



PRESIDENT: Rev Sharon Hollis

GENERAL SECRETARY: Colleen Geyer

31 August 2021

Dear friends

The Uniting Church in Australia at its 15th Assembly in June 2018 affirmed the following proposal:

- “That the Assembly resolve to stand in prayerful solidarity with the Australian Roman Catholic Church [as it prepares for its Plenary Council in 2020]...to call on God’s Spirit to accompany the Australian Roman Catholic Church during this period as it listens to the promptings of the Spirit and seek to discern what God is calling it to as a Church for the future.”
- The Assembly further invited its local congregations “to join in this time of prayer for God’s wisdom and openness to be with us all and especially with the Bishops and lay leaders of the Roman Catholic Church.”

A Catholic Plenary is the highest formal gathering of all local churches in a country. This Plenary Council is being held so that they can dialogue about the future of the Catholic Church in Australia. A plenary is called by the Pope and attended by bishops, clergy and lay leaders from across the church. The Australian Plenary Council, which has been delayed due to COVID-19, is now due to be held on 3-10 October 2021. You can learn more about the Plenary Council at [Plenary Council \(catholic.org.au\)](http://Plenary Council (catholic.org.au)).

I encourage congregations and ministers to think about how they can be in prayerful solidarity with their local Catholic parish as the Plenary Council meets. I encourage congregations to take time one Sunday in the lead up to the Plenary Council to pray for the Plenary Council and their local Catholic Parish and bless a symbol of that prayerful solidarity, which can be sent or taken to a local Catholic Parish. If your state is not in lockdown you might like to arrange for someone from the congregation to visit your local Catholic Parish to present the symbol and bring a greeting from the congregation.

Some suggestions for what a congregation might gift to a Catholic Parish as a symbol of prayerful solidarity:

- A candle (decorated if possible),
- A poster or prayer card. This could be designed and made by children of the congregation for display in the Catholic Parish,
- A video prayer and greeting that the Catholic Parish could post to their website or social media. The Uniting Church congregation could also post it on their website and social media,
- A letter of greeting, with the text of the prayer prayed by the Uniting Church congregation.



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I appreciate that for many of you who are in lockdown it will be difficult to purchase an appropriate symbol and impossible to visit your local Catholic Parish. I have tried to make suggestions that could be done while in lockdown and sent electronically.

Whether you send a symbol or not I encourage all congregations to pray for the Catholic Plenary Council and their local Catholic Parish. Thank you to Rev'd John Hughes, an Uniting Church minister at Brougham Place in Adelaide, who wrote this prayer for use by a local Uniting Church to pray for their neighbouring Catholic Parish.

Let us pray:

Creator God, in your great love you have given us the gift of your Spirit. As the Roman Catholic Church in Australia enters this time of discernment, we pray that your Spirit would guide and encourage those involved in the Plenary Council. May we all stand together as we seek to be your people on the way of Jesus.

We pray this through Christ Our Redeemer. Amen.

Thank you for considering this invitation to engage in ecumenical solidarity with our Catholic siblings as they engage in this significant period of discernment. After the 15th Assembly the President Dr. Deidre Palmer conveyed the Assembly resolution to the Most Rev Mark Coleridge, President - Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. I have also written to Bishop Coleridge and to Bishop Michael McKenna, Chairman - Bishops Commission for Christian Unity and Inter-religious Dialogue, to assure them of the prayers of the Uniting Church for the Plenary Council.

Grace and peace

Rev Sharon Hollis
President
Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia