

UCA Where are You? No 10

This is the TENTH paper in a series that reflect on the course of the Uniting Church. Tracing the personal journey and reflections of Rev Ted Curnow they bring together a wide range of statements and insights related to the position of the Church and Christian marriage. Cultural context, lead up stages, Assembly 2018, the aftermath and sorting out substance and myth.

‘Emerging, Formative, Creative Expressions’.

Seven months had passed since the Government had changed the nations traditional definition of marriage. The Uniting Church, with no direct consultation with Congregations or Presbyteries had then strategically followed by riding the crest of the wave. The decision had caused celebration for some, alarm, grief, sadness and anger for others. By September some had left the church and some Ministers had resigned. Instead of progressing the church in its mission Resolution 64 of the 15th Assembly had inflicted a deep wound, that while officially played down and to great extent publicly suppressed by the church media, was never the less toxic and still festering. What had seemingly become a previous attitude of church hierarchy to just ignore a large proportion of the grass-roots church however would continue to make its impact.

As Rev Robert Griffith, the chairman of the Far North Coast Presbytery in NSW engaged with many across the country he reported how continuing questions were being asked. Those who could not accept the change in doctrine asked, “How did we even get to this point?” Others who could not see what the problem was asked, “Why all the fuss about same-sex marriage?” The ACC like a terrier dog attacking a threatening snake went to the core of the issue by recognising that the church had not simply instituted a *‘new statement on marriage but a new gospel as well’*. Like the Apostle Paul’s white hot letter to the Galatian church, the ACC after years of teaching the difference between same gender attraction and same-sex practise claimed that what was at stake was a radically different gospel. While compassion was important, it was a subtle gospel disguised as *‘the voice of reason and compassion and a sign of God’s wider inclusive love. However it was not a sign of Gods inclusive love but a sign of Christian humanism embodied in Jesus Christ.’*

Fight or Flight.

Psychologists tell us that the human psyche, generally speaking responds in one of two ways when threatened. We either fight back against that which intimidates us or we retreat in either anger or fear. If in frustration we conclude that to do battle against the Assembly decision will be ineffective we may choose to run. In Psalm 55 the psalmists emotions are stirred. He is plagued by fear. In verse 5 he says, *‘Fear and trembling have beset me, horror has overwhelmed me.’* His mind is captive to an awful sense of foreboding and it is fear rather than anger that urges him to flee from danger. Verses 6-8, *‘Oh that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away to be at rest.---I would flee far away and stay in the desert; I would hurry to my place of shelter.’*

It is rather ironical that David uses the image of a dove. The dove in the Uniting Church logo represents the presence of the Holy Spirit. It is also interesting that of all birds the dove is extremely sensitive to a threatening presence; as soon as a dove senses danger it immediately takes flight. While it is not helpful to press the analogy too far it seems that many within the church are ready to take flight. In this psalm we are encouraged by knowing that someone else has shared that uncomfortable feeling when our impulses

tell us to flee from danger. The Psalm describes two dangers that threaten David.. Verses 9-11 is a general danger. There were people in Jerusalem whose threats and lies were making life a misery for David. In verses 12-14 it is more specific. *'If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it---but it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship as we walked with the throng at the house of God.'* Clearly someone David trusted had turned against him and was threatening his peace of mind. A close friend violated David's trust to such a degree that he feared the consequences. Now notice that David's first instinct is to flee from danger. He does indeed flee but not to the wilderness; he flees into the arms of God. This is how it seemed to work. First he acknowledges his fear. This is the first step in dealing with a pressing and uncomfortable emotion. Verse 16 *'But I call upon God'*--- coming to an end in himself, in humility he calls upon God then says, *'The Lord will save me,---he will hear my voice.'* In our disappointment, fear and anger we can talk ourselves into trouble, but like David, by the act of calling upon God we can also talk ourselves out of it by confessing the faithfulness of God. The Psalmist concludes, *'---but I will trust in you'* This is clearly the better place to be.

The Other Churches.

As early as 2012 the **Anglican Church in Australia** had confirmed its strong line, official policy against ordaining practising gay ministers. It was an undertaking not to ordain, license, authorise or appoint people who were known to be in a sexual relationship outside of marriage.

The Catholic Weekly stated that marriage was more than having ones love for another legally recognised. In fact pastoral letters were read in many Catholic, Anglican and **Orthodox churches** in the lead up to the Federal Parliament's vote on the nature of marriage. There seemed to be strong agreement across the churches. *'How can you make something the bible describes as a sacred mystery as something that is marginal, not core to the Christian faith?'* Some Uniting churches however concluded with many of the under 50s generation who were sympathetic to the LGBTI lobby that the time was right for the church to boldly pioneer and to provide a lead among the churches of Australia.

The **Lutheran Church of Australia** Commission on Theology and Inter-church relations prepared a new statement on Sexuality that was released in July 2018. In part it said,---*'While same-sex unions may be based on romantic attraction, mutual attraction and promises of long term commitment,---it is not only contrary to God's design, but it does not have the fundamental features that give marriage its unique quality. To use the name 'marriage' for same sex relationships would be to use the same name for things that are fundamentally different---While we do not identify same-sex unions as marriages, we know that all people seek and desire the support of loving human relationships. This is the new reality in which we will share our faith in Christ. The Christian church has no moral superiority to force its way onto society. To our mutual shame Christians have condoned evil under the banner of their churches. Our only way forward is through repentance, turning back to Christ, and renewal in the in the power of his Spirit.'*

Instead of committing itself to its mandate of listening to its Councils and working in ecumenical fellowship with other churches, in stark contrast to the concerns of the ACC and the solid consensus of other churches, the Uniting Church had exalted itself to the position of being the one informed progressive leader. To this end the immediate post-

Assembly period saw what appeared to be a roving representative on a rear guard action explaining and advocating the decision of the Uniting Church Assembly decision to the other churches across the nation. Amid all the years of listening and its promotion of 'space for grace' in a tragedy of monumental proportion it had actually fallen victim to hearing only what it wanted to hear, It had miserably failed to really listen to a significant proportion of the church. The church was no longer guided by the same Basis of Union or by common collective values. The traditions that united it were dying and its spiritual passion had lost its glue. Parading the banner '*unity in diversity*,' the church, like the local supermarket, decided that multiple choice was the answer. Two doctrines of marriage were now offered and people could choose the preference that suited them. Ministers could choose to marry or not marry same gender couples and congregations could choose about property use.

An Anglican Response.

In stark contrast to the open endedness of the Uniting Church, the 51st Anglican Synod in Sydney held in October moved to ensure the nation's courts knew what their 'doctrines, tenets and beliefs' were. They had concluded that as a religious institution they needed to clearly demonstrate to the State that its own actions conformed to its articulated doctrines as a religious institution. This meant the church was clearly covered by anti-discrimination exemptions.

Picking up a copy of the August TMA (The Melbourne Anglican), to my surprise I discovered half a page dedicated to an article supplied by our Uniting Church Rev Dutney. My reaction was two fold. Firstly, although the Anglican Church had previously adopted a different position with a media flexibility that stood in contrast to the tight control of the U.C. it had printed the Dutney article.

My second response was to realise that the article could not go unchallenged. It demanded another interpretation of events by a person from the Uniting Church. I picked up my pen and with the daunting feeling that David of the Old Testament must have known as he faced Goliath I rattled the keyboard with a response. The article by Rev. Dutney depicted the Uniting Church as a gallant, trailblazer but behind the T.M.A. article there was another story that needed to be told.

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Lordship of Christ comes first

In the August 2018 edition of *TMA* under the heading 'SSM decision consistent with unity in diversity', the Revd Professor Andrew Dutney explains how the same-sex marriage decision of the Uniting Church is in line with the Uniting Church's belief in unity in diversity.

However, before the Uniting Church has a belief in 'unity in diversity' it believes in the supremacy of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Unfortunately in this article, Christ fails to get a mention. It seems we have reached the point where the virtue of diversity can now mean 'anything goes' while the church's Basis of Union says it goes 'forward in *sole loyalty to Christ*'. (My emphasis).

Professor Dutney claims the Uniting Church has now recovered its "stated vocation of making visible, unity in diversity".

Professor Dutney's bold claim is hard to sustain. The truth is that after many years of prayerful consideration – that sometimes seemed ~~more like prolonged~~ social conditioning – and after struggle and an enforced media blackout, the church did approve the historic change. However, rather than making unity visible it has seriously divided the fabric of the church. Although much effort has been given to promoting an impression of business-as-usual, over 300 corporate councils and leaders in the Uniting Church have disassociated themselves from the decision and regard the move as taking the church beyond the universal Apostolic faith.

It is important to recognise that many believe it is essential to move beyond entrenched attitudes towards LGBTI people. Many agree that new expressions of compassion and understanding are very important, yet many remain unconvinced that a Christian understanding of marriage can embrace a pluralism that undermines the integrity of Christian revelation and ontological reality.

The Revd E.A. (Ted) Curnow

A Reformed Response

The Uniting Church is a member of the World Communion of Reformed Churches and has often used the words 'reformed and evangelical' to describe its heritage. What did those terms mean and how did the Uniting Church carry this heritage so that it identified with the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia? A quick look at the web-site informed me that while the UC claimed this heritage it had been self-conscious about the baggage associated with the terms 'reformed-evangelical.' Davis McCaughey around the time of church union had said that for the Uniting Church *'these terms are entirely catholic.'* That is, *'The Uniting Church must be particularly careful not to develop a terminology which suggests distinctive doctrines. We have no identity to separate us from the Church of God.'*

The new Uniting Church teaching of 'two integrities'(described as two equal and distinct statements of belief about marriage) was not only a distinctive doctrine but it also forged a new distinctive identity that separated it from the Church of God. I had accepted the invitation to preach a number of times at our local Reformed Church. It was during casual conversation that I learned from a local leader that the Reformed Church had decided to withdraw from its relationship with the Uniting Church. It was a the decision I was told was due to take effect in three years' time. While I had no way of immediately confirming this I realised how sad and damaging it was at an ecumenical level. We had seemingly trashed Para 10 of the Basis of Union that states that the Uniting Church continues to learn from the witness of the reformed fathers.

Sydney ACC Conference

The September ACC Conference and the AGM saw three times as many people present than at previous national conferences. Many were urgently looking for a way forward in order to continue as orthodox, evangelical congregations without being under the leadership of a National Assembly that was travelling in a different direction. The Government and the Assembly decision to broaden the sacred meaning of marriage for many had signified the end of Christianity as a social-cultural force. With many others the ACC realised that there would be profound consequences for society as to how citizens in the future would view human nature, family, education, politics, law and the authority of the State. The Catholic Church although in serious crisis itself, understood the cultural shift in a very different way to the Uniting Church..

Looking Across Old Boundaries.

At the invitation of Rev John and Annette Blaze and with a good deal of curiosity I decided to spend an evening beyond what had become a bubble of preoccupation with the Uniting church. I enjoyed the introductory BBQ offered by the Catholic Church at Cranbourne. The crisis in the Catholic Church was mainly focused on sexual abuse rather than the theology of marriage but it was similar in that it was a serious crisis threatening the basic unit of the Catholic family.

As part of a pastoral response to the wide crisis confronting the church, a priest who had been imported from overseas addressed the hundreds of people and families who filled the large church that evening. Using a simple acrostic and without other aids the speaker held the crowds attention for over an hour by walking the front of the church

conveying stories and sound relational principles. The Catholics had failed to discipline their clergy but their teaching and pastoral care for families that evening was spot on. While I had seen Catholicism as a top-down structure I came away rather impressed at the attempt to address issues pastorally at the grass-roots level rather than just pontificating and imposing from on high. Clearly a lesson from which the Uniting Church could learn.

A Threatening Step Forward

Instead of recklessly advocating outright schism the ACC Conference decided to offer its member Congregations a provocative alternative to the errant National Assembly. It would provide an alternative council and direction when it came to a covering '*matters vital to the life of its confessing congregations*' until the church returned to the faith described in the Basis of Union. This sort of offer was clearly intended to catch the attention of the church rather than start another church. In September, Rev Dr Hedley Fihaki, chair of the ACC wrote, '*Our congregations entered the Uniting Church on the plain reading of the basis of Union that we took at face value, only to find that the Assembly reserves the right to interpret the Basis and the Scriptures with an elite hermeneutic that can change and even reverse their meaning. In all of this we feel betrayed, trapped and completely without confidence in the Assembly's leadership.*

A Range of September Responses.

Isolated Victorian Friends

(1) The Victorian Synod has a long held reputation of toxicity towards those of evangelical persuasion. Similar to Sydney it has been said Victoria is closer to the city of Sodom than the Kingdom Heaven. However, having been inspired by a sermon on Paul's pastoral encouragement to Philemon I felt something of a pressing need to provide some form of encouragement to isolated ACC members across the State. Being careful not to chew off more than was practical and with the help of **Peter Bentley** in Sydney I decided to write pastorally to members of the ACC in Victoria '*Being aware that the ACC has limited resources in Victoria and that even in your own church it is easy to feel disconnected and isolated from others of evangelical conviction, I am contacting you at this time to encourage a programme of mutual support.*' The words of Hebrews 10:23 encourage us to holdfast to the confession of our hope without wavering' so we created a self-help ACC 'Friends List' to specifically provide an opportunity for people of like mind to make contact with each other with view to mutual encouragement.

(2) New creative directions continue to emerge. By September **Ann Hibbard's** team of prayer warriors could claim that there were obvious signs of God's hand being at work. While 'New Life' church at Robina (Gold Coast) is a large, dynamic U.C. congregation readily adopting new directions and capable of a national vision, church consultant **Tom Bandy** suggests that the micro model of church rather than the mega church is probably more suited to growth in the Aussie context. (Ref. Paper No 7, page 8) In presenting a seminar as late as October 2018 called, '*Sharing faith in Australia Tomorrow,*' **Karl Faase**, chief executive of Olive Tree Media, had stated '*The churches that are failing the most in Australia numbers wise are certainly the Uniting Church—their numbers are falling prodigiously (enormously).*' In addition to this the Uniting

Church seems to have moved quickly from being ‘a church of the people’ based in Congregations to being a national monolithic structure driven by socio-political intent. In most States one of the reactions to these trends has been the downsizing and modifying of traditional structures. This has led to the spawning of a range of marginal faith communities and various networks. **Mark Tronson** on the ‘Christian Today’ website, in referring to the current condition of the Church described it as taking a ‘**less-uniting**’ stance and **Peter Bentley** is quoted as saying that rather than separation, within the church more *‘formative, creative expressions of evangelical thought and practise can be expected.’*

As will be illustrated later in this paper the words of hope that Isaiah spoke to his generation could well address us at this point in our history. Isaiah 42:9, *‘See the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare before they spring forth---v 19, I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? While parts of the church are still withering on the vine, I conclude that it is not a time for despair. Even now there are still signs of new, missional shoots springing forth. Across the nation the sleeping church is still stirring with initiatives in Queensland, Northern Territory and South Australia.*

A Continuing Ferment.

The November 2018 ‘*New Times*’ in South Australia reported their Presbytery /Synod as one of the most emotional meetings the church had ever experienced. Over three days 400 representatives from across the State made a number of important decisions that took it into uncharted territory. Other States had acted to invoke 39 (b)(1) of the Constitution that require a percentage of Synods and Presbyteries to agree to recall the Assembly in order to reconsider its previous July decision. Being late in the year and following decisions in a number of other States the S.A. Presbytery found itself in a position where its vote could finally decide to suspend the Assembly decision.

In South Australia itself the U.C. ‘*New Times*’ had reported, that if the S.A. Synod voted according to 39 (b)(1) with others across Australia then their decision would make the difference between suspending the Assembly marriage decision. Although a general playing down and church media black-out of these strategic developments had left most members, particularly in Victoria completely unaware of this national disquiet across the church, I had heard unofficially that in light of these developments Assembly staff had been so determined and embarrassed by what was taking place that preparations were made to pay Civil Celebrants to perform marriages in churches should the July Assembly decision be suspended. With Congregations already having to decide if their properties would be used for same-gender marriages or not, the prospect for ever increasing confusion was clearly evident. After much debate in S.A. during 2018 it was decided not to make a decision about recalling the Assembly until early in January 2019.

Emotion would continue to be close to the surface. While for some this decision was so much a part of their faith conviction that it would determine if they would continue their relationship in the church that had nurtured them over a life time, for other same-gender couples who were planning ahead, the more important issue was to know if their intended wedding would go ahead.

(On 5 January 2019 the church in South Australia discussed the marriage decision of the 15th Assembly “as a matter vital to the life of the church and made without prior adequate consultation.” Result of the vote, 189, 51% to 184,49% not to contest the July 2018 decision of the National Assembly. On the same day, 5 January 2019 the Port Phillip East Presbytery notified its members of a special meeting to appoint three people to Presbytery positions. Typical of the church in Victoria it made no mention of the national significance of what was taking place next door in South Australia.)

A South Australian Non Geographical Presbytery

The other issue before the S.A. Church was a request for the Presbytery and Synod to allow the establishment of a Missional, Non-Geographic Presbytery. This was a more visionary proposal to create a new flexible structure. Unlike other states over more recent years South Australia had operated as a single Presbytery/Synod with various non-geographical networks and interest groups. Presbyteries in the Uniting church are traditionally organised on a geographical basis. In a secret ballot the November Synod meeting in a creative way decided to start work on reconstruction to enable the formation of Presbyteries including at least one non-geographic Presbytery within the bounds of South Australia. It is expected that in June 2019 members will be able to vote on the proposed new structure and that it would possibly be formed by July 2019.

Catalyst.

On the unofficial edges of the church, a national Uniting Church network had been discussed. A steering team at work by October had proposed a network committed to conversion growth and church planting that linked people of like mind to a common vision. Rather than marginalising or restricting the creative exploration and ground work of these distinctive *missional shoots springing forth*, the Uniting Church needed a 360 degree turn around, it needed to repent, a gospel heart transplant that focused on transforming people from the inside rather than crusading for a radical sociological change.

Living in Mission Transition

In the early papers of this series we began by drawing attention to the big picture. We placed the events of 2018 within the context of a larger panorama. Through the events of this series we have been enveloped by the dark clouds of deep division. It is now time to step back again to view the big picture. We need to do this in order to appreciate the unbroken shafts of light that penetrate the darkness to illuminate the power and ultimate overall mystery of God’s sometimes less obvious plan and purpose.

Many scholars and commentators today help us to understand the demise of Christianity in the Western world. At the turn of the century the classical English scholar Martin Robinson said, ‘*Vast changes are happening in the Western world on a scale that only happens every 300 to 400 years. It is similar to the collapse of the medi-eval period and the rise of the modern age.*’ In an interview published in the October 2018 T.M.A. (p25) N.T. Wright, one of the world’s foremost New Testament scholars noted that: “*the modern human rights movement is rooted in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, and if*

you cut off those roots the fruits will go bad, and society will collapse into a cacophony of competing special interest arguments. And that's exactly the point we've reached--Unless we reconnect with the ancient Christian narrative we will never understand what is happening, let alone to come through to the other side."

The year 2018 had been a year when the LGBTI campaign focused on churches and other Christian institutions. Following the nations decision to adopt same-sex marriage the momentum for LGBTI rights was unlikely to stop there. Mid-year the Uniting Church had voted for 'two equal and distinct' forms of marriage that were in reality 'two distinct and contradictory' forms of union. The year would end with the culture war focus shifting to religious freedom and the future of same-sex staff at Christian schools. Then on 29 November 2018 the Australian Labor Party introduced legislation into Parliament that proposed religious exemptions be stripped from anti-discrimination laws. This would mean Religious Institutions could become victims to hostile anti-discrimination laws initiated by LGBTI activists.

Every age has its issues. The issue at the time of the Reformation was the payment of indulgences. At the turn of the 20th century it was the evolutionary theory and creation. In the early 21st century it is gender identity and marriage. Today the West trashes and drifts from its Christian heritage with no common basis for its values so that Carl Jung, the Swiss psychologist has pointed out that the neurosis the Western World faces in our time is 'emptiness.' Again Wright seems to make sense when he says, " *I think the Church has always had a problem finding its voice. But again and again through history, it's been remarkable how, from a Christian point of view, God has raised up people to speak new words.*"

Isaiah the prophet saw Israel weakened through idolatry and corruption and he predicted the fall of Jerusalem as an accomplished fact. However as God's mouth piece Isaiah spoke into the chaos and emptiness of his time declaring '**Behold I am doing a new thing**'.

Although we could be discouraged by the events during 2018 traced in this series; amid the upheavals of our day, I can't escape the dominant big picture we started with. The God of history and time has never been passive. The colour of the grand panorama still survives beyond the stain of the dark clouds. The God of time and history has never lost control; he has always been moving in a dynamic, way through the ages so we have every reason to be reassured that he continues to move in our time. In his sovereign plan God is always doing a new thing. The question in Isaiah 43:18-19 was not has God taken time off, or forgotten his plan but, '**--do you not perceive it?**' Para 4 of the Bass of Union reminds us that Christ continues to rule and renew his church at this time in history. This repetitive cycle and historiography of God's dealing with our lostness was captured by the poet Francis Thompson who depicted God as always pursuing humanity down the corridors of time and history like the 'Hound of Heaven' to reclaim human-kind from its hotch-potch condition.

The Amazing Story.

Following the creation the intimate relationship with the Creator was spoilt as Adam rebelled against the purposes of God. But in an amazing way **God begins to do a new thing**. Abram becomes Abraham, the father of a scruffy bunch who end up as slaves in

Egypt. But in an amazing way **God begins to do a new thing** and he raises up Moses to lead his people to settle in Canaan. As the years passed Isaiah recorded that the common ass knew his master—but Israel did not know God. They failed the purposes of God. Israel was taken captive and in Babylon for year after year they sat by the rivers remembering Zion. But **God began to do a new thing**. They were set free and led through the Persian desert; they returned home and Jerusalem was restored. But in the days of John the Baptist there was a voice in the wilderness and Jesus came as the light in the darkness. *He came to his own and his own received him not*. The people failed the purposes of God. But as the Lamb of God, the Lord laid on Jesus the iniquity of us all. God turned the judgement in upon himself and **God began to do a new thing**. The words of the prophets were fulfilled. Death was swallowed up in victory and on the third day Jesus rose. The Holy Spirit was poured out on all flesh; people were transformed and energised by the power of the Holy Spirit and the Living Lord added to their number.

But in the days of the 16th century Rome became the Holy city, but Luther described it as a *'filthy stinking puddle, full of the wickedest wretches in the world.'* The Eternal City became a money making machine. They failed the purposes of God. But an amazing thing happened. **God began to do a new thing**. A shaft of light; *'The just shall live by faith'* pierced the darkness. The scriptures were opened. The mighty flame of the Reformation lit the world. But in those days of 18th century England the ecclesiastical establishment forgot the common people. The country was gripped by a moral paralysis. They failed the purposes of God. **But God began to do a new thing**. The churchman John Wesley discovered he trusted Christ rather than the institution and he felt his heart *'strangely warmed.'* He flung himself on the back of a horse and went out to save England. **God had begun to do a new thing**.

So what do we have here? Simply a repetitious story, just a matter of history repeating itself. No, not at all. The Biblical historiography of Israel is different because no nation ever details a catalogue of its failures. In the biblical record we have a pattern, a living principle that touches the life of every person. Every time we fail to respect the purposes of God or the church is shackled by tradition, apathy, apostasy, rebellion or coldness of heart; repeatedly though history **God has done a new thing**.

The writer of Hebrews understood this. He knew how the human spirit was quickly dulled and forgets. The good news is my friends that we have become partners with Christ so the writer says, "take care brothers and sisters." We are prone to be seduced by the spirit of the world; the deceitfulness of sin. He then exhorts us to stir each other up, to hold our first confidence, to live in the benefits of the good news that God is working his purpose out.

Instead of being drowned by the noise of the world, listen to the voice of the Living God. Instead of being overwhelmed or disillusioned by the state of the church or the culture wars of our time, instead of sharing the neurotic emptiness and pessimism of the age, God calls us to live in expectancy as he says, **'Behold I am doing a new thing –do you not perceive it?'**

Prayer:

Lord God of Heaven and earth who spans the universe, who breathes the breath of life into living things, who remains just and right and holy beyond our minds to work out or comprehend, We worship you in your greatness and majesty.

Lord God who like the hound of Heaven comes to seek us out. In Jesus your light has shone on us, your Holy Spirit moves amongst us. In Jesus suffering we witness him sharing the darkness of our brokenness and destroying the finality of our death.

We thank you that Jesus has been shown to be the risen Lord so that all things come under his reign. You have rescued us, set us free from ourselves and the emptiness of our time. In your love you have even crowned us with glory and honour by making us people of worth, by reinstating us as your sons and daughters.

And now Lord, as you have done through the ages, come and do a new thing in our time, renew and quicken us and the whole church by the power of your life giving Spirit.

Great and mysterious are your ways Lord for we know that you reign for ever and ever. How great is your name throughout the ages and all the earth. We humbly bow before you, bathed in your mercy, made strong and wrapped in your love we bring you our heartfelt worship and praise. Amen

This paper No 10, is the final part of a series that traces the chronological events of 2018.

Two extra Appendix papers will follow.

'UCA Where are you?' : Theology, and

'UCA Where are you?' : Practice.

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Further Reference: *On the above web sites, **The Story of Colliding Worlds**. The Church is caught in a remarkable period of rapid cultural change. Many Christians grieve over the loss of the past. Other are passionate about moving ahead. This resource explains two very different world-views and ways of thinking -- the colliding of two worlds. It calls the church to face change, to faithfully discern the truth and with courage to be loyal in following Christ.*