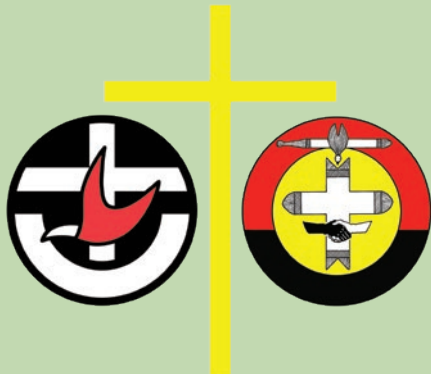


# Voices



OF OUR COVENANT

## EXHIBITION CATALOGUE



# Voices

OF OUR COVENANT

The Uniting Church covenant relationship with First Peoples is at the heart of our Church as we stand with our First Nations brothers and sisters in Christ.

The Synod office is located on the lands of the Yuggera and Turrbal Peoples and we acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country where we live and work across the whole Queensland Synod.

We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging as the holders of knowledge, tradition, story and culture and seek to learn from them and work with them in the spirit of reconciliation.

**Voices of our Covenant** was initiated by the Covenanting Working Group of the Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod, to give a space to honour First Peoples' stories, allowing them to come together in truth-telling to talk freely about their personal history and experiences with God, spirituality and culture.

Through the process of gathering and sharing stories, Jo-Anne Driessens, photographer and documenter, creates a medium for First Nations people in Indigenous communities across Queensland, to explore identity and relationship with the church and faith.

This exhibition of photos and accompanying words links to a Youtube channel where visitors can watch and listen to the Voices of our Covenant.



The Uniting Church in Australia  
QUEENSLAND SYNOD



## Reverend Aunty Alex Gater

**Born in Brisbane and raised in Cherbourg Aboriginal Community.**

**Was the first Aboriginal woman in South-East Queensland to be ordained within the Anglican Church. Brisbane, Queensland.**

My relationship with faith and religion is, I came from a Christian background, growing up at Cherbourg. I give thanks to God and my beloved grandmother who instilled the love of God in all of our family at an early age. When I learnt about Jesus, I loved listening to the stories. Also my grandfather Charlie when he was forcibly removed and taken back to Yarrabah, he was going into ministry as well. We get that from both sides of the family - granny and grandfather.

God was in our culture, was in Aboriginal culture ... passed down from generation to generation. We didn't learn about our culture at school we were taught it in the home, you know - strong family values, respect and manners - do not touch or take anything that doesn't belong to you.

Aboriginal people, we are a spiritual race of people, a peaceful race of people and a sharing and caring race of people, that's how we all survived - by caring for each other and looking out for each other, no one was ever turned away.

**Scan the code to see more of Reverend Aunty Alex's story on the "Voices of our Covenant" Youtube channel.**



## Reverend Aunty Roberta Stanley

**Connections to Hopevale, Coen, Bindal & Great Keppel Island, Queensland.**

**Ordained Reverend, Uniting Church of Australia. Townsville, Queensland.**

I came to the Lord when I was very young and I grew up with Sunday school, youth groups and all that sort of stuff. So you grew up with that and that was just part of your life. You thought that's what everybody does. So those are the things that really shaped my life, my formative years, I guess.

We have got to look at all the stories. It's not one story better than the other, but it's us together, working it out together and saying - okay, let's sit down and discuss it. . .let's sit at the table, let's move forward.

I pray that what goes from here will be to your honour God and to your glory, and that we will know that God never made junk, that we are made in your image, and Father-God people will know how much you love and care for them.

**Scan the code to see more of Aunty Roberta's story on the "Voices of our Covenant" Youtube channel.**





## **Aunty Denise Proud**

**Born on Wakka Wakka country and raised on Cherbourg Aboriginal Community, Aunty Denise is a proud Aboriginal woman. Brisbane, Queensland.**

**Aunty Denise is an internationally renowned presenter, educator, author and artist and has worked extensively across these sectors since the 1960's.**

I grew up on Cherbourg and of course mum was always in the church, and she was always involved in the Mother's Union and the Country Women's Association. She was just very involved in community and that was mum.

We used to go to the Anglican Church with old Mr Atkins (I'll say his name). He used to ride his bike all the way from Murgon, come and do Sunday school with us. Mum also was a great singer in the church, she was a wonderful singer, she had a beautiful voice, and she knew all the hymns. Her voice was the loudest, so Ralph and I used to cringe next to her, but we loved, and we still enjoy singing hymns to this day.

The church also gave us a grounding and community. It's still community in church and it was getting together and supporting each other and mum.

**Scan the code to see more of Aunty Denise's story on the "Voices of our Covenant" Youtube channel.**



## Uncle Eric Law

**A proud Wakka Wakka man, Cherbourg Aboriginal Community.  
Cherbourg, Queensland.**

I was introduced to faith and spirituality very early in my lifetime. My mother was a very strong Anglican woman. And she made sure that the 13 children that we had in the family all had that upbringing. But I was also introduced to spirituality, to our cultural spirituality, by listening to a lot of old people who were around at the time that I was growing up. And they came from every part of the state, and they were such a wonderful group of people.

I'd like to teach people, especially our young people - and not so young people here - about the Yarning Circle. I would love to teach them about that. Where everybody is equal. Everybody is respectful. Everybody is honest.

**Scan the code to see more of Uncle Eric's story on the  
"Voices of our Covenant" Youtube channel.**





## Uncle Allan Palm Island

**Palm Island Traditional owner, Munbarra people.  
Palm Island, Queensland.**

I want young people to reconnect with their identity - to go back to your country, to learn what you can. Build your confidence and relationship back and also you just do things in life! You want to be alive. You want to go on a straight line, keep your mind on whatever you can that is biblically good – bible things, good cultural things, connection to country. Then build it up, come back stronger.

Learn to respect your Elders and also be who you are, and where you come from in your connection to country. I hope in your heart that you'll look towards that in future.

**Scan the code to see more of Uncle Allan's story on the  
"Voices of our Covenant" Youtube channel.**



## Reverend Bruce Moore

(non-Indigenous ally for First Peoples)

**Executive Director, Mission for Uniting Care Queensland.  
Ordained Reverend in the Uniting Church of Australia.  
Brisbane, Australia.**

I come from a fundamental principle, which is quite a strong faith theological principle, that everyone matters. And everyone deserves the right to have dignity, work, and respect in life. I'm so conscious of our First Nations peoples, the injustices and generational trauma - the horrible story that's part of our national history.

This is something that I strongly feel is a matter of injustice and have committed a lot of my life to, working towards not only standing with, but to advocate for and see some of our First Nations peoples back in the driving seat of their life, in a self-determining way.

We have got to take the time to listen. To seek to understand, to hear the stories. Not assume that one story is everyone's story. Everyone has their own unique story, and we want to honour and respect that.

**Scan the code to see more of Bruce's story on the  
"Voices of our Covenant" Youtube channel.**







## **Reverend Gary Harding**

**(non-Indigenous ally for First Peoples)**

**Chairperson, Presbytery Minister for rural and Indigenous engagement in the Carpentaria, Queensland.  
Ordained Reverend in the Uniting Church of Australia.  
Carpentaria, Australia.**

Working with the people in Mount Isa, was something that I just really enjoyed. I wasn't there to fix the problem. I was there to build relationships. Because I think the danger we have in the church, and a lot of organisations - we want to fix it. . . . But just because we created the mess doesn't mean we're the right people to fix it.

Aboriginal communities are glad that you're there, walking with them. Because they're already spiritual. You don't have to convince them that God exists. You've just got to be able to point them to how God can relate to them and help them in their community.

So I would say to a young minister, if you really want to exercise this ministry, these are the great places to do it. Because they're hungry for the gospel. . . . We need to walk with people in that journey together to say, okay, we have a shared angst in our past, but we can have a shared joy in our future.

**Scan the code to see more of Gary's story on the  
"Voices of our Covenant" Youtube channel.**



## Reverend Mark Kickett

**Noongar, South West Australia. Minister of the Word in the Uniting Church of Australia and National Interim Chair of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC). Western Australia.**

Faith and spirituality - I have a sense that it's always been with me, and it's emerged as I've grown and gone on in life.

I saw people talking about this transforming gospel...spoken of by Aboriginal leaders who were sharing our own story and therefore validating me as who I was, and validating my Aboriginality, my culture.

And I think the journey, has emerged in my life in the Uniting Church. The Uniting Church has taken my sense of my identity and my spirituality to another level, in that we acknowledged that God was in this country before colonisation. So therefore God had already spoken into who we are.

**Scan the code to see more of Mark's story on the "Voices of our Covenant" Youtube channel.**





## Aisha Mills

**Naghi & Masig Islands, Torres Strait. Placement Support Specialist in Foster Care, UnitingCare. Cairns, Queensland.**

So the cultural journey for me to pass down to my children is storytelling.

It's the storytelling that my grandparents passed down to me - our Sunday lunches that we used to have every Sunday as a family. All the cousins would come together, we'd all bring a dish, and everybody would share.

For me at this time, it a time to listen and learn so that I can grow into full cultural and spiritual knowledge.

**Scan the code to see more of Aisha's story on the "Voices of our Covenant" Youtube channel.**



## Lisa Roff

**Wiradjuri, New South Wales. 13YARN Team Leader, Lifeline.  
Brisbane, Queensland.**

I truly believe that there is something bigger than us. But I often don't relate or connect to the word God. For me it's all about my values, my beliefs... God culture for me is my connection with the country that I live on, work on and play on.

I think it's about what my connection is to the people that I'm around, the mob. Giving back to the community that I'm in, as a way of honouring that community, working really closely with mob who I come into contact with, and respecting the ways in which they live and work as well.

I think as an Aboriginal woman, it's important for me in my community to ensure that elders are heard. Because for far too long they've been silenced. And I feel like nowadays with the progress that we've had in our nation, the youth and the younger people have more opportunity to be that voice for mob who was silenced.

**Scan the code to see more of Lisa's story on the  
"Voices of our Covenant" Youtube channel.**





## Natalie Lewis

**A proud Juru, Kabi Kabi woman. Brisbane, Queensland.**

My faith and connection with spirituality I don't speak much of, but it actually started from when I was a little girl.

I think the thing that I'd really like to teach is that spirituality, and the church, and the beliefs, and the faith - what they do is one and the same. What I've learned in theology and in walking in the spirit, is that there is one God, one creator who looks over us all. I think it's just a matter of us sitting and listening to each other to find that commonality that we all come under. And the basis of it all is love and respect.

**Scan the code to see more of Natalie's story on the "Voices of our Covenant" Youtube channel.**



## Aunty Beverley Muckan

**A proud Kabi Kabi, Birra Gubba woman. 13YARN, Lifeline.  
Brisbane, Queensland.**

My mum was a very devoted Christian. So we were brought up in the Christian way. Our storylines are actually what we call God, the creator of Heaven and Earth. So I think the upbringing of my mum has implanted on my spirit and I believe in spirituality of the land, our stories, our culture.

My greatest hope is about First Nation's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people coming together. We are all different clans from different areas, but my hope is for us coming together to unite as one.

**Scan the code to see more of Aunty Beverley's story on the "Voices of our Covenant" Youtube channel.**





## Sarah Tucker

**Narungga, Kurna – Point Pearce, South Australia.**

**Lived Experience Art Program Facilitator, UnitingCare Prison Ministry. South-East Queensland.**

I was brought up in all sorts of different spiritualities, but I have studied ministry and my alignment with God is in a freedom concept.

Culture to me is an all-encompassing freedom that lets people emerge individually from a space that has been affected by all cultures in this globalised world. We should remain true to our culture. But expand upon that, with our new progressive experiences and allow for others to be creative within their own cultures.

Painting brings the most joy - painting, creating and seeing other people create and feel comfortable with their own mistakes and wearing their scars proudly and being able to be stronger through that, and resilient. I love seeing people repair and learn to live with wounds.

**Scan the code to see more of Sarah's story on the "Voices of our Covenant" Youtube channel.**



## Sean Weetra

**Ngarrindjeri, South Australia. Chair of Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC), South Australia.**

My family is connected with the Uniting Church through the Methodists, and I've always had a faith in the church as well and been involved in the church.

For me, culture has been - on country, being surrounded by family, being able to carry on traditional artifact making and weaving, language. So I'm actually teaching that language and weaving and artifact making. So culture's a big part of my life, but definitely connects with my faith as well.

I think for myself what I'm most grateful for from Elders, is being able to listen from a young age to the stories they told and their teachings. And also just the integrity of the Elders and their resilience, has been a big teaching in my life.

**Scan the code to see more of Sean's story on the "Voices of our Covenant" Youtube channel.**







## **Alison Overeem Smith**

**Muwanina people, South East Tasmania. Manager of the Leprena Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress in Tasmania.**

**National Executive for the Uniting Aboriginal Islander Christian Congress (UAICC). Board member, UnitingCare Australia. Tasmania.**

My work and history have always been around advocacy and justice, and weaving together the threads of the basket that make us one. It's an unfinished basket, let me tell you. We got some jobs to do and some work to do you fellas, but we can do it if we all weave into the same basket.

Often I discern on - Why am I here? What am I called to? And I'm called to those woven threads of Aboriginality, Christianity and spirituality. They're not different stories, they're the one basket and that's the basket that I am called to.

And so for me, the challenge in the Uniting Church and beyond is to keep telling our story. And if I'm called to tell that story, I'll keep telling it. I'll keep yarning it up 'cos there's work to be done. And if that's what I'm called to do, that's what I'll do.

**Scan the code to see more of Alison's story on the "Voices of our Covenant" Youtube channel.**



## Reverend Craig Mischewski

(non-Indigenous ally for First Peoples)

**Ordained Reverend in the Uniting Church of Australia.  
Weipa and Mapoon, Queensland.**

I've spent my lifetime working with people outside of the church, and I bring that culture into the church... They made space for me, they said - we want you, we know you are different but that's why we want you here. So it's been a very positive experience.

I love the work that I do in the communities, like when we have gatherings in Aurukun or wherever I'm at, and just the energy, the positive energy, and people in those communities are so in love with God. They see God everywhere.

Compassion, kindness, humility, justice, if we can get those things right, even just for ourselves - if I can teach people to be kind and compassionate to themselves - then when they're caring for themselves the natural extension of that is to be kind and compassionate to other people. So if I die, having taught a few people that, then my life is worthwhile.

**Scan the code to see more of Craig's story on the  
"Voices of our Covenant" Youtube channel.**



## John Tai

(non-Indigenous ally for First Peoples)

**Cook Islands, Rarotonga, South Pacific. Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC). Townsville, Queensland.**

I'm very passionate about serving God in my journey in life... My faith in Christ or in living in that journey - it all started when

I was growing up in the Cook Islands, north of the Cook Islands, where my parents were Christian and being disciplined in that side of Christian faith, in respect and dignity.

You need to respect your community, respect owners of the land, respect the people that you socialise with, respect the whole community. My culture is very important... It allows me to reflect on where I come from and what I have, and what I can contribute to society in general.

So I am so passionate to help those who have been broken...to make a difference in these brothers' and sisters' lives... God is so powerful and his son, Jesus Christ that we serve. And that's why I am here, he has a calling for me and I am here to wait... And to work with him.

**Scan the code to see more of John's story on the "Voices of our Covenant" Youtube channel.**





## Reverend Richard Cassady

### **Ordained Reverend in the Uniting Church of Australia.**

Story is embedded in country and story rises from country.

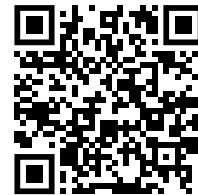
When country speaks in a way where I look at over there and I say if you want to engage with Creation, you not only look at the beauty of creation, but you also look at the brokenness of creation.

And sometimes at the brokenness of creation is one of those spaces where it actually sobers our conversation.

When it comes to understanding the one who is the provider, yeah, we have a story like that.

When we start to compartmentalise spirit and God, you go off track. It is when you share story as part of community, that is when you have a better understand of what we are all talking about.

**Scan the code to see more of Richard's story on the "Voices of our Covenant" Youtube channel.**



## Kym Korbe

**A proud Koa, KuKu Yalanji woman with traditional ties to Cherbourg. Brisbane, Australia.**

My faith was ignited, as I walked with my mother and assisted her in her efforts within Murri Anglican Ministries during the 1980s. My Aunty Alex; who is a formidable Aboriginal Christian leader within community, has also been a quiet influence in my life.

The Creator, through God's Holy Spirit, is everywhere waiting to be called into your life. The Creator brings healing through prayerful cultural and spiritual connectedness to land, waters, and all living beings. It has always been a natural way of being, knowing the Aboriginal spiritual experience is intrinsically woven into bible teachings. If we are to really understand what Reconciliation is, we need to be led by the kind of selfless love that is born of lived faith.

The Uniting Church has provided me with the ability to explore who I am as an Aboriginal Christian woman, and how that relates to experiences of other First Nations Christian peoples across our communities. We have a great deal of work to do in understanding each other better as First and Second peoples; both in the secular and sacred worlds. I am grateful to be given any opportunity to contribute to the relationship building that strengthens our covenant.

**Scan the code to see more of Kym's story on the "Voices of our Covenant" Youtube channel.**





## **Reverend Andrew Gunton**

**(non-Indigenous ally for First Peoples)**

**Moderator - Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod.  
Ordained Reverend in the Uniting Church of Australia.  
Brisbane, Australia.**

On my own journey through life and faith I have not only been confronted by injustice towards First Nations people in our society, but the injustice that has been perpetrated by the church. Just as I am on a journey of discovery about the history of First Nations people, I believe the church is also on this journey.

I have learned to respect and be thankful for the knowledge and experience of the First Nations people I get to work with, and I have learned that listening and yarning teaches me more each day. If we can listen to sometimes confronting truths and speak with each other with courage, openness and honouring I believe we can find our way forward as a church and as a community.

My faith compels me to continue to seek justice for all of God's people and to walk alongside the First Nations peoples, continuing to hear their pain and to offer my support as they determine their journey forward.

**Scan the code to see more of Andrew's story on the  
"Voices of our Covenant" Youtube channel.**





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QUEENSLAND SYNOD

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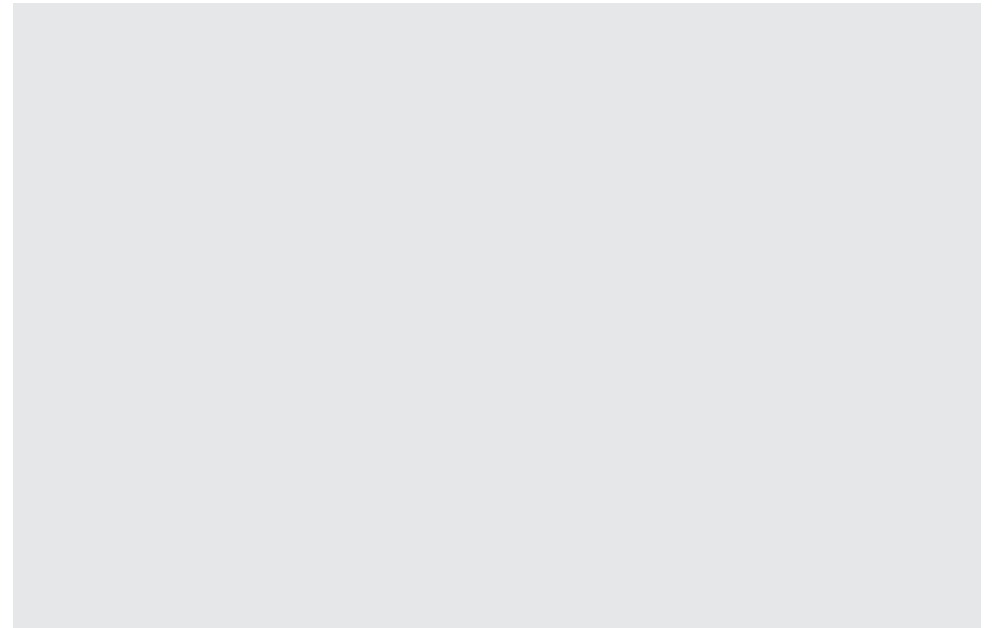
## Sharyn Malone

**A proud Wakka Wakka woman from Cherbourg. Born and raised in Wakka Wakka Country, also direct bloodline descendant to the Kabi Kabi, Koa-Gwa and Gu Gu Yalangi Nations.**

“My relationship with faith and spirituality, faith really took me down a path of healing, forgiveness and also intergenerational healing, because we know we carry a lot of intergenerational trauma, so for me that played a big part for me to start my healing within my little family.”

**Scan the code to see more of Aisha’s story.**

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## **Michael Molds**

**Yulluna-Cloncurry – Bourketown, Queensland. Community Corrections, Community Service with the parole and probation. Townsville, Queensland.**

“For future generations, I’d like to see less indigenous people in corrections. So that’s one of my big goals in this new job that I’ve got. So I’d like to work with a few more stakeholders and try and get some things happening just to reduce that the wheel of the turning door, the revolving door of corrections.”

**Scan the code to see more of Michael’s story.**



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