



Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA
CROYDON CONGREGATION

A letter to the people of Croydon Uniting Church about CHANGE...

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... because there's a lot of talk about things changing. The big shed and the old hall are going. The main hall is going to be knocked down. There will be a new car park made. House blocks will be developed on the site and sold off. The money will be spent on both modernising the existing worship space and providing a source of income into the future.

Into this mix of change comes the news that our minister is leaving to go to East Kew. "How *could* she?" "Don't we need Bronwyn to help us navigate our way through all this change?" "Couldn't she have just stayed until we were settled into the newness?" Maybe you've heard people saying things like this or asking different questions about why Bronwyn is leaving now.

The Uniting Church has a policy of ministers staying for a maximum of ten years, and commonly 3-5 years for the minister's first placement. Bronwyn has been at Croydon for 9 years, quite unusual for a first placement. The process of looking and finding a suitable placement takes some time – up to a year. In Bronwyn's case the process was very quick: when she was offered the position at East Kew, with much prayer and discernment on her part and on the part of the calling community, Bronwyn discerned a sense of call to ministry in that place.

We can confirm that Bronwyn's final service will be March 26th. Everyone is invited to join together to wish her a fond farewell on that day.

After that we can be certain that there will be a minister and there will be a church. That is not changing. But there are some important details ...

The property redevelopment plans are to remove the halls and shed later this year. As of February 14, we can advise that we can continue to **use the hall until the end of August 2017**. Nevertheless, we still need to be organised to leave the hall and organise where to put our "stuff". Kerry Shearer has kindly agreed to lead a team to plan this process. From that time onwards, all our activities will be consolidated into the current church building. For a time, it is extremely likely that we will need to leave the church building while it is refurbished. This is likely to be from a date in April 2018. The Croydon representatives on the Project Control Group have strongly put the case that there should be a different order to this, but for a range of reasons that is not possible. In terms of the property re-development, there are some exciting times ahead because work will be able to commence on the plans for the redeveloped worship space very soon. We are currently working through time lines and opportunities for the congregation to be fully involved ahead of **initial plans for the redeveloped worship space to be presented in April 2017**.

Across these changes, there will be togetherness. We will be together, that will not change. In fact, we will be *together* in a slightly smaller space. Even when we need to leave the church building for refurbishment, we will do so *together*. We will not be 'scattered to the four winds' but we will find a new, temporary 'home'. And if, through all of this, some people find it a bit odd or inconvenient, we'll give them a call or offer them a lift to church, won't we? We'll do it *together*.

How will we cope? The same way we have coped during the so many changes over the last 100 years. Each of the three congregations that came together at Union in 1977 had moved site at least once. Croydon Central Uniting Church folk moved from their much-loved site in 2001 to join Talent Street Uniting to become Croydon Uniting Church. At each of these turns, we found solidarity and friendship as we strove to do it *together*.

How did we cope through all of those changes? Through the grace of God. God will not leave us nor forsake us. God travels with us wherever we journey as many of us can testify in our own life stories. In the good times as well as the difficult times God is with us. God's love does not abandon us. God's Spirit is always available to help us. We have each other – our friends, our Christian family, to help us. None of this is going to change! What makes us special as a church – the caring welcoming friendly, God centred community that we are - will not change.

God has always been in relationship with us as a church community and as individual members of it. God will continue this relationship with us. We can trust in God.

On February 14, the Church Council received a detailed report on finding a new minister. In summary, we confidently say that

- We have the full support of Presbytery to seek suitable supply ministry following on from when Bronwyn concludes.
- Lists of ministers available for supply have been provided and inquiries have already commenced to identify a suitable supply minister. *The Executive is now making contact with available ministers as a matter of urgency. As soon as there is anything more concrete in place (such as a name!), we will tell you.*
- At this early stage of the process, we have the full support of Presbytery to commence calling a new (permanent) minister in due course.
- The processes we have already commenced, such as the Mission Development Group, are the first stage of proceeding to a call; a selection committee has not yet been formed, but this will come in time; so, for the moment, there is nothing more that we should or could be doing to hasten the process.
- A sequence of interim placements to support us and help us shape our ministry into the future is what we should expect. Those who remember the last 'change over' from Barry Brown to Joe Rankin to Ojitha Goonetilleke and finally to Bronwyn can imagine it will be something like that.
- There are very significant pastoral needs associated with all the changes. The Church Council and Presbytery Ministers are keenly aware of the significance of these. This need shapes the style of supply ministry that we should be and are seeking: ministers who can support us to be 'better *together*'.

We journey forward in hope. Released from current burdens of property maintenance, confident in revitalised missional directions for the future, the disruption of the next months will seem insignificant from the vantage point of God's future.

Praise God for God's continual blessings which we share!



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Church Council
Chairperson



Bronwyn Daniels
Minister