

## **PRESIDENTS REPORT**

What an amazing array of engagements in these past 3 months since our meeting in August.

If anyone would have said you'll be in Canberra 4 times in a month I would have laughed. But indeed I was for the former PM's meeting with faith leaders and NGO's around the Syrian Refugee intake, then to Victoria for a Justice convention, back to Canberra for the National Uniting Care Leader's Summit, Sydney and then back again to Canberra for the National Presbytery Minister's Conference, the Sudanese National Conference in Brisbane, National MCM Reference Committee Melbourne, home to Darwin. Then back again to Canberra for a Refugee policy reform meeting with politicians from all parties and faith leaders. A few radio programs and several media statements along the way about Refugees, Climate Change and the Royal Commission. In the last couple of weeks I've met with Coptic Orthodox leaders, the Heads of Churches and NCCA in Sydney. Travelled then to Adelaide for the SA Synod – a wonderful community of compassion and hope (as the Moderators vision declares). And finally I returned to Sydney for the National Directors meeting with the General Secretary. Sounds exhausting but you know it's the communities of cultural diversity, the people of our church which energise and enliven me.

The Presbytery Ministers gathering was mostly Anglo (there was one Korean), no Queenslanders and those present were somewhat accepting of the NCLS data the past President had commissioned. My comments as I've travelled around the country, and some of you have heard me say this, have been that we are a culturally and linguistically diverse church, all of us and I don't expect the trend line in the NCLS data to extrapolate out. Rather there is another line heading in the opposite direction - the life giving cultural diversity of our church. It's here there is growth and life, it's here we are challenged to adopt more culturally rich contextual theologies and ways of doing things, it's here that we meet experiences of the presence of Christ in the midst of suffering and strong faith which challenges complacent, comfortable Anglo Australia.

I seek to raise the profile of the National Multi Cultural Reference Committee and its Chair. My sense of call is connected to our movement fully embracing its rich cultural diversity. This for me is why the exploration of what it would mean for our practises to recognise First people as sovereign is vital. For the Uniting Church this has local, national, ecumenical and international dimensions. I sense at times in the past these have been dislocated or compartmentalised and now they shall be interwoven, we are the community of Christ.

It was great to be at the SA Synod and I hope to get to all of the Synod meetings. I find this connection with the people of God is invaluable and from the conversations, there is some mutuality about that.

We've experienced incredible grace through the decision of Uniting Care Queensland and Juniper, a fine statement that we are the Church together engaged in Christ's mission in the world. We are seeking with integrity to face the governance question that is before us and not to lose the heart of who we are as the people of God.

Finally thank you to the General Secretary, Terence for his wisdom and support for me since the 14<sup>th</sup> Assembly.