They’re the first words we learn, wherever we happen to be travelling in the world. Hello, and thank you. Sometimes, it’s all we’ve got. All we need.

Our work takes us to places where we might expect only suffering and hopelessness, and yet what we meet time and again is gratitude. Gratitude from people who are thankful beyond belief for opportunities they never thought they’d be given; a chance to study their way out of hunger; a toilet built with their own hands.

"Please tell them thank you – thank you for helping us, even though they don’t know who we are.”

The words are spoken with a kind of holy wonder. These are families who look after one another with a fierce love, but the idea that people in countries far away know and love them too is another thing altogether.

For us, gratitude leaps the banks and spills both ways. A smiling mother cooks us corn from her garden and we sit to eat with her husband, father and five children. Later, we find out she has gifted us everything she had to feed her family for the week. Tears in his eyes, a Pastor shares a story of the love that led him back to care for his church, even after feeling a loaded gun against his temple. A child slips her hand into ours and sticks close, her smile a mile-wide. She has never seen anyone with skin like ours before. In these moments, we’re not the powerful dispensers of donations and resources and knowledge. We’re just sharing the goodness of what it is to be alive; the grace of life in all its messiness and small mercies.

“In all things, give thanks.” Paul’s words to the church at Thessalonica have as much relevance today as they did two thousand years ago. Gratitude transforms our daily lives as we concentrate on all that is good and gifted rather than all that wearies us and wears us down.

To each of you, we give our thanks.

In the past 12 months together we have reached hundreds of thousands of people with the practical love of Christ, providing:

- Training to leaders of God’s church
- Clean water and education to save lives
- Loans to start small business
- Emergency shelter, counselling and respite in disaster

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.
NOT GLAMOROUS, BUT GLORIOUSLY GOOD

This is Reverend Albino Da Costa. He’s the Director of Fousuna, our partner in Timor Leste working among some of East Asia’s poorest people – less than 700 kilometres from Darwin.

Called to serve God’s people twenty-five years ago at the height of Timor Leste’s occupation by Indonesia, he is usually at home playing soccer with village boys, supervising education visits to homes without water or electricity, and transcribing interviews from Tetum back to English. He also does a men’s rendition of John Denver’s “Take Me Home, Country Roads” followed by us on the journey between Dili and Same on a week-long trip that is slowly more than the time we can afford. Reverend Albino is just like many of the talented partners with whom we work – a jack of all trades who juggles the roles of practitioner, sage, pastoral worker, and financial administrator in an organisation too small to spécialize but determined to excel nonetheless. The finance are particularly demanding – projects need to be planned well in advance and yet local congregations have no capacity to fund them. 60% of Timor Leste’s people live in poverty.

“We rely on funding from our external donors to the drought crisis facing our farmers? Here are a few points on the issue:

• Foreign aid represents less than 1% of Australia’s Gross National Income ($5.22 million in every $100)
• Australians rightly care about tackling poverty here and in the lines of our global neighbours, and we have the resources to do both.
• As Christians, we are an international people and we are called to be a blessing in the lives of the world’s poorest.
• Foreign aid isn’t just about helping the poor in addition to tackling poverty, our aid program helps our near neighbours to combat contagious disease, resist terrorism, prepare and prevent for natural disaster, develop their ability to trade with Australia and other nations, support education, as well as foster peace and stable leadership in our region, all benefit from a safer, more prosperous Asia Pacific.

Please consider becoming a UnitingWorld Global Neighbour and give up to regularly. As little as $10 a month will help our partners plan with increased confidence for their life-changing projects, help us cut administrative costs and provide clean water, education and leadership training in the world’s most forgotten places.

Sign up using the tear off slip or call us on 1800 998 122

YES I WANT TO BECOME A GLOBAL NEIGHBOUR
Your regular gift will have a huge impact in the lives of the poor.

Please accept my regular monthly donation and debit my credit card:

- $15
- $49
- $98
- $200

I my Cheque

OR please accept my single gift of:

- $15
- $49
- $98
- $200

I my Debit card

Thank you for your support!

Have you wondered how to respond to social media calls for Australia’s foreign aid to be redirected so that more money can be spent on domestic social issues? Here are a few points to consider on your discussion on the issue:

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Thank you for your support!
“But I still can’t get over how much God loves us, you know?” he says.

The distant softness in his eyes make me realise that the wonder of this truth has struck him before, but each time has the power to move him deeply.

I’m not in some exotic foreign land, connecting across cultures. I’m in the suburban Sydney home of an old friend, listening as he regales me with tales of his youth. In his twenties, he and his wife answered a call to practice medicine in a remote village in India, with two kids under two. A hospital raided by hyenas. They are now in their eighties, but the love of God burns brightly in them and they are faithful supporters of UnitingWorld.

When I first went to India, I met Christians who despite being less than one percent of the population and from the most socially marginalised castes, were extremely active in a range of social ministries. They ran schools, hospitals and fought human trafficking. And their leaders stood out for me. They felt a sense of urgency about their faith that I didn’t. Many of them came to faith in their teen years or young adulthood, and they still spoke with a sense of wonder of their discovery. They used phrases like “before I knew Christ” and “when I came to know Jesus” as if of a watershed moment of transition. When they spoke of the gospel, it sounded like this amazing, powerful, dangerous thing they couldn’t believe they’d discovered and couldn’t wait to share. They were not fresh converts, but seasoned leaders of the church.

The Christians I met in India assumed that people just didn’t know that God loved them, and that it was their job to fix that. They remembered how abruptly and miraculously God hijacks your life and sets you on a different path, and they just took it for granted this is what God wanted for everyone. Living in Australia, surrounded by people who live as if Christianity has been tried and found wanting, I have allowed myself to forget the truly radical and earth-shattering nature of the truth that I believe.

We belong to God. We are truly beloved just as we are, created in God’s image. We’re precious, of infinite value. There is grace enough to heal all our brokenness. Love enough to fill all our longing. This is what Jesus came for, lived for and died for – so that we could know this truth. And we don’t just believe it for ourselves, but believe it for every other person near and far. So we cannot rest while poverty, oppression and injustice keeps people from knowing God’s love for them. Because the love of God is not just a message to be heard, but a reality to be touched, tasted and lived; made tangible by the actions of God’s people.

At UnitingWorld, we often wonder how we can better share the life-changing stories we encounter, better inspire people to join in the global movement of transformation that is the story of God’s church at work. I’m convinced now that if I am to follow God’s call to act, I must again and again awaken the shocking recognition of who God has called me to be—a beloved child of God.

So as I thank you for your faithful support, I also wish for you a moment of wonder and awe. That you can pause and say “I still can’t get over how much God loves me” and let that incandescent truth set you on fire.

Dr Sureka Goringe,
National Director, UnitingWorld