

34. UnitingWorld WA Commission

<i>Chairperson</i>	Dr Elaine Ledgerwood
<i>General Secretary</i>	Rev David de Kock
<i>Staff</i>	Geoff Bice Kate Leaney
<i>Members elected by Synod</i>	Lee-Anne Burnett Kerry Povey John Jeffreys Rev Brian Thorpe Susy Thomas Alison Dyall

1. INTRODUCTION

The UnitingWorld WA Commission has had another very busy year working to support our international partner churches in the important development work they do in their communities. Along with conducting ongoing fundraising campaigns and education efforts within our congregations, members of the commission and its network of supporting congregations have conducted visits to West Papua, West Timor, Timor Leste and soon to Sri Lanka to assist our partners and further strengthen our relationships across the region.

2. GOVERNANCE AND RISK MANAGEMENT

The UnitingWorld WA Commission has been consistently working through improving its risk management and governance procedures this year. As of 2017 we assigned an extra meeting every second month to developing more robust governance procedures. This has allowed the group to clarify the broad scope of risks that need to be managed across the various activities and projects supported. We also developed a self-assessment tool to assist congregations to reflect on their own practices when supporting partner churches in development work. It is hoped that this will help congregations adopt best-practice approaches and avoid common pitfalls experienced across the development sector.

3. COLLABORATING COMMUNITIES FOR CHANGE

The UnitingWorld WA Commission has encouraged local WA congregations to collaborate together in order to support our partner churches and organisations. The original model for this has been the Floreat, Trinity North and Wembley Downs congregations co-ordinating their support for our partner church in West Papua. This has seen fantastic collaboration across these congregations as they have worked together to fundraise, build relationships and provide support for the church in West Papua. The UnitingWorld WA Commission sees these inter-congregation approaches as an excellent platform for the implementation of the Synod's strategic collaborating communities plan.

Following this model, South Perth and Uniting Church in the City congregations are working together in similar way to support the Methodist Church in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, a working group has recently formed with representatives from St Augustine's, Melville, and Foothills Uniting Churches to explore how they might be able to collaborate to support Lafaek Diak in Timor Leste.

This approach means that local congregations are able to understand the work of our partner churches more closely and develop more meaningful connections, rather than just giving money or allowing the Synod to act on their behalf. For congregations who have chosen to engage in this way, it has been particularly uplifting as people are drawn in to achieving a common goal.

If there are any other congregations interested in engaging in international development work by joining or forming a working group they can get in touch with Geoff Bice or Kate Leaney at the Uniting Church Centre or anyone from the UnitingWorld WA Commission.

4. UNITINGWORLD NATIONAL

Conversations this year with the national UnitingWorld office have been beneficial in improving our compliance and risk management procedures. The UnitingWorld WA Commission has enjoyed a positive working relationship with UnitingWorld National, following improved communications and practices between both parties. In July, Geoff Bice was invited to join UnitingWorld and our international partners in Bali for the South East Asian Regional UnitingWorld conference. This was a very positive forum discussing gender justice and program development.

5. COUNTRY REPORTS

The UnitingWorld WA Commission has active engagement with a number of international partners:

5.1 Sri Lanka

At the 2013 Synod it was agreed that we, as a Synod, would support preschools operated by the Methodist Church in Sri Lanka. There are five preschools we now support across the North and East of the country in areas of particular need.

We now follow our Letter of Agreement with the Methodist Church in Sri Lanka to provide funding of over \$16,000 to provide quality preschool education, including provision of nutritious meals while the children are at school.

A recently formed working group is co-ordinating the fundraising efforts which have included a Bollywood themed dinner at Mt Pleasant Uniting Church and a curry lunch at Uniting Church in the City. There are further fundraising plans in place for the remainder of the year as well as a visit to the Sri Lankan preschools scheduled for late September.

5.2 West Papua

The Black Pearl Network conducted another visit to the Papua region of Indonesia in May 2018 to visit our partner church Gereja Kristen Injili Indonesia di Tanah Papua (GKI-TP) including members of Floreat, Victoria Park and Districts Star St and Trinity North Uniting Church congregations, accompanied by Geoff Bice.

The Australian Papuan Cultural Exchange Program (APCEP) intensive English language program will be conducted again in 2019 for ten students. This is a highly successful program organised by a dedicated coordination team from Floreat and Trinity North Uniting Churches. Donations are still being sought to cover the cost of the three month program.

English language courses are being run in the Sarmi and Nabire districts with local teachers employed to run classes. Other classes are also being established in the Waibu-Moi and Sentani areas.

Demonstrations of the Days for Girls program have taken place to distribute feminine hygiene packs and educate girls and women on their basic healthcare and human rights.

The Black Pearl Network were also pleased to host a group of 40 Masters students on a week-long field trip in August. The group were shown around various Uniting Church facilities and agencies to improve their awareness of service provision options for their home setting.

Support for the LEMAK water and sanitation organisation has now been limited to the sharing of relevant expertise.

5.3 West Timor

Connections with the local church in West Timor and the Christian University of West Timor (UKAW) through Nedlands Uniting Church continue to yield benefits.

Two experienced English language teachers in Lyn Callaghan and Vern Lloyd travelled to West Timor along with Gwyneth Graham and her daughter Robin in July. As well as providing intensive

English language training the group were able to connect with university staff and scholarship students.

A group of academics continue to provide assistance to the University including Professor David Scott, Professor Bostang Radjagukguk, Dr Seet (Sid) Lip Chai and Professor Colin Binns. The expertise of these people has been welcomed across the fields of water harvesting and water management, agriculture, enterprise development and climate change adaptation.

It is also with sadness that we acknowledge the loss of Dr Peter Graham from the Nedlands Uniting Church West Timor support group. Peter was fundamental to the establishment of the connection with UKAW and is great loss to the group. Support for West Timor was one of the many humanitarian contributions Peter made throughout his life of generosity.

5.4 Timor Leste

Our partnership with Fundação Lafaek Diak (FLD) in Timor Leste continues. FLD run a range of development activities including a scholarship program for health care students. FLD have faced a few staffing issues as it is difficult to retain qualified staff in remote areas but despite this they have an average of 2,576 people per month who use their healthcare services.

Recently a working group of representatives from a number of supportive Uniting Church congregations have begun planning to better co-ordinate our support and fundraising efforts for FLD.

6. COMMISSION MEMBERSHIP

This year, the Uniting World Commission has had some members resign due to having completed their ten years of service. As a result, we are particularly looking for new members. The membership of the commission do not need to be involved in a specific project, only to have the interest and passion for supporting what our partners are doing in their countries. We always need a few members who are not traveling. If you, or someone you know, are interested in supporting our partner churches in this way, please contact Geoff Bice or any of the UnitingWorld WA Commission members.

7. CONCLUDING AS CHAIR

Having been involved in the Uniting World WA Commission (and its predecessors) more on than off since 2002, it is now time for me to retire both as Chair and from the UnitingWorld WA Commission. This has been brought on in part by coming to the end of ten years of service, and also due to my new role working for CEDAL. It has been a privilege to lead this commission to new ventures and through new approaches. I would like to thank all the past and present members of the UnitingWorld WA Commission with whom I have worked for their dedication, creativity, and willingness to get involved in this important work of the church. Although I will no longer be actively involved in UnitingWorld on such a regular basis, I look forward to working together in joint activities. I will watch with interest the new directions and approaches of UnitingWorld WA and I wish the commission every blessing for future.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The UnitingWorld WA Commission recognises and acknowledges, with thanks, the contribution made by Uniting Church WA congregations in support of the commission's international partner churches and organisations, in particular:

- **Sri Lanka**
 - Uniting Church in the City
 - South Perth Uniting Church
- **West Papua**
 - Floreat Uniting Church
 - Wembley Downs Uniting Church
 - Trinity North Uniting Church

- Uniting Church in the City
- **West Timor**
 - Nedlands Uniting Church
- **Timor Leste**
 - Foothills Uniting Church
 - Melville Uniting Church

The UnitingWorld WA Commission also recognises and acknowledges congregations exploring support for UnitingWorld WA Commission's partner churches and organisations, including:

- St Augustine's Bunbury Uniting Church
- Kalamunda Uniting Church

9. CONCLUSION

If you are interested in being involved in the work of the UnitingWorld WA Commission or would like to explore ways for your congregation to engage with our international partners, please contact Geoff Bice or any of the commission members. Members of the UnitingWorld WA Commission are always pleased to be invited to speak at congregations and other gatherings to share the work of UnitingWorld and our partner churches.

Dr Elaine Ledgerwood
e.ledgerwood@iinet.net.au