

UNITINGWORLD

UPDATE
ISSUE 2
2022

“YOU ARE THE
salt OF THE
earth”

— MATTHEW 5:13

Martha in Timor-Leste, recovering from tuberculosis with the support of our partner's health clinic, cooks her family's corn to share.



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.

YOU ARE THE *salt* OF THE earth



Our partners invite us to the table to share, and we're grateful.

The last pieces of corn from a family's harvest, laid out on a table set with love: that's what I see when I think of people I've visited over the past ten years with UnitingWorld.

Gifted by a family fighting tuberculosis and hunger in Timor-Leste, the cobs are a sweet yellow symbol of the generosity and faith I've felt at so many tables around the world. Fresh coffee brewed for us in the highlands of Bali, simple prayers, mud crabs dug from the river and offered up on an island in Papua New Guinea, hymns in many languages, hot sweet tea in India. Always, the smile that says: "We have enough to share, and even if today is hard, tomorrow will be better."

These are the people I think of when global news rests an icy finger of fear against my ribs. I remember communities that lay bare their grief together and then get up, hands and hearts steadied by a faith that calls them to pray and work in equal measure. They believe in the mystery of God, yes, but they live out love and sacrifice in ways that are sweat, flesh and muscle.

They are truly 'the salt of the earth' – ordinary and everywhere, unspeakably valuable: preserving life, adding flavour, fertilising the soil for new things to grow.

For ten years, it's been my privilege to introduce these people to you in stories, pictures and video. And it's been a joy to see you light up in response. Time and again, you've stepped up to help build things both physical and less tangible – toilets and water tanks; faith, hope, wisdom and knowledge. I've seen our friends take hold of what you've offered with both hands and work tirelessly to make life better for themselves and their communities.

Collectively, it's your stories and those of our partners that I summon when life feels dark. Over the past ten years, you've worked with us and our team of smart, creative partners

to confront poverty, respond to the changing climate, elevate women and girls, open minds and fight hunger.

Thank you for trusting us and our partners with your vision of a better world. From our joined hands, scattered salt works its simple magic across the globe.

It can't always be seen, but its impact is unmistakable. Stay salty.

– Cath Taylor

*Cath has been writing for us and shaping campaigns like Everything in Common, Lent Event and Seven Days of Solidarity since 2011. She is moving on to another role with a Christian non-government organisation this month and offers her heartfelt thanks for your love, prayer and giving.



THANK YOU FOR SHARING EVERYTHING IN COMMON!



We are absolutely delighted to report that your commitment to Everything in Common gifts in 2021 made it our most successful year ever! Stellar performers were clean water, chickens and school books. Your generosity is making possible big changes for people like Ibu Wayan, who, after initial setbacks raising a piglet in the highlands of Bali has received training from our partner the Protestant Christian Church in Bali.

"My pigs gave birth to eleven piglets!" Ibu Wayan told us with much excitement. "The total turnover from breeding and selling my livestock over the past 6 months is 8,500,000 (AU\$809.00) and this means we could survive during COVID-19 and keep sending our children to the school."

Thank you to everyone who bought a card or helped us promote the gifts. We're so grateful!

SEVEN DAYS OF SOLIDARITY

Thanks to everyone who celebrated our global neighbours with us during Lent. Here's what a few people had to say:

"The Seven Days booklet is one of the best and well-put together resources I've come across in 30 years of ministry. The layout, content and information are all spot on and really useful for church members to engage with." Reverend Scott Litchfield, Bridgewater Uniting Church.

"The 'Action for the Day' items are excellent; achievable and interesting. In fact, we have actioned the Day 5 activity – when 50 ni-Vanuatu seasonal workers in Penguin were isolated due to COVID-19 in their accommodation,

we approached all the churches in Penguin and they gave generously. This enabled us to buy the workers treats: biscuits, chocolates, groceries and bags of rice. We then asked our ni-Vanuatu friends to join us and sing at our celebration at the end of the Seven Days of Solidarity." Jeanne Koetsier, Penguin Uniting Church, Tasmania.

If you've not already had a chance to check it out, why not join us celebrating where God is alive and at work in the world? We promise



you'll be encouraged by the people you meet and their stories. You can do it any time in the year, as a church community or by yourself.

Visit www.sevendaysofsolidarity.com.au for stories, video, a sermon, prayers and a stunning original song written and performed by Roxanne McLeod and talented UCA musicians.

UPDATE FROM OUR PROJECT IN SRI LANKA

Last year around this time it was our joy to introduce to you Raj, Narmatha and Darshi. They are participants in projects run by our partner, DeafLink, through the Methodist Church in Sri Lanka. We got in touch with them recently to find out what they're up to and how they've fared during the pandemic.



Raj – is continuing his work as a mechanic (reduced hours due to curfews and shut downs) and is undertaking some formal study with his uncle.

As a graduate from the disability inclusion class run by the Church in Kalmunai, Raj is delighted to have these opportunities for further work and study. A keen dancer, the Methodist Church asked him to provide an item for the 20th Anniversary Celebrations of DeafLink and Raj was happy to oblige, dancing up a storm. to the joy of his audience.

Narmatha, who was already running tailoring classes for local women from her home, has gone from strength to strength as a community leader.

She's helped to lead candle and soap making workshops for people to supplement their income and now also has 25 children each week come to her home for English tutoring. Our partner says that telling her story through UnitingWorld gave her the confidence to believe she was 'not a lonely woman in a wheelchair, but a powerful local leader.'



Darshi graduated from her Disability Inclusion class at the end of last year.

A talented artist and dancer who shared with us how much her creativity meant to her, she is now employed part time by our partner to help nurture other hearing-impaired children in their interest in the arts.

We absolutely love hearing these stories of growth and change! A huge thank you for the part you've played in creating lives that are strong, hopeful and investing back into their local communities.



Pray for Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is facing its worst economic crisis since independence in 1948. Soaring inflation has caused devastating shortages of food, medicine and fuel across the country. Energy is being rationed by the government causing prolonged blackouts. Our partners the Methodist Church in Sri Lanka (MCSL) have been outspoken about the failings of the government and have pledged to do everything in their means to alleviate suffering. We stand with them in prayer and solidarity.

Read more and the full MCSL statement at our website: www.unitingworld.org.au/news

A prayer for Ukraine

FROM THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

The news can be difficult to listen to and to read.

When that news relates to faces we know

And to voices familiar to us,
It becomes all the harder to hear.

Lord God,

We ask you to hold the people of Ukraine deep in your heart.

Protect them, we pray;

From violence,

From political gamesmanship,
from being used and abused.

Give, we pray,

the nations of the world the courage
and the wisdom

to stand up for justice

and the courage too,

to dare to care - generously.

Lord in your mercy,

Take from us all,

The tendencies in us

That seek to lord it over others:

Take from us those traits

that see us pursuing our own needs
and wants

before those of others.

Teach us how to live in love

And dignity

And respect - following your example.

In your name and for your sake,

Amen

UnitingWorld does not have partners in the region but there are good organisations that do. Visit the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) website for a list of accredited agencies: www.acfid.asn.au/content/consolidated-appeals-ukraine

THANK YOU FOR STANDING WITH TONGA!



Your pre-emptive support helped our partners in Tonga build and stock this facility for rapid response to disasters.

We've been blown away by your response to help our neighbours in Tonga after the devastating volcano and tsunami that hit in January. Our partners the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga (FWCT) immediately rolled out the *Tekina 'I Moana* initiative, the disaster management and recovery arm of the church. Your support helped our partners to visit

eight villages in the hardest-hit areas across Tongatapu and the Ha'apai islands to provide essentials like food, clothes, and shelter, as well as disaster chaplains to offer counselling and spiritual encouragement to those displaced by the tsunami.

Surveys were conducted during the visits to evaluate the loss and damage, although it was recognised that for many people it was too soon to even contemplate their future needs. Our partners say it meant a lot to the communities that the church visited them so soon after the disaster.

Disaster preparation helping long-term recovery

Back in 2018, UnitingWorld supported FWCT to build and stock a large storage facility for building materials (pictured) to be able to begin repairs to damaged buildings quickly

after disasters rather than having to wait for supplies to be shipped in from outside. It was used for Cyclone Harold and is now being used for reconstruction work on the most affected homes. Your support means UnitingWorld can help re-stock this facility and ensure significant reconstruction of destroyed homes and public buildings.

Going forward, your gifts will enable the FWCT to provide urgently needed supplies of small boats, tents, temporary toilets, school bags, basic tools, petrol, generators, water tanks and fishing gear to island communities whose homes were destroyed. **Thank you so much!**

Please continue to pray for the response efforts. A COVID-19 outbreak and subsequent restrictions on movement have hampered visits to the affected areas, needs assessments and the overall recovery.

FROM THE NATIONAL DIRECTOR

SALT OF THE EARTH AND LIGHT OF THE WORLD



A woman is raising up the powerless in her community with the truth that they're made in the image of their creator. Another is working to prevent violence before it happens and inspiring her peers to join her.

A man is showing whole communities how to work together in disasters and care for the most vulnerable. Another is tackling inequality by overturning the structures keeping people oppressed.

These are just some of the stories we've shared during our Seven Days of Solidarity. Each story is a tiny star that pierces the darkness that seems to shroud our view of the world these days.

Right now it seems impossible to think of much outside the shadow of crisis stretching across the globe. War in Europe, floods at home, Sri Lanka being crushed by an economic crisis and COVID-19 still haunting our lives.

The feeling of dread that comes with living under such continuous threats can be overwhelming. It makes us feel tired, fragile and small. This may be true for you. My staff and I, and all of our overseas partners are no exception either.

Yet we strive to count the stars in the darkness. These stories seem small, but like stars in the night sky, together they tell a beautiful story. They remind us that the God who formed the stars and galaxies, names each of us the same. *You are the light of the world.*

Every act of sacrifice and service, every gift from a generous heart, every word of kindness and grace, is an unquenchable act of defiance against the darkness; beautiful and enduring.

The wonder of God's grace is never only in size and power but in the ordinary and hidden. *You are the salt of the earth.* Grounded in the earth and carried in the seas, salt is everywhere enriching, preserving and essential for life to flourish. The change it brings isn't imposed from the outside but from within.

Thank you for letting us share with you the stories of salt and light that we have seen. And thank you for being salt and light for



A light that illuminates a small one-room family home visited by our partners in India.

us and our partners through your prayers, generosity and sacrificial love.

Together, we are witnesses to the light which the darkness cannot put out.

With thanks for all you do with us,



Dr Sureka Goringe
National Director
UnitingWorld

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the Uniting Church in Australia.

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