

Profile Form for Nominees for President-elect

Regulation 3.7.5.1 requires that the Assembly Standing Committee provide advice to the Church on the challenges and issues which may be faced by the President and the Assembly in the next seven years. This is to assist the discernment process as the Church nominates and elects the President – elect.

In November 2020 the ASC addressed itself to this responsibility and offers this guidance to the Church.

“As the Uniting Church continues to move through a season of significant change, the ASC believes that the challenges and issues likely to be faced by the President and the Assembly in the next seven years will include:

Promoting the joys, passion and hope of who we are as the Uniting Church as we walk together in our diversity

The Covenant

- Living out the Covenant and relationship to First Peoples

Our Foundations of being the Uniting Church

- Evolving and growing as a Church bearing witness to the Kingdom of God - modelling a countercultural way of living in the world
- Growing discipleship
- Enhancing the church’s capacity for theological conversations by encouraging familiarity with the Bible, and how to use it according to Uniting Church’s understanding of the Bible
- Confidence in the Gospel - in the context of a declining Church and a multifaith context

Future of the Church

- Changing face of the church as worshipping communities
- Helping the church to respond effectively to rapidly changing contexts and ongoing marginalisation in society
- The church in a digital age
- Guiding the church through significant structural and regulatory change towards a sustainable future

Leadership

- The nature of ministry for the future
- Encouraging young leaders, listening to their voices for how they see the future of the Uniting Church

Oriented Towards Justice

- Resourcing the complex issues of life
- Climate justice - the impact of climate change
- Racial justice



Name:

Rev Charissa Suli

Nominated by:

Richard La’Brooy
Rev Radhika Sukumar-White

Synod of residence:

NSW and the ACT

Age range:

30-39

**Personal
Interests:**

I love finding moments of play with my children. They can give me all the emotions in one day. I love to sing, coach and mentor people of all ages in their faith, wider community involvement and travel. I really yearn for the days when we can be together with our global Christian family (and we're allowed to come home again).

Placement / employment:

I am a second-generation Tongan Australian with over 20 years of experience in cross cultural and intercultural ministry in the Uniting Church. My deep love of God was forged in the crucible of early motherhood and a business career to support my family. Not a day goes by when I don't thank God for the blessings of my husband Langi and our family.

My ministry is the product of many great Uniting Church mentors, people like Tony Floyd and Jason Kioa, who opened my eyes to the possibility of ministry and leadership. With Jason's encouragement, I chaired the Tongan National Conference 2nd Generation Team for 9 years, encouraging young leaders and nurturing team ministry. I'm thrilled that many of these young leaders are now faith leaders – both lay and ordained - in their own UCA contexts. I went on to work as a cross cultural consultant for the NSW/ACT Synod.

I completed my theological studies at United Theological College and was ordained as a Minister of the Word in 2014 at St David's Uniting Church in Dee Why on Sydney's Northern Beaches. I served in congregational ministry at Dapto Uniting Church before following God's call to work at the Assembly from 2018 as a National Consultant focusing on leadership, justice, education, multicultural and cross-cultural ministry, discipling the next generations and mission.

I am a confident presenter and performer, but the heart of my work is enabling young members of the Uniting Church to find their own voices. I've worked with colleagues across the UCA to improve church resources about domestic and family violence, and coordinated online campaigns and events such as 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-base Violence and supporting ecumenical initiatives such as Thursdays in Black. I'm also serving as a chaplain for the Fifteenth President, Dr Deidre Palmer.

Passion:

I am passionate about people and ministry, and how we inspire the people around us as communities in Jesus Christ in the life of our beloved Uniting Church to truly be the instruments through which Christ works to bear witness to himself.

In today's challenged environment for people of faith, I am passionate about being a positive voice in the public square about what it means to be Uniting Church in Australia today,

I am passionate about pastoral ministry built on respectful and informed relationships - ministry that acknowledges everyone's difficult journeys but holds a special place for those who have really struggled to feel God's love in our Church – such as First Peoples, our LGBTIQ+ community, our culturally diverse communities

Vision for the UCA:

I want the UCA to be a welcoming Church that is joyful, accepting, hospitable and life-giving to all, one that is open to God's spirit leading us to new experiences even when the journey together is difficult, painful, or uncomfortable. I want our Church members to love one another enough to travel the road ahead together, seeing beyond whatever differences we have to our shared values.

I want the UCA to be a Church that affirms a variety of expressions of faith to deepen our understanding of God and our neighbour; a Church that is unafraid, even proud of our diversity to the point we let ourselves be enriched and reshaped by it; a Church that goes deeper into the scriptures and makes space for theological talanoa (the Polynesian word for sharing/conversation) to inform our faith and practice of ministry.

I want the UCA to be a Church that bears witness to the Gospel and fulfils God's mission in every aspect of our ministry as we follow and apply the life and teachings of Christ in everything we do. And as witnesses, we will listen and learn from one another, rather than only speaking and teaching, and we will promote full participation and talanoa.

I want the UCA to continue to be a justice-seeking church that faithfully addresses racism, gender justice, and the effects of climate change, being accountable for how our decisions will affect the flourishing of God's creation, learning from the mistakes of the past and doing things differently and better.

I want the UCA to be a Church that presents a strong and positive identity front and centre across the Assembly, Synods, Presbyteries, Congregations and Parish Missions and their respective Agencies, across Uniting Church schools and with our global ecumenical partners.

In a world where many borders and minds are closed, I want the UCA to keep thinking globally and maintain a strong commitment to the ecumenical movement.

I really want a UCA that walks the talk when walking together as First and Second Peoples in Covenant with the UAICC.

And I want a UCA that embraces digital technologies to communicate with all generations inside and outside our communities to spread the Gospel in rural and urban contexts, focusing on daily ministry rather than just Sunday ministry – to be a Church that helps people find faith and live out their faith on a daily basis.

In light of the advice provided by the ASC on the challenges and issues likely to be faced by the President and the Assembly in the next seven years I can/will

I am full of hope and optimism for the Uniting Church in Australia.

I see myself as a transformational leader, deeply focused on God's people in the Uniting Church.

While I've experienced firsthand the difficulties of changing embedded cultures, I have also been enormously encouraged by the results of persistence with intergenerational and intercultural ministries.

My learning and growth in ministry has enabled me to resource synods, presbyteries and local congregations in cultural awareness training and being present in spaces of conflict leading people forward through a process of cross cultural mediation to resolve difficult matters of the Church.

I am walking into the future with a well-informed faith and confident I have the tools and skills to pursue ministry in this important leadership role in the life of our Church. I have a finance and marketing background and am currently completing my Masters in Ministry.

By focusing purposefully on our people and our relationships, and by championing our witness and service, I know we can build a bigger, broader and more Uniting Church.

In my own ministry I've seen God breathe life into areas that were once arid and barren, bringing them back to life.

A Church to bring the vision of Pentecost to life, a kingdom banquet where "people will come from the East and West, North and South, and will take their places in the feast in the kingdom of God." (Luke 13:29) Perhaps the vision can only be completely realised until the kingdom has arrived in all of its glory. Nonetheless, we must live as though the eschatological kingdom has already arrived!

Finally, I'm aware of how much I draw my motivation from the people around me in UCA. God has bestowed those in our Church with all the gifts and abilities we need to positively change the world.

The challenges that we face as a Church today are numerous. But when we work collaboratively as the people of God on the way to the promised end, we truly transform lives and communities, leading them forward to Christ