

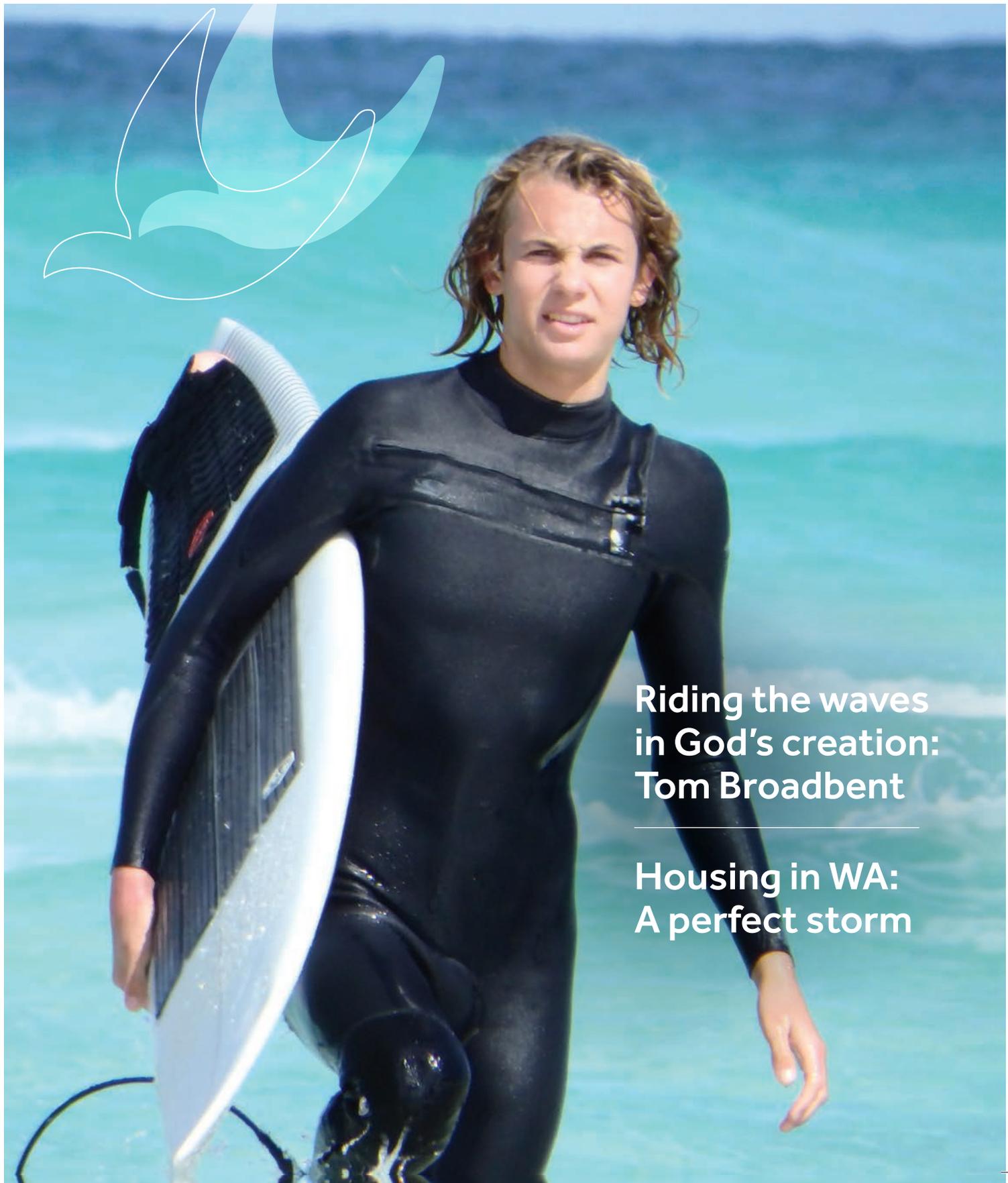


Uniting Church in Australia
Western Australia

Issue 70
December 2020

Revive

a fresh perspective on faith, church and life



Riding the waves
in God's creation:
Tom Broadbent

Housing in WA:
A perfect storm

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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.

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Aaah it's that time of year again! Christmas is upon us in what has been a very different year.

With WA being even more isolated from the rest of the world this year, I feel like we've had a great opportunity to enjoy living local, and the people of WA have done a pretty good job of supporting local businesses, artists and events when they needed us.

In my local area, the small family businesses in the town centre supported us too, as they worked together to provide a delivery service for people who haven't been able to get out and about.

Now that the borders are slowly re-opening, I hope we can continue to support our local small businesses, especially throughout the Christmas season.

While our state borders were closed, though we couldn't enjoy music or other touring events from over East or overseas, our local scene worked hard to keep us fed and entertained, and our local businesses worked hard to meet restriction requirements and continue to operate.

With postage services overworked and backed up this year due to huge demand and limited travel caused by COVID-19, we have a great opportunity to shop local this Christmas. And by shopping local I'm not referring to the huge department store down the road, but the small family businesses that make up our local communities – local book stores, gift stores, vintage shops and pop-up artisan markets all make for great Christmas shopping that can support our local businesses.

We also have some great ethical gift ideas featured in this edition; support a family overseas through one of our international partner churches by purchasing a gift from UnitingWorld, or support people doing it tough in Australia through the Target UnitingCare Christmas Appeal. Find out more about these appeals on page 6.

Also Christmas related, we have a faith reflection on the Spirit of Christmas from Rev Dr Christine Sorensen, Presbytery Minister for the Uniting Church WA, and a recipe for some super yum Tim Tam Balls, perfect for handmade edible gifts or for adding to your Christmas spread.

On a more serious note, our feature this edition looks into the current housing crisis we have in WA, and how we can call on our government for change. While most of us are enjoying time with friends and family over the holiday, let's remember not all of us are so fortunate.

However you spend your Christmas this year, I hope it brings you hope, peace, joy and love.

Heather Dowling, Editor

5 minutes with...

Kerry Povey



Kerry Povey

Kerry Povey is the Chair of the Uniting Church WA International Partnerships and Development Commission, and a member at Trinity North Uniting Church. She takes 5 minutes to share some of her passions with *Revive*.

What is the International Partnerships and Development Commission?

The International Partnerships and Development Commission (IPDC) is a group of diverse, but like-minded people from WA Uniting Churches who get together monthly to discuss the various international partnerships that the Western Australian Synod is involved in.

It is really exciting to be a part of as most of the members have travelled overseas and formed personal connections with people in the partnership that they represent.

The personal relationships that we form with our overseas partners is what makes the Synod projects extra special. Getting to know the people that we are walking alongside enhances the joy we feel in helping others and keeps us committed to doing God's work.

If there are any congregations or social groups interested in hearing more about what we do, we would love to come and visit! Get in touch at kerry@povey.net.au

What has inspired you lately?

Now, more than ever, I have been inspired by those who for many years I have regarded as the unsung heroes of our society. The medical teams who have in very uncertain times put their lives on the line to care for complete strangers suffering with COVID-19. The scientists working hard to deliver a vaccine, the researchers searching for new drugs to treat disease, the laboratory technicians striving to deliver test results in a timely manner and the contact tracers working tirelessly to stop the spread.

I think that finally these dedicated people are getting some of the recognition that they deserve.

Who do you admire?

I admire Jan Thorpe and Lee-Anne Burnett, a couple of the ladies in the Black Pearl Network.

They are amazing women of God who live their lives taking the love of Christ to others. They both dedicate much of their spare time to the Black Pearl Network, a project of the IPDC, which without them would definitely not be the same!

They have taught me a lot about living out your Christian beliefs and self-sacrifice.



The perfect gift and amazing hope

I began 2020 as your Moderator-elect wondering what would unfold during the course of the year and how I might be guided by God to effectively lead this wonderful Church when I assumed office.

When the day of the Opening Worship of the 44th Annual Meeting of the Synod of WA and my Installation arrived on 11 September, the world was a very different place indeed, unlike any other we have experienced in our lifetime.

The more I thought of it, as a people of God, we are in a not so different place to those early believers who literally did not know what their fate would be from one day to the next. They lived in a time of great uncertainty as the then powers of the day flexed their political and military muscle, not only in what we now call the Middle East, but throughout the then known world. The last thing believers needed to be doing was drawing attention to themselves.

However, as we know, those early believers, though naturally anxious, became increasingly emboldened to announce not only who they were, but whose they were in respect of their fealty, their loyalty, their life purpose.

In the world I grew up in, Christianity was not the majority religion. Many in the wider community regarded Christianity as a leftover remnant from imperial times and something not in keeping with a modern, vibrant, independent nation. So as a Christian, I knew that those like me who embraced the same faith were being constantly watched to see if our deeds matched our stated beliefs.

As I grew into a young adult, I came to realise that being held to account by those around me, even though they did not share my beliefs, was in its own way both a challenge and a compliment – for one was expected to be different, to embrace a way of living distinct from the run-of-the-mill existence so many accept as all there is to life.

It has taken a pandemic for our nation to undergo a stocktake of our values and the things that are ultimately important. As a very different 2020 lives out its final days, we will turn naturally to Advent. It is a time when the lasting 'Good News' is announced; news that is not false or manufactured, but the essence of that which has sustained the people of God through many vicissitudes for 2 000 years.

Many commentators are saying that life post-COVID-19 will be very different. That which was regarded as essential in former days, will in the aftermath of the pandemic, change. Many see such change as change for the better.



Susy Thomas, Moderator of the Uniting Church WA lays hands on Rev Dr Sonny Rajamoney (kneeling) with Bob Hunt, Chair of the Presbytery of WA, during Sonny's Induction into Northway Uniting Church in November.

To my way of thinking, such change following a time of great calamity and social disruption is not all that different to the advent of Jesus into the life of the world at a time of great social and political upheaval. That advent changed the life of the world for the better and it still continues to do so.

The perfect gift and amazing hope – the hope of the whole world was wrapped up in this child. It is that mystery which stands at the heart of the Christian faith, and that mystery to which we must hold fast in Christ Jesus, and of the love which we have to all.

I trust that you will join me on this journey of rediscovery as to how to be the people of God, open to the future we are all being called to during this Advent and Christmas season.

I wish you every blessing in your preparation, contemplation and celebration during this Advent and Christmas. May God's blessings be given to you, your family and friends, and may God bless all your hopes and aspirations for 2021.

Susy Thomas
Moderator, Uniting Church WA

Moderator's Diary

December 2020

- 8 December Scotch College Speech Night
- 10 December Presbyterian Ladies' College Speech Night
- 14 December Uniting Church WA Synod Standing Committee Meeting
- 15 December Covenanting Commission End of Year Gathering at Waroona Uniting Church and Drakesbrook Weir

January 2021

- 25 January Principals' Sundowner at Penrhos College

February

- 8 February Uniting Church WA Synod Standing Committee Meeting

March

- March Gingin Uniting Church Milestone Anniversary Celebrations

A little pig goes a long way

Cath Taylor, UnitingWorld, shares how gifts from the UnitingWorld Everything in Common catalogue are changing lives.

There are no pigs pictured at the birth of Jesus. Donkeys, yes. Maybe a lamb. Pigs – no. Considered unclean by Jewish people, they're unlikely to have been among the much romanticised gathering.

One fabulous hog, however, has taken centre stage at the birth of a child just to our north, in Bali, Indonesia. The pig is a bit of a symbol for the life changing impact of Jesus' birth – for everyone.

The hog belongs to Komang Ariadi, a young man from remote north Bali. At 25, Komang worked as a labourer, and was already married with two children. Without land of his own or official training, he picked up jobs wherever he could – on building sites, in a clove plantation. They're among the hundreds of thousands of people who live in poverty amidst the idyll of tourist life in Bali.

In mid-2015, Komang was spending each day looking for work – life was in a predictable rhythm marked by anxiety and the endless quest to make ends meet. To his surprise, he heard that a new group – Christians – had visited his village and were interested in starting a project to support people through innovative training in livestock breeding and small business skills.

Christians are very much a minority group in Bali, representing less than 2% of the population, and our partner MBM (Maha Bhoga Marga), the development agency of the Protestant Church of Bali,



EVERYTHING IN COMMON

GIFTS THAT FIGHT POVERTY AND BUILD HOPE



UnitingWorld
connecting communities for life

Komang Ariadi's life changed for the better when he received a pig from UnitingWorld. Photo: Daniel Buckingham, UnitingWorld.

are always greeted with cautious curiosity whenever they make a new contact. Their mandate, though, is clear. Christ is alive in the world, bringing new possibilities for all. And when Komang plucked up the courage to meet with them, the next few months became an absolute revelation.

He learnt about small business and livestock breeding and after completing training, secured the capital to buy two pigs. Feeding and caring for them, he looked forward to the day when they'd give birth and he'd have pigs of his own to rear or sell. The pigs brought a new found security to his family.

But that wasn't all. Komang attended further training about water, sanitation and the rights and obligations of Balinese citizens.

He added a toilet to his house, taught his family about hygiene and – critically – was able to secure the legal rights to his home.

"It was the best thing I could have learned," Komang said. "Having a safe place to live changes everything."

The transformation of Komang's family began with a pig – a pig supplied through the generosity of givers to UnitingWorld's Everything in Common's Gift Catalogue at Christmas.

Humble pig. Life changing impact. That's worth celebrating!

Buy your life changing gift from UnitingWorld's Everything in Common Gift Store at everythingincommon.com.au



PROUDLY SUPPORTING



Support a better Christmas for others

Christmas can be a difficult time for many people in our community, especially as many more are confronted by hardship for the first time. For people and families facing financial stress, many will struggle to access daily necessities, such as food, essential items, and even a safe space to live. As the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to be felt, Christmas this year will be especially hard.

The Target Christmas Appeal has proudly supported the UnitingCare Australia network for the past 29 years, giving customers the chance to support a better Christmas for others. Giving to the Appeal will help brighten Christmas Day for thousands of people and families who might otherwise go without.

The appeal launched in November and will continue to run right up until Christmas Eve. Target customers have the opportunity to purchase a packet of 6 gift tags for \$3 in all Target Stores or make a donation online.

All contributions go directly to UnitingCare Australia and their national network of community service providers, who have been at the front-line of service provision for over 100 years.

This Christmas, join in supporting the Target Christmas Appeal and the work of the UnitingCare Australia network. Now more than ever, we're all in this together.

Visit unitingcarechristmasappeal.com.au to show your support today.

Our backyard



Camp by the seaside with Messy Church this Summer

Greg Ross

The Messy Church Summer Camp will be held for the third time in WA this January, and registrations are already flying in as families and friends choose to take some time together in a Messy Church way.

It will be held from Friday 1 to Monday 18 January at the Uniting Church Campsite in Busselton, and campers are invited to attend as many or as few days they like during this time.

Undergirding all we do are the five core values of Messy Church: all ages (intergenerational), hospitality, creativity, Christ centred, and celebration.

Households of any make up come with their tents, camper trailers or

caravans. They bring and prepare their own food and we provide the facilities of the Uniting Church Campsite in Busselton and the chance to take and use any of the sporting equipment, creative craft supplies and more. The campsite has all the necessary facilities, including new accessible bathrooms and an airconditioned hall.

During the day some households choose to do their own thing, others find new friends or catch up with old friends and enjoy the beach, boating, fishing and swimming, or they go for bike rides or short drives to local attractions.

Each evening we plan to either have a games evening, a shared meal – with COVID-19 safety in place – or watch a movie on the big screen outdoors.

Many Messy Church and traditional church households are finding that the Messy Church Summer Camp is a great and non-threatening way to bring unchurched, de-churched or questioning people to spend time together.

We are planning to have a number of Messy Church celebrations during the three weekends and people are welcome to come and visit, but will need to register and provide their contact details so that if needed for COVID-19 tracing we have them ready.

Thrive Mission Committee is also making funds available to assist any Messy Church families who would like to attend, but cannot afford the \$12 per person per day fees. To apply contact revgregross@internode.on.net or phone 0417 637 944.



Students from Mowanjum during a visit to Perth, made possible by the Boab Network and its supporters.

Missional work alive and strong in the city

Christine Nicholas, member of Uniting Church in the City, shares two exciting projects the congregation has been passionately involved in, despite the challenges of 2020.

The good news of Jesus Christ calls us to be a missional people – to be caught up in God’s mission in the world.

Boab Network

Uniting Church in the City has supported the Boab Network, a project of All Saints Floreat Uniting Church, since 2016.

Every school holidays, the Boab Network involves teams of volunteers running activities for the children of the remote Mowanjum Aboriginal community, with assistance from adults within the community.

Uniting Church in the City has a member on their Network and for the last three years has sponsored the school holiday program by bringing a group of teenagers and carers from Mowanjum – some 10 kilometers south east of Derby – to Perth.

In past years, the itinerary included a visit to Uniting Church in the City Wesley Perth, the experience of looking at Perth from the Central Park Tower, a basketball coaching session by the Joondalup Wolves, kayaking with the River Gods, a ride on the Fremantle Ferris Wheel, being totally spoilt by Bunnings Homebase and a visit to the Perth Zoo.

The camp gives the young people the opportunity to visit the city and the schools here, helping to breakdown barriers. They get to visit a world outside Mowanjum, with different ways of communicating and different ‘norms’.

This helps them to become comfortable in this outside world. Just as we find it a leap to live in Mowanjum’s culture, they find the same coming into the Perth cultural setting.

Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service

We have also formed a relationship with Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service, who provide health services mainly to Aboriginal people throughout Perth.

Last year, Uniting Church in the City, through our then General Manager, Neil Starkie, received hand knitted and crocheted blankets, including baby blankets, from friends of Lifecare Willetton Physiotherapy.

Ninety of the blankets were taken to the Head Office at Derbarl Yerrigan and every single blanket was given to those in need. The

Uniting Church in the City Mission Committee also gave monetary support for food parcels.

This year, homelessness has spiked due to COVID-19 and our Mission Committee has given financial support to Derbarl Yerrigan to help support those without a roof over their heads.

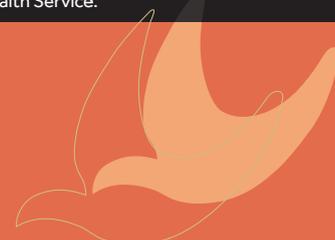
Our new General Manager, Simon Godfroy, kept up the good work and through the friends of Lifecare Willetton Physiotherapy we were again able to give more blankets to vulnerable people in our community.

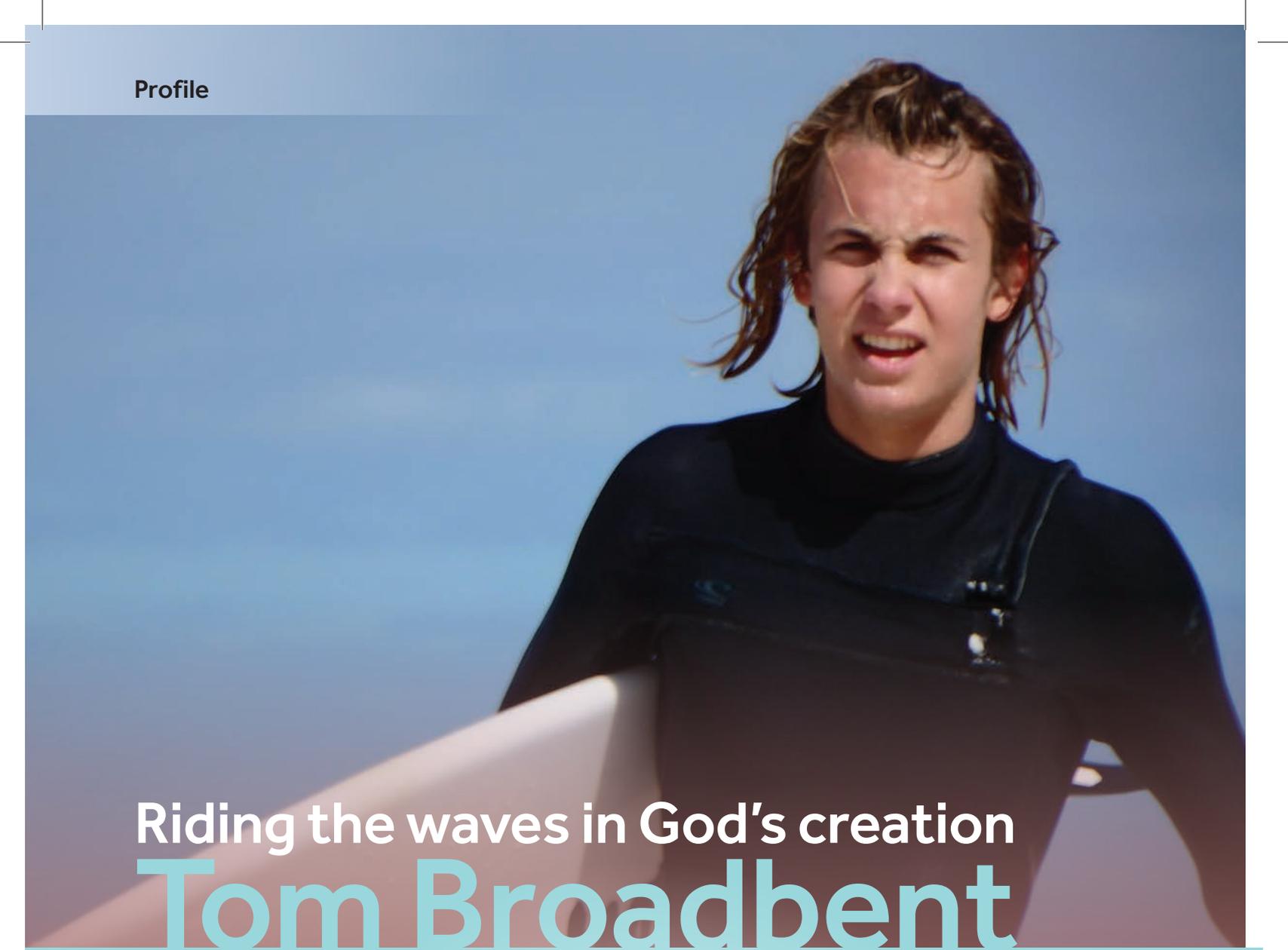


Christine Nicholas and Rev Frances Hadfield passing on a cheque to Marie Yuncken, All Saints Floreat Uniting Church.



Christine Nicholas delivering handmade blankets to Beth Manchester from Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service.





Riding the waves in God's creation Tom Broadbent

Heather Dowling

Like many young adults who've recently finished school, Tom Broadbent is figuring out where he wants to head in life. There are three things he knows for sure he wants in that journey though: travel, surfing and Christ.

From his hometown of Busselton WA, Tom spent 2020 merging these three passions – with some limitations to the 'travel' part – through a yearlong diploma in leadership through Christian Surfers Australia and Alphacrucis College, based in Sydney. In what could be described as a 'gap year', has been a chance for Tom to build his leadership skills, share the gospel and live in the present on some of the world's best beaches.

The course originally planned its students, hailing from all over Australia, to travel to Indonesia, America, Coffs Harbour and Philip Island, but these trips

were cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions. The first planned trip did go ahead prior to COVID though, in Tom's hometown region of Busselton and the South West of WA. While this wasn't as exciting as a trip to Indonesia, he still appreciated the opportunity to meet others doing the course and to build friendships early on in the year.

"I've made heaps of friends through the course and I've got a bunch of travel planned out that I want to do with some of my mates," he said. "I thought 2020 was going to be the year of all years, I was frothing for it... and it's absolutely flopped.

On top of study, Tom also works in disability support services.

"I'm making the most of it. I'm just working and saving up money and there'll be better times ahead."

While surf-related travel was a major appeal to studying this course, its main purpose for Tom has been to learn how to share the message of Jesus throughout the surfing community in the South West.

"We [Christian Surfers Australia] see in the surfing community in Australia that there's a big gap between Christianity and the whole community and culture of surfing," Tom said.

"Everyone doing the course absolutely loves surfing, loves the culture of it and loves everything about it, but we see the gap and we're trying to use surfing as a way to reach other surfers and tell them about God.

"The course is teaching us leadership skills for the best way to do that. We've got two semesters and four units in the first semester and five in the second. Some of those units include youth ministry and handy tips on how to do our jobs right.

"We're all wanting to be Christian Surfers leaders, so we're wanting to learn how to run our Christian Surfers groups in our home towns. And the course is a guide to give us the right knowledge and skills to run those camps and groups."

Tom was introduced to surfing as a kid by his surfing dad, Rev Andrew Broadbent. At the time, the family were living in Perth, but they moved down to Busselton when Tom was in his early teens, when Andrew became the minister at Busselton Uniting Church.

"When I was younger I was really into surfing," Tom said. "My dad was about to enrol me into a local board rider's club, but he didn't really like the culture of it, so he and a couple of his mates made up a Christian Surfers group. At the time it was Christian Surfers Micro-Grommets – a grommet is like a young surfer.

"Everyone doing the course absolutely loves surfing, loves the culture of it and loves everything about it, but we see the gap and we're trying to use surfing as a way to reach other surfers and tell them about God."

"That's what got me into Christianity I guess. I used to love every Saturday; we'd meet up for

a surf down at the beach and cook up bacon and eggs after. I'd have all my mates there and new kids would come along. It was pretty cool.

"As I got older, I started meeting some of the older teenagers and young adults involved in Christian Surfers and they sort of had their own thing going on. I became friends with a lot of people involved.

"Christian Surfers has always been my youth group in a sense. Growing up in the Uniting Church there wasn't many kids my age. I don't love going to church every Sunday, I find it pretty boring. But having that Christian community around you is so important I reckon; it keeps you solid in your faith.

"I love the values of the Uniting Church and what they do. I absolutely love all the older people at my church and I love what our church is doing. I choose to go to the Uniting Church because I'm super happy with what they do and I want to be a part of that, even though there might not be many kids my age."



Tom Broadbent surfing at his local beach.

Tom's involvement with Christian Surfers Australia grew and he started going along to camps and conferences. Now he's hoping to build up a branch in the South West of WA.

"At the moment there's nothing really down here in Busselton. There used to be a big Christian Surfers group, but it died off and there hasn't been anything in ages, so at the moment we're building one up," he said.

"I've been talking with other Christian Surfers leaders about how people who've never had anything to do with Christianity in their life before, then going to church for the first time would be a huge culture shock. This is a good way to build relationships with people through surfing and then once they've got an idea of Christianity, then you can start taking them to church.

"It's a great way to bridge the gap. Surfing is just a tool that God's given us to use to teach people about the gospel."

Growing up as a minister's child is not always easy, but Tom focussed on growing his faith as an individual. He didn't want to continue life as a Christian simply because of his upbringing, but wanted to explore the journey himself. He was encouraged to grow and work his way through his own questions, doubts and thought processes throughout his adolescence.

"In year 12 it was a classic case of I said I was a Christian, but I didn't really put in much effort. I was a nice person I guess, but I didn't spend much time looking into being a Christian. High School is super tough, especially when you're the only Christian at the school. It's super easy to do the wrong thing

and get caught up in the antics of Year 12.

"Going through High School with your dad as a minister, I wasn't one of those minister's kids who went off the rails, but when kids asked what my dad did I was always pretty embarrassed. I found it hard saying he's a minister.

"I came out of Year 12 thinking I actually want to own my Christianity and start looking into things myself instead of just drifting away from being a Christian.

"I think heaps of kids who have grown up in Christian homes are in the same sort of boat. There's an age where you've got to own it yourself and think, 'is this actually really what I believe?' And that's what I wanted to do.

"Now, like every Christian, I still have my doubts sometimes, but I try my best to keep God at the centre of my life in everything I do. I try to pray regularly and intentionally put in effort to try and learn about God and get people to help me read my Bible.

"I grew up in a Christian family and I've had a super blessed upbringing. I'm super lucky."

Whether they believe in a religious faith or not, surfers are passionate about their beach culture and that feeling of getting out in the ocean and riding waves. Most surfers will build their lives around accessibility to the waves – where they live, where they work, and where they travel. When Tom adds his faith to this mix, he finds himself in awe of God's creation.

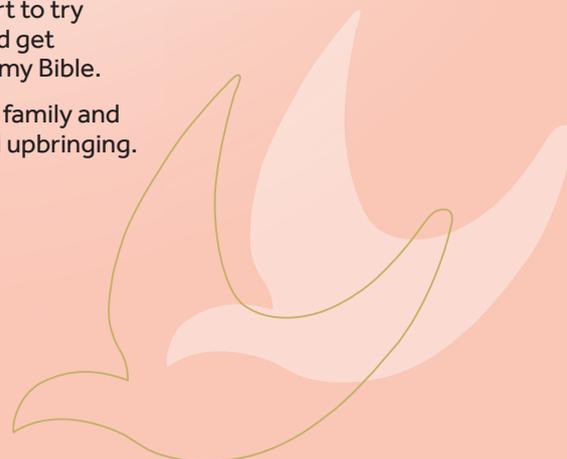
"It sounds pretty hippy, but you're just one with the ocean," he said. "You're out in the wild elements, out in God's creation just riding a bit of fibreglass on a wave and gliding along the surface of the water.

"When you simplify it, it's just fun. It's the funnest thing in the world I reckon.

"Some people love the adrenaline rush of pushing themselves and surfing huge waves. I've got a bit of that, but I don't push myself as hard as some of my mates do, I know my limits. It does feel good when you take a risk; when you accomplish something and get over your fears and surf the spots that you were pretty scared of. The feeling of gliding across a wave, it's just the best I reckon.

"You're spending time in God's creation and it's pretty amazing. When I'm out in the water, out in the ocean, it's one of the places I feel closest to God."

Find out more about Christian Surfers Australia on their website at christiansurfers.org.au or follow Christian Surfers Western Australia on Facebook.





Tom Broadbent has made lasting friendships through Christian Surfers Australia.



Super Collector Good Sammy creates change for the better

Staff from Good Sammy Malaga: Bianca, Megan, Lara and Fleur, with their Store Manager, Lisa (front). Good Sammy Enterprises is a Super Collector for the new Containers for Change scheme in WA.

Containers for Change officially launched in October in WA, and our own Good Sammy Enterprises is playing a huge part. Good Sammy is a Uniting Church WA agency providing employment opportunities for people living with disability.

As a Super Collector, Good Sammy has 16 collection points for all your used, eligible containers. Bring in your containers and get a 10 cent refund for each, or donate your refund to a registered charity – including Good Sammy.

Taking part in the scheme has provided staff at Good Sammy with some new and amazing opportunities as they prepared to launch and as they maintain their involvement going forward.

The scheme itself is a great way to encourage recycling and keep our streets and parks clean of rubbish, but for Good Sammy it also provides more opportunities for people living with disability to enjoy meaningful employment.

Melanie Kiely, CEO of Good Sammy Enterprises, said there's been a huge amount of amazing and interesting work created to get this project up and running.

"There's been a huge amount of work," she said. "We've got a brand new site that's opened up in Wanneroo behind our main store, a drive through site.

"At Canning Vale we've taken one of our bays and had to paint it. It's been completely kitted out, cleaned, painted, and equipment put in.

"There's been a lot [of work] around building, there's been a lot around traffic, there's been a lot around

training and recruitment. It's been a massive project.

"Now that we're up and running, the jobs, our [staff] love it. They love the diversity and they love building different skills in different places. They haven't had to give up their old jobs, they're getting to do a bit of both and that is allowing them to build up multiple skills.

"There's a whole range of jobs that we've created across the patch and they're enjoying the variety and opportunity to meet directly with customers, especially for our factory staff."

Good Sammy have also been creative in the way they've approached getting involved in the scheme, by offering hospitality at their warehouse in Canning Vale.

"In Canning Vale we've also opened up our canteen to the public on Saturdays and we've trained a whole

load of people to be baristas. We've opened a little coffee cart inside the canteen so people can come and get coffees after they're dropped off. We've also opened a pop-up store in Canning Vale where they can come and shop on Saturdays.

"All that provides a range of different ways to build skills and to build people's confidence as they progress through their employment journey.

"The level of enthusiasm is great. Our big challenge with the whole scheme now is building volume."

Melanie said that Good Sammy provides a family friendly place to take part in the scheme. While some sites are operated with reverse vending machines, Good Sammy provides a personal touch with staff present at each site.

"The beauty of our sites is that it's an amazing, friendly experience with our staff. Every time they come in they get to interact with the personality of Good Sammy and they're getting to help develop people and give them confidence in a work situation.

"Secondly, our environment is much better for families. All of them are in the shade, all of them are cool and all of them have got people who are actually helping you.

"We're trying to promote the environment, promote recycling, but most of all we're trying to promote our people, our cause, and building confidence and skills in people with disabilities so that they can go and work in other jobs and move onto whatever job they want to do.

"Our point of difference is our personality."

As a Super Collector, Good Sammy can collect and sort high volumes of containers for the scheme – though there is no minimum amount for collection either.

"We're not just a small site where you can drop it off and we take small quantities. We're a super collector because we can have drive through sites where we'll take large volumes," said Melanie.

"We also work with corporates and other organisations where we get large volumes. We get the containers and we sort it, and then it gets picked up by the logistics people for processing."

Taking part in the scheme is a great way for people to raise some extra cash or to fundraise for community groups and charities. Uniting Church WA agency, Juniper and Uniting Church WA school, St Stephen's School, among other organisations in the community, have both come on board the program in support of Good Sammy.

Melanie is keen to partner with more Uniting Church organisations, especially schools, in the program.

"We'd love more schools," she said. "We'd love to get schoolkids involved in coming and finding out about the environment, coming on-site, volunteering their time, and meeting our staff, so they can understand not everybody in the world has got the same opportunity – broadening their perspectives on life.

"There's a lot more opportunities around how we can partner within the Uniting Church that we'd love to explore. There are multiple benefits in terms of environment, in terms of inclusion, in terms of community, there's just so much potential. We should all work together."

Eligible containers include most uncrushed aluminium and steel, glass, plastic, and liquid paperboard drink containers between 150ml and 3L. Milk and juice bottles, wine and spirit bottles and cordial bottles are ineligible, but check the websites below for more information.

Find a Good Sammy Containers for Change drop point at goodsammy.com.au/container-recycling

Find out more about the Containers for Change program at containersforchange.com.au/wa



Mark Paul (left) and Brenton Smith working in the Containers for Change drive through at Good Sammy Enterprises in Canning Vale.



Housing in WA: A perfect storm

Heather Dowling

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, housing was at a crisis point in WA. But now, even more so. With jobs lost and the Australian Government's JobSeeker payments about to end, there are people falling through the cracks and slipping into homelessness.

John Berger, Executive Officer, Caring Agencies at the Uniting Church WA, is also the Executive Officer of the WA Alliance to End Homelessness. He said Western Australia has come to this point after decades of failing to fund and support social housing in WA.

"We have a housing system where the investment in social housing has declined over the past few decades, the private market is not delivering stock that's affordable for people on low incomes, and so we have this pressure point in our housing system," John said.

"It's my understanding there are 14 000 applications for social and affordable housing in Western Australia and the average wait time for an allocation can be beyond two to five years.

"Over the last three or four decades, government investment in social housing has steadily declined. Once upon a time social housing represented around 7-8% of the total housing stock in Australia.

That has now declined to 4% in some states, or even less.

"It's declined on the assumption that the private rental market will fill the gap. But we know that the private rental market, over three or four decades, has come to a point where most houses are unaffordable for people on low or government supplementary incomes. Australia has one of the most unaffordable housing markets in the world.

"We seem to be obsessed with building large homes and wanting to rent them for top dollar. What we need is a variety of affordable housing and even slightly smaller housing – one and two bedroom homes. We have a significant lack of housing at that bottom end.

"One of the fastest areas of homelessness is older single women. These are people who've never been homeless, finding themselves homeless, and they're at the mercy of a system that says 'tough'.

"The need for affordable housing is across our community. Whether you're an older person that just needs an affordable rental, whether you're a student at university, or whether you're trying to come out of homelessness.

"There are needs across the community."

Housing stress

People are considered to be living in housing stress in Australia if they are spending more than 30% of their income on housing costs. This is the benchmark Anglicare Australia has used for its Rental Affordability Snapshot, which they research and release each year.

This year, due to COVID-19, they've released two – one in April and an update in August. The snapshot looks at rental properties all over Australia and tests whether they are suitable and affordable for people living on low incomes.

In August's update, the Rental Affordability Snapshot looks pretty grim, with an even worse projection for December, when the Federal Government's JobSeeker Coronavirus supplement will be cut. These payments were also reduced in September.

According to the report, a single person in Australia earning minimum wage can afford 1.7% of the rental properties on the market. A couple with two children earning minimum wage can afford 2.4%, and a single person on the government's Youth Allowance or JobSeeker payments after they are cut in December can afford zero – not even a room in a shared house.

These stats show more and more people are being pushed into homelessness.



In October this year, the Government of WA's Department of Communities launched the WA Housing Strategy 2020-2030. The strategy aims to increase social housing in WA by 2 600 homes over the next ten years, but with 14 000 people on the waiting list this strategy needs to go further and faster.

Gayle Mitchell, Practice Lead – Transitioning from Homelessness at Uniting WA (previously UnitingCare West), said demand for affordable housing is not being met.

"There needs to be 61 000 new houses built just to compete with demand now," she said.

"We know that there'll be more people needing social and community housing with COVID and what's happened with employment and job security – and it doesn't happen quickly. Housing seems to happen very slowly.

"The State Government has promised Common Ground and Housing First, but they're years away. They've not even turned soil yet.

"The rate of people experiencing homelessness is on the rise. In Tranby, our engagement centre, in the first three weeks of September we saw 38 people who were new to homelessness. And that was before JobSeeker money decreased, so we're not seeing the full hit yet."

Homeless and invisible

Gayle explained that people experiencing homelessness are not necessarily sleeping rough on the streets. Homelessness can come in many forms, and can be hard to track.

"Homelessness is someone who can't call their safe place permanent," she said. "It could be someone that's couch surfing, it could be someone in an overcrowded house.

"They're not the statistics that we're capturing. So the problem is way bigger than we think it is.

"We're not capturing overcrowded dwellings, people going house to house. Some people won't even think they're homeless if they're in a squat or an abandoned building because they've got shelter.

"The situation is bigger than people think. There's a lot of people that I would deem homeless that we don't see."

The situation is only going to get worse in the near future as the Federal Government's JobSeeker Coronavirus Supplement is cut.

"We're anticipating a lot more people becoming homeless," she said. "We're already seeing that the private rental market is really hard to get into at the moment."

Gayle said Uniting WA is working with people who've applied for more than 30 rental properties and continue to get knocked back because there's not enough suitable properties on the market. There's also a group of people who have put their mortgages and rent payments on hold, which she said will catch-up with people soon.

"There's a perfect storm and it's going to lead to a bit of a crisis in our state unfortunately," she said.

"We're trying to meet the demand on very limited resources. Where we

used to see 80 people in Tranby on similar funding that we have now, we're now seeing 260 a day.

"We are really strapped for resources and staffing and we've done everything we can to try and squeeze as much out of our contracts as possible. The impact that has on people accessing our services is that it's chaotic, because we're so busy we're just bandaiding peoples issues. We're not really getting to the bottom of 'why'. Why are people experiencing homelessness, why are we not seeing movement?"

"When someone presents to Tranby in the morning we're dealing with what happened to them during the night. So we're just starting again every morning.

"We're meant to be able to work intensively with someone and move them through the system out into long-term accommodation. And it needs to be driven by the person, it can't be one single response for everyone that walks through the door, they're all different."

Homelessness affects us all

Homelessness impacts more than just the people experiencing it though they bear the brunt of it. It has huge effects on other areas of social services and our economy. John said it is actually financially beneficial to support people experiencing homelessness into housing, and that our attitudes towards people affected needs to change.

"From an economic perspective, to allow someone to live on the street

Feature

will cost us more in taxes than to house them because of the impact that person has in our community in the sense of deteriorating health, potentially law and order interactions, counselling services, policing and justice. All those services cost government, and us as taxpayers," John said.

"Economic studies have shown that the best way to deal with homelessness is to house people because it's actually more cost-effective. There is no lack of documentation that says the best investment in homelessness is to put people in affordable housing.

"From a humanist perspective, everyone can only lead a fulfilling and productive life if they've got safe and secure housing.

"How can someone find work when they're struggling to live day to day? How can you address your trauma or alcoholism if you don't have a safe secure home? Having safe secure housing gives people a foundation to build their life.

"[Our] government believes that if you're homeless it's your fault and you should be working hard to change your situation, get yourself

into a job and essentially earn your own home," John said.

"There is this lack of understanding that, actually, we all should have a home. This is a human right.

"There is a lack of understanding both in the community and government to take action. There is a strong value judgement around blame."

Raise our voices

The Uniting Church WA is calling for planning which will ease this crisis. In September, at the 44th Annual Meeting of the Synod of WA, the Uniting Church WA agreed to call on State and Federal Governments to prioritise investment in renewable energy and social housing in WA.

The Social Justice Unit, on behalf of the Uniting Church WA, has written to members of State and Federal Government, and is urging Uniting Church members to do the same. With the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, they have prepared a briefing paper to help with this process.

"What we need is either government to significantly increase the investment in social and affordable

housing, and/or changes to our tax and regulatory schemes to support the construction of more affordable housing in the private rental market," John said.

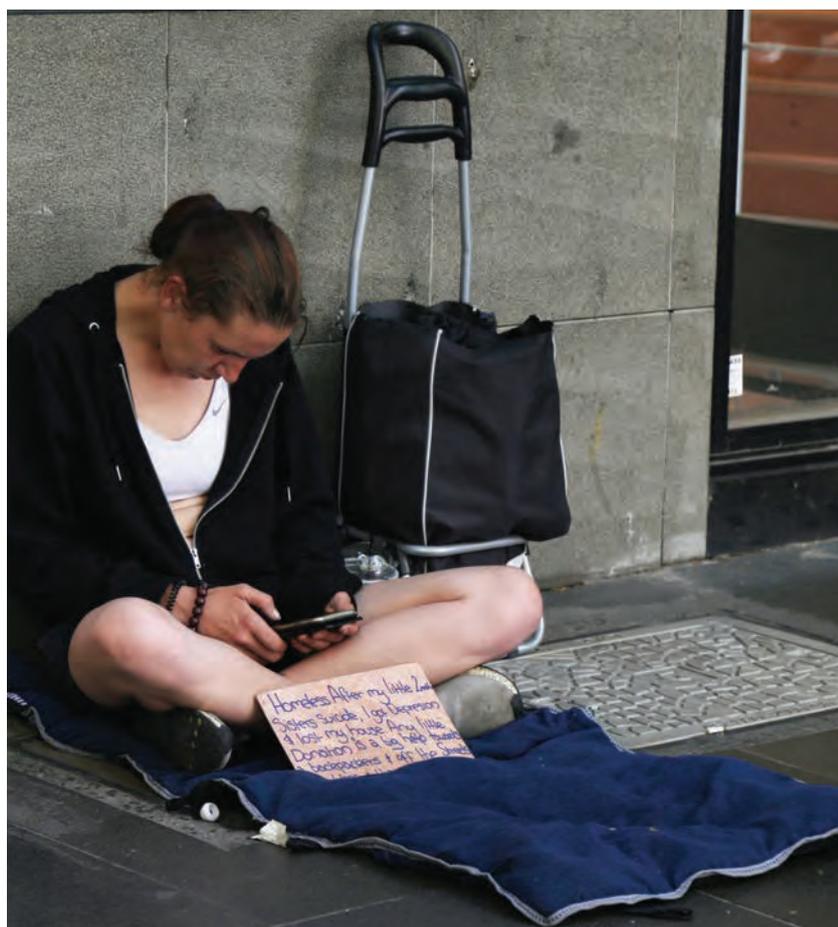
"For instance, in Australia we have a lack of concessions and incentives for investment in construction of affordable housing. So we have a situation where our superannuation funds are investing in affordable housing in America and UK and not Australia, because there are a lack of policies and tax concessions that make an appropriate return on their investment, but delivers on affordable housing.

"Australia doesn't have the policy or the tax concessions to facilitate this. And this is all within the means of government; government can change these policies."

Housing which runs on renewable energy is beneficial to people on low incomes as it brings energy costs down and makes their housing more affordable.

"The other issue around social housing, is many of those houses are very inefficient and therefore expensive to heat or cool. So there would be a strong argument to





reach better standards in terms of their sustainability and ability to not draw on energy to heat or cool these places. There's a good environmental argument, which then in turn makes it more affordable as well.

"We need to get to a position where the community understands that it's actually good for us as a society to ensure that everyone has an affordable and appropriate home, and that those homes are sustainable from an environmental perspective.

"Government has two options – invest in social and affordable housing, and/or change policies and settings to allow the private market to deliver on affordable housing."

John said that while we all have different capacities to create change in this situation, as Christians, members of the church

are called to act. For some that might mean financially, others may be able to offer practical help, and others may be called to speak up and call on governments to do more.

"I think from our Christian faith we are compelled to speak out in terms of this injustice," John said. "I think it is an issue of injustice that somehow we believe it's okay for people to be homeless. So the church should be a strident voice in ensuring that everyone has access to a safe, affordable and appropriate home.

"As a church we should seek to be more inclusive of those who live in our community at the margins.

"It's about justice, it's about empowerment, it's about inclusion and it's about compassion. As Christians, we are called to demonstrate all those values."

Want to know more?

Download the briefing paper from the Uniting Church WA and Vic/Tas and get some tips for writing to your local MPs on this issue. Find it at revivemagazine.org.au

Read Anglicare Australia's Rental Affordability Snapshot at anglicare.asn.au/research-advocacy/the-rental-affordability-snapshot

View the Government of Western Australia's Housing Strategy 2020-2030 at communities.wa.gov.au/strategies/wa-housing-strategy-2020-2030

Find out more about the Housing First initiative at endhomelessnesswa.com/housing-first

Respect, learning and welcoming

Heather Dowling

When the Uniting Church WA gathers, we often share in a Welcome to Country or an Acknowledgment of Country. Both are significant ways the church can acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land, but there are some important differences.

A Welcome to Country is only led by Traditional Custodians; whereas an Acknowledgment of Country can be led by anyone, and acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of that place. A Smoking Ceremony is a process of cleansing and healing, which can also take place with a Welcome.

Mitchell Garlett is a candidate for Ministry and member of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress WA. He's a proud Noongar family man, and the son of the late Rev Garlett. You may have seen him at Uniting Church WA events leading a Welcome to Country or a Smoking Ceremony.

He said a Welcome to Country is an important time. It allows the Traditional Custodians of that place to welcome and acknowledge those present, and it allows those present to respect the land and culture of the First Peoples.

"A Welcome to Country is to welcome people to the land of the Traditional Custodians of the area, and also to thank the ancestors for allowing meetings, events or whatever it is to take place in that area," he said.

"We have the white fella welcome where they welcome everybody. The Noongar way of welcome is to allow [Second Peoples] to listen and to have respect for the Noongar ways and their connection to the land and to our ancestors – to the spiritual side of our ways.

"It's important to do Welcomes for people who do not know Noongar ways or have an understanding. It gives them the opportunity to listen with respect and to be a part of allowing our ways to be your ways, in treating our land with respect and listening to our language."

Mitchell said that traditionally, a Welcome to Country would be shared with any people who were travelling or visiting land outside of their own nation. They would also serve to warn people about unsafe areas on the land, or advise them where they could find necessities.

"Welcomes would usually be involved in the old days. People who come as visitors, as part of that welcome they would be shown areas that are safe to be travelled through and areas that are not. Visitors would be told about food in the area, where to find water, all that sort of stuff.

"Our Noongar way of understanding is to share with visitors who come to this place."

When Mitchell leads a Welcome to Country, he pays respect to God, his ancestors, and the land.

"The first thing we'd normally say would be to give thanks to our creator, giving thanks to God," he said.

"The second thing is that we pay our respects to our Elders, including our ancestors that have gone before us. Without them our language, our culture, our ways wouldn't have been able to still be alive today.

"The other important thing is to the land, our Mother Earth, for the provisions that we get from it.

"We can't have one without the other, they all connect to each other in our belief system."

A Welcome to Country is led by a First Nations Elder from that land. An Elder, however, does not necessarily have to be an older person, but can be a person who holds the knowledge and wisdom to be a leader.



Mitchell Garlett (back right), with his family (left to right) Lorenzo, Mitchell Jnr, his wife Janice, Clarence, Sealin holding his son Kiahn and Freda.

Mitchel learnt to be a First Nations leader by listening and respecting his Elders, including his Dad, Rev Garlett.

"It all started when I was very young, and it came from my Dad," he said.

"I didn't get this out of books, it was something that I learnt from listening – and it was important for me to know.

"I hold onto that knowledge and wisdom, but for me as a younger person I know that I've got Elders that I can go to that have rights over me, out of respect."

When First and Second Peoples share in a Welcome to Country, they are not only respecting the land and culture of the Traditional Custodians of that place, but keeping the culture alive.

"Our Aboriginal history and our culture was denied its existence," Mitchell said. "In doing [Welcomes to Country], this is one way for us to maintain and restore our cultural practices that were given to us from our creator.

"For non-Indigenous people, they can learn about the ways that we deeply feel and care for our land – our relationship to the land.

"That relationships is a very spiritual and very sacred connection. These Welcomes, they need to be heard and they need to be respected."

Mitchell Garlett leading a Smoking Ceremony before a Welcome to Country at a Meeting of the Synod of WA.

Deep Listening Festival explores Growing Strong Together

Mary Elton

For the past two years, Margaret River Uniting Church has run an annual Deep Listening Festival. The festival invites people to step outside their normal busy schedule to engage, connect and listen.

Through a diverse range of speakers, workshop presenters, musicians and artists, the festival is an opportunity to hear wonderful stories, to inspire and enrich people's understanding of themselves and the community around them.

In 2020, the theme is Growing Strong Together, however, COVID-19 has meant that plans have had to change.

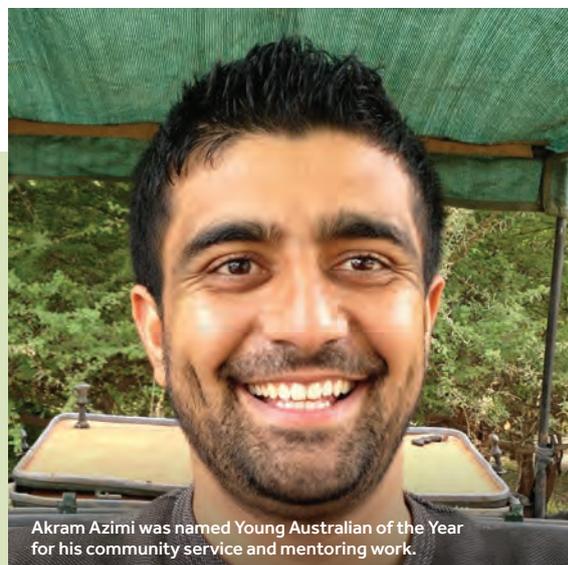
This year, there will of course not be a big festival over several days, but

a series of smaller events targeting different aspects of the theme.

The first of these was an afternoon tea with Ginn Fourie, held in November. Ginn comes from South Africa, but now lives in Margaret River. She explored with us her journey from pain and trauma through to forgiveness following the murder of her daughter, Lyndi in South Africa in 1993. Last year, Ginn's story about this was published in her book, *The Lyndi Tree: An Autobiography of Hope*.

The second event, to be held on Saturday 16 January 2021, will showcase the work of six local artists as they interpret the theme.

Our special guest speaker for the evening will be Akram Azimi, who arrived in Australia as a refugee aged 16 in 1999. In 2013, Akram



Akram Azimi was named Young Australian of the Year for his community service and mentoring work.

was named Young Australian of the Year for his community service and mentoring work. We are delighted that Akram's mother Nadira, will accompany him on the night.

Wine and nibbles will be served on entry, with music to finish off the evening.

Booking information will be available soon, for more information visit margaretriveruniting.com or contact Mary Elton at elton5@bigpond.com or on 0429 797 767.

Ending violence in the Philippines



Christians in the Philippines speaking out against human rights abuses. Photo: National Council of Churches in the Philippines.

The Uniting Church in Australia remains deeply concerned over the deaths of church members who are speaking out about human rights abuses in the Philippines.

Dr Deidre Palmer, President of the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA), has written to the Philippines Ambassador in Australia, Her Excellency Ma Hellen Barber De La Vega, and also to Foreign Affairs Minister, Senator Marise Payne to express deep concern and encourage prompt and decisive action.

As the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) stated in June 2020:

"Most of the church people targeted in this way are those primarily fulfilling the Christian mandate and mission of ministering to the poor and the marginalised. They undertake their prophetic task as Christians to be with the people, especially in times when the basic human rights of people and communities are being undermined.

"Their Christian mandate compels them to be with the last of the least and with the poorest of the poor to defend God's image in every human being. Their faith compels them to accompany people in asserting and attaining their full rights, but they are vilified, harassed and even killed for doing so."

Deidre said the Uniting Church had a longstanding partnership with the United Church of Christ in the Philippines and a relationship with the NCCP.

"We are also aware of the many Filipino people who have found a home here in Australia, including within our UCA, and we acknowledge their pain and anguish at the continuing abuses in the Philippines," Deidre added.

"I join with the UCA Synod of Victoria and Tasmania in encouraging UCA members to join in this letter writing action as we seek justice and accountability in the Philippines."

The Justice and International Mission Cluster within the Victoria and Tasmania Synod has a helpful letter writing resource with background information on the situation in the Philippines, who you can write to and helpful information to include in your letters.

Find the resource at justact.org.au/resources

This article was originally published at uniting.church



Calls to care for children and land

At the 44th Annual Meeting of the Synod of WA, held in September, the Uniting Church WA passed two proposals from the Covenanting Committee.

The Uniting Church WA will call on State and Federal Governments to protect ancient Aboriginal heritage sites by reforming Aboriginal Heritage Acts, in close consultation with Traditional Owners; and will call for Traditional Owners and knowledge holders to retain access and control over Aboriginal Heritage sites.

The recent demolition of the Juukan Gorge, an ancient Aboriginal heritage sight, by Rio Tinto has again highlighted the inadequacy of the Aboriginal Heritage Act.

Rev Robert Jetta, Chair of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress WA (Congress), said that it is difficult to explain the impact of the loss of sacred sites.

“The sad truth is, we the Aboriginal people, have so often felt like strangers in our own land, yet we are the First Peoples. So many parts of our culture, our lives and our voice have been broken and

destroyed by the ‘progress’ of the colonisers. Our people are strong and we are still here holding onto our culture, but things like this – it still hurts.”

Together, the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress WA and the Uniting Church WA grieve the loss of these artefacts that tell the stories and hold the history of Aboriginal people and their culture over tens of thousands of years.

The Uniting Church WA will also call on the State and Federal Governments to fund and support Aboriginal organisations to reduce the number of Aboriginal children in Government care; and for the age of criminal responsibility to be raised from 10 to 14 years in Western Australia.

There are currently 47 000 children aged 0 to 17 in out of home care across Australia. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children make up most of this number.

Concern for children is a particularly important point for Congress. Through support for families to keep their children, connect with

their culture, and become healthier and happier, Congress sees a positive future for their people.

While there will continue to be circumstances where the safest option for children is in some form of out of home care, and there are excellent examples of the positive influence foster carers can have, there is also an inherent trauma in removing a child from their family and heightened risks of poor outcomes.

“Too many of our young people are being taken away and put in care or entering the prison system. It means this generation are reliving the trauma of many years ago,” said Robert.

“We want the Government to support us to look after our young people. The funds that are being used to take kids away and lock kids up, we need to be spending that money on prevention, on supporting young mums and families to keep their kids.”

Read more about these proposals on the Uniting Church WA website at unitingchurchwa.org.au/media-events/media-releases

New beginnings for Steve at Tranby

Rev Steve Francis, Ex-Moderator of the Uniting Church WA, is the new Chaplain of Tranby College, a Uniting Church school in Baldivis WA. Steve began the role in term 4, 2020, after he completed his role as Moderator in September.

Before serving a double, six-year term as Moderator, Steve served as the Minister of Nedlands Uniting Church, a large multicultural congregation, for twenty-three years. He has previously also worked as the State Youth Director for the Uniting Church WA.

Steve loves being with people of all ages. He enjoys the challenge of creatively communicating the love of Jesus Christ in both words and deeds.

After high school, he studied Engineering and worked in a

chocolate factory in the UK, a European airline in Germany and a mining company in the Pilbara.

Steve said it's a great joy and a learning curve to be 'Chaplain Steve' at Tranby College.

"Everyday feels like an adventure, meeting new students and staff in this warm and generous learning community," he said.

"I especially love the interaction with the younger students. I asked the Year One class to guess how old I am and one very confident boy said he knew. 'You are 23!' he said... Not a bad guess.

"I am learning to listen, to love and to pray for this community.

"Hopefully Chapel Services, which I will lead, will be opportunities to shape creative, age-appropriate worship and faith.



Rev Steve Francis, Chaplain at Tranby College, met with 2021 Chapel Captain Erica Meyering (left) and 2021 Service Captain Victoria Chitura to begin the planning to make Chapel services creative, stimulating and relevant next year.

"So many students have expressed to me how they missed Chapel during the COVID period.

"Chaplaincy has always been close to my heart, and investing the next few years of ministry in a school community is a wonderful God given opportunity. I am very grateful and hopefully up for the challenge."



Scenes from an Open Garden day held in Toodyay.

Toodyay back on deck

Sheena Hesse

A year of fundraising plans for Toodyay Uniting Church flew out of the window when COVID-19 restrictions came into place. In fact, we had to place all our plans on hold. Gradually we are slowly resuming our activities.

Spring in Toodyay is a beautiful time of the year and our first event for 2020 was an Open Garden on 10 October at a home in Settlers Ridge.

With social distancing in mind we were able to space out the visitors and allow them to wander the garden before enjoying a Devonshire Tea.

Our next event was a very successful Car Boot Sale held in the grounds of St Stephen's Anglican Church, who we share worship with. The church is situated on the main



A Car Boot Sale at St Stephen's Anglican Church in Toodyay helped fundraise for both the local Anglican and Uniting Churches.

road through the town and is an ideal spot for such an event.

Our last event for 2020 will be a Christmas Market stall in December. All our fundraising events are the combined effort of members of the Toodyay Anglican and Uniting Churches.



With Christmas just around the corner, these super tasty Tim Tam Balls will be a sure hit with guests. Lay them on the Christmas table or package them up and give them out as gifts.

They could also be quite easily decorated for Christmas; try adding a drizzle of melted white chocolate, or rolling them in desiccated coconut. Or even experiment with other flavours of Tim Tams to try something different.

Simple to make and good to eat!

This chocolatey treat was sent in by Heather Hamblin from Trinity North Uniting Church.

Have you got a favourite recipe? Send it in to revive@wa.uca.org.au or mail them to Revive magazine, GPO Box M952, Perth, 6843.

Tim Tam Balls

Ingredients

2 packets of Arnott's Tim Tams

250g block of Philadelphia Cream Cheese

Melting milk chocolate

Method

Crush the Tim Tams and blend in a food processor with the cream cheese.

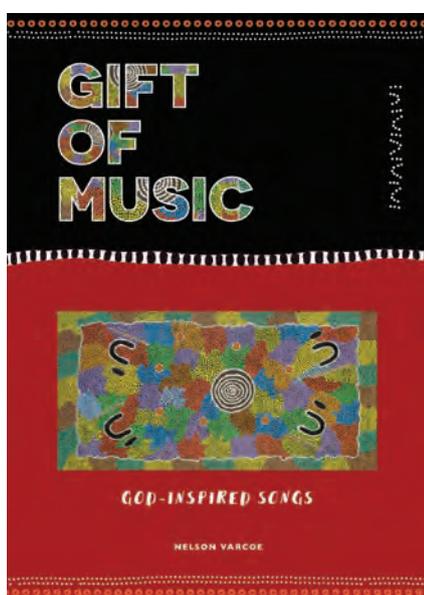
Roll mixture into balls.

Dip in melted chocolate and refrigerate until set.



Gift of Music, Songbook and CD

by Nelson Varcoe
Adelaide Congress Ministry, 2020



Margaret Gunn

Nelson Varcoe remembers his Uncles singing old gospel songs around the camp fires at Point Pearce Mission, Yorke Peninsula, the music echoing across the plains on hot summer nights. As a 12-year-old, he salvaged choke wires from an old Model T-Ford to cobble together his first guitar. “It sounded pretty good,” he says.

Now, after a lifetime of ministry and service, Nelson has published his first collection of 25 original ‘God-inspired’ songs in country-gospel style, dedicated to his mentors: “Aboriginal Christian Pioneers who travelled all across this country on the smell of an oily rag, to bring the gospel to our people.”

Melody lines, guitar chords and full lyrics are included in the book, but the CD brings the songs to life and makes the music accessible to all people, regardless of their musical skills.

Nelson’s lyrics arise from a range of faith experiences: a retelling of the story of Nehemiah, or the disciples in a storm, a longing for ‘a Moses-moment’ on the mountain, the reassurance of the ‘Shield [of the] Most High’ for

someone running ‘like a rabbit in the field’ or the call to stop and meditate in the quiet beauty of ‘Meroo’.

The title song: ‘Gift of Music’ – a catchy tune like so many of the others – expresses Nelson’s personal joy and gratitude for the gifts God has given.

These songs have grown out of Nelson’s ministry as a pastor and chaplain, educator and artist. In the Foreword, his colleague writes, “Nelson has the capacity to tune into what is going on in the atmosphere of a certain event, confrontation or encounter, and to find music and words which somehow embody, enunciate or express the deep things of that moment.”

His own worship community knows each song by heart and helped choose the front cover design, which incorporates one of Nelson’s original paintings. He has shared many of the songs around the country, at the Festival Theatre, Adelaide, ecumenical gatherings, Uniting Church Synod meetings, city workshops and remote communities.

The publication is available from Uniting Church South Australia Mission Resourcing. Email mr@sa.uca.org.au or phone (08) 8236 4200 (\$29.95 + \$10 postage and packaging).

* Margaret Gunn has transcribed the songs and edited the book.

OPENING DOORS: A SEEKER'S REFLECTIONS ON THE ROOMS OF CHRISTIAN LIVING

by Kevin Treston, Coventry Press, 2019

Keith Suter

Kevin Treston, based in Brisbane, has written many books to assist adult faith formation within the Australian Catholic church. This is a short, readable book that is ideal for any Christian discussion group or for individual reflection.

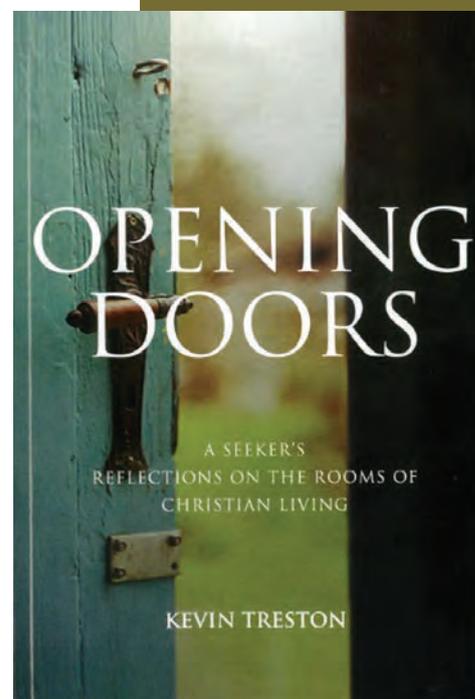
The eleven 'doors' are different aspects of Christian living. Each chapter opens with a key question, such as "how does your faith life touch your everyday happenings?" "How might our Christian faith be fully integrated within the whole web of life in the universe?" "What are key issues in Christian moral teachings today?" "How is your membership of the church significant or not significant in your faith life now?" And "How do you see the role of a Christian in the world today?"

Each chapter ends with group conversation starters and is well written and bound to provoke discussion. Indeed, it is amazing

how much content is packed into each short chapter.

Underpinning the book is Treston's idea that the Christian church is heading into a new era. He sees three great movements in the 2 000 years of the Christian story: 'the beginning' (God's revelation in Jesus as the Christ: Jewish heritage is the primal setting for how Jesus as the Christ story is told and celebrated); 'traditional story' (the Christian story is shaped by Greek philosophies and Roman European cultures from the 4th century until our present age); and the 'emerging cosmic story' (now there is a reframing of the Christian story, which requires teachings, theology, spirituality, liturgy, and ethical living to be reconciled with the challenging new information on the universe, modern science and the new consciousness).

I would encourage all members of the Uniting Church to read this book. It is not necessarily a specifically 'Catholic' book. The questions challenge each of us to have a clear position (which can of



course evolve over time) on each of the matters raised.

The Christian viewpoint in Australian life may be becoming a minority viewpoint. But people outside the church are still curious as to why some of us remain within the church. Each person should have some answers to the questions raised in this book and so will have a sharper perception of their faith. They will then be in a good position to respond to questioners.

The Spirit of Christmas

As we approach Christmas, Rev Dr Christine Sorensen, Uniting Church WA Presbytery Minister – Formation and Discipleship, asks what does the ‘spirituality of Christmas’ have in common with ‘the spirit of Christmas’?

Spirituality is a word that has gained such currency in our modern world it means everything and nothing. One of the ways we can give parameters to spirituality is to think of spirituality as being a capacity for self-transcendence, and then more narrowly define human, religious and Christian spirituality.

- Human spirituality can be seen as the ways that all people make connections and find meaning in their lives, to have meaning beyond themselves.
- Religious spirituality has finding integration and connection in conjunction with a higher power, or within a broader set of religious structures. As Christians we share this kind of spirituality with those of other faiths who seek transcendence beyond themselves.
- Christian Spirituality is more specifically the ways that we find meaning and purpose in relationship with the Triune God.

When we start to think about what is going on as we approach

Christmas and the spirituality that we may encounter, it could be helpful to break down the spirituality of Christmas as human, religious and Christian.

Human spirituality at Christmas may be the very general bonhomie and good humour of the season, seen in celebrating the love we hold as families and the sense of family connection, gift giving and receiving, and joy and fulfilment in enjoying hospitality.

Some of us will come from families where all the spirituality of Christmas is contained in these things. Others will know that this is a part of what we celebrate and yet reach out for something deeper.

Religious spirituality at Christmas may link to the awareness, in a time of memories, of Christmases past and family gatherings, and even an embedded longing for ‘something’ more. Christmas is

full of outward symbols and practices that point to meaning making, to trying to find sense and connection through familiar religious images, and concepts of connection and gift giving.

In the community and civic sphere we see Christmas trees, community carol services, and shopping centres endlessly playing seasonal music, all ways of satisfying a need for religious tradition and building a sense of connection.

People will participate in worship services who would not ordinarily join us, knowing or searching for transcendence and meaning. Those of other faiths may join us in knowing that this is a meaning-making event that while not shared in particularity, for us Christmas has religious significance. When I lived in Pakistan I would receive Christmas wishes (and cakes and other gifts) at Christmas and Easter from Muslim friends, reciprocated at the equivalent time in their religious calendar.

Christian Spirituality at Christmas encompasses the above, but is centred in the meaning-making of a God who became incarnate in our world.



While Pentecost is often associated in our minds as the moment of the Spirit's flowing out into the world, the time of Christ's coming is of course a 'Spirit' moment. Expectant people waiting, a supernatural movement of the Spirit, messages about Jesus, and praise and prophecy are part of both the Incarnation and Pentecost stories.

The expectancy is from the promises pointing to the coming Emmanuel who would change the world. John's mother witnesses

to the presence of the Spirit when pregnant Mary visits, and the child in her womb moves. Mary uses words spoken centuries earlier by Hannah to speak of how the coming child, imbued by the Spirit, would turn around systems that oppress people. Angelic voices speak of good news of great joy, and of peace and goodwill over the earth. Prophets Simeon and Anna speak of salvation, and revelation, but also of the ensuing struggle in a world that will not accept the Spirit that fills the newly born child.

As we approach Christmas, we can choose to simply enter into a 'spirituality' of our human connectedness, or we may bear the Spirit of the Incarnate One, who came that the world might be turned upside down. We may find ways to help people move toward a spirituality of Christmas that is something beyond human connection.

May you have a Spirit-filled Christmas.

The road to Badjaling

Rev Dr Alison Longworth, retired Uniting Church WA Minister, shares her experience of revisiting Badjaling, while traveling from Perth to Quairading to lead worship.

After the easing of restrictions due to COVID-19, Western Australians were being encouraged to 'Wander out Yonder' and I was preparing to travel into the wheatbelt. On the Sunday morning I was committed to lead worship with the Quairading Uniting Church and in the afternoon I had arranged a visit to the Ballardong Noongar community at Badjaling, a few kilometres east of the town.

My connection to Badjaling began in 1987 when I visited the former Mission site with my family. The recently erected memorial plaque acknowledged two missionaries, and the thirty-nine Noongar families who lived on the Reserve near the railway siding from 1930 to 1954. My Great Aunt Mary Belshaw was the founding missionary, hence my initial interest.

I have made return visits over the years, met with Noongar Elders, searched the archives and from time to time also led worship with members of Quairading Uniting Church.

In mid-October, my husband Robin and I set out from our home in Perth and followed the road map over

the Darling Scarp and through the countryside, passing the historic town of York, the hamlet of Dangin and on to Quairading, where wildflowers bloomed in the church garden.

It was a small faithful group who met for worship that day. There was a warm welcome as always; fresh flowers were placed on the table.

As I was preparing for this road trip, I had been hearing the expression that Australia was on a 'Roadmap to Nowhere'. That morning the ABC News announced that the Victorian Premier was expected to announce his Roadmap to Recovery from restrictions imposed due to a second wave of COVID-19 in that state.

In the lectionary reading that day, from Exodus 33, the people of God were lost in the desert and without a road map. Moses pleaded with God, "Give me a road map through this desert, show me your way."

And while Moses would not see the full glory of God, he learned God's presence would be with him on the journey and that would be enough.

Focused on the metaphor of journeying, I had brought a small ceramic labyrinth to show the congregation. I explained a labyrinth is not a maze, where we are liable to become lost. A labyrinth has only one path and it leads to the centre. From there the path leads back out into the world.

With enough printed versions of a labyrinth for everyone, in a time of silent meditation we each followed the path through to the centre, reflecting on our journey with God and back to the country around us and the people and situations we care about.

As I quickly discovered, I was not introducing anything new. The Uniting and Anglican congregations from time to time share worship together and people were already experienced at walking the labyrinth at the front of St Faiths Anglican Church. I resolved to visit the garden labyrinth before leaving town, but I already had a commitment for the afternoon and that was to catch-up with Ballardong Elder, Murray Yarran at Badjaling.

The road to Badjaling is ten kilometres along the Quairading to Bruce Rock Road. As we travelled, we saw wheat fields ripening for harvest. Extensive clearing throughout the twentieth century has resulted in salt affected land. Years of grazing and cropping meant less wildflowers, apart from remnant patches of bush. Attempts have been made to restore the land by tree planting along fence lines while a commercial crop of sandalwood trees was a new venture since my last visit a few years ago.

Once safely there, Murray, Robin and I yarned about the hardships and the happy times in the story of his people at Badjaling. We listened as

Murray shared his vision for spiritual and community building.

Our visit concluded with the short walk to the memorial plaque.

The day ended with our return to the Quairading Anglican Church where I walked the labyrinth. It took a while as there were many twists

and turns. It was a metaphor of our spiritual journey and the way the centre leads us back into the world.

As I emerged from the labyrinth, I carried with me the memory of the people and places encountered on this road trip and gave thanks for them and the presence of God on the journey.



St Faith's Anglican Church, Quairading, features a labyrinth for spiritual reflection.



Alison's husband, Robin Longworth, with Murray Yarran, member of the Ballardong Noongar Community.



Rev Dr Alison Longworth (right) with members of Quairading Uniting Church.

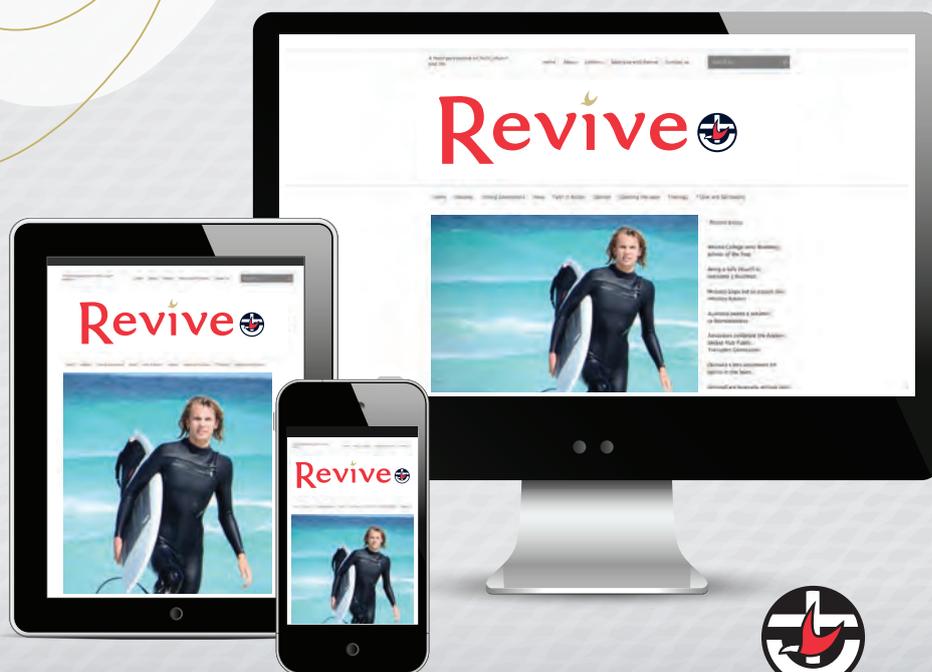


Rev Dr Alison Longworth with Murray Yarran at a memorial plaque at Badjalng.

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