

## Biography for Rev Charissa Suli

### 17th President of the Uniting Church in Australia Assembly



Rev Charissa Suli stands as a beacon of hope and inspiration, serving as the 17th President of the Uniting Church in Australia Assembly. Her election marks a historic milestone as she becomes the youngest person, the first person of non-Anglo-Celtic background, and the first of Pacifica heritage to hold this esteemed position.

Rev Suli's leadership is deeply rooted in her unwavering commitment to inclusivity, community building, and transformative ministry. She embodies these principles with empathy, grace, and resilience, breaking barriers and paving the way for future generations.

Her journey into ministry was inspired by the pioneering women clergy within the Uniting Church, particularly those of Pacific Islander and Asian heritage. Witnessing their leadership ignited her own vocation. This profound sense of purpose was affirmed in 2014 when she was ordained as a Minister of the Word, following the completion of a Bachelor of Theology.

Throughout her ministry, Rev Suli has held significant roles across the Uniting Church. Her leadership has been demonstrated in positions such as Deputy Executive Minister and Presbytery Minister with the Sydney Presbytery, National Consultant with the Uniting Church Assembly, Congregational Minister at Dapto Uniting Church, and Cross-Cultural Consultant within the New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory Synod. She has also been deeply involved in the Tongan National Conference, serving as convener of the Second-Generation Committee for 10 years, where she nurtured emerging leaders, fostered intercultural and intergenerational ministry, and bridged the gap between first and second generations.

Her academic achievements underscore her dedication to theological education and ministry. Alongside her Bachelor of Theology, Rev Suli holds a Graduate Diploma in Ministry and is nearing the completion of her master's in theological studies. Her recent minor thesis, focusing on "Racism in the Uniting Church in Australia: Towards a New Way of Being the Body of Christ," reflects her deep commitment to justice and equity within both the church and broader society.

Guided by the theme "Threads of Love: Weaving Christ's Love Across Cultures and Boundaries," Rev Suli's presidency draws from the Tongan tradition of weaving the *Fala* (mat), symbolising the interconnectedness of the diverse strands that make up the church. Her vision calls for the church to embrace diversity and unity, reflect deeply on its identity as the body of Christ, and work towards healing and transformation in areas of inequality and injustice.

Rev Suli's personal journey is one of resilience and faith. She has overcome significant challenges, including early motherhood and the social and cultural expectations that accompanied it. With the support of her husband, mother and unwavering faith in God, she transitioned from a successful career in finance and marketing to answering her call to ministry, demonstrating courage and dedication to her faith.

Living in Sydney with her husband and their four children, Rev Suli finds joy in creating meaningful family traditions, taking long walks along the beach, and celebrating life's simple moments together.

Rev Charissa Suli's leadership as President is not just a personal achievement but a profound symbol of the Uniting Church's commitment to inclusivity, diversity, and the transformative power of Christ's love. Her presidency inspires both the public and members of the Uniting Church to embody these values in their lives and communities.

Under her guidance, the Uniting Church in Australia continues to move forward with a renewed commitment to inclusivity, compassion, and unwavering faith, weaving together the diverse threads of its community into a unified and loving tapestry that reflects the deep love of God found in Christ.