



Uniting Church in Australia

ASSEMBLY

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Uniting Church in Australia to make historic appointment: first person of colour as spiritual leader

The Uniting Church in Australia will appoint a new President on **Thursday 11 July**, Rev Charissa Suli, the youngest and first person of colour to lead the church nationally.

The installation service to take place at **St Stephens Uniting Church in Sydney's CBD** will be an historic event, with the Uniting Church being the largest Christian denomination in Australia to appoint a person of colour as national leader.

Rev Suli, 42, is deeply proud of her Tongan heritage which has shaped her life and faith. Through her leadership, she hopes to weave her Pacifica culture into the fabric of the church and the wider Australian community and to amplify the voices that go unheard.

"As I reflect on my journey to leadership, I am grateful for the way the Uniting Church has seen me and how Jesus has seen me," says Rev Suli.

"Right now, we have an opportunity as the church and the wider Australian community to recognise the leadership that migrant and Indigenous communities have to offer."

"It's not to say the Western way is wrong, and the Pacific way is right. We've got to be open to having that talanoa (dialogue) and building stronger relationships so that a new thread can be woven into the tapestry of our community. There's a richness in what we can learn from each other."

"I truly believe that my call to this role is about more than me. It's about what God is doing in the life of our church. It's about the radical, inclusive love of Christ."

On Rev Suli's path to leadership, she has overcome immense personal challenges and dismantled barriers, including the stigma of teenage motherhood. At 25, she discovered a deep and powerful call to serve as an ordained minister in the Uniting Church.

Rev Suli will be the 17th President of the Uniting Church and the fourth woman in the role. She will be tasked with representing the Uniting Church, one of Australia's largest Christian denominations, and offering spiritual leadership and counsel to its members who worship in more than 1600 congregations and faith communities all over the country.

Learn more about Charissa's journey here: <https://uniting.church/introducing-the-17th-assembly-president/>

PHOTO AND MEDIA OPPORTUNITY:

*Rev Charissa Suli will be installed at the triennial meeting of the Uniting Church when she receives the symbols of ministry from outgoing President Rev Sharon Hollis on **11 July at St Stephens Uniting Church in Macquarie Street at 7.30pm**. The service will include Tongan choirs and singing in multiple languages.*

*Media are invited to attend. High quality video footage and photos can also be made available on request. **Media Contact: Rebecca Beisler 0450790218***

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