

# UNITINGWORLD

ISSUE 1  
2019

## WHERE DO YOU FIND COURAGE IN A FEARFUL WORLD?

“Courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at its testing point.” – CS Lewis.

Love, compassion, justice, kindness, honesty, steadfastness – without courage, so many virtues would falter before their first steps were taken. Within our Uniting Church family, both locally and globally, we hear stories of people brave enough to walk long journeys that test them at every point. In the lead-up to Easter this year, we wanted to share some of them with you as an encouragement to you in your life and faith.

### From Timor Leste:

Meet Albino, Albert, Ana, Rosita, Stephanie and Maria. Albino grew up during the war for his homeland and persevered to lead his church in the effort to serve among the poor. Albert and Ana are clinic nurses raising their own families in hard to reach places outside Dili. Rosita and Maria have fought and won against disease. Stephanie will help raise the next generation of leaders from among Timor Leste’s children, arming them with hope and the love of God. Each has known the courage to continue even in dire circumstances.



Stephanie, a young leader from the church in Timor Leste.

### From Australia:

Noel and Noela, David, Sharon, Sue, Steve, Thresi. Some are members of local congregations; some are Moderators of our church. Each shares a story – of lives changed by mental illness, encounters with our Aboriginal brothers and sisters, the love of family.

We invite you to be involved with these stories of courage by signing up to be inspired and live simply through Lent Event this year. You can read weekly theological reflections on courage both local and global; live simply and give (or take) up something for forty days to raise money for life-changing health, leadership and education projects.

lentevent



Rev Albino, Protestant Church of Timor Leste



Noel and Noela, Glebe Road Uniting Church in Ipswich QLD

### HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

Find stories, prayers and resources online at [www.lentevent.com](http://www.lentevent.com)  
It's not too late to join us as we aim to raise \$350,000 to support the work of our partners and celebrate courage in a fearful world.



UnitingWorld  
connecting communities for life

UnitingWorld is the international aid and partnerships agency of the Uniting Church in Australia. Together we work for a world where lives are whole and hopeful, free from poverty and injustice. Because every person matters.

## PEACE IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA



Church and community leaders travelled from across the southern highlands of Papua New Guinea to participate in the Young Ambassadors for Peace workshop.

## REPAIRING MORE THAN ROOFS

Kina Somare\* is wanted throughout the Highlands of Papua New Guinea on numerous counts of violence. Leader of a well-known gang that frequently clashes with others in the region, his face is both known and feared. So when he walks into a peace workshop one still afternoon in October, amidst the rubble of Hela Province's worst earthquake since 1922, everyone in the church stands very still.



Our partners have been installing water tanks around earthquake affected communities in the southern highlands. This one is being held up by two recycled car chassis. Innovation for elevation!

Somare walks out a changed man. He speaks with local police. He wants to become an ambassador for peace personally and to influence other young people to bring healing to the community. His transformation is staggering.

"The Bishop of the United Church in PNG (UCPNG), who was taking part that day, found Somare's presence particularly unnerving," says UCPNG Disaster Office Project Manager Stella Vika.

"He'd been held up by this man at knife point not so long ago. They met, reconciled and Somare gave his life to Christ. Our partners up in Hela Province are really blown away by this story. To have someone of such notoriety undergo such a change is incredibly encouraging."

The United Church of Papua New Guinea, in partnership with UnitingWorld, has been running peace workshops and counselling for people impacted by the recent earthquake. Like other aid agencies, UnitingWorld was on hand with sanitation kits and practical items, but the long-term work of helping people recover emotionally and psychologically is incredibly important.

### HELP US BE DISASTER READY.

Every dollar donated before disaster strikes doesn't just save countless lives – it saves significant amounts of money. Every \$1 invested into building better homes, preparing evacuation plans and protecting communities can save as much as \$15 in the aftermath of a tragedy. Please, if you're able, add to our disaster-ready fund at [www.unitingworld.org.au/ready](http://www.unitingworld.org.au/ready)

**"Disasters frequently damage infrastructure and livelihoods but they can also increase vulnerability and conflict,"** says David Brice, Disaster Relief Coordinator with UnitingWorld. **"Giving people access to counselling and the tools to navigate conflict has a significant impact on how quickly these communities can heal and recover."**

**It's one of the unique ways your donations go further with UnitingWorld.** Your support doesn't just address the practical problems of clean water and repaired roofing – it builds people's resilience to tackle issues that accelerate after disaster. And men like Somare are changed in the process. Given the skills not just to rebuild their homes but their lives, they embrace the opportunity to bring change.

Thanks for your support and vision bringing hope and wholeness. We greatly appreciate every dollar you give and all your prayers for those experiencing disaster.

*\*Name changed to protect identity*

## A GREATER HOPE

## VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Some years ago, Reverend Lindsay and Mrs Marcia Shephard were part of a congregation in Sydney with a passion to give sight to the blind.

It wasn't simply a metaphor. It actually happened. Through a partnership with UnitingWorld and a project in Fiji, men and women blinded due to cataracts were restored to sight. The experience moved the Shephards so much that they continued and increased their commitment to UnitingWorld – having been regular givers for some thirty years, they recently made a significant gift in their will to ensure projects like these can continue for many years.

"We have both had a deep commitment to the mission of the Church beyond the local

congregation, arising out of Christ's call to discipleship and the powerful word of God throughout the scriptures for justice," the Shephards say.

"While there are many situations in Australia that we see as needing support, it's our deep desire to continue our commitment to the work of UnitingWorld as this often takes place among some of the most disadvantaged peoples and communities in our world. We have a deep desire to help these people find pathways to a new and fulfilling life."

We're grateful to the Shephards and others like them who, through their faithfulness and commitment, will make such a significant difference to our work into the future.



Rev Lindsay and Marcia Shephard

If you're interested to know more about how to make a Bequest, please contact Rev Paul Bartlett at [PaulB@unitingworld.org.au](mailto:PaulB@unitingworld.org.au) or (02) 8267 4479.



Redcliff Uniting Church gift stall



Students from Moreton Bay College in Brisbane raised \$2,000 during Everything in Common

## SHARING EVERYTHING IN COMMON

Everything in Common has been a great success and it was all thanks to you.

Together over 100 gift stalls across the country have sold more than 5,300 life-changing Christmas gifts (and counting). The gifts you gave will help us provide clean water, education and income opportunities for families in the Pacific, Asia and Africa to live with dignity and hope.

Remember you can still shop online for our gifts right throughout the year! We have all-occasion greeting cards with some great designs and you can also make a donation on a loved one's behalf and send them a personalised e-card to let them know.

[www.everythingincommon.com.au](http://www.everythingincommon.com.au)

**We are still collecting funds from church stallholders so make sure you send yours back to us ASAP so we can put them to work!**

## A LENTEN PRAYER

Dear God,  
We are the children of Timor Leste dreaming of the future – we are born to families too poor to help us finish school, our leaders have often had to show the way in secret during war and conflict, and we are still learning how to use our voices. But our ideas shine bright.

**God hear us: we are the children dreaming of the future.**

We are the children longing for safety in places where war has robbed our parents of their childhoods, their memories, their families, their feelings. We do not want to be the victims of violence, in our homes or on the street, and we need people to stand up for us, creating a better way.

**God hear us: we are the children longing for safety.**

We are the children looking for love. Among our friends, within our families, in the heart of the God we hear about from our leaders and Sunday School teachers who tell us we are worth it. We want to believe, but hoping is hard.

**God hear us: we are the children looking for love.**

We are all your children and we pray for our friends in Timor Leste. Teaching, guiding, nurturing and loving in your name. Give us the courage to stand beside our neighbours as they build a nation and to see each child as precious as our own.

**God hear us,  
We are all your children.**

**Amen.**

## A SPECIAL THANKYOU FROM FIJI



**We were thrilled to receive a handwritten letter from a student who has been part of our Informal settlement school subsidy program in Fiji. Mira\* just graduated and wanted to say a big thank you to the Uniting Church for supporting her education.**

Many of you gave a 'Set for School' gift card last Christmas, supporting students like Mira to get through school on an equal footing with her peers. It's great to see the joy and impact it can make.

*\*Real name changed.*

*\*\*We have reproduced parts of Mira's letter to remove references to names and specific locations to protect her privacy.*

Suva, Fiji / 7 Feb, 2019\*\*

**The heads/members. Uniting Church, Australia**

*I am glad to write this letter of appreciation for the support of the Uniting Church towards my education life.*

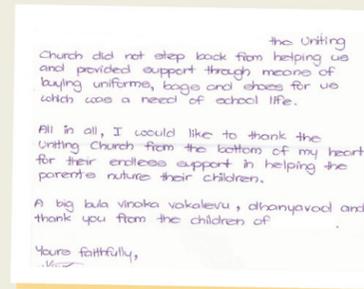
*It was indeed a proud moment for my parents to see their daughter graduate out of high school with having much burden on their shoulders to educate me. Furthermore, this attainment of education also moulded me to contribute towards the works of the church by becoming a Sunday school teacher.*

*The Uniting Church did not step back from helping us and provided support through means of buying uniforms, bags and shoes for us which was a need of school life.*

*All in all, I would like to thank the Uniting Church from the bottom of my heart for their endless support in helping the parents nurture their children.*

*A big bula vinaka vakalevu, dhanyarad and thank you from the children of \_\_\_\_\_.*

*Yours Faithfully, Mira\**



## TURN THE OTHER CHEEK

### GENDER EQUALITY THEOLOGY CHANGING HEARTS AND MINDS IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

*Salote and Jone have been married 11 years, members of a Christian church, and have two beautiful children.*

*They love one another, but throughout their marriage they've had times of conflict and Jone has become angry, abusive and resorted to violence. Each time he pleads for forgiveness, vows to change and for a time makes good on his promise. Each time, violence returns. Salote wants to believe that everyone, with the love of God, can change, but she fears for her life and for the welfare of her children. She asks the advice of her Pastor.*

This is the scenario a group of men and women are grappling with in a frostily air-conditioned room in the offices of the United Church of Papua New Guinea, Port Moresby, on a typically hot February day. They've come from all over the country – the Highlands, New Britain, Goroka – and they represent different denominations, universities and groups united by a common desire to see an end to violence against women. This week, their unexpected secret weapon is better theology.

"Almost everyone in Papua New Guinea is a Christian, which completely underpins the culture," explains University lecturer Theresa, who has come to be part of the Community of Practice meeting, seeking inspiration for her gender and social studies lectures. "But most have only a shallow understanding of what the Bible really says about men and women.



Gender Equality Theology Community of Practice members in Papua New Guinea

It's enough for many men to believe their marriages are ordained by God, or that they are superior to women. In reality, there's so much more to what the Scriptures say about the equality of men and women. Understanding this properly changes everything."

Watching the group grapple with what advice a Pastor should give to the couple is an interesting experience. Earlier, a Bible study by Rev Dr Seforosa Carroll has unpacked a passage from Matthew about turning the other cheek – a concept that for decades has been part of the powerful brew holding faithful women captive in abusive marriages. Rev Dr Carroll, however, explains that in the culture of Jesus' day, rather than passively accepting or inviting further violence, 'turning the other cheek' could quite literally have created a radically different dynamic between two people and restored a sense of equality and dignity. The interpretation opens new possibilities in the room and creates a buzz that spills over into discussion and

controversy around the case study. For some, the issue hits close to the heart. Women here have left abusive marriages of their own and are raising children while helping other women find safety from violence. This is no idle hypothetical. What's certain is that for everyone in the room, this teaching of Jesus – fully explained, beautifully illustrated – has real authority and currency to change lives.

**UnitingWorld is continuing to support the development of resources to teach Gender Equality Theology throughout the Pacific. If you're interested in seeing a copy of the Bible studies or helping provide invaluable financial support for the project, please get in touch. We'd love you to join us on this exciting journey with our partners!**

Gender Equality Theology Community of Practice activities are supported by the Australian Government through the Papua New Guinea–Australia Partnership.



## ELECTION 2019

### AN OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK UP FOR A MORE GENEROUS AUSTRALIA

**Whichever political party wins the federal election this year, we hope to see a more positive vision for Australia's role in our world over the next term of government.**

We live in a time when conflict and disasters have – for the first time in decades – increased the number of people going hungry in the world;<sup>1</sup> 60% of the global population still do not have access to safe, adequate drinking water; an unprecedented 68 million people remain displaced from their homes; and right now it is estimated that there are 40 million people trapped in modern slavery – many producing the goods we take for granted every day.

Despite being the wealthiest population on the planet when measured by median wealth, our foreign aid remains at its lowest level ever as a percentage of Gross National Income (GNI) and is set to keep falling.



Micah members converged at Parliament House for Voices for Justice, December 2018

#### Micah

UnitingWorld is a member of Micah, a movement of Australian Christians raising a powerful voice for justice and a world free from poverty. If you want to add your voice, it can be as simple as writing a letter to your member of Federal Parliament. Visit [www.unitingworld/get-involved](http://www.unitingworld/get-involved) to connect with the campaign and get resources on how you can help build a more generous Australia.

<sup>1</sup> FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO 2018, 'The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2018'

## NOTES FROM THE NATIONAL DIRECTOR

Recently I started reading 'Dare to Lead' by Brene Brown. In the very first chapter, there was discussion of the brave and courageous organisational culture that is required to succeed in complex, rapidly changing environments full of seemingly intractable challenges and insatiable demands for innovation. They identified the #1 roadblock to creating such a culture: "Avoiding tough conversations, including giving honest, productive feedback."

Here at UnitingWorld, we've just done some professional development to help us tackle honest conversations together, learning to listen with curiosity, taking into account different personality styles and working to support each other with integrity during times of stress. From the boardroom to the kitchen, these are techniques that can help us to work in harmony to be more together than we are separately. However, it requires all of us to be brave – to step up in the belief that the risk is worth it.

UnitingWorld hosted partners from Indonesia in January. We heard about the challenges facing the minority Church and were inspired by stories of their interfaith peacebuilding work.

Our partners constantly engage not just in tough conversations with each other in the workplace, but with their culture in general – challenging understandings of the roles of men and women; influencing attitudes toward the treatment of children; overcoming corruption and working toward peace. There is no way to avoid these tough conversations. They, too, require listening skills, the ability to know when and how to speak to avoid stress, and how to judge 'personality' differences.

And as author Maya Angelou writes: "Without courage, we cannot practice any other virtue with consistency. We can't be kind, true, merciful, generous or honest."

As we focus on courage throughout Lent, please pray for us as we learn to lead and listen to one another, and please pray for our brothers and sisters around the globe. Join us on the Lenten journey as we walk toward Easter, the ultimate revelation of a life courageously lived and given for others. Stories for your inspiration, both from Timor Leste and here in Australia, are available at [www.lentevent.com](http://www.lentevent.com).

Dr Sureka Goringe, National Director, UnitingWorld

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