

## Reflecting on 40 years of the Uniting Church in Australia

Friends.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2017, the Uniting Church in Australia celebrated its fortieth anniversary. Here at Armadale a small gathering met and remembered something of the disruptive and exciting times then and wondered a little about the as yet unknown times ahead...

We gave thanks for the Spirit led vision and determination of the instigators of the movement to create a new fresh, future looking iteration of the Church of Jesus Christ in the Australian context, and for the many faithful witnesses in the years between union and now, to the enduring and eternal truth of Christ.

1997 is a world away from our life today: note the photographs in *Crosslight* of those involved – almost exclusively men; the original language of the Basis of Union gender biased, non-inclusive, reading truthfully, if a little jarringly to today's sensibilities, of the era.

We live in a different world.

And yet we face similar issues, hopes, dreams and fears as those of the founding fathers - albeit in a very different world context. We continue to long and pray for peace, justice, hope; for forgiveness and a new start in our lives and relationships - locally, nationally, globally; for Christ's kingdom to come.

Each generation must confront its own challenges, trials and temptations. We cannot begin to imagine those faced by the visionaries who worked and prayed and brought into being the Uniting Church in Australia. Yet we follow in their footsteps and carry on the work they began. And we are grateful...

May I commend to you again the inspired and inspiring book written by Rev. Dr. Geoff Thompson 'Disturbing Much Disturbing Many' in which Geoff holds up for consideration and discussion the pressing theological issues for the UCA today, provoked by the Basis of Union?

This is a timely and deeply encouraging work for Christians seeking to integrate contemporary pressures on the Church with biblical witness and Church history and does so thoughtfully and, for my part, convincingly, in humility but without embarrassment.

In an increasingly secular world, where truth claims are de-bunked and derided – save for the truth claim that there are no truth claims – where does the Uniting Church in Australia stand? Has sociology, political correctness and pop psychology replaced the witness of scripture and tradition? Will we declare unequivocally that Jesus is Lord? Do we believe, by his Spirit, that he is present with us now? We shall see...

It matters how we respond to such questions... What we think and say about Jesus; what we say and think about the Church; what we say and think about now and all that is yet to be affects what we will do and what we will not do; how we live and how we will die.

Some things do not change: God's love for all creation; the supremacy and lordship of Christ; the ongoing work, encouragement and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. What a joy and privilege to walk together as a 'pilgrim people' led and inspired by faithful men and women. We thank God for the Uniting Church in Australia and pray to be found faithful, for Jesus' sake and for the sake of all creation.

Grace and peace.

Fiona

*'Wisdom is vindicated by her deeds'. Matthew 11:19*

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