

Dear Ipswich City Church Family

Thanks for the positive feedback about worship yesterday. For past worship service and individual clips you can go to our [Youtube Channel](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCz5w6rIppfl-aYoTpTQzeHg).

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Today's reflection is a bit longer. This week the Uniting Church will be 43 years old. So for today I am reprinting a short talk I gave at the 40th anniversary in Toowoomba.

The overriding idea is that the church exists to proclaim the word of salvation to all people. This was the vision which sparked the uniting church off. I don't know if we have the right formula for unity but we have the right vision, for it is Jesus' prayer that for the sake of the world we all be one.

Daily Reflection



"I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me." (John 17:20–21, NRSV)

Uniting church 40th anniversary address

Given at the anniversary party 17-6-2017

at Middle Ridge Uniting Church 264 Stenner St, Centenary Heights QLD 4350.

40 years ago in 1977 the majority of three Christian denominations came together. We did not come together on the basis of the lowest common denominator or by trying to stitch together a patchwork quilt of Congregationalism, Methodism, and Presbyterianism. While we honoured that heritage, we tried to do a new thing, stating the ancient Biblical faith in new ways. Our basis of coming together was the one Lord Jesus Christ upon whom both our faith and our unity are built. The purpose and goal of our union is to set forth the word of salvation for all people and to serve the world for which Christ died.

Our purpose was not to bring together three struggling churches. When the Basis of Union was developed, when the negotiations happened and when the votes were taken in the 60s and early 70s all the churches in Australia were still growing. Our desire was to be obedient to Christ, reflecting the Unity we already share with all God's people because we share in the intimate relationship between Jesus and the One he calls Father. We wanted to be one just as Jesus and the Father are One in order that the world might know Him.

It might know he was sent, raised and crucified, so that the whole world, indeed all creation and all people might be made new. Jesus' first words of ministry "The Kingdom of God has drawn near, repent and believe the Good News", his call to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us, to go out and heal, feed the hungry, proclaim the Kingdom, be peacemakers, visit the imprisoned, quench the thirsty, and be light and salt for the world, this call is still our call today.

In the power and communion of the Spirit our "call is to serve that end: to be a fellowship of reconciliation, a body within which the diverse gifts of its members are used for the building up of the whole, an instrument through which Christ may work and bear witness to himself."

Whether in the future the Uniting Church swells to be as mighty in worship and witness as it is in service through Uniting Care, in Blue Care, the Hospitals, Community Care, our local Meals on Wheels and so on, or whether we continue the trend of these last 40 years, our call remains the same. Our call is not to be successful or victorious or powerful, for all the power and the glory, success and failure are in the hands of God.

Our call is not even to be faithful. It is instead to set forth that word of salvation for all people. It is to celebrate not our faithfulness, but the faithfulness of God in Jesus alive in us by the Spirit. To set it forth in our churches, fellowships and Bible studies as we gather, sing, pray, study and listen. Our call is to set forth the word of salvation by sharing the hope within us in our homes, sporting, social and service clubs, workplaces, shopping centres, schools and in loving our neighbours to the ends of the earth.

Sometimes we have done it well. Sometimes we have loved the institution or our place in it more than we have loved our Lord or the world Christ died for but our call is still to set forth that word. That has been our forty year

journey. That journey is not over, God's call has not diminished. That is what we celebrate today. We celebrate forty years of salt and light. We celebrate the faithfulness of God and we celebrate the Good News that God calls us still to set forth and be sharers in this word of salvation. Thanks be to God. Amen and Amen.

Yours in Jesus

Andrew

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