

Reverend Linda Driver



Early Life

Linda's father migrated to Australia from Germany in the 1950s as a skilled labourer initially to the Bonnegilla camp before settling in SA. Her mother migrated a few years later from Slovenia which was under communist rule at the time. Her sister (Linda's aunt) had escaped to Italy where she married a Serbian refugee before moving to Australia. This enabled her aunt to sponsor her sister and family to Adelaide. Her parents met here in Adelaide, having been introduced by a mutual friend.

Linda's father was keen to assimilate and read widely to build his language and knowledge. He boarded with a number of varied families, providing him with a broad range of multicultural friends. He enjoyed inventing and served in the community through Neighbourhood Watch. Linda's mother was a seamstress and worked at ACTIL and David Jones before Linda and her brother were born. Both her parents and relatives were involved with the Slovenian Club, so Linda grew up with strong associations with this group.

Linda's childhood home in Aldgate was designed by her father and surrounded by bushland. She grew up playing with her younger brother and the children in her street. She attended Stirling East Primary School which was quite a small school at the time and she found it hard to find friends.

When Linda was in Year 6, the family moved to Banksia Park which had a much larger school, and she really enjoyed her new teacher and started making new friends. Linda earned pocket money helping to wash and load her father's truck. She was in a separate mixed faculty section of the high school that was very supportive. It was here that Linda started oboe lessons and then on to flute which she still plays today. Through this opportunity Linda became involved in bands and concerts and on the organising committee.

After high school, Linda attended the SACAE Kintore Avenue, now part of Uni Adelaide, to do a 3-year degree. Here she became involved with national competitions for concert bands, worked on committees, studied arts administration. She taught flute in a few schools and private students. A car accident just before her final exams meant Linda couldn't do the final performance for accreditation. After taking almost a year to recover, Linda had another accident so never ended up with formal qualifications in music, but still taught flute and did some conducting.

Although Linda had grown up in the Catholic Church her strong friendship group were involved in the Tea Tree Gully Uniting Church, and she became involved in wider Church events including the National Christian Youth Convention. Linda transferred from the Catholic Church in her early 20s to the Uniting Church which was much more active and offered her opportunities to contribute, lead worship and be involved in a range of activities, for example, she started a Sunday School for 3-year-olds.

It was through this group, Linda met husband Paul and when they married in 1988, they moved into a house in Hope Valley. By 1995 they had had two children and bought her parent-in-law's home in Banksia Park where the family remained until they moved into the Athelstone Manse in 2018.

Linda worked at teaching flute and volunteered with organising and stage-managing events for Christian groups and as the Adelaide Band Festival productions manager. When her youngest son started school, Linda took up an administration job in the Uniting Church Synod Office often doing the administration for events she had previously been involved with including Kids' Camp Out. Later she applied for an Event Manager role and did that for 6 years alongside her volunteer roles.

Linda took up a position for Novita for 11 months coordinating events in their marketing section which although interesting clarified that she was more interested in leadership roles within the Church. Linda asked herself, "What am I called to do?" Her answer was to take a pay cut to work in an administration job in the Uniting Church at the College again while studying ministry and starting the discernment process towards the Ordination pathway.

Burnside City Uniting Church was Linda's first placement which was a very varied community with divergent interests, in a church that was an amalgam of several other churches that had come together.

In 2017, Linda was called to a placement at Athelstone Uniting Church and moved into the manse in early 2018. Linda immediately felt that this was the place she was meant to be and very connected to the community values and the directions of the church. Church members wanted to be more part of the community and so she has helped to facilitate that outreach. Church groups now meet in the local cafes, including a craft group called Threads. Church members continue to meet at local cafes after church to support local businesses. This has seen an increase in connections with the local community. Other activities have included designing silhouette figures to promote AKWAK, (Aussies Knitting for War Affected Kids), the Sheep Trail at the Council Xmas event that added connections with information about the Christmas story, and making and sending knitted angels out into the community at Christmas time to be discovered as little surprise messages of hope

Linda has developed a CommuniTEA event, that encourages communication and sharing of tea. Linda ran the first event at the church's 50th and then ran further CommuniTEA's as part of Campbelltown Council's Home Support Program with colleague Rev Rebecca Purling (Campbelltown Uniting). Linda volunteers on state and national church committees and is interested in the broader connections and developing leadership. Building connections with key local First Nation members is very important to Linda. They have often held *Spirited Sundays* at The Rezz with guest speakers and discussion groups to extend their reach.

Linda says she is a planner and that booking in time to rest, time with friends and walks in nature help her to maintain her work-life balance. Time with her family and two grandchildren are very important to Linda.

Reflections

Success is not a word Linda uses often in her world but sees success as being able to achieve the goals you want to achieve and in having a positive effect on others. As a Minister, her message is to support others to flourish and grow in God and experience love and connection.

Her advice to young women is to discover who you are, enjoy your youthful energy and time, and what you uniquely offer without comparing yourself to others. You are amazing!

"Have faith that your paths will lead you to the place you were uniquely made for – eventually it will all come together"