



# INTERCULTURAL NEIGHBOURING SUNDAY 2024

*Weaving Christ's love across cultures and boundaries*



**CELEBRATION GUIDE**



# Intercultural Neighbouring Sunday

## From the President

An old Tongan proverb says, 'oku nofo fakataha ha ki'i kolo lavame'a, ngaue fakataha, mo fetokoni'aki, which translates, "a successful village lives together, works together, and helps one another." This proverb is particularly true for the Tongan women who work together to weave the Tongan Fala (mat). It is sacrificial labour, and women work diligently in communities to 'lalanga' (weave) the Fala so that the talanoa (dialogue) of people who sit on the Fala can begin.

Each strand of the Fala is important to each other in the same way that the Holy Spirit gifts and empowers all members of the Church to confess Jesus Christ and serve him as one body with many members who contribute to the ministry and mission of the Church.

Intercultural Neighbouring Sunday (INS) is an opportunity for us to celebrate the rich and inspiring cultural diversity in the Uniting Church, giving thanks for the transformative love of Christ which holds us together. Emerging from a decision of the 16th Assembly meeting, INS encourages Uniting Church members to reach out and build relationships beyond the Church with the culturally and linguistically diverse neighbours around us.

This year's theme is the 17th Assembly theme, ***Threads of Love: Weaving Christ's Love across Cultures and Boundaries***. It's an invitation to weave the threads of Christ's love in all expressions of faith, across cultures and boundaries in your community and wider neighbourhood.

I encourage you to take this opportunity to celebrate our multicultural heart, to build new relationships, and to weave together a future where diversity is cherished, unity is celebrated and every thread of our communal tapestry resonates with the boundless love of Christ.

Watch a video about the 17th Assembly theme here: <https://vimeo.com/973642695>



**Rev Charissa Suli**  
President of the Uniting Church in Australia



# 2024 Theme

Threads of Love: Weaving Christ's Love across Cultures and Boundaries

## *Breaking Down the Dividing Wall*

Emerging from a decision of the 16th Assembly, Intercultural Neighbouring Sunday (INS) is an opportunity to celebrate the cultural diversity at the heart of our identity as the Uniting Church and to explore ways to build intercultural relationships in our own neighbourhoods. This year, inspired by the 17th Assembly theme, 'Threads of Love: Weaving Christ's Love across Cultures and Boundaries', we invite you to weave the threads of Christ's love in all expressions of faith, across cultures and boundaries in your community and wider neighbourhood.

The theme of the 17th Assembly reminds us of what occurred 60 years ago. In 1964, Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr was invited to visit West Berlin. On a particular Sunday, he preached a sermon to 20,000 people in an outdoor rally. Later that day, against all advice, he crossed the border separated by the three-year-old Berlin Wall, arriving in East Berlin. He delivered the same sermon at St Mary's Church, which he had preached earlier. In his address, he uttered the following remarkable words: "Identifying faith as a means to reconcile and not divide the people, regardless of the "man-made barrier" of the Berlin Wall... It is indeed an honour to be in this city, which stands as a symbol of the divisions of men on the face of the earth. For here on either side of the wall are God's children, and no man-made barrier can obliterate that fact."

On 21 July, Uniting Church congregations and faith communities are encouraged to celebrate Intercultural Neighbouring Sunday, and Ephesians 2:11–22 appears in this day's Lectionary Reading. The proclamation in 2:14 arguably contains one of the core messages in this letter. "For [Christ] is our peace; in his flesh he has made both into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us."

Intriguingly, the phrase "the dividing wall" is literally "the dividing wall of the dividing" in the Greek text. The first word μεσότοιχον (mesotoichon) means a partition wall, and the second word φραγμός (phragmos) refers to a fence. Placing two distinct words of near identical meaning side by side is not a mindless redundancy nor a random insertion. Rather, it is employed to highlight the deep division between the Jews and the Gentiles. Yet Christ is able to break down the ingrained schism caused by any ethnic differences.

In an increasingly multicultural Australia, we have a great opportunity to experience what Dr Andrew Walls calls a new "Ephesian moment," in which different cultures and races being joined together, to eat and work together within one Body of Christ.



When the Epistle to the Ephesians was written, there were only two major cultures in the Christian church, the Jewish and the Hellenistic. But now we have many cultures in the Body of Christ and we are called to join Christ who is breaking down the wall and crossing the boundaries of language and culture.

Regardless if it is a physical wall like the one in Berlin back in the 20th century or an invisible wall portrayed in Ephesians 2, Christ's love can break the wall and move us to unity in diversity. We must work together diligently, breaking down and dissolving any established walls because of our cultural and language differences. By doing so, we can weave Christ's love across cultures and boundaries and build up a beloved multicultural Body of Christ in our neighbourhoods.

- What are the “walls” that you have observed in your neighbourhood, including where you live, work, or play?
- Are there any “walls” that you can identify within your congregation or faith community? What are they?
- As a community, what can you do to break down those walls?
- Individually, what can each of your members do to break down those walls?

*By Rev Dr Sunny Chen, National Consultant, Assembly Resourcing Unit*





# 2024 Prayer

*From 'A Church for All God's People', adopted at the 11th Assembly*

## English

God our Creator, you brought this Uniting Church into being  
You have called us to be your diverse and multi-coloured people  
Show us how to value one another as those made in your image

Christ Jesus

You reached out across the barriers that divided Jews, Samaritans and Romans,  
Enable us to cross the barriers that separate us from one another

Holy Spirit,

You are the Giver of Unity,

Unite your people in love that we may be a community of justice, love and  
reconciliation -

A Church for all God's People!

Amen.

## Spanish

*Translated by Rev Esteban Liévano, Ibero-Latino National Conference Chair*

Dios nuestro Creador, haz creado esta Uniting Church en Australia

Nos haz chamado ser el pueblo diverso y multi-colorado de ti

Demuéstranos como valorar unos a los otros como los hechos en tu imagen

Jesucristo

Alcanzaste entre las fronteras que dividían los judíos, samaritanos y romanos,

Equípanos para cruzar las fronteras separado nos de otros

Espirito Santo,

Sois o doador de unidade,

Une tu pueblo en amor que podremos ser una comunidad de justicia, amor y  
reconciliación -

Una iglesia para todo el pueblo de Dios!

Amen.



## **In Pilipino**

*Translated by Rev Berlin Guerrero, Filipino National Conference Chair*

Diyos naming Manlilikha, ikaw ang nagsilang nitong Uniting Church  
Tinawag mo kami bilang iyong samu't sari at makukulay sa bayan  
Ipakita mo sa amin kung paano papahalagahan ang bawat isa na nilikha mo sa iyong  
wangis

Jesu Kristo

Tinawid mo ang mga balakid na nagbukod sa mga Judyo, Samaritano at mga Romano,  
Tulungan mo kaming lagpasan ang mga balakid na naghihiwalay sa amin sa isa't isa

Espiritung Banal,

Ikaw ang Tagabigay ng Pagkakaisa,

Pagkaisahin mo ang iyong bayan sa pag-ibig upang maging pamayanan kami ng  
katarungan, pagmamahalan at pagkakasundo – Isang Iglesya para sa lahat ng Bayan  
ng Diyos!

Amen

## **In Chinese**

*Translated by Rev Tony Lai, Chinese National Conference Chair*

上帝你是我们的创造者，你让这联合教会诞生  
你召唤我们成为你多样而多彩的子民  
教导我们如何彼此珍惜，作为照你形象所造的人

基督耶稣

你跨越了分隔犹太人、撒玛利亚人和罗马人的障碍，  
使我们能够跨越彼此分隔的障碍

圣灵，

你是合一的赐予者，

用爱团结你的子民，使我们成为一个正义、爱与和解的社区——  
一个属于所有上帝子民的教会！

阿门

## **In Portuguese**

*Translated by Rev Esteban Liévano, Ibero-Latino National Conference Chair*

Deus nosso Criador, tens criado está Uniting Church em Austrália  
Nos chama ser o povo diverso e multicolorido Seu  
Mostra à nos como valorar uns aos outros como os feitos na sua imagem



Cristo Jesus

Alcançaste entre as fronteiras que dividiram os Judeus, Samaritanos e Romanos,  
Equipa-nos para cruzar as fronteiras separando-nos dos outros

Espirito Santo,

Eres el donador de unidad,

Une Seu povo em amor que podemos ser uma comunidade de justiça, amor e  
reconciliação -

Uma igreja para todo o povo de Deus!

Amém

### **In Indonesian**

*Translated by Pastor William Yap*

Tuhan Pencipta kami, Engkaulah yang telah membentuk Uniting Church

Engkau menjadi kan kami sebagai umat-Mu yang beragam.

Ajarlah kami agar kami dapat menghargai satu sama lain sebagai ciptaan-Mu.

Tuhan Yesus Kristus,

Engkau telah melintasi batasan yang memisahkan orang Yahudi, Samaria, dan  
Romawi,

Mampukanlah kami untuk melintasi rintangan yang memisahkan kami satu sama  
lain.

Roh Kudus,

Persatukanlah umat-Mu dalam kasih agar kami dapat menjadi komunitas yang  
mencerminkan keadilan, kasih, dan rekonsiliasi- Gereja bagi semua umat Allah!

Amin

### **In Korean**

*Translated by Rev Myung Hwa Park, Korean National Conference Chair*

창조주 하나님, 우리 연합교회를 있게 하시고,

하나님께서 우리를 다양하고 형형색색의 사람들로 불러주셨습니다.

우리가 서로를 하나님의 형상을 닮은 사람들로 소중히 여기게 해주시옵소서.

그리스도 예수님,

주님께서는 유대인과 사마리아인 그리고 로마인들을 나눈 장벽을 넘으셨습니다.

우리들도 우리와 다른 이들을 나누는 장벽을 넘을 수 있게 해주시옵소서.

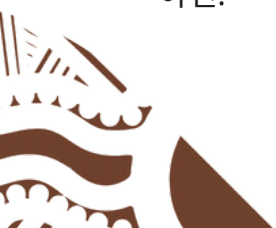
성령님,

성령님은 연합을 주시는 분이십니다.

사랑으로 우리를 연합하게 하셔서 우리가 정의와 사랑 그리고 화해의 공동체,

하나님의 온 백성을 위한 교회가 될 수 있게 해주시옵소서.

아멘.



# Tips and Suggestions

## Monocultural Congregations

*By Rev Dr Sunny Chen, National Consultant, Assembly Resourcing Unit*

Language and culture are inseparable. There are over 200 local worship communities worshipping in languages other than English and First People languages in the Uniting Church nationally. As a monocultural Anglo community, raising the awareness of the different languages spoken in other Uniting Church communities would be helpful when planning for an Intercultural Neighbouring Sunday worship service.

Nationally, there are at least 36 languages spoken in various Uniting Church worship communities, including Tongan, Fijian, Rotuman, Samoan, Cook Islands, Niuean, PNG, Maori, Nolfolk, Hindi, Dinka, Nuer, Ghanaian, Spanish, Arabic, Armenian, Aramic, Assyrian, Farsi, Mandarin, Taiwanese, Cantonese, Korean, Vietnamese, Indonesian, Tagalog, Matu, Chin, Haka, Falam, Karen, Shona, Adebela, Tamil, Portuguese, Kiswahili, Kirundi and Macedonian.

In organising an Intercultural Neighbouring Day worship service for this year, the following lists some suggestions, focusing on the language aspect. They serve as a starting point or an inspiration for other practices that your community may think of.

### Bible Readings

On top of reading the passages in English, consider having those passages read in one (or more than one) other language.

- Invite someone with a different cultural background to be a reader; or
- Pre-record the reading(s) done in a different language other than English prior to the service, and then broadcast the recording during worship.

### Hymns

In choosing hymns, consider selecting those hymns, with their melodies and/or lyrics being originated from a non-Anglo background. For example, there are some hymns in that category in *Together in Song*.

- TiS 241 So God loved the people of the world
- TiS 253 O Lord Jesus Marrkapmirr
- TiS 345 Were you there when they crucified my Lord
- TiS 459 In Christ there is no east or west
- TiS 579 The blind man sat by the road and he cried
- TiS 709 Chuyo, chuyo (Lord, hear us)



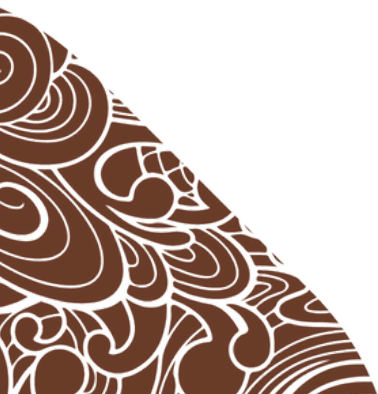
## **Sermon**

Preacher can consider the following suggestions in composing a sermon.

- Include a quote, which is relevant to the sermon message, originated from someone who is from a non-Anglo background;
- Include a relevant story or illustration that has a culturally and linguistically diverse flavour.

## **Special Testimony**

Consider inviting someone from a culturally and linguistically diverse background to share a testimony regarding the person's faith journey.



# Tips and Suggestions

## Bilingual and multilingual worship

*Contributed by Rev Sandy Brodine, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania*

### Plan ahead

It takes quite some time and effort to plan a service involving multiple languages, especially if you want to plan with a linguistically diverse team, or need translate some parts. Start early, and leave yourself plenty of time.

### Plan with a culturally diverse team if possible

Planning with a culturally diverse team will help to ensure that cultural sensitivities are attended to will help create a more meaningful service.

### Use non-verbal symbols and signs

Creative elements that use different senses (ie: not just spoken or written words) are helpful. Examples include silence, symbol, visual images, mime, dance. If appropriate, creative ways of engaging such as painting, sculpting, active play etc that rely less on language, but still help people to convey meaning to one another can be a great way to build relationship, and perhaps learn about a different culture. Holy Communion could be presided at in one or more languages as people will recognise and understand the ritual, and be able to follow what is happening based on hand gestures etc.

### Introducing different cultural elements

It can be wonderful to include elements in the service from different cultures. When doing so remember that singing, dancing or any other involvement by a cultural group is about participation and not performance. Such participation can be a wonderful way to deepen the worship experience across cultures.

### The Sermon

Where possible, try to find a way to share the sermon in a way that is not reliant on one language being translated into another. For example use elements that can be understood visually such as images or film. If possible a shorter sermon is better than a long one, especially if parallel translation is necessary.

Consider how you wish the sermon to be presented. Is the preacher able to speak both languages and can therefore switch languages themselves? Do you need a translator? Would it be better to preach in one language, and provide a written version in the other?





If you are working with a translator, find out how experienced they are, and how much preparation time they will need. If they can translate on the go, ensure that you give them full sentences and don't stop in the middle, as word order can differ a lot from one language to another.

### **Hymns and Prayers**

Consider using hymns and prayers where responses can be spoken or sung in a range of 'heart languages.' If you can find hymns where there are words in both/multiple languages to the same tune, these would assist everyone to be able to participate in their own 'heart language.'



# Tips and Suggestions

## Multicultural and intercultural congregations

*By Rev Dr Benji Callen, Burnside City Uniting Church, South Australia*

### Multicultural testimonies at Worship contexts

While doing a series on spiritual disciplines I quickly realised that when it comes to the topic of fasting different cultural backgrounds had vastly different experiences of this ancient Christian practice. For example, those from Africa, India, China, Korea and Malaysia, fasting was a very normal religious practice. Some had even been taught it by their mother as a child. Whereas many white Australians I asked had mostly experienced fasting as something you do before an operation or medical procedure. To highlight the differences in background and help normalise the practice for those who had never considered it before we interviewed in worship four people from four different countries. They briefly talked about their experience of fasting and how that had helped them of their church in their Christian discipleship and mission. Their testimonies were far more powerful than the exegetical sermon that followed. It taught me not to make assumptions about certain faith perspectives and that we can all learn from each other.

### Multicultural fellowship with an international lunch

Over the last few years, we have found different excuses to host an international lunch. Either as a celebration after a Sunday service or as part of a Saturday one day church camp at the church. We've found a mix of personal invitation and asking for volunteers has been needed to encourage a wide range of food. From hot Indian pork curry, Venezuelan Empanadas, Chinese fried rice and the classic Zucchini slice it was oh so tasty and a great way to share culture and hospitality. There are practical challenges around heating and serving food around the kitchen, but with some good humour and decent dose of grace it's worth it.

### Multicultural Youth Activities

Sharing of international food and hospitality has also been a critical part of a vibrant youth group. One term we had a theme of "dumplings" where we made Chinese dumplings together, the next week we tried heated frozen Russian and Polish dumplings (Pierogi and Pelmeni), and finally, we had Aussie golden syrup dumplings. It became a talking point and emphasised both the similarity and the beautiful unique expressions of different cultures. How then can we as children of God be both similar and unique?



# Litany

## Litany of Commitment to a Journey Together

*Based on the Statement, The Uniting Church is a Multicultural Church*

VOICE 1 In Christ all human boundaries are swept away!

**ALL This we affirm.**

VOICE 2 Jesus Christ has made peace between people of every race, culture and class.

**ALL We are witness bearers to this truth.**

VOICE 3 As we move towards this new day we stand before God and our sisters and brothers to face who we are and who we seek to be.

VOICE 1 This means being open to changes the Holy Spirit will bring.

ALL We hear the call of God to be open the gifts of all God's people.

VOICE 2 It will mean naming the sin of racism where it exists, including in the church.

ALL We will work to create a community of justice and love.

VOICE 3 None of God's children are to be pushed to the fringes of our church.

**ALL We will ensure that there are equitable rights in the use of Uniting Church properties;**

**full access to its resources;**

**full participation in decision making in the councils of the church and pastoral care for all God's people.**

VOICE 1 And when we are tempted to hold on to what we have from the past and insulate ourselves from the hurts and struggles of each other.

ALL God give us courage to risk leaving the security of the safe and familiar. May we celebrate the richness of our diversity, and experience unity which is your gift.

VOICE 2 Our life together is a foretaste of the reconciliation of all things in Christ!

ALL We will seek to live as a sign and witness to God's Kingdom, and be a sign of hope within the Australian community.

*By Rev Dr Helen Richmond*



# Intergenerational Ideas

*By Wendy Lewis*

Here are some ideas that might help the children and families in your congregation or at home to engage with this important Sunday.

## **Bible stories**

Now might be a good time to audit the children's bibles and storybooks you have around your church or home. Some questions to consider are

- Will all members of your congregation and neighbourhood identify themselves in the pictures?
- Are the skin tones representative of the people being discussed in the stories?
- Are the pictures engaging for our "younger digital natives"?
- Is the language used inclusive?

## **Bible story suggestions**

- Creation (Genesis 9:9-12)
- The Tower of Babel (Genesis 11) (read God's Big Plan by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Theodora Hieber)
- Abraham and the Three Strangers (Genesis 18: 1-8)
- Journey Stories of Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Exodus, Naomi and Ruth, Daniel, Jonah, Esther, Jeremiah, Jesus (read : Jesus was a Refugee by Andrew McDonough)
- Jesus meeting with Samaritan woman (John 4:7-10)
- Faith of a Syrian-Phoenician woman (Mark 7:24-30)
- The faith of a Roman centurion (Matthew 8:5-13)
- Samaritan Leper (Luke 17:11-19)
- The Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-37)
- The Canaanite Woman's Faith (Matthew 15:21-29)

## **Story Bible suggestions**

- My Big Story Bible by Tom Wright,
- The Biggest Story Bible Storybook written by Kevin D Young
- Children of God Storybook Bible By Archbishop Desmond Tutu
- The Jesus Story Book Bible written by Sally Lloyd-Jones and Illustrated by Jago
- The Whirl or Spark Story Bibles from Sparkhouse Family
- Bible Stories Every Child Should Know by Kenneth N. Taylor
- The Action Bible



## Story book suggestions

- Who is My Neighbour by Amy Jill Levine and Sandy Eisenberg Sasso
- Who ever You Are by Mem Fox
- OR 10 Finger and 10 Toes by Mem Fox for the very youngest
- God's Dream by Desmond Tutu
- The Story of And by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso

## Songs

- Be One Together by David MacGregor: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8K\\_GP026sns](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8K_GP026sns)
- I see God in You by Heather Price: <https://heatherprice.com.au/downloads/i-am-loved-album/>

## Activities

1. Many cultures have their own weaving techniques and materials they use. Research some and have a go at making something either individually or corporately. These videos may get you started:
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pRaMP2B589c>
  - <https://www.sbs.com.au/language/english/en/podcast-episode/what-is-the-cultural-significance-of-first-nations-weaving/ey5wv6fm3>
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wJbzjV\\_Q5c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wJbzjV_Q5c)
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QW2zwr6txdo>
  - This idea can be done individually then used to create a large mosaic: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4kqGP1nIKD0>
2. We weave flavours and textures when we cook, so have a try at cooking a dish from another culture. Then perhaps sharing what everyone has cooked in a communal meal.
3. Throw pebbles into a body of water, sea, lake, pond, bath and watch the circles expand out and cross over each other. Or drop food colouring into a bowl of water and watch the colours change as they intermingle.

## For Messy Church

*By Rev Sophia Lizares and the Kalamunda Messy Church Team*

*Church across borders through a multilingual and multicultural Messy Church: A Story from Kalamunda Uniting Church, WA*

Pentecost - what an excellent feast to celebrate life as an intercultural church! This covers not just us within the Uniting Church but also with all the world.

On the welcoming table was a passport that people filled out with their names and places of birth and a list of “destinations”: fun games and crafts from around the world. We had 15 of them including skittles, boules, bocce, snakes and ladders. We made an Egyptian necklace and even danced the tinikling from the Philippines.

Just like any feast, we had a banquet, featuring dishes from around the world. Chinese fried rice, the controversial but delicious pavlova. Our hottest dish came from India and was dubbed “Fiery Pentecost Curry”!

Our Messy Church at Kalamunda Uniting has always been multicultural, drawing from the wider multicultural community. How good it is to welcome people and their stories, especially come countries that need our prayer and attention.

This Pentecost, we were privileged to have two Palestinian Christians, descendants of the first Jews at the first Pentecost, share the story about the need for understanding the great need for peace around the world.

One Christmas, we showed a film on the Nativity which drew two Ukrainians.

As we are intergenerational, we’d also like to learn more about youth culture.

Each month this year of activities and celebrations, focus on a Holy Habit from Messy Church reflecting the different aspects of the shared life as described in Luke-Acts. We look forward to hearing from others about how they do it! We can all have a go.





# Suggestions for Hymns and Songs

## *Intercultural and Multicultural Worship*

### **Together in Song**

- 50 Bonum est confidere / It is good to trust Taizé community\*
- 73 Laudate Dominum / Sing praise and bless the Lord Taizé community\*
- 701 Alleluia
- 702 Alleluia Taizé community
- 704 Asithi, Amen / Sing Amen Swahili
- 706 Bless the Lord, my soul Taizé community\*
- 709 Chuyo chuyo turo chusoso / Lord hear us! Korean
- 711 Wa wa wa Emimimo / Come, O Holy, Spirit, come Yoruba (Nigeria)
- 713 Dona nobis pacem, Domine Taizé community\*
- 714 Eat this Bread Taizé community\*
- 720 Halle, halle, hallelujah! Caribbean
- 723 Santo, santo, santo / Holy, holy, holy Spanish (Argentina)
- 725 In our darkness Taizé community\*
- 728 Jesucristo reina, reina, ya! / Jesus Christ reigns! Spanish (Argentina)
- 730 Jesus, remember me Taizé community\*
- 731 Jubilate Deo / Rejoice in God Taizé community\*
- 734 Kyrie eleison / Lord have mercy (Ghana)
- 735 Kyrie, Kyrie, eleison / Lord have mercy Taizé community\*
- 736 Kyrie eleison / Lord have mercy Ukrainian Orthodox
- 739 Nada te turbe / Nothing can trouble Taizé community\*
- 740 O, qué bueno es Jesús / O, how good is Christ the Lord Spanish (Puerto Rico)
- 741 O Lord hear my prayer Taizé community\*
- 747 The Lord is My Light Taizé community\*
- 749 Thuma Mina / Send me, Lord Zulu (South Africa)
- 750 Veni Creator / Come Creator Taizé community\*
- 752 Veni, Sancte Spiritus / Come Holy Spirit Taizé community\*
- 773 Gloria, gloria Taizé community\*
- 775 Gloria, gloria Spanish (Argentina)

\*The Taizé community is an ecumenical monastic community in France. Worship is in many languages and often songs are translated into multiple languages for communal singing. See the Taizé website for translation into many different languages.

### **Additional song resources:**

- Come All You People: Shorter Songs for Worship from Iona / Wild Goose Publishing
- We Walk His Way: Shorter Songs for Worship from Iona / Wild Goose Publishing
- For Everyone Born: Global Songs for an Emerging Church

*Compiled by Rev Jennifer Hughes*



# Stories and Reflections on Being a Intercultural and Multicultural Church

## Encountering God in a Multilingual and Multicultural Worship

*By Rev Seung Jae Yeon, Lead Minister at Eastwood Uniting Church (Synod of NSWACT)*

At Eastwood UC, Eastwood NSW, our 9:30am Sunday worship service (some special occasions like Easter, UCA Anniversary and Christmas we gather at 10am as a combined congregation) is delivered with three languages: English, Chinese and Korean. The three languages are an important tool for representing the members of our church community. Through every Sunday service, we celebrate who we are, affirm where we belong, and remind ourselves that the stewardship is given to us. The number and type of languages we utilise is important. Rather, it is more important to always identify the representation of the main worship language/s we agree and make sure that our worshippers feel included because of the languages that they might find who they are.

As a first-generation Korean migrant UCA ordained minister, I am still comfortable with the setting of Korean language spoken and culture practised. I know it plays an important role in shaping my Korean-ness and is influencing my ministry and its all practices, both visibly and invisibly. I also know it takes a lot of time and energy to prepare the multi-language service, write the liturgy, translate it into the necessary language (always thankful to helpers in our congregation), and embody it every time it is offered. But here's why I am sustainable in this life-long commitment:

I have a vision that worshippers (existing members and potential Christians) who attend our gatherings will experience encountering God in the midst of worship, in just one of the elements offered through that worship. Also, in this worship, I have the conviction that we can experience God through a single word, a single image, a single musical note, and a single one's service that might make people feel hospitality. It is okay if this doesn't happen. In God's mysterious plan, there will be one more chance to experience God and flourish.

I believe that a multicultural worship should be guided by the following values: humanity over efficiency, community over competency. Because God's presence and love cannot be perfectly translated into any language but their heart language/s. It is almost impossible for a person to be renewed by earthly factors. It could be only possible with the love of God, the grace of Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit that we encounter and experience the likeness of God in worship.

Just like the Sun removes the traveller's cloak whereas the North Wind can't, our worship services in many languages should be designed and offered in a way that provides a space where all worshippers feel and experience warm hospitality so that they turn to God and perhaps are renewed.

Link: [Eastwood Uniting Church's Community Chat Embraces Multiculturalism – Insights Magazine \(uca.org.au\)](https://uca.org.au)

### **A Story from Bacchus Marsh Uniting Church, Victoria**

*Contributed by Simon Lumb, Bacchus Marsh Uniting Church, Victoria*

Bacchus Marsh is located 50km northwest of Melbourne. The outer west of Melbourne including Melton has experienced rapid population growth with many new residents to Australia from a diverse range of cultures.

In March this year we were approached by the leaders of Melton Bethel Baptist Church who were looking for a new home to have their Sunday worship and fellowship. Their congregation comprises refugees and people who have migrated recently from Myanmar (formerly Burma).

For us at Bacchus Marsh Uniting Church, we were very excited by the opportunity to not only see buildings dedicated to the glory of God be used by another growing faith community but also the opportunity it brings for our congregation to learn about another culture with opportunities to share in ecumenical worship and intercultural fellowship.

To recognise refugee week in June, we held a worship service (available on YouTube) inviting their members to participate with the sharing of song, dance and prayer. We have also been invited to share a meal together and we are excited at the opportunities our shared faith brings.

### **A new home for Melton Bethel Baptist Church**

*By Titus Bawihung, Melton Bethel Baptist Church*

Our congregation is from Myanmar and there are many different ethnic groups in our country. We are Chin Matu group and we speak Matu language. As refugees, most of our people are coming from Malaysia under a UN program. Our church established in 2022 and based on Melton. We were looking for a place for worship. Finally, God answered our prayers by opening the Uniting Church. They kindly welcome us as a family and we feel blessed. We hope that we can continue fellowship together sometime in the future and share our thoughts and prayers. Thank you so much.

**[Read three more stories about our Intercultural Worship](#)**





**INTERCULTURAL NEIGHBOURING SUNDAY 2024**  
CELEBRATION GUIDE