family.

"One of the young families who comes along with their little boy, who is about 14 months, the mum said the coolest thing was that – because it was so hot on that day – she said 'we had Messy Church in our nappy!'



Thomas with his seedlings, an activity from his 'Messy Church Pack', during COVID-19 restrictions.

"A couple of the other families got together online. We delivered a packet to the grandparents as well so they could share it together on Facetime, which was really cool. They were reading the stories to each other, it was really good."

As we begin to settle into a 'new normal' of physical distancing, Greg said he is interested to see how church evolves once the restrictions put in place to deal with COVID-19 were lifted.

"One of the things I've begun thinking about is how we use this space to imagine a different future. I think that's really important."

"I think that our understanding of church membership will change," he said. "And hopefully people will still be generous in sharing resources – as long as churches make sure they've got their copyright licences."

Bunbury St Augustine's Uniting Church Messy Church is now meeting in person and online. For more information email bunburyuniting@gmail.com.

A portrait of Susy Thomas, a woman with short, wavy grey hair, wearing black-rimmed glasses, a red and gold striped scarf, and a dark jacket. She is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. The background is a blurred green foliage.

Obedient to God's call: Susy Thomas

Heather Dowling

When Susy Thomas received a tap on the shoulder to nominate as Moderator Elect of the Uniting Church WA, she was thrown. As a retired, successful CEO of a community service organisation, she was ready to enjoy some rest and much-loved time with her grandchildren.

At the time, Susy had recently returned from Sri Lanka as the Chair of the Uniting Church WA International Partnership and Development Commission, where she was visiting a preschool program of the Methodist Church of Sri Lanka. The program is supported by the Uniting Church WA through the commission.

Susy was planning a joint fundraising initiative for the program through her congregation, South Perth Uniting Church, and the nearby Uniting Church WA School, Wesley College, when she was encouraged to think about being nominated for the position as Moderator from several people.

After a lot of prayer and discernment with her family and friends, she decided she needed to listen to God.

"It was a process," she said. "But I felt very clearly God telling me that I need to be obedient."

At the 2019 Annual Meeting of the Synod of WA, Susy was elected to serve as Moderator of the Uniting Church WA from September 2020 to 2023. She said the discernment process – where members of the Synod pray and reflect on the call from God – is an important part of the decision.

"What it has convinced me, is that the God who called me gave that many people God's hope to them as well. It was a confirmation," she said.

"I love the word 'discernment' in the Uniting Church. The people there who were discerning, and I, felt that it is God's church. God only asked me to be obedient."

Susy has often felt the call of God on her life.

She was born into a Christian family in Kerala, India, raised to act justly, with mercy and to walk humbly with God, never being ashamed of the gospel. She completed a Bachelor of Economics in India and met her husband Philip, before she relocated to London to be with him and begin a family. In 1982, Susy, Phillip and their two daughters migrated to Perth, Western Australia.

"It was a struggle for me to move from London to a place absolutely unknown," she said. "We didn't have any relatives here, nothing. We were just coming here.

"So I fought with God. But in an amazing way God showed me this is God's plan, for us to be here," she said.

"A month or so before we left, we randomly came across a Western Australian person in London. So I asked him to tell me about the education system here. He mentioned the Uniting Church schools.

"That was the first time I'd heard of the Uniting Church."

After working as a teacher in Perth for a while, Susy took on the role of CEO of Drug Arm WA, now called Hope Community. In this challenging role, Susy supported disadvantaged people in the suburbs of Perth.

"We talked about how we could do hands-on things for young people, so we started a street outreach program. We had street vans staffed by volunteers who went out to different spots like Fremantle, the city and regional centres.

"I was also a Justice of the Peace by then, so I was often called in to the Rangeview Remand Centre to sign release papers to bailout kids."

Susy proposed to the board to use a property as accommodation for young people they had bailed from lockup. They would live there while also learning various hands-on skills like woodwork or computer skills, and also receive counselling.

"What would Jesus do? If you have two blankets, give one to someone who needs it. That was what I wanted to do."

When they had finished the course, a letter was written to the Magistrate advising them of the course they had completed, in the hopes they would take it into account during sentencing – and that the young person might have a brighter future.

"The programs were funded by the State and Federal Governments and we had similar programs in regional centres such as Kalgoorlie and Geraldton."

During the time Susy worked at Drug Arm, the organisation experienced huge growth and Susy was also involved with setting up a 13-week drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre in Geraldton.

"It was a brilliant program," she said.

"I started working at Drug Arm with just myself and a full-time secretary. And by the time I left we had enormous growth with more than 50 staff.

"It was an exciting time.

"God very clearly told me that I had to do that job – it became my life. I enjoyed it and we had a brilliant team of people who worked together happily.

"What would Jesus do? If you have two blankets, give one to someone who needs it. That was what I wanted to do."



Profile

Since being elected as Moderator Elect in September last year, Susy has been busy preparing for the role. The COVID-19 pandemic has meant that she was unable to visit as many people in person as she would have liked, but it hasn't stopped her from getting her head stuck into everything required of her as Moderator.

"After I was elected as Moderator Elect, I wanted to learn more about the Uniting Church. Though I was a member of the Uniting Church for 38 years, I have very little understanding of the enormity of the work and the services we provide.

"In my mind, our service is whatever we do to please God – that is the worship. You don't necessarily have to be singing, praising and praying; whenever you're honouring and pleasing God, it's worship."

"I'm excited about it. We are a pilgrim people, on the journey for our promised land. Along the way we are worshipping and serving our God. God promises to feed us with Word and sacraments.

"In my mind, our service is whatever we do to please God – that is the worship. You don't necessarily have to be singing, praising and praying; whenever you're honouring and pleasing God, it's worship."

Susy has spent the year learning from the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC), the Multicultural networks, Uniting Church WA schools, and our



agencies such as Uniting WA, Good Sammy Enterprises and Juniper.

"All is in the name of Christ through the Uniting Church WA," she said.

"Our faithful congregations, with their prayers and support, enable us to continue the Lord's work.

"I want to pray with them, I want to walk with them, I want to be supported by them and I want to support them," she said.

"I am a team player; I don't think I could do anything without a team. I get energy from others and I want to be a support to others, and also supported by others.

"I also firmly believe in giving ownership. We all have different skills, so give people ownership, so they can blossom in that skill."

One of the things Susy has done this year, is set her theme for her three-year term. She has chosen Romans 15: 13.

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

Susy felt this verse came to her from God, and was a great verse to support people through all the challenges of 2020 so far.

"I thought, 'what a wonderful God to give this hope to God's chosen people,'" she said.

"It is a weird time and the world is trying to sort out everything. This is God showing that without God we cannot do anything in our life."

Like many, one of the reasons Susy loves the Uniting Church is its passion for justice.

"This is one of the reasons I love the Uniting Church, we stand for justice," she said.

"If you love God and if you are saved by Jesus Christ; he stands for justice. And that is what we need no matter how many languages we can sing in or praise God with. If we can't be God's hands and feet then there is no point. That is where justice and mercy comes.

"I look forward to see what God calls me to do in this job."



Susy Thomas will be installed as Moderator of the Uniting Church WA on Friday 11 September, 7.00pm at Wesley College Chapel, during the Opening Worship of the Annual Meeting of the Synod of WA.



Profile

Emergency preparedness

for Summer 2020



Claire Silveira, Red Cross Community Resilience and Recovery Officer presenting to attendees on fire preparedness.

As many of Australia's bushfire affected communities are still struggling to get back on their feet since last year's horror bushfire season, people are once again preparing for another harsh summer.

To aid churches in these areas, a resource booklet recently went out to Uniting Church WA congregations to assist them in ministering to disaster affected communities.

It provides advice for congregations on preparation, intervention and post-disaster support.

Mary Elton, member of Margaret River Uniting Church, knows all too well the terrifying nature of bushfire, having lived through devastating fires in 2011. Her property was one of a few which survived in her area.

"We were down at the river mouth for about four hours or so, the

fire was still heading towards that direction as well," Mary said. "There was quite a few people down there, nobody really knew what was going on. It was pretty scary.

"We were surprisingly calm really when I look back at it; how we got through that time.

"We had done a lot of preparation because we did live in the bush."

As well as practical preparedness, such as cleaning gutters, putting their sprinklers on and closing up the house, Mary said planning how to get out of a fire is vital, as you often can't think straight when faced with an emergency.

Having a 'Plan B' in place for when 'Plan A' doesn't work is also important, as is a plan for any pets you might have, and a way to look after important documents.

"We had an emergency kit which the Red Cross and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services have some fantastic information about," Mary said.

Claire Silveira, Red Cross Community Resilience and Recovery Officer, leads emergency preparedness training for all types of emergencies, including but not specific to bushfires. Most of their training is around psychosocial preparedness.

Claire said that one in three people in Australia will go through a major emergency in their lives, and that taking the time to learn emergency preparedness is important for us all – not just those in bushfire prone areas. A lot of the training is about managing our personal reactions during stress.

"Emergencies and disasters are stressful – that's a fact," Claire said. "When we're stressed we don't necessarily make good decisions.

"One of the keys we've found is to remain calm, and that can help us make better decisions. So the key is having really good stress management techniques."

Claire teaches stress management techniques using 'AIM': Anticipate how you react when you're stressed;

Identify thoughts and feelings you have when stressed; and Manage your reactions and emotions through mindfulness techniques.

"There's not a lot of point in waiting for an emergency to put these things in place, you need to embed these in your day-to-day life so that when something happens you can draw upon those skills," she said.

"Have you ever seen someone in your life, or experienced it yourself, where you've had brain freeze? Where you're so overwhelmed with things that you can't do something?

"In the moment, if you haven't done any preparedness then people aren't able to cope with that stress. And sometimes people are quite surprised with how they react.

"We know that people who do some form of preparedness, even just a little bit, are able to cope better and they recover faster.

"We know that, whether you believe in climate change or not, emergencies are becoming more frequent. Weather extremes are increasing: it's getting hotter, it's getting wetter, we have bigger storms, and more flooding. There are more events happening than there used to be and there's good reasons for getting prepared."

Local churches also play a role in disasters and emergencies. Rev David Jackson, Convenor of the Disaster Relief and Community Recovery Committee, said there are a number of things churches can do to prepare for disaster.

"The first thing is to build a network of people who can be contacted," David said. "An up-to-date pastoral contact list is one of the most important things for any church to have in place. From experience, we know that it is essential that all those from the congregation who are likely to be impacted

are contacted. People who have been inadvertently ignored during disaster situations have experienced unnecessary trauma.

"Appoint one person from the congregation who is dedicated to co-ordinate any crisis response.

"Make an inventory that includes buildings, storage space, kitchen, laundry, shower, toilet, car parking and areas that can accommodate animals, and plans to make prepared meals and toiletry packets for men and women as examples."

All of this information, David said, can be incorporated in your congregation's own Disaster Resilience Plan.

One of the most important ways churches can assist their communities in times of disaster is through connection.

"Recovery is a marathon and not a sprint," David said. "Connections are the number one thing congregations can do to quarantine themselves from future shock.

"Faith communities play a pivotal role in supporting recovery and resilience – you know and understand your community, you know the stress points and

vulnerabilities of your communities better than anyone else.

"You are also there for the long haul. You are the known and trusted faces and places.

"To do this work you need to sustain your service and your core business to meet increased demand. Look for opportunities to integrate your existing service delivery with the disaster recovery activities. Think and act collectively by avoiding working in silos and don't add to community confusion and fatigue."

For more information on **Red Cross Emergency Preparedness programs** visit redcross.org.au/prepare or follow them on Facebook at Red Cross Emergency Services WA.

To get in touch with the Uniting Church WA Disaster Relief and Community Recovery Committee for assistance in developing a congregational plan for disaster preparedness, or for a copy of Good Advice for Churches, Congregations and Faith Groups Ministering in Disaster-affected Communities, contact Rev David Jackson at de.jackson@bigpond.com.



Indigenous Lives Matter

Australians march to end injustice

Heather Dowling

When George Floyd died at the hands of police in the United States, Americans took to the streets and sparked global outrage.

In Western Australia, thousands of people have supported the Black Lives Matter movement – online and via protests – even amidst the global COVID-19 pandemic. While Scott Morrison claimed this was an American issue not relevant back home, Australia disagreed and called out the more than 400 Indigenous Australians who have died in custody since the 1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

According to The Guardian Australia's *Deaths Inside* database, which tracks Indigenous deaths in custody since 2008, Indigenous Australians are ten times more likely to die in custody than non-Indigenous Australians.

Shockingly, Western Australia has the worst statistics in the world when it comes to Indigenous deaths in custody, with 54 deaths

in our state alone since The Guardian began tracking.

Injustice in the justice system

Dr Hannah McGlade, Senior Indigenous Research Fellow at Curtin University, gave a powerful and moving speech at a Black Lives Matter rally in Perth in June. She is a Nyungar woman and a human rights law researcher and advisor. In 2019 she was appointed Member of the United Nations Permanent Forum for Indigenous Peoples 2020-2023, representing Indigenous people of the Pacific region.

She said Indigenous people in Australia are being incarcerated at higher rates than non-Indigenous people, leading to more Indigenous deaths in custody.

"Thirty years ago there was a Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody that did find that Aboriginal people are dying at higher rates – and primarily this is because they're being incarcerated at higher rates," she said. "They also looked at the underlying reasons concerning incarceration and called on government to implement social justice reforms to address this.

"We know that more Aboriginal people are in jail because of our racial history of discrimination, oppression, dispossession and systemic forms of discrimination."

Hannah said Aboriginal lives are unsafe in the justice system for a number of reasons.

"We know that Aboriginal people experience discrimination at every stage of the criminal justice system. And that's been recognised by the former chief justice of the supreme court of WA, so this is no secret.

"There is a problem of racial profiling. Young people who are Aboriginal can be seen as criminal; Aboriginal women are often seen as criminal.

"This is a problem of society. This kind of racism is stereotyping. Aboriginals are seen as bad and dangerous people, and that stereotyping leads to police attention that can then result in charges that may not be valid.

"There are other stages in the justice system as well where Indigenous people can be treated in a harsher manner."

Abolishing imprisonment for unpaid fines

Hannah said poverty can also be a contributing factor to prison over-representation for Indigenous Australians. Children have been arrested for stealing chocolate and lollies, and in the recent past, people were incarcerated for unpaid fines – a law which was abolished in June this year.

The decision to end imprisonment for unpaid fines in WA will have an effect on the rates of Indigenous deaths in custody, however, there is more work to be done.

The Uniting Church WA was part of the long-term campaign, and celebrated with other community groups such as Social Reinvestment WA.

"It was a recommendation thirty years ago in the Royal Commission because Aboriginal people are going to be more disproportionately impacted and incarcerated. They don't have the means to pay fines, so that is a clear example of indirect and structural racism.

"This is a neutral law – if you don't pay your fines you can end up going to jail. But that's not neutral when some people are born into wealth, or have greater opportunity for wealth than Aboriginal people who have had less opportunity.

"It's good, but we need to do a lot more. We need to look at the Australian Law Reform Commission Inquiry, *Pathways to Justice*. I was

an advisor to that inquiry and we haven't had a response to it from our State Government and none from the Federal either.

"There's a lot of lip service. The State Government said they were going to reduce Indigenous incarceration, they've signed a reconciliation commitment. Unfortunately we're not seeing the kind of expertise in Indigenous affairs in our state that we should be."

History matters

Indigenous people in Australia have had a long history of racial injustice against them.

"We've had segregation here, we've had people denied land, land taken from them – we've had returned soldiers who were not given land like other non-Indigenous returned soldiers," said Hannah.

"There's discrimination throughout the justice system; very often it's not acknowledged.

"We've had an apology by the Police Commissioner, yet at the same time, we saw a young Indigenous boy in handcuffs having his head slammed into concrete by police, in Perth."

Systemic racism in Australia is rife, both in and out of the justice system. Where overt racism may be easy to spot and, perhaps, call out, systemic racism often happens without recognition.

Systemic racism happens when our institutions are set-up in a way that puts some at a racial disadvantage. It affects people in areas of housing, finance, education and in the justice system. It continues a cycle which keeps people disadvantaged.

While overt racism is recognised as unacceptable these days, we still have a long way to go. Many of us may not be aware of the privilege we have, and some choose to deny they have it.

Not only is systemic racism an issue in Australia, it's a contributing factor to the high number of Indigenous deaths in custody.

"[Systemic racism] is a little different to the individualised form of racism that we're used to seeing when someone is individually abused in racial terms or denied an opportunity because of their race," Hannah said.

"Systemic racism is more about the systems and the institutions and the way that racism happens in those systems or institutions, but in a way that is less overt.

"So it's unrecognised, it's structural. Sometimes it's based on rules that seem neutral on their face, but will have a disproportionate impact.

"I think it's also based on a system that is encompassing the dominant culture and not understanding of Indigenous people and the issues people are facing. And an unwillingness to learn as well.





Photos by Desire Mallet, taken at Black Lives Matter rallies in Perth this year.

“So at its core there’s a lack of respect for diversity, reconciliation and human rights.

“We often don’t talk about systemic racism in this country. Even though we’ve had a prohibition on indirect discrimination under the race discrimination and sex discrimination act for a long time, we haven’t really had a strong human rights culture.”

Raised awareness

In recent months, thousands of people have rallied in support of the Black Lives Matter movement in Australia, suggesting a shift in the way people are thinking about the issue.

“Clearly we’re having a change in society that’s about a people’s movement of increased awareness and understanding of non-Aboriginal Australians,” Hannah said. “It’s an exciting time, even though it’s sad because we know people’s lives are still being lost because of the way they’re treated for their race.

“The people’s movement is always the most critical movement for change. You can have laws, but if people don’t believe in those laws to bring about change and non-discrimination then those laws are not given much effect.

“We’ve had discrimination laws in Australia since 1975 and yet discrimination is fairly common place.

“Black Lives Matter has really shone a light internationally on the issue of systemic state violence in a way that Australians have never seen before.

“So this was very eye-opening I think for a lot of Australians. I’ve been told that people who have never been socially active before did make a post about it or did come to a rally which is so fantastic.

“That passion that young people have to live a meaningful life, this is giving them some understanding for how they can contribute to that, and that’s really important.”

The Uniting Church in Australia has also come out in support of the Black Lives Matter movement, while staying cautious about the risks of large gatherings during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr Deidre Palmer, President of the Uniting Church in Australia and Pastor Mark Kickett, Interim Chairperson of the National Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC), issued a pastoral letter during Reconciliation Week to members of the church in response to George Floyd’s death in the United States, and asked for three things: for Uniting Church members to send a message of support to the UAICC; to update their Facebook profile pictures to add a ‘Uniting Church Against Racism’ frame; and to sign the ‘Change the Record’ campaign, calling for an end to the incarceration of, and family violence against, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

“The Jesus we know from the Gospel stories, calls leaders to use their power in service to others, to call forth in others compassion, justice and kindness, unity and community. These are the leaders, we are called to be and that we need in the world today,” said Deidre.

In his letter, Mark related racially motivated events in America to events here in Australia.

“Here in Australia I am constantly reminded of the journey that First Peoples, my people, have had to endure and are continuing to endure, and yet the resilience of the First Nations continues to shine through such great adversity.

“Today, along with so many people and communities worldwide, I encourage us to be a light that shines upon the darkness of bigotry, racism, intolerance and hatred and to be that beacon of hope and life with a message of hope and peace that emanates from the Prince of Peace, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

Lifelong trauma

It’s important to remember in all of this that each death that occurs in custody is not just a number; it’s a person who is loved by their sisters, brothers, children, parents, friends and community. The trauma endured by loved ones after a death in custody is a lifelong experience.

“It’s a really severe traumatic impact on the family who have a history

of intergenerational trauma – we all do because all of our families were subject to these laws of segregation, assimilation and genocidal policies. It’s accumulative trauma,” said Hannah.

“And I think that was really highlighted in the case of young Cherdeena Wynne. Her father died in custody 20 years before her and she was searching for answers. Was he murdered? Was there no justice?”

Cherdeena died in 2019 after being assaulted by police at her mother’s house in a case of mistaken identity.

“She was carrying that trauma of her father’s death when she was assaulted by police in her mother’s flat here in East Victoria Park,” Hannah continued.

“Male police officers who violently assaulted her and traumatised her in a shocking way which you wouldn’t envisage if you were a non-Aboriginal person, because it just doesn’t happen to you. Nobody runs into the homes of non-Aboriginal families – particularly not in the wealthy suburbs or middle class suburbs of Perth – and attacks people like this.

“This is really an assault and attack on Aboriginal people’s bodies, minds, psyches, their lives – with no justice. The trauma of that is alive and lifelong.”

The road to change

Hannah said to create real change on this issue, Australia needs to implement the recommendations from the Australian Law Reform Commission report, Pathways to Justice.

“The report of the Australian Law Reform Commission is really critical,” she said. “Important recommendations were made about how we can start tackling this over-representation of Aboriginal people and discrimination in the justice system.

“One of the key recommendations was that states re-establish the Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees. I believe this is absolutely critical to ensure focussed attention on the reforms that we need, being driven by Aboriginal people, consistent with self-determination and our own knowledge of these issues.”

As individuals, Hannah said there are a number of ways to create an impact.

Ask your workplace if they have an active Reconciliation Plan and if they don’t, ask for one to be created. You can also contact your politicians and ask them to support Aboriginal human rights.

Hannah also suggests to stay informed by learning more about the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and supporting Aboriginal led movements for Treaty, constitutional reform, and addressing human rights goals.

“Be concerned, be informed and be active,” she said.

Learn more

Stay informed on Indigenous Deaths in Custody through Guardian Australia’s Deaths Inside database, which tracks Indigenous deaths in custody from 2008: theguardian.com/australia-news/ng-interactive/2018/aug/28/deaths-inside-indigenous-australian-deaths-in-custody

Keep up-to-date with the Black Lives Matter movement in Perth by following Boorloo Justice on Facebook.

Find out more about systemic racism here: theconversation.com/explainer-what-is-systemic-racism-and-institutional-racism-131152

Learn more about the ending of imprisonment for unpaid fines here: revivemagazine.org.au/2020/06/17/campaigners-celebrate-as-wa-ends-imprisonment-for-unpaid-fines

Read the three requests and a prayer from the Uniting Church in Australia here: assembly.uca.org.au/news/item/3199-three-asks-and-a-prayer

Look through the Indigenous Deaths in Custody Recommendations of the Australian Law Reform Commission here: alrc.gov.au/publication/pathways-to-justice-inquiry-into-the-incarceration-rate-of-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples-alrc-report-133/recommendations-14/

Learn about the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples here: un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples





*Amanda Hunt, CEO of **Uniting WA**, shares her hopes for a socially inclusive post-COVID world.*

During COVID-19 restrictions we stopped visiting friends and family, eliminated social interactions, radically adapted our work practices and made drastic changes to our lives as we raced to avoid the impending disaster. We understood that social distancing would save lives, and we watched with joy and dismay that crisis brings out the best and the worst in us.

We learned that what we really value is relationships.

We found new ways to care for and reach out to each other. We found proof that families, neighbourhoods and communities are as stable and cohesive as we always hoped and dreamed they would be.

This pandemic has exposed how interconnected and interdependent we really are. But the sense of

disorientation has been compounded for those who were always socially isolated.

Rising inequality has never been more evident than for people with no place to 'stay home'.

The vast majority of the estimated 1 000 people who sleep rough in Perth every night had nowhere to be safe. And the increase in domestic violence left women and children unsafe in their own homes.

The next wave is not simply the risk of re-infection, it is the risk of moving into a welfare crisis.

There are hundreds of thousands of people in our community who already live with complex challenges such as mental illness, disability and homelessness, and far too many children experiencing vulnerability who rely on community services for support.

Together, we can co-create a community where people are not blamed for their experience of hardship or vulnerability. We can bust the myths and stereotypes about people doing it tough. We can realise that homelessness really can happen to anyone.

Our new-found ability to work from home means that we have no excuse not to include



people with disability, who have historically been 'locked out' of employment or meaningful participation in community life by discrimination or the lack of universal physical accessibility.

The World Health Organisation has recently warned that the mental health effects of the pandemic could exceed the consequences of the virus itself. Lifeline already answers 131 calls a day, and by all accounts the pandemic has accelerated a pre-existing mental health crisis.

In 'Australia Re-imagined', Hugh Mackay called out the anxiety pandemic that is already ravaging our community, and suggested that this can be relieved by focusing on someone else's needs – being compassionate is the great antidote to anxiety. People who are marginalised and already feel socially isolated are at a greater risk of depression and despair. When we offer friendship and engage with people in a meaningful way, the connections we build can literally save lives as well as the economy.

The economic effects of the crisis cannot be underestimated. Looking at unemployment alone – which the Grattan Institute predicts will rise to 14-26% – we will see much greater numbers of people in financial and housing stress.

While government recognised the need for an immediate welfare safety net at the start of the pandemic, we risk seeing a new wave of long-term disadvantaged individuals and families when this is removed. For years, the social sector has urged the Federal Government to acknowledge that income support payments are inadequate for people to lead healthy and fulfilling lives. That it takes a crisis to act on this, albeit temporarily, is a bitter pill to swallow for those who value a just society and have long called for income support that is above the poverty line.

If we are going to emerge stronger, healthier and more resilient, we have to uncover the 'common good' that can address the inequality in our community. Things that move people out of hardship and vulnerability are relationships, belief in a future, employment, and education.

If COVID-19 has taught us anything, it's that disadvantage is an issue for our entire community and that loneliness and isolation can be destructive.

To create change together we can do some really simple things:

We can shift our conversations from the problems of community to the strengths, assets and possibilities. By uniting, we are committing to creating a future that is distinct from the past.

We can harness the entrepreneurial spirit of our young people; ignite their imaginations by giving them opportunities in new and different types of employment instead of leaving them feeling powerless and unable to re-enter the job market.

We can choose not to sustain imbalance, with surplus on one side and scarcity on the other, which happens when we are disconnected from what's important. In bridging the divide between the have and have-nots, we are intentionally bringing in those who live on the margins.

We can engage in practical support for people experiencing hardship, busting the myths about the 'deserving' and the 'undeserving' poor by truly hearing, without judgement, the stories of those who are struggling, and relating to them as neighbours and fellow contributing citizens.

We can reconnect our kinship to Country – follow the lead of Aboriginal people whose connection with nature and our precious land kept us sustained and strong for tens of thousands of years.

Uniting through shared joy, passion and beliefs we can rally in hope and build strong and solid social bonds.

We can be proud to live in a community where all West Australians are connected and belong.

This article is an edited version of a longer piece originally published at revivemagazine.org.au.

Heads of Churches call for more action on homelessness

The Heads of Churches WA, including Uniting Church WA Moderator Rev Steve Francis, have written to Hon Simone McGurk MLA thanking the Government for their commitments to reduce homelessness, and requesting more measures.

The letter asks for three measures: emergency resourcing to ensure the health and welfare of those experiencing homelessness before and during COVID-19, starting with the housing of all rough sleepers; increased investment in services and housing beyond September 2020; and a co-ordinated communication strategy between the Government and Housing and Homelessness Sector.

"The care agencies of the churches of Western Australia are advising

us that an emerging welfare crisis is looming. We recognise the efforts made to reduce the COVID-19 risks and related health impacts on the sector, however we also know that many services are already stretched and we are eager to prevent a secondary health and social crisis," the letter states.

"We welcome the proactive establishment of the Homelessness Taskforce "to raise the issues and risks for people experiencing homelessness as a result of COVID-19 and to help develop strategic responses and solutions".

"Through our faith in Christ, who calls us to love our neighbour and tend to the needs of the poor and vulnerable, we are deeply concerned about the welfare of people experiencing homelessness.

The risks of COVID-19 for this very vulnerable section of the



community weigh upon us heavily as we head into winter.

"As the WA economy builds recovery after the impacts of COVID-19 we ask that the WA Government prioritises investment in immediately housing rough sleepers and providing more homelessness and housing support services to compliment the social housing commitments made by your Government.

"We look forward to working effectively with the WA Government to help tackle this issue of homelessness within our community."

Download the full letter at revivemagazine.org.au.

Ending COVID for all



Children in Kanagipuram, Northern Sri Lanka, learning about colours and numbers with fruit.

UnitingWorld have joined with the Micah Australia coalition to urge the Australian Government to provide vital support to vulnerable nations during the COVID-19 crisis. UnitingWorld believes the government can achieve this by protecting the world's most vulnerable people, strengthening health systems, and kick-starting economic recovery.

A toolkit for churches is available on the UnitingWorld website containing links to video content, sermon notes, facts and statistics, ideas and resources for how to share the campaign with your church, and a letter template and instructions to write to your MP.

Back in May this year, Rev Steve Francis, Moderator of the Uniting Church WA, and Kerry Povey, Chair of the International Partnerships and Development Commission, wrote to members of the church, encouraging them to support the church's international partners as they deal with the COVID-19 global pandemic.

"As much as this pandemic has been a challenge for us to deal with here in Australia, our hearts also go out to our friends in our partner churches around the region. We are hearing worrying reports from our partner churches in countries like Indonesia and Timor Leste where they have limited capacity in their health systems to respond to this crisis," the letter reads.

"Our partners need assistance to make sure hygiene and sanitation can be improved, appropriate protective equipment can be purchased and the most vulnerable communities can be protected against COVID-19.

"We are appealing to you, our Uniting Church family, to help our sisters and brothers in other countries that lack the safety nets we have in Australia by providing a direct donation."

Members are encouraged to donate financially to UnitingWorld or other various appeals supporting churches in Sri Lanka, Timor Leste, West Timor and West Papua.

For more details on how you can support these programs visit revivemagazine.org.au/2020/05/05/calls-to-continue-international-support.

Get involved with the End COVID for all campaign at unitingworld.org.au/endcovidforall.

Sharing Pots of Love

Kardinya Uniting Church found a simple way to stay in each other's thoughts during COVID-19 restrictions, by cultivating pot plants for each other.

Pots of Love was the brainchild of Betty Pearson, member of the congregation, who wanted to encourage people to keep thinking about each other even though they couldn't meet for in-person worship.

Congregation members were invited to 'strike' a plant and look after it during the weeks of lockdown, and then bring it to their first worship back in the building. Members could then take a plant home from the ones donated, reminding them of their shared connections during the period.

Betty said it was a way members could do something together while staying physically apart.

"I thought, when this closure is over and we get back to our normal

Sunday worship we need to do something special," she said.

"So many of our people are spending time in their gardens during this time of isolation. Quite a few of our people are gardeners. Gardening is on our mind.

"[Pots of Love] gives people something to do, and to think about somebody other than themselves while they're in lockdown. Just to focus on something while we're not seeing each other.

"When you look at your pot when you get it home you'll think, 'oh, someone made that, that's really nice'. I hope."

Kardinya Uniting Church gathered in person for worship on Sunday 2 August after a long period of watching online services from other congregations and sharing a printed resource for at-home worship, prepared by their two Lay Preachers, Malcolm Shoosmith and John van den Berg.



Reg Pearson, member of Kardinya Uniting Church, tending to his Pots of Love.



Members of Kardinya Uniting Church sharing their Pots of Love.

Stolen Generations artist to create artwork for Wellington Square

A WA Stolen Generations artist has been appointed to create artwork acknowledging the Stolen Generations, which will be placed at Wellington Square, Perth. Wellington Square has been the location for many Sorry Day events, and is a significant place for Stolen Generations survivors and countless generations of their forebears.

Sorry Day is held each year on 26 May. It is a day of healing, held to remember and commemorate the Stolen Generations – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were forcibly removed from their families by successive Australian state and federal governments between the early 1900s to the 1970s. The Uniting Church WA supports Sorry Day events each year through the Bringing Them Home Committee.

The West Australian Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation (WASGAC), Yokai, and the City of Perth are delighted in the choice of artist Sandra Hill – an Elder and custodian of the Wadandi (salt water) people of the South West of WA – to create the Stolen Generations artwork. It is planned to be installed in time for Sorry Day 2021.

The artwork centres on 'mias' (homes) to represent regions of WA around a central Whadjuk Noongar centrepiece. The work will enhance the educational and ceremonial function of Wellington Square as a traditional gathering place for the Aboriginal community, and at events such as Sorry Day, as well as serve as a reflective space for individuals or small group use.

It will be part of a dedicated place for healing and remembrance in the north-west corner of Wellington Square.



Sorry Day is held each year in May, in Perth's Wellington Square. This year it was held online due to COVID-19.

This article is an edited version of a longer piece, available on revivemagazine.org.au. It originally appeared in the May 2020 edition of 'Yokai Yarning'. For more information or to sign up to the Yokai newsletter, visit yokai.com.au.

COVID-19 Prayer Wall for others

The onset and rapid escalation of the COVID-19 pandemic in Australia, and around the world, led to widespread changes and restrictions for workplaces, industry, social gatherings, recreation and households. For many, this unprecedented and changeable situation led to a heightened sense of worry, fear, isolation, anxiety and panic.

In challenging, troubling and uncertain times like these, it is crucial that we come together as a community in love and peace, however we can, and remember that we belong to each other and that we are stronger together.

From Monday 23 to Friday 27 March, as a school community, Penrhos College came together in spirit and we created a Prayer Wall in the Chapel. Across the week, in classrooms and in the Chapel, students and staff were invited



Penrhos College created a Prayer Wall in their chapel to pray for others during the COVID-19 pandemic.

to write a prayer, to share their thoughts or hopes, or even draw a picture – whatever was meaningful and helpful for them at the time. Each day, contributions were gathered and posted on the wall.

Across the week, students and staff shared so many inspiring prayers and hopes, and beautiful artwork. Together, we prayed for others – for family and friends, for doctors and nurses, for the sick and their loved ones, for a treatment or vaccine, for businesses and workers, for leaders and governments, and for places around the world.

We shared our hopes and dreams – for peace and positivity, for health and safety, for patience while we wait, for more gratitude, for love and kindness to spread, and that God would watch over us all.

Prayer can help us voice – to ourselves, to others, to God, to the universe – our deepest concerns and highest hopes amidst the circumstances we face. And once voiced, we may find greater calm, clarity and resolve to persevere and prevail.

Rev Claire Pickering, Chaplain at Penrhos College

Wesley College launches Reconciliation Action Plan



Wesley College's Mooritj Mob Dancers.

Wesley College launched its Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) at a NAIDOC Celebration Breakfast in July.

"At Wesley, we are committed to shaping and living a reconciled future where non-Indigenous and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples enter into a deep relationship with one another, forged by mutual respect, equality

and shared histories," said Wesley College Headmaster, Ross Barron.

"Up until now, Wesley's steps in advancing reconciliation have been organic, evolving and developing as our Mooritj Mob program evolved and developed.

"However, this important document, the RAP, allows us to extend our existing initiatives and continue our journey in a structured way that is embedded in all aspects of college life."

The Mooritj Mob is Wesley College's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program. Wesley offers approximately 30-40 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scholarships. Students are invited to celebrate their culture and to share it with others.

One of the most well-known and public aspects of the program is the Mooritj Mob Dancers and didgeridoo players. The Mooritj

Mob has been known to perform up to 60 dances annually both at the college and at outside community events.

Wesley College's RAP is based on the three key areas outlined by Reconciliation Australia: Respect, Relationships, and Opportunities.

Mathew Irving, Deputy Head and Chair of the RAP has led the collaborative 18-month process that has been developed with students, teachers, community members and with the support of Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Education.

"Reconciliation is a matter of the heart for each person. It is about celebrating the cultures, languages, practices and stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and forging a reconciled future of mutual respect, equality, and truth-telling in and out of the classroom," he said.



Marie Yuncken, from All Saint's Floreat Uniting Church, shares her warm and hearty minestrone soup recipe, which she enjoyed with friends as COVID-19 restrictions eased.

"We were so missing our friends and family to chat with face-to-face during the early tight lockdown," Marie said. "Telephone, Zoom and WhatsApp were great, but not the same as sitting across the table to catch-up. We needed to see friends.

"The weather was beautiful, warm and sunny at the time when we were allowed to have two people with two square metres each in our homes or outside. So people came and shared soup and crusty bread every other day. We sat at the outside table and talked for a couple of hours. It was really valuable time shared together."

Hearty minestrone soup

Ingredients

2 carrots	6 cups hot water
2 stalks of celery	4 chicken stock cubes
2 onions	1 bouquet of garni
2 cloves of garlic	310g canned red kidney beans
3 rashers of bacon	Salt and pepper
2 tbsp olive oil	1 cup of macaroni elbows
400g canned tomatoes in juice	Parmesan cheese
¼ cup tomato paste	

Method

Heat oil in a large saucepan and sauté the chopped vegetables and bacon for 10 minutes.

Chop tomatoes and add to the saucepan with the tomato paste, water, stock cubes and garni. Bring to the boil and simmer for 20 minutes or until the carrots are tender.

Drain the kidney beans and add to the saucepan.

Add macaroni elbows and cook for 10 mins. Season with salt and pepper and garnish with parmesan cheese.

If the soup is too thick, add extra stock.

THE STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE: Conversations with John Bottomley about transforming church community services, by Kate Dempsey, Coventry Press 2020

Keith Suter

The Uniting Church, according to this book, is both “shrinking and ageing”.

The congregational side of it certainly is. But the community services side is expanding. I have argued in my PhD on the Uniting Church’s future that if the Uniting Church’s community services were amalgamated and “quoted” on the Australian Stock Exchange, the new Uniting entity would be one of the exchange’s largest companies. As governments continue to privatise their welfare services, so the Uniting Church will be among the not-for-profits scooping up the additional work.

Rev John Bottomley is a pioneering Uniting Church minister. He and university lecturer, Dr Kate Dempsey have co-operated in producing a very challenging book.

Bottomley speaks whereof he knows. He has been a suburban Melbourne minister, a social researcher and social justice activist with an involvement in the creation of three agencies. He remains active in retirement.

The book tackles head-on some of the larger questions arising out of the Uniting Church’s work in community services.

Is the Uniting Church now becoming too much of a corporate

business? Is it becoming just a welfare arm of government? Is the Uniting Church, by taking government money to provide services, being restricted in what it can say about those services? How can the Uniting Church maintain its prophetic role without jeopardising government funding?

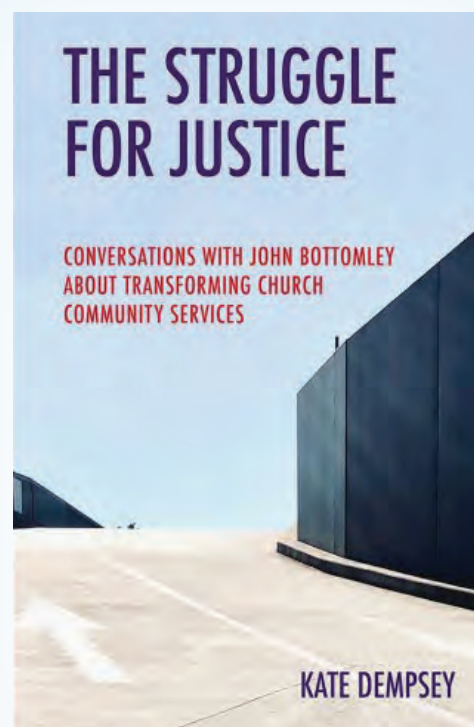
There are no easy answers to these questions, but it is important to have them raised so that the Uniting Church can think about what it is getting into.

Each chapter ends with discussion questions and so the book is a very good study guide. Boards and management will find it a useful way of stimulating debate on their work.

The book also raises questions about the nature of Australia’s overall economic system. For the past four decades Australia has had a particular economic philosophy that maximises individual profit (even it means fewer resources for the wider community).

The rich are getting richer and so are the poor – but at a slower rate. There is growing inequality. What role does the Uniting Church now have in stimulating a national debate over economic justice?

Again, this book is very useful in reflecting on this.



METANOIA:

A Memoir of a body, born again,
by Anna McGahan,
Bible Society Australia, 2019

Anna McGahan's book, *Metanoia*, is a gift to Australia and the Australian church.

Rodney Marsh

The first recorded words of Jesus' ministry included the command to 'turn', 'change' or 'repent'. The Greek noun for this is 'metanoia'. In her book, Anna tells of her own metanoia – a transformative change of heart. Her story is raw, engaging, exciting, true and above all, real.

Anna tells us how she arrived at "the safest place" and "the most dangerous place" she has ever been. She tells not only of the pain of sickness, loneliness, alienation, relationship breakdowns, missteps and of the right and wrong choices in her life, but also of her story of commitment, empathy, love, and her yearning for, and finding, 'something more'.

Anna tells of how she eventually heard and responded to the Spirit's gentle call. Anna learned to trust Jesus, and was, like all of us, loved into the discovery of the peace, joy and hope for which she was made.

Metanoia is an important book for the Australian church.

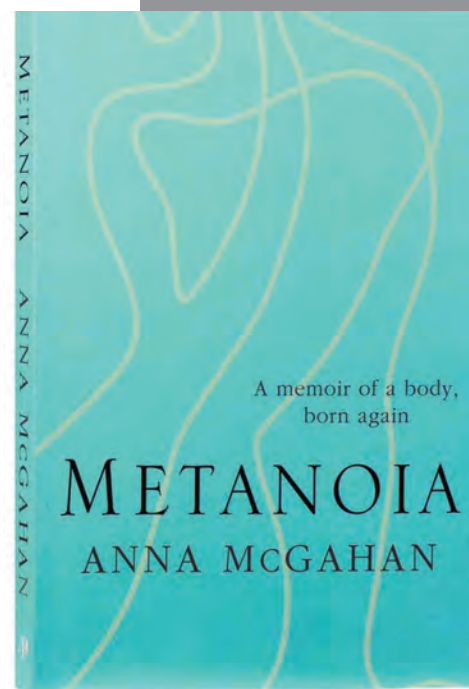
Anna's background is, like all Australians born since 1990,

radically secular. For Australian young people who have rejected all things "Christian", Anna's book speaks poetically of her response to God's gracious call. She tells of an exciting and wonderful journey of healing to find her true home in God's love. It is a message that young Australians are desperate to hear.

Anna's first person experience of anorexia is sensitively written and worth reading for any parent, carer or adolescent caught in an irrational cycle of mental illness. Secular and religious models of analysis and treatment for such 'suffering' can, and do, bring relief (as they did for Anna), but Anna's experience is important because these models cannot bring the wholeness of healing.

Jesus' call for metanoia is present in every age, but because culture shifts, the meaning of metanoia will change with our culture. The institutional church is slow to change, so we must urgently look to people like Anna and her contemporaries to discern what the Spirit is saying to the church.

Anna openly and honestly discusses her bisexuality and reflects on her



personal experience and attitudes. Anna's reflections will help ground our attitudes and words in the reality that, when we speaking about or with LGBTQI people, we are speak about persons created in God's image and born to reflect God's glory.

Anna has some wonderful stories to show the blessedness of life when we learn to listen to the Spirit and give as we have been given to.

Australians need Australian stories like this. Anna's example encourages us all to discover and take our own journey of change with Jesus.

Take your own journey to your unique "safest place" and "most dangerous place", where God is waiting to welcome you.

Be inspired to act this Sustainable September

Rev Gordon Scantlebury, Uniting Church WA minister and member of the Social Justice Commission, has prepared this year's Sustainable September resources. The Uniting Church WA, through the Social Justice Commission, resources the church for Sustainable September each year as part of the World Council of Churches' Season of Creation.

Gordon invites you to reflect and take part.

As I write, 2020 feels like a type of 'tipping-point' for our world.

We already have around a one degree celsius increase in temperatures around the world compared to the long-term average, with all our scientific modelling telling us this will only increase. Yet our human response in addressing climate change has, to date, been piecemeal at best – and at worst, combative or dismissive.

We have pumped more carbon into the atmosphere in the last 30 years we have been aware of global warming than we did in the previous 200.

There is no denying a disrupted climate will only add to the stresses on both our human and non-human world. An increase in the number and severity of bushfires, floods, cyclones, droughts, famines and diseases are now familiar and expected scenarios, all with their resultant impacts on international relations.

Throw in the COVID-19 pandemic with all its dislocations, and 2020 starts turning into a pivotal year. How we in our humanity respond to this time of challenge will have far-reaching impacts for our world's future.

In light of this, Sustainable September has more of an edge to it this year compared to previous years. 'The time to act is now!'

We are encouraged to a greater urgency, a stronger reflection of our attitudes, and an increased resolve in following the way of Christ.

Using the Lectionary readings, I have focused particularly on the Exodus story and how the Hebrew people were called to respond in their time of crisis. There is great urgency in the Passover story, and a call to hope in God and a renewed future above self-seeking material security in the present.

Theirs' are some of the lessons we need to apply in our own faith, in our own time.

I have also reflected on some of our learnings from our response to COVID-19.

Throughout this year we have become aware of our need to take decisive actions in addressing the spread of the virus, even though significant costs are involved. We have also become more attuned to a renewed call to respond as a whole community.

'We are all in this together' became a catchcry during lockdown months, and we found creative new ways to reach out to one another in relationship. Such insights from the COVID-19 pandemic are ones we can apply not only to our human society, but also in our relationship to the Earth and its creatures.

The time for decisive action is now in front of us.

All of humanity and all of creation are in this together. And yes, there will be costs in changing our destructive lifestyles, but those costs are needed for our present and future good.

My hope is that we would not simply rush back to 'business as usual' once the viral pandemic is past. Rather, let us learn from the challenges of 2020.

Let us learn from the stories of our faith, and let us help bring in a more life-giving future.

The free Sustainable September 2020 pack - 'The time to act is now' – includes complete worship resources for each of the Sundays in September.

Alongside prayers, hymn suggestions and sermon ideas

there are also complete reflections based on the lectionary readings.

The resources additionally include video clips and suggested actions that can be taken up by individuals or congregations around climate change, but also with our practice in turning back our reliance on single-use plastics.

Visit ecochurches.net to download them now and for more updates follow Social Justice UCWA on Facebook.

Christian community and Pacific holiday joy

Dreaming of an island getaway? Add this one to your bucket list.

Before all the restrictions of COVID-19 became a reality, back in July last year, Rev Dennis Doust, retired Uniting Church WA Minister, spent two weeks in a remote village on Ghizo Island in the South Pacific. He shares his experience with Revive.

Dennis Doust

Simplicity of lifestyle is a central value in living a Christ-centred life. Hence, finding a low-cost South Pacific location where Christian ministry and lifestyle interface, is a Godly provision indeed.

Thanks to the fact that my daughter, Zoe Doust was working as a volunteer with the Solomon Islands 'legal aid' service, knowledge of this location came to us.

Time out amongst the people of Sagheraghi village was of minimal cost, yet enormous respite blessing to our family group. Sagheraghi village on the western side of Ghizo Island is a relatively remote paradise. Access is by a 50-minute rough road trip. Alternatively there is a more luxurious, quicker power-boat trip. Both are worthwhile, telling experiences.

Urilolo Lodge is an amazingly peaceful tropical hideaway. The local folk have a strong commitment to Christ, supporting mission

work within the United Church (Methodist) in the Solomon Islands. Their welcome is genuinely warm and friendly.

For lodge accommodation, the Village Chief William, has built two delightfully comfortable natural timber and thatch chalets. Raised on pole foundations, they front the crystal clear waters of a stunning, reef protected bay.

The extensive soft, golden-sand beach gives some indication of the coral growth and fish in the gently beckoning deeper blue waters. Tall coconut palms provide a pleasant vista across ocean and land.

As there is limited lodge accommodation, you are unlikely to share this beautiful tropical bay, or the village, with any other non-Solomon Islanders.

If your preference is to have time-out with a well-stocked bar, house service, hot water and all 'mod-cons', Urilolo is not your spot. The facilities are traditional, quaint,

clean and refreshingly simple. Three hearty meals of Solomon Island grown food come well prepared each day, or you may self-cater.

If you love the idea of recreating in an isolated South Pacific, natural paradise, you will be blessed.

Indeed, a major opportunity I found on this holiday was the chance to fulfil the biblical injunction of knowing that in Christ Jesus we are 'blessed to be a blessing'.

This holiday break provided for us some opportunity to support the fragile economy of Sagheraghi village. Personally, I much prefer my limited dollars go this way, rather than to a company or wealthy resort owner – often foreign.

Sagheraghi's Sunday worship service was uplifting. Three different languages were spoken – the English I suspect as a concession to us visitors. Singing was robust and from the heart, children were present in great numbers, Bibles carried by worshippers were very well-worn.

It was an outright privilege for us to be received as guests and friends. Sagheraghi villagers are inspirational in demonstrating such contentedness in Christ, in the midst of material minimalism.

With limited or less-restricted finances available, it is a great place to informally immerse oneself in a Christ-centred simple lifestyle. The

children also enjoy the natural gifts of Godly culture and relationship (with local kids) – of freedom abounding on land or the sea.

The Urilolo Lodge's two chalets are not heavily booked. If you wish to make contact, its best to email Zoe Doust zoe.doust@gmail.com or Sally spagepitu@gmail.com.



Sally Pagepitu with the Doust, Anderson and Donlevy families out the front of Urilolo Lodge. Sally was very excited to get photos with some Urilolo guests. She has been studying tourism in Fiji and as the niece of the Chief of Sagheraghi Village, she is hoping to help him with his grassroots tourism business.



Chief William, Chief of Sagheraghi Village in Sagheraghi Bay.

Visit Revive Magazine online

Read more news, opinions, stories and reflections. Keep up-to-date with all the events from the Uniting Church WA and more.

revivemagazine.org.au



Uniting Church in Australia
Western Australia

EDUCATION WITH Uniting Church Schools

Our seven independent schools provide education for over 8,000 students from Pre Kindergarten* to Year 12. They offer a variety of learning environments, from some of the oldest and best-known independent schools in WA to the more recently established colleges in new suburbs on the edge of the Perth metropolitan area. While these schools respect the faith diversity of all students, the story, values and practices of the Christian faith are expressed with integrity in order to nurture young lives for sound learning, faith, compassion and responsible service.



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