



International Partnerships & Development Commission (Formerly the UnitingWorld WA Commission)

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	Kerry Povey
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INTRODUCTION

The International Partnerships & Development Commission (IPDC – formerly the UnitingWorld WA Commission) has had another very productive 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 Sri Lanka to assist our partners and further strengthen our relationships across the region.

The IPDC is a Synod Commission under By-law S2.6 exercising the powers and responsibilities of the Synod. A key challenge for the Commission is meeting the requirements of the new External Conduct Standards which the Australian Government has mandated for all international operations and donations.

COUNTRY REPORTS

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

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 5 preschools we support across the North and East of the country in areas of particular need.

We now follow our annual Letter of Agreement with the Methodist Church in Sri Lanka to provide funding of about \$16,000 to provide quality preschool education, including provision of nutritious meals while the children are at school. The MCSL have requested a longer-term commitment but this has been placed on hold until the project can be reviewed in light of the new ACNC Standards.

South Perth UC have run a sausage sizzle fundraiser at Bunnings and another Bollywood themed fundraising dinner for June in collaboration with Wesley College. UCIC have agreed to host another curry lunch. Contributions from Mt Pleasant UC, South Perth UC, Gingin UC, Applecross UC and Ross Memorial UC have been gratefully received.

Susy Thomas, Hannes Halgrin and Kate Leaney visited Sri Lanka in September 2018. This was warmly welcomed by the MCSL and provided first-hand knowledge of the impacts of our support and an opportunity to collect stories to share with donors.



West Papua

The Black Pearl Network conducted visits to the Papua region of Indonesia in November 2018 and May 2019 to our partner church Gereja Kristen Injili Indonesia di Tanah Papua (GKI-TP) including members of the Floreat, Star St and Trinity North UC congregations, accompanied by the Moderator in November and Geoff Bice in May.

The Australian Papuan Cultural Exchange Program (APCEP) intensive English language program was conducted again in 2019 with great success. Thanks go to the many volunteers, donors, hosts and congregations who were part of this year's APCEP including Dongara UC and Margaret River UC. English language courses have rapidly expanded in up to thirteen different locations across Papua. Progress has been made to formalise the program's management as a registered organisation within Indonesia and the Black Pearl Network (as an operation of the Floreat Creative Living Centre) have developed a raft of policies to demonstrate compliance with the new ACNC Standards.

Demonstrations of the Days for Girls program have continued to take place to distribute feminine hygiene packs and educate girls and women on their basic healthcare and human rights. Pilot sites for clean rainwater capture and storage have also been established across at least 7 locations.

West Timor

Connections with the local church in West Timor and the Christian University of West Timor (UKAW) through the Nedlands Uniting Church continue with student scholarships and visiting academics. In February four lecturers from UKAW were hosted in Perth for a month to join the APCEP course run by the Black Pearl network. Lyn Callaghan will be visiting West Timor in August to attend the UKAW graduation.

Timor Leste

Our partnership with Fundação Lafaek Diak (FLD) in Timor Leste continues. FLD run a range of activities and on average have 2,576 people per month who use their healthcare services.

A working group of representatives from supportive Uniting Church congregations have recently run a fundraising "Trek for Timor" from Kalamunda UC to Foothills UC. More than 30 participants successfully raised funds to employ a driver for a mobile health clinic to reach remote villages.

KEY FOCUS AREAS:

- **Governance and risk management**

The UnitingWorld WA Commission has continued working to improve 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.

There is now, however, a greater burden of compliance required to meet the new External Conduct Standards from the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC). All charities that operate or donate overseas, including those classified as Basic Religious Charities, must comply with the new Standards. The Standards cover:

- How charities control their funds, goods and other resources
- The need for an annual review of overseas activities and record keeping

- Anti-fraud and anti-corruption guidelines
- Measures aimed at protecting vulnerable individuals

This has ramifications for each of the direct partnership arrangements the Synod maintains, and also for donations made by congregations to charities operating internationally. The Commission will be working with congregations to provide awareness of compliance requirements. To manage the risk and ensure compliance the Commission is working with UnitingWorld and the Synod's Insurance and Risk Manager to review operations.

- **Country specific sub-groups**

The 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 coordinating 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.

Following this model, representatives from the South Perth and Uniting Church in the City congregations have been working together in a similar way to support the Methodist Church in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, a working group has also formed with representatives from St Augustine's and Foothills congregations to build support for 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. This approach also connects people across congregations in achieving a common goal.

- **UnitingWorld National**

Regular communication with UnitingWorld continues to take place to ensure as much cooperation and coordination as possible. UnitingWorld have again invited Geoff to participate in their annual South East Asia Regional Conference in July. While Geoff was unable to attend, the Black Pearl Network's Papuan Manager Fred Bundah was present.

Geoff and Kate attended the Micah Network's Voices for Justice lobbying event in Canberra at the invitation of UnitingWorld. They met with many federal politicians to advocate for improved funding for international development among other topics. This was done at their own expense but as an addition to an Assembly justice staff conference they attended in Sydney covered by the Synod.

KEY CHALLENGES

Some of the key issues the Commission is dealing with include:

- Risk management and compliance – as mentioned, the new ACNC Standards require a review of the Commission's operations. A process has begun to identify what international donations or support is being provided by UC congregations.
- Naming – there have been some confusions about the relationship between the Commission and UnitingWorld national, given that we both have "UnitingWorld" in our name. While this was originally a deliberate way to demonstrate our coordinated efforts, this seems to create more misunderstandings than benefits. It is important that people understand that UnitingWorld and the UnitingWorld WA Commission are separate entities with different financial arrangements and reporting systems but due to the similarity in naming this has not always been clear and misunderstandings have arisen.

We want it also to be clear that the two entities are very much part of the same Uniting Church and share the same international partner churches and will continue to cooperate wherever possible.

The Synod Standing Committee has therefore agreed that the Commission be known as the: International Partnerships and Development Commission. We believe this name reflects the nature of the work we are engaged in and adequately distinguishes us from UnitingWorld.

- Staffing and membership – Since our last report Marg Staffa has finished up in her role providing administrative support, but it is pleasing to see Kate Leaney being given a permanent position. Brian Thorpe has become secretary of the Commission as a way of reducing Kate’s workload. There is still a need for more members on the Commission.
- Fundraising – there is a continuous pressure to sustain our fundraising responsibilities across all our partnerships, but we continue to explore different methods and relationships to meet our commitments.

PLANNING

The Commission has communicated with all congregations requesting them to advise us of any international donations or support they provide.

The Commission will continue to review projects and advise on best practice approaches to comply with ACNC Standards.

The Commission will continue to support the development of sub-groups to focus congregational support for particular projects.

The Commission will continue to reach out to congregations and schools to engage support for the development work of our partners.

PROPOSAL

The Commission is concerned about the Federal Government’s repeated cuts to the Australian Aid budget and so submits the attached proposal seeking: “A Generous Australian Aid Commitment”.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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

Sri Lanka

- Uniting Church in the City
- South Perth Uniting Church
- Mt Pleasant Uniting Church
- Applecross Uniting Church
- Gingin Uniting Church
- Ross Memorial 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
 - St Augustine's Uniting Church

CONCLUSION

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

Susy Thomas
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