

# Multiculturalism Matters

UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA | PRESBYTERY OF SOUTH MORETON | 27 MAY 2015



**30th anniversary of landmark UCA Assembly statement**

## June 19 forum to review our multicultural journey



**'The Uniting Church welcomes cultural and linguistic diversity as God's gracious gifts to the human family'**

*From One Body, Many Members: Living Faith & Life Cross-Culturally*  
(UCA Assembly 2012)

HOW has the UCA Qld embraced the gift and challenge of the multicultural nature of the church?

What has been the experience of individuals, Congregations, Presbyteries, and Synod agencies and boards? What more needs to be done to live out the calling to be truly multicultural?

These are some of the questions to be explored in a major Synod forum to be held at **Broadwater Road UC, Mansfield, on Friday, June 19, from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm.**

Called *One Body, Many Cultures: Make It Happen*, the forum will mark the 30th anniversary of the UCA Assembly's statement, "We are a Multicultural Church," which said the church's embrace of its multicultural character could be a sign of hope to the Australian community.

Deaconess Terani Lima, convener of the newly-renamed Synod Multi Cross Cultural Reference Group which is organising the forum, said, "Because being multicultural is a whole-of-church calling and commitment, we're hoping for a wide cross-section of UCA people to participate. It will be a day of sharing worship, stories, hopes and plans."

**That evening will see a vibrant multicultural worship celebration planned by next-generation leaders, also at Broadwater Road UC from 7:00 pm.**

Both events are free, no RSVP. Enquiries: David Busch (contact details below).

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*Multiculturalism Matters* is published bimonthly and emailed with the Presbytery Newsletter. You are welcome to email, or copy and distribute. Each issue can also be downloaded from the Presbytery web site: <http://www.southmoreton.org.au>. Please email David if you would like to receive the newsletter directly by email. Submitted photos and stories reflecting the cultural diversity of the South Moreton Presbytery are welcome.



Rev. Grant Cheng with some of the welcome stewards at Brisbane Taiwanese UC, Hillcrest:  
(from left) Yuan Lee, Nancy Yu, Tim Wu, Daniel Chang, and Chiya Shih

## Taiwanese UC ready to welcome Presbytery

THIS Sunday's Presbytery Regional Young Adults' Service will be a celebration of the UCA's cultural diversity, as the Brisbane Taiwanese congregation lead the worship.

The service will be held at their centre at 1 Wineglass Drive, Hillcrest, starting at 6:30 pm, followed by supper.

The service theme is "Reborn," and is being put together by the congregation's dynamic Arise Youth Ministry team. It will feature music and drama, and Rev. Grant Cheng will preach in Mandarin with English translation.

### **FAST FACTS**

#### **Brisbane Taiwanese UC**

**Founded:** 1990

**Worship:** Sunday 10:00 am

**Attendance:** 140-180

**Languages:** Taiwanese, Mandarin, English

**Sunday School:** 40-50 children

**Languages:** Mandarin, English

**Youth group:** Friday night 7:30 pm

**Languages:** Mandarin, English

**Community:** Migrant families, students, working holiday-makers

**Minister:** Rev. Grant Cheng  
(Presbyterian Church of Taiwan)

**Saying hello:** nǐ hǎo (formal)



# Property agreements herald start of new relationships: 1



## Coomera UC and the Cook Islands Christian Church

THE partner-church relationship between the UCA and the Cook Islands Christian Church now has a local expression in the Presbytery.

Coomera UC have invited a new CICC congregation covering southern Brisbane, Logan and the Gold Coast to use their church and hall for its Sunday program of worship, lunch, and fellowship and singing.

Discussions between leaders of both congregations focused not just on property but also included sharing of stories, history and church vision.

This understanding has helped form a positive basis not only for property sharing but also for a mutual commitment to building a strong inter-church partnership.

**PHOTOS:** (top) the Cook Islanders celebrate White Sunday at their first service at Coomera UC on May 3; (middle) people from both congregations share in the Coomera UC anniversary dinner on May 17; (bottom) some of the group who negotiated the property use agreement.

*Photos: Melbourne Marsters*



# Property agreements herald start of new relationships: 2

## Southport UC and Gold Coast Korean Fellowship UC

THE Korean language on the new sign outside Southport UC is a small marker of a significant new partnership.

The Gold Coast Korean Fellowship UC has moved its services from the local Salvation Army temple to the Southport property, sharing it with the Southport UC congregation.

The recent completion of a new hall complex adjoining the church created the opportunity for the Korean congregation to relocate, and the new arrangements began from the opening of the hall on May 10.

Following initial input from Presbytery, a series of meetings between leaders of both congregations since February has carefully worked through a wide range of issues, based on the recognition of the distinct yet equally valuable mission and needs of both congregations.

The signed agreement includes a commitment to exploring a deeper relationship and mutual support between both groups.



PHOTOS: (top) the new sign outside Southport UC; (middle) members of the property working group from both congregations; (bottom) people from both congregations enjoy refreshments after the hall opening on May 10

## Desire to learn and preach drives Latu's call



**Latu Tuiono ... 'God, if I am useful to you, keep me alive.'**

LATU Tuiono is just starting her POD, but it's the fulfilment of a commitment and yearning that began with a frightening experience when she was 6 years old.

Latu remembers waking up one morning in the family home in Tonga, with her mind awake but her body totally paralysed. "I was like a rock," she says. "I could hear people in the house, my mind was alive, but I could not move or feel or say anything."

Being a deeply spiritual child with a strong awareness of God, Latu did what came naturally to her. "I prayed," she recalls with tears. "In my mind, I said, 'God, if I am useful to you, please keep me alive.'"

Very gradually, she started to regain feeling in her fingers and toes, and then her skin, and after a while she could move her arms and legs again.

"Since then, I've had a strong desire to serve God, a sense that I want to give myself totally in service to him," Latu says.

But life's course has taken her in other directions: school, marriage, children, and moving to Australia in 1985 with husband Semisi to raise her family.

Living in Sydney, Latu and Semisi were stewards with the Tongan congregation at Blacktown UC, but the leaders advised Latu against pursuing her sense of call to serving God, saying she needed to give priority to her family.

With the children grown up and having moved to Brisbane, Latu and Semisi began theological study at Trinity College with a view that they might be ordained together. But Semisi died suddenly of a heart attack, plunging Latu into grief and putting an end to her vision for a life in shared ministry.

Two years on, living alone and with her children grown

up (she now has two grandchildren), Latu feels she is ready to pick up again the call which she believes God has placed in her heart.

Her particular passion is for learning and preaching. "I love studying and preaching," she says. "I love words and ideas. I want to know more about God and I want to tell people the message about God's love in Jesus Christ."

While Latu's conversational English is very good, she admits to struggling with the level of English language in academic texts such as those used in her Lay Preacher's course. "I can manage, but my mind gets tired," she says.

Now she preaches and leads worship in the Tongan service at her home church of Logan Central Multicultural UC and in other Tongan churches, but feels her call is to the whole church. She is seeking greater involvement in the English-language intercultural service at Logan Central and is considering doing a TAFE course in English.

With qualifications in business and aged care, a Certificate in Child Care and studying for her Diploma, Latu works as an educator with children. "I love my work, but it is not my calling," she says. "Working for God in ministry is the only thing that will make me happy."

### **WHAT IS A PERIOD OF DISCERNMENT?**

**THE Period of Discernment is a guided process of study, practical experience, spiritual reflection and mentoring, aimed at helping people to clarify God's call on their life. It is a requirement for people intending to candidate for ordination, but it can be used to explore calls to other forms of ministry and service. South Moreton Presbytery has 30 POD candidates, about half of whom are from multicultural backgrounds.**

# Stella's pathway began with an open church

ONE week-day morning five years ago, Stella Chork stumbled into Southport UC and poured her heart out to God.

Having had a successful career in real estate and property development in Australia and New Zealand, Stella had looked forward to home life as a new mother.

But with the breakdown of her relationship soon after her son's birth, and then a difficult custody battle, Stella felt shattered, and pleaded with God for help.

Born in Malaysia of Malaysian-Chinese descent, Stella had been raised in a Christian family, but her connection with church diminished after the family moved to Australia from Canada when she was 15.

"When my life fell apart I started attending a Pentecostal church," Stella says. "But I wanted a place to go and pray each morning while my son was in day care, and Southport Uniting was the only church open."

Several mornings each week for nearly two years, Stella would sit in the second-front pew and pray through tears for God to bring a solution. Then two things happened.

One day as she was leaving the church, Stella sensed God challenge her: "Why do you keep coming here? What are you asking of me that I have not already done?"



**STELLA Chork in the multifaith chapel at Gold Coast University Hospital, and (below) outside the hospital's Spiritual Care Centre.**

In wrestling with this challenge in her spirit, Stella realised that God was not going to rescue her or make her problems go away. But God had been with her, and always would be, with a capacity to bring new life and purpose out of every circumstance.

"I felt an enormous sense of peace and reassurance, of being set free, of God's constant presence," Stella says.

She continued to visit Southport UC, but now with a sense of hope and a desire to be open to whatever God's new path might be for her.

Enter Rev. Dona Spencer, of

Southport UC's ministry team. Dona got to know Stella, and suggested she might like to become a volunteer to help the BlueCare chaplain at Labrador Gardens.

"I didn't know what a chaplain was, so I said No," Stella says. "So Dona said she'd leave it for a while."

Some time later, Dona suggested that Stella accompany her to Labrador Gardens and think about becoming a friendly visitor to residents there, and Stella agreed.

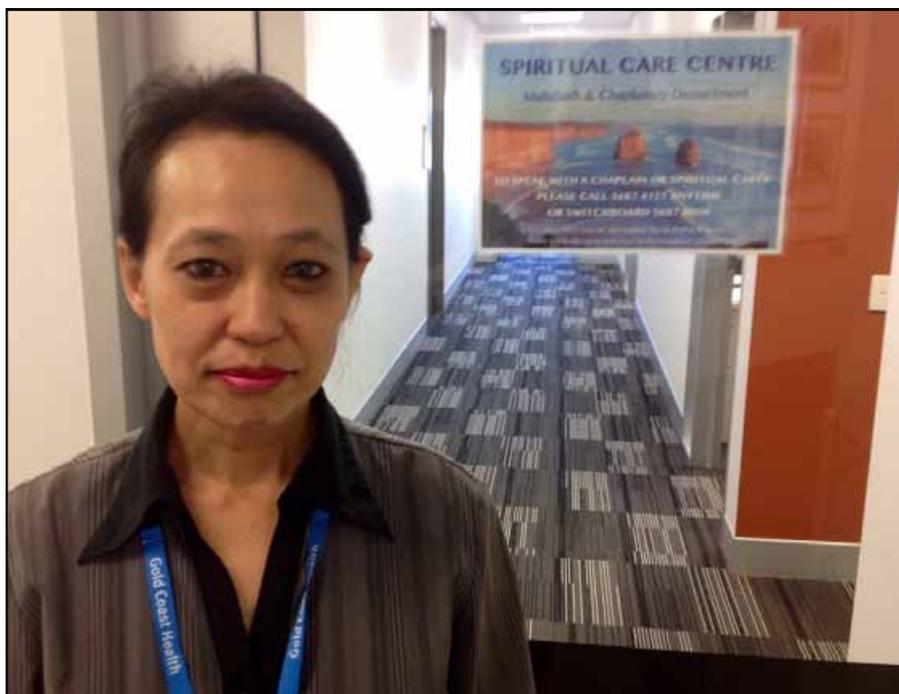
"From the moment I walked in there, I felt this was where I was meant to be," Stella says. "Something resonated very deeply in my spirit. It was like I'd come home."

Rev. Terry Ayling was the interim BlueCare chaplain and was looking for an assistant. Stella agreed to come and learn under Terry's mentorship.

"Moving into pastoral care seemed the most natural thing to me, even though I was just beginning," Stella says.

With Terry's assistance and encouragement, Stella completed her Certificate IV in Pastoral Care through Trinity College, and will complete her Clinical and Pastoral Education (CPE) course in June. She has also begun Lay Preachers' studies to equip her for leading services at Labrador Gardens and Woodlands Lodge.

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# Helping people to see God when life falls apart

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After doing a brief supply chaplaincy at the PA Hospital, Stella gained a part-time role as Pastoral Care Coordinator at a Catholic nursing home in Ipswich, and is now also on the multi-faith spiritual care team at the Gold Coast University Hospital, where Rev. Terry Ayling is now the coordinator.

Stella finds the religious diversity among the team a source of delight and enrichment.

“There is great friendship and respect among us,” she says. “God draws each of us to love and serve and care: that’s what we have in common and we focus on that.”

Stella has just begun her POD, and while she is looking forward to trying new things that will test and clarify her sense of God’s call, she feels a very strong draw to chaplaincy.

“Pastoral care is about empathy, compassion, journeying with someone as they seek strength and

meaning in a time of difficulty,” she says.

“I see God in so much of what we do and the people we see. I see God in each person, sometimes in surprising ways, even in people who say they are not religious.

“I encourage people to draw on their spiritual resources, to discover how God has been present throughout their lives and how that Presence continues in sickness or dying or when life seems to fall apart.”



## New leaders commissioned

LEFT: Leaders of the new Tongan worship group were among those commissioned by the Moderator, Rev. Dave Baker, at Redland Bay’s 135th anniversary service on April 26.

## Niue anniversary at Acacia Ridge

BELOW: Acacia Ridge UC marked one year since the Niue worship community from Knox Moorooka UC joined their congregation, on May 17, with many 9:00 am service attenders staying for the Niue-language service that day.



# Matu give \$1000 for Nepal earthquake victims



Sharyn Robinson receives \$1000 from Matu Christian UC pastor Sang Lui

MEMBERS of the Matu Christian UC Faith Community at Kingston have experienced upheavals in life as refugees from Burma.

And this month, they dug deep to support victims of another upheaval, the devastating earthquakes in Nepal, barely 1500 km from their homeland.

During their service on May 24, they presented \$1000 to Sharyn Robinson, UnitingWorld's Qld liaison officer, for the agency's Nepal Earthquake Appeal.

UnitingWorld is channelling its emergency relief funds for Nepal through ACT Alliance, a Geneva-based agency comprising 140 member church relief and aid organisations.

Sharyn said she was touched by the people's generosity. "They have known desperate times in their life, and as Jesus has blessed them they want to share that blessing with others in their time of need," she said.

## South Sudan: Moderator calls church to prayer

I HAVE received a letter from Pastor Moses Leth of the South Sudanese Nuer UC Faith Community which meets at Coopers Plains, asking that the Synod be called to urgent prayer for peace in South Sudan.

The terrible political and tribal violence which has swept through South Sudan since December 2013 has killed tens of thousands of people and plunged the South Sudanese diaspora in Australia into grief and anguish.

Now the latest outbreak of violence has reached areas in the Greater Upper Nile region, including Jonglei State, where many members of the Faith Community come from and where their relatives still live.

Reports of the mass slaughter of innocent people; of terrible human rights atrocities inflicted against women, children and the elderly; of the burning of villages and the destruction of livestock and newly-planted crops; and of killings occurring even within UN-staffed protective camps; have brought an acute distress to this congregation and the Nuer community in Australia.

The inter-tribal nature of the country's civil war is putting enormous

strains on the diverse South Sudanese community in Australia.

Relationships in some households and communities are strained to the point of breaking. The emotional burden of grief and despair grows each day as the violence continues.

Community leaders in Australian churches are seeking to bring a united call for peace and reconciliation among all South Sudanese, in Australia and in their home country.

**'The emotional burden of grief and despair grows each day as the violence continues'**

Pastor Moses is pleading that the wider Uniting Church throughout Queensland join with his community, and other South Sudanese congregations, in praying as follows:

- For an immediate end to the violence in South Sudan, including a fresh and genuine commitment to peace and reconciliation among the nation's leaders;
- For more international support

for the work of the United Nations and aid agencies who are providing emergency relief and shelter to hundreds of thousands of displaced persons;

- For the cohesion and strength of the South Sudanese community in Australia, that it may offer a firm and united witness for peace and reconciliation, and that its church and community leaders may give wise leadership that promotes life and hope;

- For the many South Sudanese in Australia who are distraught and grief-stricken over events in their homeland communities, that they may know God's comforting presence, and the love and care of the people around them;

- For the leaders and people of the two South Sudanese Faith Communities in the Qld Synod, at Coopers Plains and Kangaroo Point.

I commend Pastor Moses' concerns and request for prayer to the whole church, and invite you to stand with our South Sudanese brothers and sisters at this time of need.

**Rev. David Baker**  
26 May 2015