



Moderator's Letter

.. for members of the Uniting Church in the Northern Synod

AFTER PENTECOST

July 2022

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

There is a season on the Christian Lectionary Calendar that is called 'After Pentecost'. I like the sound of that. It reminds me that we live in the time 'after Pentecost', which means we live in the times after the Holy Spirit came upon the early followers of Jesus and gave them greater courage and faith. As 'After Pentecost' people, we can live with courage and faith too, because we know God's Holy Spirit in our world and in our lives. I often think of the Holy Spirit being like the wind that blows across the sky and across the land, bringing relief and also bringing power through windmills and wind turbines.



This year the 'After Pentecost' season runs from June the 12th, which was 'Trinity Sunday', through to 'Christ the King' or 'Reign of Christ Sunday' on the 20th of November. It is the longest season of the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL). The RCL is a list of readings for every Sunday of the year that goes for three years and then repeats again. Each week it usually includes an Old Testament reading, a Psalm, a Gospel reading and a reading from one of the Letters of the first Century Church. It is a good way to get a good overview of the Bible. Millions of people around the world in many different Christian churches use the Revised Common Lectionary. Most Uniting Churches use the RCL, but we don't have to use it every week. We have the freedom to be led by the Spirit about which Scriptures we will read and preach from. After all, we are living in the times 'after Pentecost'.



On Pentecost Sunday this year, on June 12th, there was a wonderful gathering in Pukatja, (Ernabella) in the APY Lands. People gathered in fellowship at the Inma area in Pukatja and we worshipped with songs and scriptures, prayers and messages of encouragement. People travelled from across the APY Lands, from Aputula (Finke), from Alice Springs, from Darwin, from Manayingkarirra in Arnhemland and from Adelaide. During the celebrations of Pentecost, we commissioned some Pastors, being Jill Doolan as a Pastor based in Aputula and Yanima Bryant as a Pastor based in the Kalka area over near the WA border. We also commissioned

Ben and Emily Howand as Support Workers for the Ananguku Area Ministry. Ben and Emily and their two little boys will live and work from two bases, one in Pukatja and one in Alice Springs, where they are well supported by the Alice Springs Uniting Church congregation. The Chairperson of the Northern Regional Council of Congress, Jamie Nyaningu, led the proceedings which were held in Pijantjatjara language and English. It was a truly wonderful time and very fitting for a Pentecost celebration.

After Pentecost, we ran some Pastor training sessions in Pukatja and then Ben and I travelled west to spend some time sitting and listening to Anangu in Kalka, Pipalyatjara and Irrunytju. Yanima and the extended family and community in Kalka offered a warm spirit of hospitality as they shared stories, hopes and prayers with us. One beautiful day was spent with old man Fox and his family. I will always treasure that day together, in the bush; and particularly when we sat side by side in the red earth, chatting, praying and laughing. Mr Fox passed away a couple of weeks later. He will be greatly missed.



Another wonderful celebration in the After Pentecost Season was the 45th Anniversary of the Uniting Church in Australia on the 22nd of June. A combined Uniting Church celebration was hosted by Casuarina Uniting Church on the evening of Sun 26th June. People from Darwin, Arnhemland and Alice Springs Uniting Church congregations joined together as well as some folk on the internet live-stream. Songs, dances, items, scripture readings and a great supper were shared by all in a joyful celebration of our church.



The Spirit continues to move across the vast areas of the Northern Synod and in the lives of our people in so many ways. One such way was the gathering at Gochan Jiny-jirra – Cadell homeland where 130 people were baptised and 8 ministry leaders were commissioned recently. Crosses in the ground across Arnhemland, on tables in Balanda churches and on hill tops in the desert communities attest to the desire of our people to identify themselves and their communities as ‘followers of the Christ’.



The Uniting Church itself is a movement of the Spirit. In 1977 the Uniting Church in Australia was begun, not as another denomination, but as a movement of Christ-followers living in Australia and in 1985 the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) came into being. In 1994 a sacred covenant was established between the Uniting Church and the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress. You can read the Statement at <https://resources.uca.org.au/resources/covenanting/item/135-covenanting-statement-1994>.





Our document ‘The Basis of Union’ sets out the agreements of our founding traditions (Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational) about what sort of church we wanted the Uniting Church to be. It is an inspiring document to read, even today. As we celebrate 45 years, we are also reflecting on what it means to be the Uniting Church. in the 2020s and beyond. The National Assembly are inviting all members to think about who we are and how we would like to move forward into the future. With that in mind there is a 5-part Study series available for small groups who might like to reflect on the Basis of Union and discuss ideas about the church. as we look forward. It is called ‘Act 2 - Our Life Together’. It is available online at <https://uniting.church/our-life-together-reflections-on-the-basis-of-union/>

Let me encourage you to do this 5-part ‘reflection and discussion series’ and send some feedback to the National Uniting Church Assembly. You will almost certainly find it interesting, challenging, and helpful.

It has been a full and wonderful time in the life of our Synod this year. Yes, we have challenges and struggles, but we also have so much goodness and joy at the local level where faithful people worship God, support one another and continue to reach out into the wider community to support those who are struggling with life. As ‘After Pentecost’ people we continue to seek the active, leading of God’s Holy Spirit in our daily lives.

I give thanks to God for our church and for all our people.
God bless you all.

Grace and Peace.
The best is yet to come,

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*Living on Larrakia land
Born on Jaitmatang land
Raised on Jaitmatang, Woiworunn, Maarku and Larrakia land*



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