



## Joan Stott UCAF Bursary

The UCAF National Committee is pleased to announce that two bursaries will be awarded for study being undertaken in 2024. The two awardees are Laura rose from the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania and Michaela Anthill-Cassie from the Synod of New South Wales/Australian Capital Territory.

### Laura Rose



I have been on the way with Jesus my whole life. Born and baptised into the UCA as a baby at Frankston UCA. At 15 I was confirmed at Chelsea UCA and gave the speech on behalf of the class. At this time, I experienced what it meant to share my faith with others and could feel a spirit call. I was far too young at the time to know what it meant. I studied first year philosophy at University of Melbourne when I was 17 and my final essay was on the topic of the existence of God; my professor at the time suggested it read more like a theological essay and I should change my major. I did and studied a Bachelor of Science instead. I have spent my time establishing a successful scientific career in clinical trials, but it no longer feels very sustaining or life giving. The pandemic has led many of us to examine our lives and reflect about how we're spending our time. Is there a different way of being? How do I want to spend my time? What is important and life giving to me? How do I demonstrate my faith in where I spend my time? I've been asking myself these questions over the last few years and I'm feeling called into exploring the pathway to ordained ministry. This led me to commence my period of discernment last year.

I've been regularly attending St Kilda Parish Mission UC for the last 15 years. Perhaps this has been my time in the wilderness? A time for my personal growth and reflection. With each minister a new lesson. Rev John Tansey taught me about meditation, stillness, reflection, listening for God. Rev David Pargeter taught me about academic reading of the bible, historical context, how translations can alter meaning and intent. Rev Dr Coralie Ling taught me about feminist theology, inclusive language and Sophia Wisdom. Rev. Robert Hoskins has shared his passion for indigenous culture and highlighted the importance of reconciliation. Rev Alex Sangster has taught me about mission, faith in action, what it means to care for Mother Earth and being a living example of Jesus in the world. Rev Claire Dawe has shown how team ministry and positive collaboration can make an impossible dream become a reality in a relatively short space of time.

You can't be what you can't see. Working with Rev Alex and Rev Claire has ignited my spirit fire of what Ministry can be. They've shown me that it's possible to be a mum and work in this vocation. It gives me hope that there's a future in Ministry as a vocation and that it's something God wants me to explore. This year I have commenced theological study at the academic level to see where the spirit is leading me. I've felt a call into ordained ministry for many years but have pushed it to the side as inconvenient and battled with an internal argument about not being ready. A series of recent events has led me to stop, listen and feel that God wants me to formally discern this call.

I have a special interest in trauma theology, exploring ways that the bible has been used as a weapon to suppress and silence hidden voices. I'm passionate about eco feminist theology and reading texts of terror. I'm learning more about the bible in hopes to one day heal people's negative experiences with scripture and provide a welcoming and inclusive space to discuss the challenging parts of the bible. I'm currently writing an essay on Judges 19, examining a reading of the text in the context of a domestic abuse relationship. I hope to do more of this work in the future.

In my UCA, I have preached about the future of our church, the Act 2 report and how we need to do church differently to CONNECT. I feel the Spirit is moving and I'm drawn to this movement. I feel I am meant to play a role somehow as yet unknown. I am studying theology to have an academic and foundational understanding of the bible. To give of myself, of my time and explore the possibility of a future in ordained Ministry. A future where I can demonstrate faith in action in my vocation. I have much to learn, the academic foundation is critical for further exploration of where this spirit call is leading me and is my next step on the way.

### **Michaela Antill-Cassie**



After attending a Christian High School, I became connected to the local church, became a Christian and began service in the youth ministry. During this time, I completed a Bachelor of Education in early Childhood and began my career as a teacher in a Long Day Care Centre. After working for a few years in this setting I became involved with the organisation Youth with a Mission (YAM), where I completed a 3 month Discipleship Training School (in New Zealand) and was engaged in a 2 month outreach program (in Africa). Following this I did future study with YWAM, completing a core course in Biblical Studies. Throughout

this experience I began to feel a sense of call to work with young people in a church setting. Upon my return to Australia, I took on a part-time role (for 2 years) as a Children's work at a local Anglican church, where I was ended in scripture in schools as well as Friday and Sunday programs.

When the opportunity to apply for a role as a Youth and Young Adult Pastor at Roseville Uniting arose, I eagerly applied with the hope to continue to follow the call I believed God had placed on my life. Throughout my time at Roseville \*Currently 15 years) I have grown in my theology, in my relationship with God and had the opportunity to further explore and discern the call of God on my life. After completed a Period of Discernment (POS), where one of my goals was to engage in theological study, I discovered a strong sense of call to ordained ministry in the capacity as a Minister of the Word, although the time to begin that journey wasn't then. A few years later, after getting married, having two fur babies – Tilly (cat) and Honee (dog), and a baby son, I felt that the time to begin the formation process to become a minister was now right. And so, this is where I am today, after following God's promptings and call in my journey of faith.

On completion of my bachelor's degree and formation program I hope to be ordained in the Uniting Church in Australia. To share the love and welcome of Jesus Christ serving the community in which I am placed and called.