

UNITINGWORLD

UPDATE
ISSUE 1
2024

A call to faithful
*climate
action*

Join us for
LENT EVENT

14 Feb – 28 Mar 2024

Rev Kepueli Vaka on the steps of Pitt Street Uniting blows a deep note on a Kele'a (conch shell) during the 2019 Climate Strike marches. This Lent, we want to recapture this energy and take faithful action for creation.



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.

Lent Event: a call to faithful action on climate change

Feeling overwhelmed about climate change? You're not alone.

Following the catastrophic bushfires across Australia in 2019 and other weather-related disasters, a survey by Griffith University showed about three out of four Australians reported feeling 'fairly' or 'very' concerned about the effects of climate change, more than double the number recorded in a similar survey 10 years ago.

For young people, this concern is feeding despair and a feeling of helplessness. Climate anxiety is now one of the most common issues psychologists are discussing with young people, according to the Australian Psychological Society.

A researcher who led a survey of nearly 19,000 young people about climate change and its mental health impacts, commented this year that urgent measures are needed to "foster hope and avoid despair, while motivating positive climate actions."

Does that sound like the work of the church to you? It does to us!

In the face of the escalating climate crisis, we think the church has a powerful role to play in not only taking meaningful climate action, but inspiring hope and courage to face the future.

But it's going to take a movement.



Join us for Lent Event

This Lent, commit to 40 days of faithful action for God's creation. Start wherever you're at with a large or small sustainability challenge. Use it to fundraise to help vulnerable communities who are fighting to build resilience and mitigate climate impacts. Raise your voice.

Along the way, we'll be considering the role of faith in caring for God's creation through a series of short devotions and video interviews with our partners and theologians.

Sign up today and start inspiring others to join! www.lentevent.com.au



Lent Event is about building a movement of collective change and hope. It inspires courageous action across communities in Australia and in the lives of our neighbours around the world.

The change we need:

1 Personal

Make a significant change in your life that benefits God's creation. Keep it up for 40 days and pray it becomes an ongoing habit. When we act, we inspire others to join, spreading hope.

2 Practical

Support vulnerable communities who are fighting to build resilience and mitigate climate impacts. Fundraise during Lent or make a gift to support critical climate action.

3 Political

Use your voice to influence your community and let our politicians know we need urgent climate action. Help make sure it doesn't come at the cost of the already poor and exploited.

Reaccreditation with the Australian Government

Every five years, UnitingWorld must undergo a thorough assessment to be reaccredited as a partner of the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Over three days in November, our systems, policies and processes were rigorously scrutinised and we received positive feedback from the team of reviewers when they gave us the good news. They particularly appreciated our commitment to a partnership approach in everything we do and gave good feedback about our board and leadership, project management, communications and finances.



Read our Annual Report

In an era of deepening crises and rapid transitions, UnitingWorld faithfully continues the work of partnering with churches in the Pacific, Asia and Africa. This work enables many to live with dignity and hope, and to realise their God-given potential in their communities.



Our work is sustained by the love, prayers, and generosity of our supporters across Australia. Our donors have stood with us, funding our long-term programs, and digging deep to support emergency appeals.

Thanks to the incredible generosity of our supporters and determination of our partners, in FY23 we reached 257,502 people with tangible benefits, across 27 projects in 12 countries with 22 partners. Our projects addressed poverty, gender equality and climate resilience, and supported stronger governance and management.

Thank you so much!

Read full report at www.unitingworld.org.au/annualreport2023

Young leaders reconnect and advocate for justice

The second annual Pacific Australian Emerging Leaders' Summit (PAELS) took place in December.

More than 70 young Christian leaders from across the Pacific and Australia came together for connection-building, leadership development and dialogue over a week-long program, coordinated by Micah Australia.

As part of the program, delegates were hosted for worship services at Blacktown Regional Uniting Church and Campbelltown Uniting Church.

At Blacktown Uniting, President Elect of the Uniting Church in Australia, Rev Charissa Suli, gave a sermon that encouraged the young delegates to boldly share their stories and their authentic selves.



"Your advocacy and voices are critical in shaping a future where the dignity of all human life and God's creation is recognised and celebrated," she told them.

Delegates went on to two days of advocacy training and a day of meetings with more than 50 members of Parliament in Canberra, where they discussed key development priorities for young people and their communities.

You can read more about the event on our website here: www.unitingworld.org.au/PAELS23

1,000 trees and vegetable seedlings shared in one day in Ambon

On November 24, our partners in the Protestant Church of Maluku (GPM) hit the streets of Ambon with the aim of giving away 1,000 trees and vegetable seedlings.

GPM sees this initiative as a missional opportunity to engage the public with information about their kitchen garden project (which is supported by UnitingWorld), the importance of sustainability, and the health benefits of families growing their own food.

The relationships started by giving away trees and seedlings can be life changing.

Community members can find out how to access health services, open bank accounts, get access to small business capital, become aware about preparing for disasters, and can even join valuable social groups to share knowledge on farming, producing and marketing food.

Rev Jeny Mahupale, who manages the project, spoke passionately on the day.

"As humankind, let's work together for saving the earth and saving our children's future," she said.

"One plant you give, one vegetable seedling you share, is the same as you share your breath for other people and nature."

"Thank you so much for all your support for UnitingWorld and for us in the East part of Indonesia. A big hug from Ambon, Maluku," said Rev Jeny.

Thank you to all who supported our food crisis appeal during Spring! It meant that we could fully fund these projects that are now changing lives in Maluku and Timor-Leste. We look forward to sharing more stories about the projects this year.



"I want to see a Pacific where all nations come together in fellowship to work and grow together. And I want to see a world where people live in peace and in love for one another."

Rev Dr Tevita Havea, President, Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga

"I want to see a world where humanity respects creation, animals and trees, where there is kindness, caring and loving. Because I see God in that world."

Rev Geraldine, Methodist Church in Fiji



"I want to see a world where my children do not have to migrate away from their home because of the impacts of climate change."

Rev Dr Tioti Timon, Kiribati Uniting Church

"I want to see a world where everyone feels safe. Where we can see beyond our gender, our colour, our race ... a world full of peace – Christ's peace."

George Walter, Uniting Church in Australia (VIC/TAS Synod)



"The world I want to see is no violence and healthy relationships."

Leila Parina, United Church in Papua New Guinea

"I want to see a world where all creatures stand together. Humans, animals, plants... we need to act in solidarity because we are all God's creation."

Maria Komboy, Evangelical Christian Church in Tanah Papua



"I want to see a Pacific that is free from colonisation, whether political, economic or educational. And I want to see a world that actions justice and love for the poor and our neighbours."

Prof. Upolu Vaai, Principal, Pacific Theological College, Suva



"I want to see a world where people are working together to fight climate change."

Akanesi Tolu, Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga



"The world I want to see is free of violence for women, men, girls and boys, where everyone can live in a safe community and home."

Anna Daniels, Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu

The world we want to see...

NOTES FROM THE NATIONAL DIRECTOR

The biggest barrier to the world we want to see.

"The climate is changing faster than our combined efforts to stop it."

Somehow this statement feels like a rare and vulnerable admission from Australia's Foreign Minister, Senator Penny Wong, despite it being something most of us already know and understand.

It might be because there was no added "... but the government is doing X, Y and Z and everything is going to be fine."

Senator Wong made the remarks at a Parliamentary welcome event for Micah Australia's Pacific Australian Emerging Leaders' Summit (PAELS) in December, which included 14 delegates from the Uniting Church and seven delegates representing our partner churches.

She knew her audience.

For the young leaders present, the changing climate has been the number one issue of their advocacy agenda since they formed a network...

...there were delegates from the low-lying atoll nations, Kiribati and Tuvalu, who spoke about the erosion of their coastlines and rising seawater ruining their supplies of drinking water...

...there were delegates who've lived through severe droughts and famine triggered by climate change in the highlands of Papua New Guinea and West Papua...

...there were delegates who still live in colonial territories who've watched in real time the cost of unrestrained 'progress' on their lands, fisheries, waterways; their traditional ways of living sustainably...

We hear these same stories from our church partners across the Pacific, Asia and Africa. They describe the situation as a climate emergency, an ecological crisis and a failure of human relationships – to God, to creation and to each other as part of this household we share.

We also hear from them words of hope and courage. The hope we have as followers of Jesus, and the courage to work together to protect God's creation before it's too late.



As part of Lent this year, we want to share more hopeful visions of what the world can be.

Not just through words but powerful, even radical, deeds. Every act we take can be a light in the dark to help ward off despair and build hope for someone.

I urge you to join us for Lent Event this year as we take faithful action together and inspire others along the way.

For me, an inspired, hopeful and impactful movement of faith is what the world urgently needs to see right now.

Dr Sureka Goringe, National Director, UnitingWorld

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