

What is it like to be a young adult in your Uniting Church in Australia?

We have asked a lot of our young adults, "What's it like to be a young adult in your Uniting Church?"

The good, the bad, the in-between, the cold hard truths and the warm fuzzy affirmations - all comments were welcomed and appreciated.

We've also collected some reflections from people who have participated in wider young adult gatherings, beyond their own local congregation, such as The National Young Adult Leaders Conference.

We offer these thoughts and stories so that young adults will be heard.

We offer them so that young adults won't feel so alone.

We offer them so that people who minister to or with young adults might learn more about what helps and what doesn't.

Annaliese

Please don't take anything I say as too negative, I have a deep love for my congregation. Being a young adult in the uniting church is a constant battle between what society has told us, and between what the church often tries to tell us. Unfortunately, society has a lot better grasp on how to portray information than the church does. Rather than hearing the simple message of 'GOD LOVES YOU', I am often distracted by sermons that have no relevance to my life and sermons that do not answer the most difficult questions about faith. I want to hear why I should be inspired by Jesus Christ, instead, I hear boring, over used prayers which do not ignite any love for faith or ignite questions about christianity. In my experience, there seems to be a complete separation between the youth and the elderly, limiting my ability to gain wisdom knowledge and experience from more experienced Christians. No one has ever challenged me on my faith, so if its there, I sure wouldn't be aware of how to defend it.

Sarah

If this question was posed to me just over a year ago I would have said.. unsupported and pressured. At a stage where we go from just working out where we are going in our lives, exiting youth groups and finding out our own personal gifts and talents as an adult to the very short time frame later when we get engaged and married and have babies (most people averaging 5 years) There is a high expectation/pressuring that you will exit youth group and automatically start serving the youth and the kids church with little to no support from any sort of mentors. And then when you do get onto the married stage of life the expectation is that you have to find your own replacements or the entire program will fall flat because you grew up and can no longer take the full responsibility any more. Now come into the present day, different church, I'd say it's a more even field of learning and exploring faith. There's still an expectation of service from the older generations but it isn't as great (perhaps that is just because we came to this church with children and not as young young adults though).

Overall with all the uniting churches we have attended over the past few years I think there is a general lack of faith support and flexibility of small group style learning for this age group from the older generations. Generally it's young adults leading young adults which can only get you so far in your learning. It would be nice to see an older generation step up to take on the leadership of young adults.

In one huge positive for the uniting church, after leaving the first church we went to about 8 or so different churches in our area from different denominations and styles and found that we enjoyed the uniting church style of leadership structure, communion and teaching theology.

I'd also like to add that we thoroughly enjoyed our time serving and had we been better supported in our roles it may have continued on, even if it was in different ways once we had our children.

Nicole

A lot of pressure - because people expect us to be the future of the church and respect us enough to want our opinion but I feel that I'm speaking on such a large generation with no one my age beside me.

Adventurous - because you get opportunities to express opinions and challenge/ explore faith & leadership opportunities and get trained and guided from a young age, where if not in the church you would never have been given the chance.

Emily

As a uniting Church member, having the opportunity to represent the church on an international stage (WCC) I feel that as young people of the Uniting Church we are very lucky. We come from a church where a young lay women's opinion and perspective is valued the same as a middle aged ordained minister. Many people coin the phrase we are the 'future' of the church but on many occasions (Synod/Assembly/local congregations) I have seen in action that young people are playing an active role in the church 'today'. Agreeably, certain current structures do limit young people's enthusiasm to be involved in governing roles but the fact that the opportunity that we have the ability to do so should be celebrated!! One needs to be involved within the structure to change the structure.

Bekah

I'm just over 30, but I think my voice is still valid given the age of other adults in our church. Sunday mornings just didn't work for us, we are treated like grandchildren, a bit of a novelty. It wasn't until we discovered a bible study in our network of churches that things changed, our young adults have started a Saturday morning group where we can sit and discuss life and faith, from that group a more contemplative worship space has formed, and through that we are meeting other people in the wider church, and feeling like we are valued and involved and making real progress.

Radhika

Here are some from me!

Supported Because older generations are keen to pass on their knowledge and experiences

On display Kinda like being strange animals at a zoo

Overburdened Because "young" is somehow synonymous with "invincible"

Blessed To bear witness to Christ's hope in a "dying" church
Hope they're helpful! Xo

Jessica

I have been a part of the Uniting Church since I was born. In my church that I attend now, I am 1 out of 8-10ish young people and the oldest young person attending, if that makes sense.

To me, being in the Uniting Church is hard in some ways because it is a constant struggle to be heard and accepted. Being told by older people that "We don't do it that way, We've done it this way for years..." is hurtful.

We all learn in different ways, that's what makes us unique, there are plenty of ways to do one task. I am also getting sick and tired of older people saying that, "Young people are the future of the church." When I hear that, to me, it's like, "Okay, so we'll just leave the church and come back later when you're all gone". No thank you, I am apart of the church of today and I will squeeze myself into every part of the church and be involved in every way I can.

On a more positive note I have also been a part of churches where young people have been given responsibilities and have been given the opportunity to be involved in many aspects of the church and this has been fantastic. From travelling around I have met and worked with other people who are passionate about young people in the church and encouraging them just as much as the rest of the congregation. A change of attitude is needed throughout the whole church, we need to learn to work together as one in Christ. Young people have ideas too.

Josephne

Empowered.

Able to serve the Lord as a young person and female.

Able to live out my passions.

Able to worship in my own way.

Able to love others and stand up for those who need it.

Able to be the person God made me to be.

Nadine

Appreciated. The uniting church has been a supportive, affirming place for a young lesbian like me - people have listened to my experiences, pointed me to literature and groups which help lgbt Christians integrate their faith and sexuality. I feel my lgbt friends of different denominations have had a significantly more difficult and painful time coming out, being accepted and learning how to be a faithful Christian whilst still being true to who they are. I feel very lucky to have grown up in an accepting and open minded community. Sometimes I feel a bit lonely like I'm "the only gay in the village (church)" - but I feel people try their best to make an inclusive culture and see things from an lgbt perspective and that's very much appreciated.

Robert

This is tricky as there are positives that I will not mention in this post.

My most dominant emotions are comfortable and weighed down. I am not sure that the first is a good thing either.

The second is perhaps more concerning to me. As a young person that has been on actively involved in leadership. I have found that there is a lot of baggage from the older generations that is hindering how the younger generations work within the church. Now, this is a standard generational complaint but I have found that when this baggage has not been in the way, I have experienced a richer church life.

I am not trying to do away with traditions. I just feel that traditions and administration is meant to make it easier not hard to be part of the church.

Rosalie

Safe. Because I finally have a church community who is okay with me being queer. They even voted me onto church council, while other congregations wouldn't even let me lead kids at KCO.

Michael

What's it like to be a young person in my church?

Good: we have a solid framework between the group of younger people in our church that has been nurtured by our minister. We worked together to take lead of a service a couple of weeks back that was met with great feedback.

Bad: we probably could do with a smidge more time at presbytery to actually show we have a presence and are doing things in the community...

Other than that, life as a "young" Christian in the UCA is one that isn't boring.

Jay

It can be a challenge at times, given the low population of young people (I, save for young children, at 17, am the youngest member of roughly 10 younger members) in my Congregation and the associated struggles of being heard by some of the elder parishioners, with ingrained views of how Church should function; yet I do love it, being amongst some of the very spirited elders and some of my fellow young people, as we can work together using our gifts to serve the Lord, praise and glorify Him in our works, in our daily lives & to make a positive contribution to the Faith and World.

The younger folk in my Congregation are becoming more involved, and not long ago led a service in the absence of our Minister, with said service being extremely well received by all whom attended, so it seems.

Basically, it's a mixed feeling. Great to work together with those whom have wide ranging spiritual gifts to build a better Church and World; plus the growing acceptance of young people's place in the church community yet challenging due to the rigidity of some members/unwillingness to/dissatisfaction with changes.

(Apologies for somewhat repeating points and the excessive use of commas and parentheses, etc. hahaha)

Kai

Sorry I've taken so long to reply. I've been travelling and haven't had a chance to sit down and give it the response it deserves.

I find it is an affirming experience being part of my Church. There is great opportunity to grow in faith and share ideas. While not everyone may agree with me, or others, about their beliefs, there is a great deal of respect for others' experiences. There are chances to explore new things, and room to make mistakes and to learn from them. Just knowing that there is a group of people who will love and support you and your peers no matter what might eventuate is a very empowering thing, and I believe has me a great foundation to follow God's call.

Scott

Balanced - Just like any relationship, as I have grown within my Church both in faith and actions, I too have been rewarded with trust, support and encouragement. In our congregation we focus on 'Growing Lifelong Disciples of Christ' - this means we are encouraging people to grow, develop and own their faith whether it is within our congregation or another part of the wider Church body in the future

David

Being a young adult in my Uniting Church means I am never bored and always learning. My home church, and our wider church are so diverse. My idea of faith is growing bigger each day through listening to and talking with so many wise and wonderful people. And no matter how many times my ideas change, I really do trust that the Uniting Church will always have a space ready to welcome me.

Name withheld by Tom

I have had a lot of positive experiences with the Uniting Church! So I don't want to discourage you. There's a lot you have done right in ministering to me. But here's why I had to leave the UCA.

I wasn't being discipled well enough for where my faith was at. The church is too focused on training up leaders of the church rather than disciples of Christ. I was burnt out from service and wanted more Jesus and development of faith than I was able to find in the culture of the UCA.

I quickly found that when you have nothing left to offer the church as a young adult, it doesn't have much to offer you either.

I was developed up as a leader and thrown into full time youth ministry without adequate training or support. I was declared competent for ministry as the church was far more interested and getting me working and giving to it than ensuring I was set up for success in the role. As issues began to arise in my placement I was not supported.

I became so damaged by the job that the only way to solve things was for me to walk away from the role.

It was not long after that that I went to NYALC, which was as positive an experience as it was able to be for me, given where I was at. Although, I feel like a National Young Adults Discipleship Conference would be far more beneficial than a leadership conference, where we tackle big issues of faith development rather than big issues of leadership and church politics, although I'm sure there's a balance of both that could be reached somehow.

Eventually though, I got to a point of realising that I was so burnt out that not only did I have nothing left to offer the church but nothing left I wanted to give to the church.

At the same time, I was at a place with God where my faith was being challenged and a place on my life journey where my past was demanding to be dealt with. I quickly discovered that the UCA wasn't a place I could deal with any of these things and staying was only making me bitter and risking me abandoning my faith altogether.

I didn't feel safe enough in the UCA to trust it to nurture me through the tough process of healing from a traumatic past. I couldn't find a place that would help me tackle and grow my faith and that would allow me to be broken when they just wanted me to lead.

This tension between being expected to lead while feeling so broken made me feel like I was a failure for needing nurturing and like I was letting the team down for not having anything to offer. This was crushing my faith as I was struggling to find Jesus in that kind of environment.

So I left in an effort to save my faith. I have been going to a Baptist Church and have met far too many young adults who have told me 'oh I used to go to a Uniting Church.' So the good news is that we're not leaving our faith, but the bad news for the UCA is that we're outgrowing it because we're not being discipled and nurtured beyond our leadership potential.

I have no doubt others who have been through similar things to me have not found a safe place in the UCA to be nurtured, discipled and felt safe to be broken and others who have just reached a point in their faith that is not compatible with what the UCA has to offer. We're outgrowing youth group and finding nowhere to go to continue our faith development in the church other than to be put into leadership where we are required to give without also being fed.

I still love what the UCA stands for and I wish it was a place that I was able to find what I needed. Maybe I'll feel called back to it one day but for now, it's not a place where my faith development needs are being met.

Despite how doom & gloom that all sounds, I'm actually doing really well! My relationship with God is the best it's ever been, I'm healing really well from the wounds of the past now.

I'd love to see the UCA get to a place that is drawing young adults in rather than driving them away so if there's any part I can play in helping that to happen then I'm happy to do that!

Some Young Adult Stories from our UCA publications which are relevant to the question are also shared here for us to learn from.

Awkward Encounters with the Church

Carlynn Nunn

I, like a lot of my friends, would consider myself a believer, but in a cool, disdainful-distance-from-the-church, ironic and sepia toned way. I don't raise my hands in "worship". I don't refer to the singy time at the beginning of church as "worship" without air quotation marks. I am a nitpicky, smartarse Christian who is quick to shake her head at the naiveté that sees church goers say they're praying for a miracle or (cringe) comment on a Facebook status with a cheerful "isn't Jesus the BEST? :D" . Ugh.

..I meet the Christians and find them to be a number of things, with a notable absence of "all the same". They are friendly, quiet, loud, cheerful, verbose, dry. All are here for the same reason, the Uniting Church.

...I first start to suspect something is going on when Rev. Elenie Poulos, the National Director of UnitingJustice talks to us about the history of the Uniting Church. As Elenie talks, she mentions the empire, and our calling to stand against it. Surely she's talking about another organization. Perhaps Greenpeace.

We look at a foundational Uniting Church document titled "A Statement to the Nation" and marvel at its passion and relevance. Not many of us have read it before. I begin to get the feeling that perhaps the Uniting Church is something special.

It was later in that same session as we sat about writing a powerful and moving statement to the nation of our own that I realized I might be developing a bit of a crush. On the church. How awkward.

Later still Rev. Ken Sumner, the Chair of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress and co-host of the conference, is preaching and setting up communion when I notice something. I no longer want to not enjoy this. I want to be a part of what Ken is so moved by. I don't want to be cool any more.

..We can be a part of a beautiful and ancient tradition played out by flawed and fragile people, and ourselves. We can not like some songs and still celebrate our Love. I am a part of this stuff, and I can talk about that without it being a big honking smack in the face for those listening. And more importantly, I am allowed to be myself. I am allowed to doubt, and to cringe, and to not use the word ministry if I don't know what it means.

Slowly, humbly, I realize I am free. I also realize I am smitten.

..The things I learnt are both quantifiable and very much not so. I learnt about leadership, about our history, about a sacrament. But more than that I learnt that my distaste for parts of my religion had led me to reject spirituality in its entirety fearing that it would taint and dis-colour me. I learnt that happily, that is now in the past. And finally I learnt that I am a Christian, in love not just with her Lord but with His body.

Carlynn Nunn



Carlynn Nunn of Brunswick Uniting Church addressed the congregation with a 'letter to the church' at her recent confirmation. Carlynn has agreed to share her letter with the readers of Crosslight.

Dear "the Church",

I was born into you, raised by the faces of grownups that smiled at me, collections of casseroles after church and of course obligation.

You introduced me to The Lord and to your people, well meaning individuals who dressed neatly and said things like "Jesus came into my heart" and "I have a calling to go to Africa".

I learnt to raise my hands in worship and to try earnestly to remember how bad I was when instructed to think of the cross.

I went to many of your incarnations over time, and at some point along the way, I began to wonder what was actually going on.

Questioning the things your people said to me on a Sunday led to my feeling misrepresented and disconnected from and by you. Now this is nothing new, but led incrementally to distaste for you altogether.

I am sorry, church, but I met too many people who didn't understand what it was they were enthusiastically espousing and who blithely assumed that their truth was the only truth.

Added to this was your not insignificant betrayal of many people I know and love, including some in my own family.

I felt your denominations were irrelevant.

I wanted to be a part of the kingdom, not a man-made institution that often seemed entirely removed from the world it allegedly wanted to help.

I kept attending a variety of your faces but always looking for what was wrong and the little that was right, my ear tuned for the mistakes that would be inevitably made and my cynicism about the whole palaver at the ready, should I need it.

I began working at Brunswick around 15 months ago now. I had concerns at first, though the job and my subsequent involvement in the regular meetings of your group here came at a time when I was ready to find a solution to my sparring with you.

I have to say, your little group here in Brunswick are lovely. They have been so outrageously welcoming and full of encouragement it quite literally shocks me. I often shake my head at my good fortune, and marvel at the lack of all that I despised about you before.

So Brunswick has taught me that while a congregation can be different from my experience and challenging in its views, it can also be heartfelt, authentic and gracious. I started thinking about membership a little while ago, mainly as a response to your people here.

That was shortly before I fell in love with you.

I went to a conference, (National Young Adult Leaders Conference), a few weeks back. I was scared of it, to be honest, on account of all the Christians that would be in attendance. We both know that I am not their type of people and they are not mine.

On arriving however, I found around 70 young people whose guileless friendship inspired and floored me and around whom I felt I was my most authentic self, cynicism and all.

During the week away I learnt a lot about you and how you are, in your Uniting form, committed to the most basic and beautiful and important and life giving things imaginable.

I also realised with a shock, while watching Ken Sumner lead communion, that though I've never been someone who is ashamed of her faith, though I've not been afraid to talk about it, I have been so concerned about removing myself from all that I dislike about Christianity that I had at some point forgotten nearly all there is to love.

I had grown so competent at pointing out all that is wrong with you, that I had smeared my cynicism over all that was right, obscuring the possibilities you've been holding politely for years as I railed against your obsolescence.

I am sorry to say, I had let myself grow embarrassed of not just you but all connected with you.

As I watched Ken tenderly speak of this gorgeous tradition and remembrance, I realised for the first time, that I can actually embrace what I believe, and not become something that I hate.

I can celebrate with friends who believe and friends who don't, because to celebrate my faith is to celebrate something both unique and beautiful and only found here, in me, and something that is a part of the ancient, the holy, the transcendent and the joyful. I don't need or want to separate them anymore.

So church, I am writing to apologise I suppose.

I wanted to explain that though I have insulted you, and though I thought I had good reason, I want to give us another try, if you'll have me, for in you I now see the face of my father.

I know you're human, and fallible and sometimes dirty and broken and wrong, but you have the capacity for great beauty, and courage and wisdom and the ability to walk around in the mess of our lives, finding the lovely parts and making them shine and I've always been the type to believe the best about things anyway.

Lastly, I don't think that church membership is the only, or the best way of doing life. But I have been placed in a fortunate position inside your monster, and believe that those that can unite to try in a corporate sense to fight for justice and mercy and love, to join the monster in its challenge against the empire, should do so.

For me that means no longer pointing the finger at you in accusation, looking at myself as a part of this magnificent story and making sure that the change starts here.

With love,
Carlyne.

(This article was first published on the [Crosslight](#) website)

An Open Letter from Richard La'Brooy



Richard La'Brooy

Dear Tom,

It's great to hear from you! NYALC 2012 seems a long time ago but it's certainly had a massive impact on me.

I know it might sound a bit cliché or that I'm exaggerating but for me NYALC really changed the direction of my life. In February this year I was working at a Law Firm and about to start

an Arts/Law degree but I wasn't really committed to it. Since I left school I'd been getting more involved with my local congregation at North Ryde here in Sydney and had been feeling a bit of prodding from God to get more involved. NYALC really inspired me and was the confirmation I needed to know that my career lied somewhere in the Church. I'm not sure what form that'll take but I know that in some way I want to work in the Uniting Church. This year has been, without a doubt, the best year of my life because of the amazing opportunities I've been blessed with. At NYALC Andrew Williams, NSW/ACT Gen Sec, asked me to represent the Synod at Assembly in July. This was an amazing opportunity and I felt so blessed to have been part of that event and to, in my small way, contribute. At Assembly I was having a few conversations with Kerry Enright about UnitingWorld because international aid is my real passion. After Assembly he asked me to come on UnitingWorld's National Committee for Church Connections which I started on in August. At NYALC I had some conversations with Adrian White about Tertiary Chaplaincy because I was starting at Macquarie Uni this year and wanted to be part of a Uniting Church group. He put me in contact with the new Chaplains on campus and I became the Student Rep for UCA Chaplaincy. In October this year after one of the Associate Chaplains resigned they asked me to take on the role and I'm now working at Macquarie as an Associate Chaplain 12 hours a week. I've also been asked to be on the Arrangements Committee for NSW/ACT 2013 Synod. All these opportunities for me came about as a result of NYALC.

The opportunity to be part of the drafting team for the Reconciliation People statement after NYALC was great too. Seeing it though to the last drafts with Rads was a great experience. Then to see it so warmly accepted by the wider Church at Assembly was fantastic. I know for the younger members of Assembly it meant to us that we were truly valued by the wider church and not just a token pat on the back.

I've also developed some awesome friendships and connections as a result of NYALC. I've been meeting with people here in Sydney and also been in contact with people across Australia. For me this has been amazing. I've always been involved with my local congregation but never on a wider UCA level. Now through NYALC and Assembly I've got great friends and contacts throughout the country.

At 19 I feel so incredibly blessed to be doing what I'm doing. I now know that my life and career lies somewhere in Uniting Church. In what way I don't know but I know that God has a plan for me somewhere in our great Church. This wouldn't have come about without NYALC, it really did change my life!

I hear so many people around the Uniting Church saying that we're a dying Church and there's no youth. However after my experiences at NYALC and Assembly I know that there are a huge amount of young people who are incredibly passionate about our Church and wanting to get more involved and it's gratifying that the Uniting Church welcomes our input.

(Published on the [Assembly](#) website)

NYALC Reflections – Brad Case



Brad Case

As a young adult leader in the Uniting Church there are many joys and many struggles. The National Young Adult Leaders Conference hosted by the Assembly and Congress is a great way for us to gather together and share in our own unique experiences within our denomination.

In my current context I am the only person between the age of 18 and 30ish. Leading youth and children's ministry each week is a joy and privilege, but can seem like a lonely endeavour because I don't get to do ministry with people my own age. I don't get to share the struggles or help carry the burden of others. The joys aren't sweetened and the blows aren't softened because of the companionship of fellow pilgrims. Don't get me wrong, I love the ministry that I get to do with young people, and I LOVE sharing and singing the Wondrous Story with those of older generations who've done the same ministry before me...I ABSOLUTELY love it. But I look around and it seems that there are less and less mid-twenty something's sticking it out with me, less and less of us singing the song.

It seems like a pretty common story across many Uniting Churches, and the current data would suggest there aren't lots of us in this age bracket actively involved in servant leadership in the life of the church. Young Adult leaders often bridge the gap between "not ready to lead" youth and "too busy to do ministry" young families, and we're often asked to keep on giving because we're passionate, capable and all that's left. It often feels like we're going hard and going it alone, which can take its toll. Without the companionship and fellowship that comes with being On the Way with other young adults, it can often just feel like 'working in the wilderness'. There have been times when I've felt refreshed with God, but feeling dry and crusty in my ministry. And there have been a few times when I feel I'm just done with the Uniting Church...done with serving in my local congregation because I'm not connected to the bigger story of what God is doing within the Uniting Church...done because there aren't voices of others re-telling that same story back at me.

Recently I was feeling like this, like I was done with being a young adult leader in the church when I received an invitation to NYALC not knowing much about it. I ended up accepting the invitation, but was honestly feeling compelled to go only out of duty rather than as a chance to connect with other young adults in the Uniting Church.

Then I got there...and everything changed again for me. Just like the wanderers in the desert, the quail came.

NYALC provides a space for us...passionate, ragtag, talented, lonely, diligent, faithful young adult leaders...to remember. Remember that we are valued, remember that we belong, remember that we aren't alone and remember again the story we're called to tell. Together with young leaders from across every Synod and Congress and with people from every culture, we sang, we prayed in our own language, we took the sacraments, we learnt, we laughed, we cried and we met with Christ together...together. And for me this was the most important part of the community that those who ran this week were encouraging us to build; that together we are part of God's story in the Uniting Church here in Australia...that together we can do small and amazing things that change someone's world every day. A key part of the week was that we weren't asked to lead or serve as we do back home, but to just participate. Nothing was required of us except to be open to what God might do in and through us...and God did a LOT!

The event program itself is packed full, but balances the right amount of stretching experiences, reflection and relaxation to give us genuine rest. Highlights were Elenie Paulos teaching us about Sabbath Economics each day, the Bible Study times with Andrew Dutney, as well as our ministry experiences on the Wednesday. Each of these things was a chance for us to think outside and be removed from our own context and have our concept ministry blown wide open for us to experience *Missio Dei*, Gods Mission, in a new, challenging and refreshing way. Yet, most importantly it was a great chance for us to meet others facing the same challenges, struggles and ministry opportunities across the country, to support and encourage one another and learn together...that together we're never truly alone.

NYALC's value isn't in what the local church can get out of it, or what presbytery's will benefit from those they send (although those who attend will surely return refreshed, encouraged and engaged - thus benefiting their ministry back home). The value is in the time that our young adults get to "pit stop" on the great journey and remember to love the road that Jesus has called us to travel and the people we travel it with. That in itself makes NYALC invaluable. The value is in the valuing of our most precious resource; our incredible young leaders who say YES to Jesus and the local church in whatever way they can. It's vitally important for young adult leaders to experience Uniting Church community, theology and mission outside of their local church environment, alongside other Uniting Church young adults from ALL cultures and contexts along with moderators and the president in true Christian community. It helps us remember the story we're a part of.

For me, NYALC reminded me why I love the church that I've journeyed with for so many years. It took my tired and weary spirit and reminded me why I'm ruined for the Uniting Church...ruined for the way we do justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our Lord. I entered NYALC exhausted to my bones and spirit and left feeling genuinely refreshed (something that hasn't happened on a camp in a LONG time) and ready to go home knowing that I'm part of something special. But most of all, spending the time together with young adults from across the life of the church reminded me that together we're eternally loved, forgiven and free through Jesus Christ.

And if it can do any of this for another young adult in your congregation, then NYALC is one of the most valuable ministries and endeavours of our Uniting Church.

NYALC Report – Joanna Palmer, SA



This was the first time I had attended NYALC. I'm so glad I did! I feel deeply grateful and blessed to have been part of such a vibrant, enriching, multicultural community of Uniting Church young adults.

NYALC reminded me why I'm so proud to be part of the Uniting Church, and encouraged me in my faith in many ways. Hearing other young peoples' stories of their lives, leadership and faith, from many cultures and places across Australia, was inspiring.

The Bible studies were challenging. The focus on 'Sabbath economics' in Elenie Poulous' Bible study was confronting and relevant, particularly going into the Christmas period, which can often be consumed by capitalism. The ways in which Christians can be countercultural can have far-reaching economic consequences, as Elenie discussed.

Non-hierarchical, servant leadership, through the example of Jesus, was the essence of leadership that I took away from this conference.

I enjoyed hearing more about the Basis of Union – the focus on the congregation and the whole church as trying to further God's mission, is something that I have reflected on often since I went to NYALC. It has made me appreciate, even more, the people around me in my congregation, and other congregations that I have been fortunate to visit.

The importance of spiritual self care was highlighted, and it was good to be reminded that community, prayer, music, worship, and many other ways can be helpful in this.

Conversations over meals and board games were moments that I will remember as mixtures of serious discussion and hilarity, which helped join the community together during the week.

Visiting Wayside Chapel was another highlight – their vision of “creating communities with no us and them” was both challenging and inspiring.

I came away from NYALC feeling encouraged, hopeful, joyful and also challenged. There were so many wonderful people who I feel privileged to have met (both young, and young-at-heart). Knowing that we share in faith, community and leadership in many different ways is exciting!

So, “What’s it like to be a young adult in your Uniting Church?” for you?

Young adults who would like to share their thoughts and stories can send them to tomk@nat.uca.org.au for inclusion in this article.