



CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUNG ADULTS OF THE UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA:

Reflections from my time as President

Dr Deidre Palmer - 2018-2021

During my time serving as President – from July 2018 until now, I have had wonderful opportunities to listen to and speak with members of the Uniting Church of all ages. The Uniting Church is an intergenerational Christian community connecting across age groups and many of our young adults enjoy this experience of the Christian community. This is a reflection on the voice, presence and actions of young adults shaping the present and future of the Uniting Church in Australia.

Young adults are not a monolithic group. It would be hard to define a ‘typical’ young adult in the Uniting Church, let alone in Australia. While young people in the Uniting Church and the wider community may share things in common, they also have unique stories and experiences to share. As I have served as President, it has been a privilege for me to sit with young people across the Uniting Church and listen to their stories of faith, of discernment, and of their vision of following Christ in a world that holds many challenges, complexities and possibilities.

In these reflections, I am focusing mainly on what I have heard from the “Around the Table” gatherings that I have hosted as President, but also from NYALC (National Young Adult Leaders Conference) and NYALC Online, from conversations with young adults of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress, young adult leaders of our National Conferences and young people who are part of the Councils of our church – particularly Assembly and Synods.

OUR IDENTITY AS THE UNITING CHURCH

This reflection is set within the context of our identity as the Uniting Church, and some of the areas which have been important for ministry with young people.

I will pick up these themes again, as you hear the voices of young adults from “Around the Table”, and NYALC Online and those things about which they are passionate.

From its inauguration, the Uniting Church has affirmed the gifts and voices of young people shaping our life and mission. This arises from our understanding that **every person is created in the image of God**, infinitely loved, and to be respected, and valued.

Our “**every member ministry**” has led us to identifying the gifts of all members, including youth and young adults, and affirming that we all have a part to play in shaping, and reshaping the life and witness of Christ’s Church.

Our belief, arising from Scripture, that **women and men are created equal** and are invited into their fullest humanity in relationship with Christ, has affirmed generations of girls and women in their identity and gifts.

We believe in a **holistic Gospel**, that understands the Good News of Christ speaks into all aspects of our life – social, cultural, economic, political, psychological and spiritual. You will hear this foundation reflected over and over again in the voices of our young adults.

We are in a **Covenant relationship as First and Second Peoples**. Our young adults are First and Second Peoples committed to voice, justice, truth telling and walking together into a more just, and hopeful Australia.

We are a **multicultural and intercultural church**. This is our lived experience. From the early disciples at Pentecost to the movement of the Holy Spirit today, God weaves us together in our diversity and common faith in the transforming and liberating Christ.

Arising from these foundations of the Uniting Church, (and this is not an exhaustive list) we have young people who are:

- passionate followers of Christ

- discerning the call of God on their lives, and seeking wisdom on where God is leading them.
- embodying the love and hope of Christ in their families, schools, universities, work places and wider community networks.
- passionate advocates for God's vision of justice, peace, and reconciliation for our world.
- members of our decision-making councils.
- contributing to local churches.
- part of ministry in schools and universities.
- expressing their Christian faith through the arts.
- offering their gifts in worship.
- sharing their faith with their peers.
- building pastoral networks.
- supporting our global partners through Uniting World
- working for UnitingCare agencies and other non-government organisations
- part of the ministry of Frontier Services

The Uniting Church believes that young people are the church of today (as are our children and older members!), as well as the church of the future. As the Assembly, one of our key areas of focus has been on “Discipling the Next Generation” – developing young adult leaders, and providing resources, gatherings and networks, that encourage and empower young adults in their ministry, in engaging in God's mission, and in sustaining them in their faith in their daily lives.

AROUND THE TABLE: CONVERSATIONS WITH THE PRESIDENT

As part of my ministry as President, I have hosted conversations with young people of the Uniting Church in “Around the Table” gatherings.

I consulted with Amos Washington in designing “Around the Table”. Amos was the Australian Youth Representative to the UN in 2018. In this role, he engaged in a Listening Tour around Australia, listening to young people as they spoke of what they care about, and their issues and concerns. I met with Amos in February 2019 to talk about the idea of an “Around the Table” conversation with young people of the Uniting Church. I am grateful to Amos for his contribution to shaping these conversations.

“Around the Table” includes listening to the stories of Uniting Church youth and young adults on a series of key areas and questions regarding their joys, griefs, and concerns, their journey with Christ, and their Christian discipleship. We explored their experiences and views of the Uniting Church and what sustains and encourages them in living the Gospel of Christ in their daily lives. It also includes a conversation on their views on how the Uniting Church might be engaged in the public space and their hopes for who we are and are becoming as the UCA, and their hopes for the world.

My original plan was to hold 12 “Around the Table” conversations, but as we know, many of our plans have changed significantly in the past 16 months. I have held 8 face to face workshops - the first took place in Canberra in July, 2019, and the last face to face gathering was held in Perth in May, 2021. I had intended for all of these events to be face to face. I had plans for Queensland “Around the Table” events in April 2020, but those plans had to be cancelled due to COVID restrictions. I was due to visit Victoria in June 2021 and host three face to face “Around the Table” events, but due to COVID restrictions and timing, we offered one online modified event. As such, the final “Around the Table” I hosted as President, was in an online format.

“Around the Table” conversations have included 106 youth and young adults.

- Canberra – July, 2019
- Darwin – October 2019
- Hobart – February 2020
- Launceston – February 2020

- Adelaide - February, 2020 and November 2020
- Sydney - February 2021
- Perth - May 2021
- Victoria (online) – June 2021

I think these conversations have been a source of encouragement, challenge and hope, for all the participants and the Church more widely. I hope they inform our discernment as a Church, as together we seek to live out God’s vision of the renewal of Christ’s Church and the reconciliation and renewal of the whole creation.

I have shared some of the stories and insights from these conversations as I have travelled around the country, and have found that people are keen to hear the voices and contribution of young adult members of the Uniting Church.

I will also be including some of the insights of our young people, their questions and hopes, in my report to the Assembly as Retiring President.

OVERVIEW OF THE “AROUND THE TABLE” PROCESS:

(See Appendix A for handout for the process)

The process begins with acknowledgement of country, opening prayer, introductions to each other and an overview of the process and its foci, before undertaking the following activities:

Activity one: focuses on personal reflections - Who are we, what brings me joy and grief, what sustains and encourages me, what are my concerns for our world?

Activity two: Our faith journeys explores something of our personal journey of faith and our experiences of God.

Activity Three: The Uniting Church and Us moves to a focus on the Uniting Church and its life and mission.

Activity four: Our public life and witness invites a deeper reflection on the Uniting Church’s witness and engagement in God’s mission in the world.

Participants responded to the questions: How do we want the UCA to be in the public space? What are our hopes for the world?

Reflection – wrapping up the workshop

The conversation concludes with a time for reflection. Participants take a few moments to write down what has emerged for them during our conversation together. What am I hearing? Is there a prayer, insight, commitment that has emerged during this time together? They write these on a card with the Assembly theme “Abundant Grace, Liberating Hope” and they are encouraged to keep these and open them in a few weeks’ time.

RESPONSES:

*The following are some of the responses from participants. **All of the responses are de-identified.***

(A more complete list of responses is included as Appendix B)

WHAT BRINGS ME GRIEF?

- Multiple responses for: losing close family, friends and loved ones.
- Climate change and a bleak future; climate chaos and how it is affecting the poorest; lack of action in caring for all of God’s creation
- Racism
- Pandemic/COVID – loss during COVID of connection to friends and family, time and plans. Isolation
- Seeing someone lose faith
- Disagreements
- Christian values not really permitted
- News
- Less young people attending church – where is the future?
- People not taking God seriously
- Not being heard, feeling voiceless
- Fractured family
- Being worried for our future
- Pressure on younger generations to be the future and save the current crises.
- Self-doubt
- Abuse of power
- People in church letting their people down
- Being stressed by an overload of situations that are uncontrollable.

- The discrimination people face for their background and religious belief.
- People who are judgemental and blame it on God.
- The separation in the Uniting Church
- Family division
- Division in the world.
- Conflict and animosity
- Child abuse
- Christians not living from a knowledge of God's love for them and non-Christians not realising/knowing that this is an option
- The stress and pressure of being a mother who works full-time.
- Relations changing or being less strong
- The future
- Not being sure where I am welcome in the church
- Homelessness
- School
- Medical issues
- Mental health and teenage suicide
- Injustice
- Poverty
- Violence against women
- Violence
- War
- Digital addiction
- Sin being okay
- Selfishness and greed, including corporate greed.
- The wasted life
- Irony and cynicism
- Discrimination
- Work insecurities
- Loss of community
- Passive culture
- Spreading fear and division
- Hopelessness

- Growing up
- Loss of identity and culture throughout younger generations

WHAT BRINGS ME JOY?

(A significant number of responses were focused on the joy that comes from witnessing and/or being part of the joy that others experience)

- Family
- Music
- Food
- Nature
- Friends
- Pets and animals
- Community and connection
- Seeing others experience God's goodness
- Doing what I love
- Immanence, presence.
- Gardens
- Solidarity
- Meeting like-minded people
- God
- Seeing loved ones flourish
- Desserts
- Dance, laughter
- Reading, learning
- Art
- Smiles
- Being creative
- Seeing people's lives transformed by the good news
- Growing in faith and trust in Jesus
- Hope
- When 'grief things' are addressed
- Seeing God's plans unfolding
- Genuine conversations

- Appreciating and welcoming small things
- Being able to connect with others from different backgrounds. No matter the difference we are able to come as one and explore our different options.
- Giving back to the community

WHAT SUSTAINS AND ENCOURAGES ME?

- Friends
- Family
- Music
- Food
- Reading the Bible
- Worship
- Sunday services
- Prayer
- Work
- Faith community
- Hearing testimonies
- Talking with other people
- Encouraging books
- Water
- Kindness
- Faith
- Hope that God ultimately has a plan
- Determination to make a difference
- Hearing God
- Historical and global connection to this church
- God, God's people, all people
- Hearing stories of how God is working in the world
- Getting stronger in faith
- Family history
- Relationship with God
- Technology and social media – connection around the world

WHAT CONCERNS ME IN SOCIETY AND THE WORLD?

(The responses echoed something of what brought people grief)

- Climate change and the environment.
- Pandemic/COVID
- Racism
- Mental health
- Fires
- Greed
- Housing affordability
- Division
- Equality
- Poverty
- Domestic violence
- The future
- Inequality of First Nations people
- Anger, hatred and aggressive fear
- Lack of respect, denial and self-centredness
- Unequal distribution of resources
- What we choose to accept as appropriate behaviour/integrity
- Power imbalances
- Division
- Growing up

THE THING I VALUE MOST ABOUT THE UNITING CHURCH IS...

- inclusivity
- empowerment of women
- the diversity within it and multiculturalism, the communities that it creates
- it is actively working toward social justice in the community
- commitment to First Peoples
- open Communion table
- friends and an environment where there is no judgement or discrimination
- evangelism
- the people in the church

- coming together of cultures
- structures can facilitate innovation
- Basis of Union
- Its focus on compassion and inclusion – all are welcome
- At the forefront of caring change
- That we're a verb not a noun
- Spirit-led action is called for and there is an expectation that people in the Uniting Church community are focusing on serving, going beyond their salvation to act as disciples
- Our breadth and depth
- Open-hearted communities – I'm so glad I grew up in the Uniting Church and in a community, that loved love and that it has led me to people who welcome and accept those who are other and cast out.
- How liberating and inclusive it is of social issues.
- Delving into big theological issues with young people
- Music and worship
- Being able to be in a congregation with my cultural heritage
- Care for the new generation and giving us a voice

MY BEST EXPERIENCE OF THE UNITING CHURCH IS...

- KCO (Kids Campout)
- Revivify
- NYALC (National Young Adults Leaders Conference)
- Climate march
- NCYC (National Christian Youth Convention)
- TNC (Tongan National Conference)
- Road trips to events
- State youth camp
- The people I have met
- Community of faith
- Being together somewhere to talk, laugh and have lots of fun
- Having a church family to come to every week

THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE FACING THE UNITING CHURCH IS...

- Division
- Volunteer burn out
- Willingness to close ministries and churches
- Aging of the church and their willingness to change their perspectives of the past and why it's not like that any more
- Being rejected as a whole person for being gay in some places
- Engaging young adults
- People afraid of change
- Wanting to go to church
- Climate change
- Church being boring
- Lack of discipleship/spiritual direction
- Culturally ingrained greed
- Churches focussing on their flock only and not working in mission together
- How to steward historical wealth and properties for the future
- Losing young people
- Losing their faith
- Breaking the boundaries of what is normal in the church
- Understanding its context
- Being able to gather for everyone
- Communities of solidarity
- Clinging to old ideas
- Intergenerational trauma
- Stepping outside our comfort zone – worshipping outside our culture
- Resources for younger generations to help out the community

I WISH THAT THE UNITING CHURCH...

- Was able to understand young people/youth more
- Had a more political position on environmental issues especially
- Willing to confront internal issues, had less infighting
- Would embody the love of Jesus in community

- Look at how many opportunities there are for youth to lead a Christ-centred life in all areas of it
- Start new things – stop old things
- Continues to embrace creative methods of worship
- Allow young people to shape the future of the Uniting Church
- Would continue to steadfastly (but gently) work toward social justice in the wider community
- More prominence of UAICC (especially young people knowing about it)
- Encouraged more talks and conversations about mental health and worldly issues
- Were able to assist more in transitions within the church
- Provided workshops to develop leadership skills more frequently
- Had more Christian Retreats/camps
- Operated in silos less
- Did better in forming ministry agents well equipped in ministries with multicultural and First Nations people
- Discussed and spread awareness on mental health
- Build unoffendable, resilient disciples, leaders, churches
- Would see conflict and confrontation as valuable
- Would see emotional health as critical to formation
- Continued to focus on discipleship
- Would bring more souls to Christ and into the Church
- Continue our openness, honesty, inclusivity, understanding and acceptance of others

HOW DO WE WANT THE UNITING CHURCH TO ENGAGE IN THE PUBLIC SPACE?

Some of the responses are summarised below:

- Young people value our hospitable, welcoming church – its intergenerational and multicultural nature.
- One person noted “feeling like I come home when I go to church”. And another, valued, “being comforted by my church community in times of grief and need.”

- They value our Covenant relationship with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC).
- They believe it's important for the Church to be responding to domestic violence.
- They are concerned about racism.
- They are concerned about the treatment of refugees and people seeking asylum.
- They are actively engaged in addressing the impacts of climate change and believe as the Church we need to be actively and urgently responding to this crisis.
- In the public space, they believe we need to respond to mental health issues experienced by them and their peers.
- They are affirming of the ways they are able to contribute to the Uniting Church through their leadership in local churches, Presbyteries, Synod and Assembly.
- They are concerned about being patronised and dismissed, when they have much to contribute; and believe their viewpoints and insights can bring transformation to the Church.
- They love connecting with each other online, with others they have met at National Young Adult Leadership Conferences (NYALC), National Christian Youth Conventions (NCYC), Synod and Presbytery retreats, or National Conference gatherings.
- They believe it's important to connect with country, culture and language.
- They value the wisdom of their elders.

NATIONAL YOUNG ADULT LEADERS CONFERENCE (NYALC)

I hosted, along with the Assembly Resourcing Unit, a National Young Adult Leaders Conference (NYALC) in January 2019. 120 young leaders from across the life of the Uniting Church met in Adelaide to share their faith, their gifts and their hopes for our Church and its future. It was an inspiring time. Moderators, Assembly and Synod staff were also part of the Conference. These young leaders have continued to network with each other, the Assembly and their Synods.

When NYALC 2021 was cancelled because of border restrictions, we went online. Rev Charissa Suli and I hosted four online conversations with 23 young adults. The following outline guided the conversation:

NYALC ONLINE AGENDA (90-minute conversation)

- Introduction to event
- Acknowledgement of country
- Introductions: name, where you are located right now? Local church community? One other thing about yourself
- Prayer, Bible reading and reflection.
- Share how things have been for you during this global pandemic.
- What do you see as some of the challenges and learnings that are emerging? (for you/our Church/our society)
- What is sustaining you in your journey with Christ and in your life?
- What are the ways you think the Uniting Church should be engaged in responding to the various issues that are facing us as a society and world, as we seek to faithfully participate in God's mission of love, justice and reconciliation in our world?
- How might we stay connected with each other?
- Closing prayer and blessing

NYALC ONLINE RESPONSES

We asked the NYALC Online young leaders, what they have learnt during this time of a global pandemic? Some of the responses include:

- They are grateful to God for their pastoral networks.

- They are concerned for people around the world, who have been much more significantly affected by the pandemic, than their experience here in Australia.
- For some, being home together has been an opportunity to worship together with their household, have family prayers and check out other worship services online.
- This time has shown us that the church is not contained to a building. “Church is about worshipping God, and it is another way of checking in with family and friends”.
- The church is so adaptable, even with people who we didn’t expect to be.
- These young adults are concerned about employment and study pathways, loss of jobs and insecurity into the future.
- They commented on the extra costs of being online.
- They expressed concerns about how to best return to face to face church gatherings – including worship and other activities.

Consistent themes across the conversations I have heard:

- A deep appreciation of the inclusivity and welcome of the Uniting Church.
- The importance of community and friendship.
- Young people value gatherings that bring them together across borders – national, regional, Synod wide gatherings, where they experience Christian community, across the breadth and depth of the Church.
- The critical importance of addressing the Climate Crisis.
- Concern for the mental health of their peers.
- A commitment to eliminating gender-based violence and modelling relationships of mutuality, respect and equality.
- The importance of alleviating poverty and addressing greed in a global and local context where gaps are growing between the wealthy and poor.

OUR GLOBAL COMMUNION OF CHURCHES: A Common focus and commitment

During the past three years, as the Uniting Church we have been part of international gatherings both face to face and online. There have been gatherings of the Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC), Methodist Consultative Council of the Pacific (MCCP), Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), World Methodist Council (WMC) and World Council of Churches (WCC). These meetings have raised the importance of the contribution of youth and young adults in our churches and society. Churches across the globe are committed to engaging with younger generations in our societies, through embodying the Gospel of Christ in ways that connect with their various contexts and communities.

DISCUSSION

Arising from these conversations, I am reminded of the importance of the Church's need to focus on the following key areas:

- 1. Intentional long-term nurturing in Christian discipleship**, that invites people to grow and deepen their encounter with Christ and live out their Christian vocation. This intentional nurture can effectively take place in the many parts of our Church, including congregations, schools and resourcing from the councils of the Church.

Arising from our conversations on marriage, there are indicators that we need to continue to strengthen our ministry in growing people in discipleship through deep engagement with Scripture and theology. This engagement can be very fruitful in communal contexts where members of our congregations and faith communities hear other people's perspectives for the purpose of deepening our Christian faith, and strengthening our life and witness as Christ's Church.

(I recall being at a national young adults gathering, where a number of young people were concerned that on some of the more difficult issues: "we don't get to talk about these things")

Intentional nurture in Christian discipleship includes creating spaces, where people can go deeper, actively respond to challenging issues for our church and society, raise questions, express doubts, and find a faithful, supportive community.

I have seen these intentional nurturing spaces in congregations, schools, tertiary ministry, particular events, including NYALC, NCYC, School of Discipleship, small groups hosted by Christian Students Uniting, and Presbytery and Synod sponsored gatherings and conversations.

2. Intergenerational Christian communities attentive to the Spirit's actions toward welcome, hope and liberation

A recurring theme in our conversations was the importance of community and friendship. There was considerable discussion on the nature of Christian community life and the way we relate to each other.

There was a call for us to live the Gospel of Christ's love and welcome in our congregations.

Part of shaping these Christian communities, is deepening our relationships with each other. This will include:

- **careful listening to one another and** taking the time to be together and taking time to listen
- **Building intentional conversations into our gatherings** – after worship, in small groups, over meals – asking: Where are we taking time for these – in our congregations, in other gatherings of our church?

In my experiences as an educator, social worker, Moderator and President, it has been an amazing privilege to enter into deep conversations with people about their lives, their sense of identity, their relationship with God, their concerns, their hopes and visions, for our Church and the world, which God loves and in which we are called to served.

My recent President's Conference, which focused on God's call and our every member ministry featured people sharing their stories of faith and living their Christian vocation. I commend the videos of this Conference which will be available on the Assembly website in the coming month – after the Assembly meeting.

The Uniting Women events of 2014, 2016 and 2018 focused on people sharing their stories of hope. There are a number of local churches that feature stories of members – sharing – ways they are living their Christian vocation in their daily lives.

I hear our young adults calling us to be an intergenerational Christian community that reflects the love of Christ. A community that is mutually respectful, vibrant, listens to the Spirit, and is self-reflective and open to the transformation that Christ brings.

A Christian community that is honouring the voices of all age groups and is committed to renewing and revitalizing people's faith journeys with Christ and encouraging one another to grow and mature as the Body of Christ.

This will include encouraging our common vision and unity for the sake of the Gospel of Christ, and respecting different voices as faithful expressions of the way of Jesus.

3. A compassionate, well informed, prophetic public voice

Engaging in God's mission in the world of justice, peace, reconciliation, healing and hope in ways that are well informed, have integrity and are prepared to be courageous.

4. Strengthening and affirming our every member ministry

Living our Christian vocation in our daily life. This takes many forms, from local churches through to Uniting Church agencies and schools through to faithful people serving in their profession and living out their Christian discipleship in their relationships, families, communities and daily living.

5. National Gatherings

At my recent President's Conference, we heard people's stories of God's call on their lives and ways they are living their Christian vocation. There were so many people that named a national youth and young adults event, as a significant place where they discerned God's call. They named it as a turning point in their lives. They also noted the sense of Christian community and the depth and breadth of Christ's Church.

Into the future, it is important for us to be considering how we connect young adults nationally, with a purpose of growing in faith, having a view of the breadth and depth of the Uniting Church, and strengthening a network of young Uniting Church members across the country. National Christian Youth Conventions have been significant gatherings for our Church, where people have experienced the multicultural nature and theological and liturgical diversity of our Church. NCYCs have encouraged: a broadening of horizons, a deepening of/or a coming to faith in Christ for the first time; discerning God's call to various ministries and expressions of Christian vocation. In recent years, National Young Adult Leaders Conferences have been life-giving and transformative and have served some of the purposes of NCYCs as I have listed them above.

We have highlighted, for a number of years, the importance and priority of developing young adults in Christian discipleship and leadership. One of the questions into the future, is what are we prepared to give in time, vision, energy, personnel, money and other resources so that young adults are free to exercise their gifts and flourish as passionate disciples of Christ, exercising their ministry in the Uniting Church and participating in and leading our prophetic public witness.

As I have experienced the joy and privilege of engaging in these conversations with young adults, I have reflected on what I hope young adults experience through our church:

- A life-transforming encounter/relationship with Jesus Christ, one who loves them unconditionally, and who invites them into their fullest humanity.
- They encounter a God who cares about the world they live in – who is concerned about climate change and the state of people's mental health.
- A community in Christ which they are actively shaping and reforming and which is participating in God's mission in the world
- A community in Christ where they are respected, heard and their gifts and voice are embraced
- For young people who will never become members or join our groups:

- that they encounter the Uniting Church as a voice of integrity, that speaks of justice, truth-telling, reconciliation, healing and hope
- That they see us as a safe church – who is deeply sorry for situations of abuse in the church, and is committed to creating safe and welcoming non-abusive, non-violent communities.
- A community that listens, respects their voice, and is advocating for a society in which all people and the whole creation can flourish

For the reader of these reflections, I invite you to think about what you hope young adults will experience in and through the Uniting Church?

CONCLUDING REMARKS:

These conversations have been a way of listening to the voices of young people in the Uniting Church. I hope these conversations around the themes, will continue in small groups, local churches, schools and various Councils of our Church. I hope that these will contribute to our shaping of loving communities in Christ, where everyone has a voice, power is shared, justice is embodied and the people of God are empowered and equipped to be bearers of Christ's liberating hope in our world.

APPENDIX A

HANDOUT FOR THE CONVERSATIONS:

Around the Table: Conversations with the President

AN EVENT FOR YOUNG ADULTS OF THE UNITING CHURCH



Reflections on our faith journey, our hopes and concerns, the Uniting Church and our participation in the liberating mission of God in the world

INTRODUCTIONS

- Acknowledgement of Country
- Centring in prayer

Introductions

Our focus:

- Listening to the stories of young adult members of the Uniting Church – their faith journeys, discipleship, and engagement in Christ's ministry and mission.
- Sharing our views on the shape and ongoing transformation of the Uniting Church in Australia (its worship, witness and service)
- Reflecting on: how is the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ 'good news' for the current generations of Australians?

Our hopes for the conversations:

- A source of encouragement, challenge and discernment
- Together, we are inspired to act on our vision for the renewal of Christ's church and our participation in God's reconciliation and renewal of the whole Creation.

ACTIVITY ONE: Who are we?

In pairs writing on Newsprint drawn into quarters, with the following four questions written in each quadrant:

- *What brings me grief?*
- *What brings me joy?*
- *What sustains and encourages me?*
- *What concerns me in society and the world?*

ACTIVITY TWO: Our faith journeys

When thinking of your own faith journey, which of these images speaks to you at this present time?

(Select an image from those spread around the room)

Share with another

ACTIVITY THREE: The Uniting Church and Us

Post on the newsprint your responses to the following:

- *The thing I value most about the Uniting Church is ...*
- *My best experience of the Uniting Church is ...*
- *The biggest challenge facing the Uniting Church is ...*
- *I wish that the Uniting Church ...*

ACTIVITY FOUR: Looking broadly

- *How do we want the Uniting Church to engage in public spaces?*
- *What do we hope for in our world and the global church community?*

REFLECTIONS

On your “Abundant Grace, Liberating Hope” card write to yourself:

- Reflections

- Commitments, promises or actions
- Hopes
- Prayers

Closing prayer and blessing

May God our Creator surround us with love and fill us with joy

May Christ our Light guide us and lead us in ways of compassion and grace

May the Spirit our Wisdom, give us courage to faithfully witness to the liberating hope of God in our world. Amen.