

Uniting Values

I recently had a discussion with a friend about what it meant to be a member of the Uniting Church. What makes us so different from all the other denominations of Christianity? And I feel my answer was a bit waffly. But this past week I read something from the General Secretary of our church that gave me a clearer view on what it is to be a member of the Uniting Church.

The General Secretary pointed back to 1977, to one of the foundation documents of our Church.

A document, rather grandiosely called “A Statement to the Nation” said this:

“We pledge ourselves to seek the correction of injustices wherever they occur. We will work for the eradication of poverty and racism within our society and beyond. We affirm the rights of all people to equal employment opportunities, adequate health care, freedom of speech, employment or dignity in unemployment if work is not available. We will oppose all forms of discrimination which infringe basic rights and freedoms.

We will challenge values that emphasise acquisitiveness and greed in disregard of the needs of others and which encourage a higher standard of living for the privileged in the face of the daily widening gap between the rich and the poor.

We are concerned with the basic human rights of future generations and will urge the wise use of energy, the protection of the environment and the replacement of the earth resources for their use and enjoyment.”

I have to say that this remarkable document is as valid today as it was when it was penned 33 years ago! And if I wanted any assurance as to why I choose to remain a Uniting Church minister this provides it fully. This prophetic document, based firmly on a reading of the Gospels, points solidly to the values of the Christ, and more than ever needs to be shouted from church rooftops. All the issues named are as relevant today as they were 33 years ago. Indeed the paragraph on the environment seems prescient in the context of when it was written.

So in line with what we say we as a Uniting Church stands for, and with an election in the air, let me highlight an issue that I feel is a national disgrace. It’s the treatment of older Australians. Anyone who has had even a passing acquaintance with nursing homes in this country will have noticed a gradual decline in the standards of care offered by such institutions. Let me say clearly that this decline in no way reflects the heroic efforts of nursing home staff. It is completely down to inadequate funding provided by successive Commonwealth Governments over the past 15 years. In a paper called “The Grand Plan”, a coalition of Aged Care providers indicates that sixty percent of our nursing homes nationwide are financially unsustainable! At the same time, provisions to keep older Australians in their own home have also been reduced. This will only get worse as the wave of “Baby Boomers” reaching retirement age gathers momentum in the next few years.

Pilgrim Uniting Church
As I See It

As I See It surely this also is an issue that need shouting from church rooftops as we seek to be faithful to the Christ values we say as a Uniting Church we live by.

Tony would be more than happy to chat about the above article.

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