

The process of becoming Superintendent to the Central Methodist Mission in Sydney was a very protracted and onerous one. I discovered I had to be patient. There was much waiting in this game. During 1977 I had been to the Central Methodist Mission in Sydney, on a number of occasions, at the request of the then Superintendent Rev. Dr. Alan Walker. He asked me to address about 100 ministers during January 1977 at a conference held at Vision Valley. I was then back to speak at the Mission Anniversary in May 1977. That was a significant occasion because Alan Walker had indicated to the congregation that after 19 years of ministry, he was planning to retire at the end of that year. A new Superintendent would have to be appointed.

The process of appointing a new Superintendent has occurred at the Mission only every 20 years or so. There were not many who really knew how the process worked. To make matters worse, Rev. Dr. Alan Walker was retiring at the time when the then Methodist Church moved out of existence and became part of the new Uniting Church in Australia, a union of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational churches. This involved a whole lot of new regulations and new processes.

The process went something like this: A Settlements Committee was established by the Mission to find a new leader. I understand that over a period of months they listed the names of some 45 people including some in overseas countries who could be suitable. Those people had their credentials closely examined. At the end of 45 possible candidates for the position, one, an outstanding Methodist minister in South Africa was the leading candidate. Others had heard of my ministry in Melbourne and I had recently been heard by all the members of the Settlements Committee when I preached on four occasions during the Mission's May Anniversary. Consequently seven of them came to Cheltenham one Sunday to observe what was happening. They tried to mix unobtrusively among members of the five congregations that I was addressing that day. They then had lunch in our Manse and spent about three hours in discussion with Beverley and myself.

There were other meetings then held back in the Mission. I am not sure how many were held but they were times of apparent anxiety. The leading candidate from South Africa and myself were the two candidates ultimately to be voted upon and the arguments in favour of one or the other ran hot. The ballots were almost equal. Then came the final ballots and I received the majority vote. One member of the Settlements Committee telegraphed me: "Vote close. Mission hopelessly divided. Strongly advise you to decline." He was one apparently supporting me, and he wanted me to avoid a hopeless situation.

Just because the Officers and the Board of Wesley Mission had voted in favour of me, did not mean that I would receive the invitation. The candidates again had to be discussed and their recommendation of myself had to be agreed to first of all by the Mission Council, a larger body of about 80 people and then at a Parish meeting, a much larger gathering of all of the members including many hundreds of people. My understanding is that as each meeting went by I received more affirmation from those attending and consequently the decision was made that I should be invited to be the next Superintendent. But because the Central Methodist Mission was the most obvious part of the new Uniting Church in Australia anywhere in the nation, and because it was the largest parish of the Uniting Church in the nation, there were a number of other complications as a large number of groups and individuals felt they should have a say on the successor to Australia's most visible minister.

The Pastoral Relations Committee of the Presbytery of Sydney discussed the matter at great length. Because I was a minister from another denomination and also from Melbourne (that most unlikely of places for a successful minister), the debate then had to be referred on to other Councils of the Church. The congregations of Wesley Mission meanwhile were anxious that I should be invited and reply. The Pastoral Relations Committee of Presbytery referred the matter to a full Presbytery meeting where for some hours the position of the successor to Alan Walker was discussed. They agreed that I should be invited. That then raised the question of whether my credentials were acceptable to the Uniting Church. Consequently the matter was passed over to the Synod Ministerial Education Committee to examine the matter in detail.

The irony was that for more than 20 years I had been doing courses and equipping myself as a Churches of Christ Minister, to be the most effective Minister that I could be. I had never once dreamed of working within the Uniting Church and certainly never becoming the Superintendent of the then famous Central Methodist Mission. But all of the courses and programs that I had taken were equipping me to take the place of Alan Walker and some of the courses I had undertaken were in the Uniting Church's Theological College.

I had been properly trained at a Theological College and graduated with honours in every subject. I had subsequently completed a university degree and graduated. I had undertaken some post-graduate study for the London University Bachelor of Divinity. But apart from this, I had undertaken many additional courses. It had been my habit to undertake at least one major study program every year over a period of some 20 years. Some of these were in the field of psychology

and counselling and others were in the field of theology. I had sat in various schools of theology including the prestigious Ormond School of Theology at Melbourne University under such visiting scholars as Professor Alan Richardson of Great Britain, Dr. Hans Kung the distinguished Roman Catholic scholar from Switzerland, Professor James S. Stewart from Edinburgh, Professor Edward Schweitzer from Switzerland, Dr. Leon Morris, Dr. Colin Williams, Dr. Philip Potter (leading Methodists), Rev. John R.W. Stott, Dr. Edwin Robinson, Bishop Stephen Neill (leading Anglicans) and Dr. Koysume Koyama, of Japan.

I had also completed other programs such as with the Church of England Chaplaincy Department in the Royal Melbourne Hospital in clinical pastoral education. I had completed a sensitivity training program with the Victorian Council of Churches, Christian Education Department; a professional counselling course at the Cairnmiller Institute, and a two- year program on the rehabilitation of alcoholics and drug addicts with the Victorian Department of Mental Health. In the two years prior to my call to Sydney, I had undertaken a course in Transactional Analysis and Gestalt Therapy. (two psychological methodologies supported by internationally trained experts to help people confront themselves, take control of their lives and to make the changes required)

What had given me a great deal of satisfaction however, was being part of a group of ministers and theological lecturers around the world known collectively as “a panel of scholars” who prepared, every four years, papers for study and discussion at the World Convention of Churches of Christ. I also worked with the Churches of Christ Christian Union Department studying the Proposed Basis Of Union of the Uniting Church in Australia and how it would impact upon local congregations. It was our desire to see Churches of Christ become part of the Uniting Church of which we were then official observers.

As an author, I had, on behalf of the Federal Conference of Churches of Christ in Australia written “A Guide To Church Membership” which was a six- week training course for adults in church membership used in churches throughout the nation. Tens of thousands of people undertook this course. I had also written many lessons published by the Joint Board of Christian Education for the member churches of the Uniting Church. Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational ministers and Sunday school teachers had used my lessons with young people. I had published two books, one of which had sold at that stage 12,000 copies, and a further 120,000 copies had been purchased of a series of 20 booklets on “Christian Living” that I had written. Every fortnight for eight years I had

written a scholarly article in a national magazine on some 200 New Testament Greek words, their doctrinal and theological background and their implications for Christians today.

As a young minister I had always been heavily committed to communicating the good news with young people. For many years at Cheltenham I had spoken every week to more than one thousand teenagers in youth gatherings. These weekly presentations meant I had a lot of experience in communicating with youth. As an evangelist I had conducted crusades for groups of churches in every State of Australia. As a pastor I had been ministering for the twelve years previously in what had grown to be one of the largest congregations in Australia. As a person interested in the Uniting Church in Australia, I had with the Department of Christian Union explained to Churches of Christ who were interested in what was happening with the proposed Uniting Church in Australia. This had led to a number of Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational churches inviting me to address their congregations on some of the confusing aspects of the proposed union. I knew the Uniting Church regulations better than most ministers who would enter the Uniting Church.

I had also had the privileged position in Melbourne of being well-known because of nightly appearances on television. I had made more than one thousand television presentations on GTV on the Nine Network and my television experience went back to 1965 when I also started radio. Hence my experience as a minister suitable for the Central Methodist Mission in Sydney was considerable and beyond that of any of the other ministers currently working in the Methodist, Presbyterian or Congregational churches in Australia. There was one other desirable feature; I was securely married with four young children, to a wife who was extraordinarily competent and able and both of us were still in our mid thirties. No other candidate matched the credentials.

Let me assure you that did not convince the Synod Ministerial Education Committee. They required me to come to Sydney and spend a whole day in theological debate and discussion. It was an enjoyable experience. They spent most of the day asking questions about the issue of adult baptism by immersion. This was not only a practice from the New Testament days which I understood and repeated, it was also an area where everything that I believed and practiced had been substantiated and authoratively supported by theologians from within the traditions that made up the new Uniting Church. As a result the Synod Ministerial Education Committee recommended me then to the Synod Settlement Committee. The Synod Settlement Committee then spent much time in discussion and then finally made a recommendation to the Council of the Synod of the Uniting Church in New South Wales. That Council met in an all day conference at Wesley College

at the University of Sydney. I was obliged to attend and stood outside the meeting waiting to be called to be examined by members of the Council of Synod. I was given a time and duly made my appearance on time and ready. The Council of Synod discussed important business, discussed me at great length and the position and left me waiting outside alone for more than three hours, a demonstration of a lack of grace and courtesy. Eventually I was invited in and the position was confirmed. But I was learning patience.

There was one requirement, that I should attend the United Faculty of Theology in Melbourne and undertake some further studies in church sacraments and in the new Uniting Church polity. I did not mind that at all. I would be meeting with my friend Professor Norman Young under whom I had taken studies previously and in studying the regulations and practice of the new Uniting Church I was merely studying what I had already been lecturing to Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational churches in Melbourne. I spent a year with young students doing this required course, although they all thought the requirement stupid. Many of them asked me to help them in their student studies and in their understanding of the issues. The lecturer was quite keen to have my understanding on the issues of Bishops and the Concordat with South India, two proposals that were rejected.

Shortly afterwards I was asked to meet the Secretary of the New South Wales Synod. This meant another trip from Melbourne to Sydney. The time was set and I duly came to the Mission Settlement building in Castlereagh Street where his office was situated. These were buildings previously built by the Central Methodist Mission. There was a long history of more than a hundred years of conflict between the Methodist Conference and its huge, cantankerous and successful child, the Central Methodist Mission. Now the Uniting Church in Australia had taken over the former Methodist offices and it was anxious to show the newly appointed Superintendent of the newly named Wesley Central Mission who was boss. Once more I sat outside the office of the Secretary of the New South Wales Synod. He was a very committed and careful man. He duly worked through mountains of paper work. I sat outside his office waiting for an hour. His secretary bought me a cup of tea and apologised for the waiting saying he was extremely busy. I waited another hour. Because I was sitting waiting in the passage, which leads in and out of his office, I observed that no one came or went. He was busy with papers and wanted me just to wait because of his busyness. Again a lack of grace and courtesy I had never experienced in the world of academia or commerce.

I began to realise something I had never before experienced that keeping people waiting is actually a power game. Keeping other people waiting is a means of indicating who has got the power. I then remember that whenever I had rung any of these church bureaucrats I was always kept waiting before they answered the phone. Some poor secretary would keep coming on the line apologising while I was just kept waiting.

Waiting was a power game and one, which I have never joined. It is my habit to answer the phone as quickly as possible and if there is someone in the foyer waiting to see me, I will go and welcome them personally to my office or else if I do have someone there and the new comer has come without an appointment, I go and explain the situation, ensure that they have some refreshment and be as quick as I can.

There was one other aspect to this matter of waiting. During this period of time throughout 1977 and 1978 before I commenced in Sydney, the Board of Mission invited me to lecture all the other Uniting Church ministers on the issue of church growth. I had conducted Church Growth Seminars in every State of Australia to over 15,000 church leaders. Now I was to speak to hundreds of ministers and church leaders in St. Stephens Macquarie Street with my friend and acquaintance of some ten years Rev. Dr. Robert Schuller of California. That was a mistake. The problem was I was 20 years younger than most of the other contenders. Here was I, an outsider from Melbourne, teaching my elders and betters how to suck eggs.

The problem was that at these meetings there were present most of the ministers who were among the more than 40 or so contenders for my position who had been rejected. A dozen or more of these ministers who knew they had been rejected took time out to meet me personally and give me some advice.

Each of these were prominent Methodist ministers who had been the leaders of the largest Methodist churches in the country and especially in New South Wales. They were on the list of possibilities who could have been chosen but they had been rejected and knew it. Now they came to give me inside information. I was taken to a series of small coffee breaks where over a cappuccino the message was given “don’t get your hopes up too high. No one can follow Alan Walker. Everybody expects the successor to fail and rather have one of the more successful New South Wales Methodist ministers fail; they consider a Melbourne based minister from another

denomination would be less damaging. Then a proper appointment could be made of a more suitable candidate. We doubt that you will be here long. Don't be disappointed."

I had that message six times so I knew the matter was being discussed widely.

Well, I had been kept waiting so long I now knew that waiting was part of the process. I was to remain twenty-seven years as Superintendent of Wesley Mission Sydney. The work has grown for more than 25 consecutive years and is today bigger and stronger than at anytime in its history. If those same more suitable candidates are still alive, I guess I am still keeping them waiting!

THE ROLE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT.

This ministry at Wesley Mission Sydney is unique in many ways. I believe there were several emphasises to be made if this was to become one of the world's most amazing ministries.

1. Minister Of The Gospel.

Wesley Mission is a Church, a large city church committed to the ministry of Word (preaching, celebrating sacraments, communication of the Gospel, teaching the faith) and Deed (works of charity, social welfare, rehabilitation, medical care.) Its leader must fulfil each role.

It is essential that the leader of Wesley Mission be an ordained Minister of the Uniting Church to fulfil sacramental, property and trust obligations. The senior minister is designated Superintendent Minister. That ministry is one of both word and deed, and these two cannot be separated from each other. In some similar missions, the ministry of the word has been delegated to a minister of the church and the ministry of the deed has been delegated to a lay manager of social welfare. In every case the total work has declined, and in most has ceased. Without the ministry of word and deed together, the impetus for good works is lost.

2. Initiator Of Programs.

Each of eight Sydney Superintendent Ministers has developed a ministry of powerful preaching attracting the largest sustained membership of any church in Australia's history (now covering 190 years). Each such long serving Superintendent has also initiated a variety of Christian welfare programs to meet the social needs of each era: "homes for waifs and strays"; "support for fallen sisters"; "Institute for the Inebriated" in the nineteenth century, for example. During the post World War 2 period: psychiatric hospitals; geriatric services, aged care hostels, nursing homes, Life Line Telephone Counselling Service were established.

I, in my turn, wrote a 500-page treatise in 1977 before coming to the position outlining my intentions and approach to the city ministry. It included 160 published potential new developments that would require research and if such research sustained the concern, would be established to meet community needs.

Almost all subsequent developments at Wesley Mission have been the outworking of these initiatives. They include: Gamblers Anonymous and addictive gambling counselling; Christian educational Institute; national weekly Christian television program; cassette ministry; estate planning division; television commercials; major Easter/ Christmas ministry to the nation; development of investment land; Asian student outreach; computerised mail fundraising; cross divisional seminars on social issues; unemployment retraining programs; child abuse programs; monthly supporters luncheons; home domiciliary support services; clothing collections via street bins; tele-counselling; staff birthday celebrations; emergency family accommodation units; Friends of WM fundraisers; art sales; school vacation programs for the underprivileged; rebuilding the existing city property; relocating Life Line; building retirement villages on equity participation basis; publishing a well-researched history of Wesley Mission; building a Day Hospital for community based elderly; pre-school centre for intellectually disabled; Printing prestige Annual Reports; volunteers division under paid staff; youth Hostel; magazine subscriptions; establishing a Chinese ministry; founding a Creative Ministry School; developing a new worship format using video clips and promotions as worship; joint staff/elders planning retreats; management training for all senior staff at Mt Eliza Management School, establishing a financial counselling service to aid people in credit-card debt; establish an institute for ministry in evangelism; and so on.

Only a few of the 160 concepts have not been implemented. All of the above are now significant additions to Wesley Mission. With the exception of a dementia program, no major developments at Wesley Mission have been generated by staff, although every one of the above have been developed and conducted by competent staff recruited for the task. The Superintendent initiates new programs. I doubt if any minister has ever come to a new ministry with a 150, 000 word strategic plan to cover the next twenty years.

3. Interpreter Of Christian Doctrine.

The role of the Superintendent involves initiating responses to community need, based upon a theological understanding of Christian response. The response of Wesley is never just a practical response. It is a theological response. That is: this is what we know God wants us to do in this

situation. To guide me on these issues I have always consulted the Church's statements. But often the media wants personal opinions, and they want them immediately.

Bio-ethical decisions, human rights issues, gender issues, social conscience matters proceed from a doctrinal basis. Doctrine determines practise. Our response to social need does not follow Government awareness of need. It usually precedes both awareness and funding by Government.

The Superintendent interprets the Church's policy on such matters and provides the logic and impetus for such decisions using published Uniting Church policies where relevant. If an official statement is required I always refer inquirers to Moderators or Presidents.

4. Accountable Person To The Community.

Ministries like Wesley Mission, depend ultimately upon public support and funding. An important principle in fund-raising at the level of millions of dollars a year, lies in the axiom that people give to a person they trust. The response is to a person, not an organisation. Every year I send full audited financial statement to over 20, 000 donors, corporations, Church boards and Government departments. We are transparent.

The Superintendent must come under public and press scrutiny on matters of morality, accountability and credibility. Where charities do not have a human face, they do not grow. Hence "The Fred Hollows Foundation" grows, as does the World Vision Famine relief, which always has the face of a starving child.

Missions grow strong on the sustained personal accountability and leadership of the Superintendent.

5. Communicator.

All Superintendents who have been effective have been great communicators through preaching, writing, use of the press, radio, and television.

Unlike a business that has a manufactured product or service to sell, the Mission exists because it communicates effectively its plans to meet human need in a Christian fashion that deserves the practical and voluntary support of the person to whom the communication is addressed.

Most business executives prefer a low profile whereas a Mission's success is in direct proportion of the profile and communication skills of the Superintendent. Paid public relations staff and image creators have never been accepted by the public. The public expect the authoritative leader of the work to communicate the Truth using all means of the media.

6. Image Creator.

The public responds emotionally to human need. It does not respond according to intellectual awareness. Do Governments get elected on the basis of a rational community response?

The Superintendent is required to create the image within the bounds of authenticity and credibility of the Mission as a centre of compassionate care and sensible service. The Superintendent embodies the traditions of the church over the centuries while at the same time being on the cutting edge of care.

The role of Superintendent, when reduced to that of either a manager or a Chairman of the Board, results in a lowering of public perception and support.

The giving of money for practical social care came from people covenanting to give: "a penny a week and a shilling a quarter." We teach the lessons of gaining, saving and giving, which enabled Wesley's poor to grow in self-esteem and dignity.

The greatest need in the Church today is for competent, visionary and inspiring leadership. Most denominations operate in a leadership vacuum. The cry of ordinary members as they see our denomination in decline and fragmenting over moral issues, is "Where are our leaders? Why are they silent?"

TIME Magazine recently "names and profiles the twenty most influential leaders and revolutionaries of the past 100 years". If the church were to do the same in Australia, our list would include some great and inspiring names, but as far as the Uniting Church is concerned, they would all be long retired or dead.

A good test is to ask public commentators, journalists and radio talk back personalities whom they regard as leaders of The Uniting Church. The answers I got included Archbishop Peter Hollingworth, Rev Tim Costello and Rev Fred Nile. One is an Anglican, the next a Baptist, the third a politician.

The words of Karl Jaspers have an ominous ring for us today: “The power of leadership appears to be declining everywhere. More and more of the people we see coming to the top seem to be merely drifting.” It is a problem wider than the church. Ted W. Engstrom writes: “Solid, dependable, loyal, strong leadership is one of the most desperate needs in our world today. We see the tragedy of weak men in important places, little men in big jobs. Business, industry, government, labor, education, and the church are all starving for effective leadership. So today, perhaps more than ever before, there is such a need for leadership.”

When we decry the scarcity of leadership, we are not talking about a lack of administrators or managers. We have plenty of people to send out memos, formulate regulations, and attend committees. We need administrators to undertake serious management studies to improve their skills. The Uniting Church In Australia has over a billion dollars of assets yet I cannot think of one administrator in the UCA outside of Wesley Mission, who has completed advanced management training and who holds graduate qualifications. Wesley Mission believes in training leaders. Currently 80 staff are doing advanced leadership training and another 1,600 are doing skill enhancement courses, and management courses.

To be good stewards of God’s resources we expect administrators to be good managers. Some could become good leaders. Leaders can be made. Leaders read the signs of the times, look with vision, speak with skill and gather people together to get the job done effectively. Leaders do not wait for things to happen: they make things happen. Leaders take disparate people and make them a potent force. John Wesley was such a leader. He wrote: “We act at all times on one plain uniform principle – we will obey the rulers and governors of the Church, whenever we can consistently with our duty to God, whenever we cannot, we will quietly obey God rather than men.” That was the leadership spirit of Apostles Peter and John.

I believe that ministry and mission are not two different things, but that mission is accomplished by the ministry of all the people. Churches of Christ had a traditional plea: evangelisation of the world through the unity of the church which could be retrieved by restoring the principles and practises of the New Testament Church as a basis for unity.

As a young Churches of Christ minister, I set out to review the validity of each aspect of that heritage over a period of twenty years. I published ‘Rethinking Restoration’ – the most thorough

review I have seen made in Australia of the Restoration principle. My conclusions were regarded as too radical, even though they were published. In the 1970's I was committed to Unity between the fractured parts of the church and I wrote and lectured on how the proposed Uniting Church in Australia needed the evangelical witness of Churches of Christ, and how Churches of Christ needed to move from observer status to that of a negotiating denomination if it was to fulfil our plea that a united church could strengthen our witness in evangelism. But at a Federal Conference, the Christian Union proposal to join in the Uniting Church in Australia was rejected. Over the next few years I was invited to explain to Churches in the Uniting denominations, their own Basis of Union. I decided then I should be true to my commitment to Christian Unity and join the Uniting Church.

At the Churches of Christ Federal Conference January 14th 1979, before 3000 people on the Sunday night closing rally in the Melbourne Town Hall I preached on the theme "Salvation in Christ". I pointed out that evangelism was our primary purpose, to win the world for Christ. We had to become totally committed to the mission of the Church.

But the following week after that Federal Conference in the Melbourne Town Hall, I was inducted into being the senior minister of Wesley Mission, a church that in 1884 had changed its name from "Church" to "Mission", because that was to be its main emphasis. I believe in a missional church, and had argued for 35 years that the church is only the church when it is the church on a mission.

If the Churches want managers instead of evangelists, at least they should insist that they are trained in graduate management. Currently we have millions of dollars of assets under the control of unqualified people. The training of people to be ministers of the faith is quite different to the training of managers. When I look at the head office of the UCA Synod of NSW, I see a revolving door of senior staff coming and going because other senior staff do not have graduate management qualifications. If a minister wants to also manage, he or she should immediately start doing management courses at the Australian Graduate School of Management at the University of New South Wales, or the Mt Eliza School of Management at Monash University, each acknowledged as the best in their business, and places where I have trained since 1967. At least they should be doing regular management courses run by the Australian Institute of Management or the Australian Institute of Company Directors, two other institutions where I have trained in management and company governance.

If you want a church led by managers, Churches should start putting in some key performance indicators for each state to identify key result areas, publish them, and quantify progress. Some

denominations have appointed as a Church leader, a CEO. However, the role of a CEO is not to manage. A CEO appoints managers. A CEO provides strategic directions and thinking, and is the chief communicator to the people and the world outside the church. In any large organisation it is the CEO who should head strategic direction and who should be the chief communicator with both the members and the community. Leadership, not management is the key requirement.

Because I have credentials with the United Methodist Church (U.S.A.) associated with the UCA, I speak each year in their churches, and in one main centre, have given regular lectures on urban mission. The United Methodist Church have, more than any other denomination, moved to a management model. Under the management model, the United Methodist church has lost 1,000 members a week, every week, for the past thirty years.

Some people say the denominational structures are dead, and that the modern church does not need national structures. Try telling that to the Pentecostal Churches who have put vast resources into their new national structure in the past two years. The Australian Christian Churches are now the third largest denomination in Australia. They have learnt how to become an effective lobby group nationally to gain Government funds, and twenty church members recently stood for election to the Australian Parliament late in 2004.

Church bureaucrats are always interested in one question: Where does the money come from? Their answer is to close Churches and sell properties. Reductionism to save money always leads to diminishing ministry and mission. Huddling together in slow decline is not the way of the future. Never talk about reduction. Always talk about ways to raise more money. Churches must live by faith, taking risks. Money will always flow to a vision of service to people in need. It is never a money problem, it is a vision problem, and that is what Church bureaucrats rarely have.

In a not-for profit organisation, the CEO should also be the major fund-raiser. I have built up a team of people to carry out the functions of fundraising, but I sign the thousands of letters, I meet with corporate business executives, I conduct the negotiations with the Prime Minister and various Federal Ministers, and with the Premier and various State Government Ministers in seeking extra funding. The Chief Executive should be accountable for his performance in all areas of his activities including fund-raising. The Chief Executive of a not for profit organisation never depends upon levies and fees imposed upon constituent bodies or church, but on generating extra finance from outside the membership. Church leaders always think in terms of extra taxes on congregations'

areas of service to the needy. If increasing funds are not made available, then that Chief Executive should make way for someone else who can raise the funds.

There are enormous amounts of money available from believers. But believers give to a trusted leader who has developed accountable reporting systems, and a visionary plan that is communicated well and that meets the real needs of people. Wesley Mission every year pays over three quarters of a million dollars to presbyteries, synod and Assembly to pay for services of the bureaucrats who do little ever to help the poor and needy.

Money is never the problem. Vision and strategic goals are, communication and accountability are. Because people do not restrict their money being given just to denominational work any longer, this means our market for finding financial support is now broadened enormously (there are more of them than us) and because companies are becoming socially responsible, there are hundreds of corporations that will help denominational work if it has strategic vision, communicated by trusted leaders who account well for its expenditure, and who meet real needs. I am amazed how many community organisations now support the Seventh Day Adventist Church Aid programs for overseas developments for example.

Church leadership must grow out of discovering what is the minimal structure needed to effectively carry out the mission of the church. Structure is the product of strategy. Form follows function.

In such a debate, people often accuse the other viewpoint of being hierarchical and top-down authoritarian while their viewpoint is grass roots, people-centred and relevant. If you want to have a model, it is neither top to bottom or bottom to top. Rather it is shaped like an arrow, with flutes, shaft and point. Like an arrow it is missional directed towards an objective target. The flutes, that keep it flying true, are the members, in whose counsel is wisdom. I would always try in any Church organisation, to have a place for large crowds of people, who attend inspirational worship and who by their participation, accept ownership. These large-scale celebrations of the church would rotate around the major population areas. It is these people who are the true stakeholders, not Church bureaucrats.

The shaft represents the daily work of Church agencies, specialised, as there is need. These are responsible for accreditation, effective service, and achievement of strategic goals of the Church.

The arrow point is its leadership. Here lies the strategic thinking, the oversight of policy, and the most able communication. If the direction is right, the arrow hits its target.

From 1970, I saw the need for training new leadership within the churches. Waiting for others to do something rarely accomplishes much, so I planned to run a course for Church leaders and ministers. The Summer School for Successful Ministry began. This was a big venture, as I wanted to bring together outstanding leaders in the field of growing Christian congregations from across Australia. From 1970 I planned for the people of Australia. We advertised in all of the Church papers around Australia and indicated that we had secured the services of Australia's outstanding Church teachers as guest lecturers. They came from every denomination.

In the first program Reverend Alan Walker from Sydney attended and a host of others. People like Bishop Jack Dain, Reverend Bill Adams, Mr. Kevin Crawford, Reverend Michael Dennis, Doctor Bruce Peterson, Reverend Doctor Dudley Ford, Jay Bacik, Reverend David Cohen and a dozen more joined our lecturing panel. Bishop Chandu Ray came from Singapore and spoke about contemporary Evangelism in a pluralistic society. Doctor Alan Walker spoke about Evangelism in the local Church, Bishop Jack Dain on committed to ministry, and we had other sessions on using the media, developing an Australian theology, how to improve communications skills, strategy of Church growth in the eighties, harnessing youth power in Evangelism, reaching children in worship services, conducting a ministry to single adults, releasing the power of tired people and so on.

The idea was to provide throughout January an experience where Ministers and Church leaders from across Australia could live in the homes of our Church members, attend lecture programs each day in small groups around our Cheltenham complex, share meals together and then at night listen to some great preaching from some of the finest preachers of all denominations in Australia. The first Summer School for Successful Ministry was an outstanding success. Over five hundred people attended the course and we were packed out in each of our mid week preaching sessions.

That developed friendships with Ministers across Australia from various denominations who had never met each other but whose names were well known. The following January and then for the next four Januarys I ran these Summer Schools for Successful Ministry, with the final one being conducted in Sydney with three hundred ministers and fifteen hundred Church leaders attending. It was the first time in Australia that such a course in in-service training for people in ministry was ever conducted.

I had recently written a book "How to Grow an Australian Church" which took off like wildfire and in the first year approximately ten thousand copies were sold. Over the years several thousand copies a year were purchased. This was the first handbook on Church Growth in Australia to be published and there obviously was an important market for it. Even though it is now dated and thirty years old it still covers all basic principles and "How to grow an Australian Church" has become a byword in Church growth literature. In 2005 I was again asked to update and republish it. It was republished in Britain and Canada and it had a new life in those areas. People then wanted me to lecture on the principles in the book and so a whole series of probably three or four hundred lecture programs in every state of Australia was held using the material that I presented in that book.

Church leaders need a vision of the future and a fresh commitment to Biblical values at the start of the twenty-first century as never before. The mainstream denominations are in strife. The Uniting Church in Australia is in crisis. Membership is rapidly falling and together with that decline, a financial downturn. Hundreds of thousands of former members have left and UCA members and ministers are to be found in other denominations. The UCA bureaucracy in the NSW Synod want a better return on investments in aged care properties, to rationalise church properties and to sell off properties to fund administrative costs: i.e. their salaries.

The Uniting Church in Australia is not in good shape. It has the oldest average age of any denomination. Two thirds of our members are females over 60 years of age. In spite of all we talk about our ethnic congregations we have the highest percentage of Anglo members of any denomination. We are not a multi-cultural denomination in spite of all the rhetoric.

Many people are despairing of their own church. Many others are leaving to join other denominations. In 2004, 6,500 members who left were officially quantified. Many are simply being lost to the faith altogether. We have the lowest retention rate of young adults of any denomination. We know of immoral lifestyles led by people in leadership in the Assembly and Synods, its boards and agencies including its centres of ministry training. The details of such immoral life-styles have been reported to the appropriate moderators and General Secretary of Synod. Immorality among paid staff of Assembly and Synod, their boards and agencies has been named in letters to Moderators concerning complainants who have come to me.

I have publicly fought this fight against the morals found in some parts of the liberal wing of the Uniting Church for over twenty years. Mostly, it was a lonely battle. I called the first evangelical

summit of leading evangelicals from every state of Australia that met at Vision Valley in 1997 when over fifty evangelical leaders spent three days together. There was a unanimous commitment to seek to change our Church, but mostly this resulted in more prayer but no action. We are better at the struggles in prayer than the struggles with power.

I have been quoted in the media frequently concerning our church, but I have only responded to public material about the Uniting Church, mostly material generated by the Uniting Church's public relations people and the decisions that resulted. I have never initiated one single attack on the Uniting Church or any of its staff and have raised concerns only after complainants have come to me.

Once the Church or its staff enters the public arena then I regard the issue as being open for public discussion. Many fine evangelicals are standing up for the Biblical truth today. Many attended and spoke powerfully at the National Assemblies in Perth, Adelaide and Melbourne. There are also many evangelical organisations seeking revival, renewal in our prayer-life, changes in UCA direction, more support of missions overseas, greater emphasis on indigenous and ethnic congregations in Australia, Christian education programs for youth and in schools, and a more conservative theological approach to ministry training and the like.

Yet all of us are working hard in our own areas. Most of us are without the support of like-minded believers, and most without any sense of co-ordinated effort. What is more significant, the concerned members do not have all the resources of the Synod and Assembly that are used to defend their positions.

This is an urgent time in the history of the Uniting Church that requires the prayerful and intellectual contribution of concerned members and organisations who/which desire to: change the power structures of the church; reclaim a conservative reading of the Bible for the Uniting Church; develop alternative ministry training for candidates; question legal issues involving retention of church property; make present church leadership more accountable; find better ways using parish financial contributions; recall our people to Godliness in personal living; discover a new sense of national mission; and so on.

One of the constant troubles within the Uniting Church in Australia, is the constant left-wing political ideology that comes up on every issue. Some bureaucrats behave as if they were failed

politicians. The grassroots membership constantly complain about these political emphases. Some, who have no direct accountability to any congregation, seem to delight in stirring the more conservative members by their support of every radical social left wing view on issues such as abortion, euthanasia, same-sex marriages, liberalisation of laws curtailing brothels, pornography, X rated films and videos and so on. With great predictability those left wing bureaucrats respond in such a way to outrage the Church's membership. I would have respect for these Church bureaucrats if they were consistent in their claims to represent the poor. But they live in North Shore homes, drink wine and champagne and demand salaries beyond that of parish clergy.

Many Church members do not realise that more than one has had failed political ambitions that are now guiding their church decisions. The NSW Synod's most high profile left-wing bureaucrat is Rev Harry Herbert. He was earlier in life an active member of the ALP branch at Monterey. A handful of older members met in one room of an old army hut known as the Congregational Church. Harry was an aggressive ALP member with high hopes. But the arrival of Graham (later Senator) Richardson neutralised Harry Herbert's extreme left wing political views. "From the time Richardson joined the branch my reign of glory ended," as Herbert is quoted. Frustrated in his political ambition by the powerful "numbers man" of the ALP, Herbert continues to promote his political views within the Synod where there is no equivalent of "the fixer" to stymie his reign of glory. Failed political ambition not a Biblical evangelical commitment, determine his direction.

There is virility and growth among the Uniting Church ethnic groups. Many Anglo-Celtic parishes are only growing older. We believe the present leadership of the Uniting Church is not taking the business of evangelism seriously, in seeking new members or in establishing ways members can be encouraged to grow in personal holiness. They are too busy in the maintenance ministry of just keeping things going.

Some are so busy defending the behaviour of minorities they have forgotten Jesus told us to win the world. Some clergy have been inadequately trained in the skills of evangelism, or in the principles that grow a church. The constant complaint against ministers is that they have forgotten how to visit members or to practise pastoral care. Yet the Uniting Church is the denomination best positioned to win Australians to Jesus Christ.

However our denomination is not known for its commitment to basic Biblical attitudes: of commitment to Christ as Saviour, of upholding the Scriptures as the basis of faith, of personal

holiness in the life-styles of its leaders, in openness to the movements of the Holy Spirit, and in obedience to the Word of God. The Uniting Church In Australia is in deep trouble. If it is to be an authentic Australian church then it must come to grips with these basic Biblical attitudes. But these are the issues no member of the public attribute to the UCA.

The Presbyterian Church in Scotland faced these same issues in the 16th and 17th centuries. Godly men led church members to bind themselves in a covenant to their faith. For two centuries "The Covenanters" bound themselves by commitment to God to renewing their church and their personal spiritual lives.

The Methodist Church always used the last night of the year or other anniversary to express their gratitude by renewing their covenant of faithfulness to God. The idea of a covenant is central to all of scripture. John Wesley wanted his people to remember that Covenant with God at every communion, and at the beginning of every New Year. On December 25th 1747, John Wesley first urged his Methodists to renew their Covenant with God. From 1755 an annual Covenant Service was held at the end of each year, and the option has been brought over into the Uniting Church in Australia.

The Covenant Service has been held since 1812 in Australia. I wrote to all churches and ministers concerned with the restoration of The Uniting Church to its Biblical basis in 1997 suggesting the renewing of personal commitment to Christ, the re-affirmation of the Biblical standards of holiness in living in obedience to the Scriptures, and to appropriate forms of service within the community, in using the Uniting Church's Covenant Service annually when most appropriate in their churches, and to encourage members to sign in a meaningful fashion "THE COVENANT CARD". I drew up the Covenant card to reflect these concerns.

Those who joined "The COVENANTERS", I wrote to with suggestions for prayer. It was my hope that from the grass-roots membership of The Uniting Church we would enrol committed Christians praying and working for the evangelical cause within The Uniting Church in Australia. This has worked well. Subsequently a movement called "The Reforming Alliance" has been established and joined by hundreds of congregations and thousands of members. But the UCA bureaucracy ignores them.

The recent conflicts in the Anglican Communion, first in England and then in the United States, over the question of ordaining “gay” bishops have revealed a deep fault line in Christianity. This is not in the first instance a debate about sexuality or even disagreements about the contents of scripture. The fault line goes deeper and can be summed up as a fundamental difference in vision in terms of the relationship between Christianity and culture.

Martin Robinson of the UK Bible Society, says, *“Put very simply, one group believes that the Christian faith has to adapt to its cultural setting, and the second group believes that on occasion culture has to be resisted. Another way of expressing the same issue would be to ask, “Who sets the agenda?” Is the agenda of the church set by the world or should the agenda of the church flow from the Bible? Most of the time this difference of emphasis is not noticed because, fortunately, these agendas often coincide. The needs of the world and the concerns of the Bible on many matters – compassion for the poor, the hungry, the oppressed – are identical. On other occasions they do not coincide, they collide.”*

This fault line is so deep that now it has emerged it could mean a rather titanic fight of significant proportions – not exactly a fight to the death, but there will not be an agreement to differ, to continue to live celebrating our diversity! The fault line is no longer confined to camps in the Western world but has exposed fissures around the globe, with the great growing churches of Asia and Africa taking a Biblical conservative view.

The “liberal” view speaks of the inevitability of progress. They argue that one day Christians realised that slavery was unacceptable and that it was no good arguing from scripture that it is approved by God – slavery had to go. One day, the same thing happened concerning the ministry of women – scripture was reinterpreted in the light of growing knowledge and enlightenment. The liberals in the church say: “Today it is the turn of the homosexual community to be liberated. Any one who speaks against the ordination of homosexuals, same-sex marriage, and their life style as being anything except normal is homophobic and a dinosaur”. This is a slur on the conservative viewpoint.

There is however one rather glaring flaw in that argument. The pro-slavery position was taken by those who wanted to accommodate Christianity to the “realities” of the day. It was in fact those awkward evangelicals, who argued that the world had to adapt to the standards of the gospel, who championed the cause of the abolition of slavery. To pretend that it was the evangelicals who

championed the cause of slavery is not only to turn history on its head, it is also to expose a fundamental weakness in the position of those who always want the agenda to be set by the world. It was the evangelicals and their insistence on Biblical truth that brought about the change in attitude to slavery.

It was the same with the emancipation and suffrage of women. It was the evangelicals who founded the Women's Christian Temperance Union that became the first women's organisation in the world to fight for women's right to vote, to own property and to work for equal pay. Those with liberal theological disposition were fighting their own wars at that time, especially adapting to the world on the creation issue. The liberals came to the women's issue half a century after the evangelicals, and then started to re-write history in their own reflection.

The result of all of this? We accept the fault line theory. The implications are clear. I have called upon UCA Evangelicals to establish an Evangelical Assembly, a new national body to which evangelical or covenanting congregations could belong. This Assembly would be a national body rather than a state synod. This Evangelical Assembly would remain within the Uniting Church in Australia, be loyal to the Basis of Union, and fulfil the emphases of the supporting documents and confessional statements honoured in the founding of the Uniting Church. It is possible that 500 congregations could join with us. The nation-wide Presbytery for Korean Churches would be a precedent.

Further, UCA members should support evangelical care agencies and re-direct all moneys to them. We do not have to support those organisations within the church that spend moneys given by faithful members of congregations in purposes and in support of those activities evangelicals find against their conscience.

We need to stand in solidarity with each other. There are tactics being used against individual evangelicals that include harassment by telephone calls, e-mails and the threats of withdrawing ministerial status. Some UCA ministers, for example, have been treated in the most disgraceful manner, threatened by telephone calls from both Presbytery and the Moderators. Personal visits are a minimum to express concerns, but to be stood aside from life-long ministry by telephone raises all sorts of legal issues. How are ministers to know the calls were genuine? How do ministers know e-mails are valid and authentic without proper verification? Would these methods be substantiated by a legal case against unfair dismissal? In such events, we must stand together. Sack one of us, and

you have to sack 300 of us! The use of fear to enforce allegiance to the opinions of the bureaucracy is an absolute disgrace.

We need to support evangelical ministerial theological education. Ministerial education is the key to change, and the UCA is in some turmoil on the quality of ministerial graduates. There is dissatisfaction among parishes with the quality of the people being ordained. There is also the cost of turning out each ordained minister.

It is very difficult to reform existing educational ghettos. Rev Allan Thompson in Victoria, chair of the Task Group on Theological Education for the 2003 Assembly, recommends greater flexibility in education, but UTC and other Synod funded theological colleges fight for their rights to be the only training and recognising agencies in each UCA Synod.

The Wesley Institute For Ministry and the Arts is on a par with the United Theological College, via their membership and accreditation in the Sydney College of Divinity. The Wesley Institute each year trains more students in a wider variety of courses, both community, arts, and ministry streams by a larger faculty and staff than The United Theological College and we do it without any financial support from any Synod whatever. At mid 2005, the Wesley Institute of Ministry and Arts has 430 full-time students, over 100 faculty and administrative staff, and in the past twelve months has had over 4000 part-time, short term courses by students in vocational and community education causes.

Today in the USA, the evangelical seminaries have larger student populations than the denominational ones. We look forward to this day and urge evangelical churches to support evangelical Australian colleges for ministerial training. I predict that shortly the United Theological College will be closed because of its cost and the standard of its graduates.

One example of the culture clash centred on the issue of some UCA bureaucrats living in homosexual relationships. Hundreds of faxes, e-mails and letters were received from parishes, presbyteries and individuals to support the stand taken by about 80 of our Elders under the Chairmanship of Dr. Tony Chi (a former UCA Moderator) to redirect funds from the Uniting Church Assembly to areas of Uniting Church Mission. Our Elders did not believe in paying the salaries of persons living openly in immoral relationships outside of marriage while holding positions of Church leadership. The issue is not just several Church leaders practising homosexuality; but does the Uniting Church in Australia place itself under the authority and standards of the Scriptures?

The Gay and Lesbian Lobby and their supporters in NSW Synod and Assembly offices, decided not to address the issues but to turn the focus on Wesley Mission and myself. A group of lesbians and others held a sit-in in Wesley Church. They then initiated a move to end my ministry.

Early in November 1997 I became aware that some person unknown to me had made a formal complaint against me claiming that I had violated the vows made at my ordination, engaged in grave conduct unworthy of a minister, failed to comply with provisions of the constitution of the Uniting Church and failed to comply with a resolution of a body of the church. This is a serious matter. If true, this complaint should end my ministry! I understood that there were about 20 pages of evidence and attachments.

I soon found out that my doctrine and personal morality was not questioned but my use of some words in some twenty sentences taken from some 300,000 sentences available publicly on the Internet. Together they made a couple of paragraphs, but the substantiation of the charges took up the rest of the pages. I eventually discovered, although not told by either the Standing Committee nor the Pastoral Relations Committee who the Complainant was. She was a former Moderator and a former General Secretary of a Synod Board, Rev Shirley Maddox. I had spoken to her in Presbytery meetings without her revealing she was the unknown (to me) complainant. The Complaint came before the Presbytery Standing Committee and the Pastoral Relations Committee. I was interviewed at length about the complaint. The PRC and PSC decided to pass the matter unresolved to the Synod Counselling Committee.

I met twice with members of this Committee. This Committee read but decided not to raise most matters with me in the first two-hour meeting. But in the second two and a half hour meeting with the complainant present they did raise these matters of substance. It is important that the reader know the substance of these serious charges. I took a short hand reporter with me who took down all comments.

The example first mentioned was from my sermon on John the Baptist standing up against the authorities on a matter of conscience. I indicated we had seen few national prophets in our time but mentioned Rev Sir Alan Walker who, as a prophet like John the Baptist, spoke against authority “a lone voice...” The complainant stated the word “lone” was a slur upon the memory of other voices at the time, specifically Rev Robert Maddox in Perth. I was stunned. Of course other people had

protested against the Vietnam War, including me, but the difference between us was that Alan Walker had national stature. People also spoke in every village against Herod, but John the Baptist was a national figure. If I had said Walker was “a” prophet that would have been acceptable. The Committee decided I must write to Mrs Maddox and apologise on behalf of her late husband.

The next complaint from Mrs Maddox involved one of our Church services which was interrupted by a group I described in “Mission Talk” as being “lesbians and others” who staged an attempt to occupy the pulpit and sit in Wesley Church overnight at a time when I was conducting a worship service and later, a prayer meeting. I had previously spoken against a lesbian Uniting church minister who was living immorally and in disregard of the standards in scripture continuing to occupy a senior position in the Uniting Church Assembly. That spurred the protest.

In the report on the interruption to our worship in our church paper, I mentioned that the leader of the protest was a minister, Rev Michael Thomas. He had issued the press release and had given radio interviews thereby attracting a number of others to join in the protest. This included a group of women wearing badges and identifying themselves with the lesbian movement. By using the word “lesbians” first I gave the impression that he was the leader of the lesbian group. I have never considered Mr Thomas anything but a man. The Committee decided I must write and apologise to Rev Thomas. There was no apology for interrupting divine worship in Wesley Church. 400 worshippers who had gathered to worship and witness six adult baptisms were disgusted with the protest meeting in a worship service. The media attended in large numbers with TV cameras looking for a major story, but on realising there wasn’t one, soon went away.

Another example concerned a sentence in a sermon when I said “We can uphold the scriptures as the Word of God.” This statement was declared to be offensive. The complainant declared that in doing so I violated the vows made at my ordination because I agreed to uphold the Basis of Union, but “The Basis of Union does not speak of the Bible as The Word of God.” The Committee were obviously ill at ease in discussing this. I affirmed my belief in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word, the regnant Word, the living word and who is only known from the written Word of God. The issue remains. The Counselling Committee did not want to adjudicate on this!

Another example concerned my use of the word “bureaucrat” to describe a person who worked in the church bureaucracy. The Committee, after the strongest urging by the complainant agreed I must not use that word. Despite the fact the official organisation of the Synod and the Assembly

operates with all the traditional methodology and nuances of a typical bureaucracy, I was directed never to use that “b” word again. Are all clergy under the same prohibition? What happens if in a rush of blood, perhaps after a Coca-Cola, the dreaded “b” word slips out? Does the Counselling Committee reconvene to consider ecclesiastical discipline? Am I then directed to appear before a higher court of the church? For how long is the prohibition on the use of the “b” word? Do I get a remission of time off for good behaviour? This kind of decision fails the tests of consistency and logical extension. Yet I remain under the discipline of the church and I hope the “b” word never passes my lips again. This was pure nonsense.

And so on the discussion went. At no point was my exegesis of the Scriptures questioned. I always spoke vigorously but truthfully out of my deep concern for the church and its direction. I have never rejected the Councils of the Church nor their authority. Yet this was the fifth time I had had to meet with a committee or group or write and explain these same words of which the complaint was made.

The process was secretive. I am prohibited from mentioning the names of committee members nor attributing any quotes. The complainant Rev Shirley Maddox was anonymous for some considerable time until I discovered her identity. The process was delayed taking eight months. Justice delayed is justice denied. There is in the process an accusatory assumption of guilt. There is no process to determine the accuracy of charge, which in my case contained untruth and inaccuracies. The whole process fails the principles of natural justice.

The Counselling Committee were courteous, patient and thorough. However I was not allowed to raise issues of inaccuracies and errors in the complaint itself. I prevailed on the point of denial of justice and gained an apology from the complainant for her errors of fact. My speeches have been censored and my vocabulary restricted.

Is this all a good result? Apologies were made in writing as outlined above. Reconciliation? I did not have a problem with Mrs Maddox in the first place. My letter and invitation to meet her went unanswered. My previous image of her was as a Moderator of the church. I now have an image of a former leader of the church spending hours pouring over my sermons in print and on the Internet, church paper articles and magazines circling words. Has the process exacerbated the problem? Was the whole exercise a good use of time and effort in the work of Christ? Consider the time and effort of more than a score of people involved in the Pastoral Relations Committee, Presbytery

Standing committee, Presbytery Secretary, Chairpersons, members of the Synod Counselling Committee and so on. The Committee encouraged me in future to speak more carefully. My flippant offer to be uniformly dull seemed to meet with approval.

What of the hurt and stress placed on me by the complaint process? Not a word. Is this process designed to intimidate ministers and stop them from speaking boldly or raising issues in sermons? Do ministers have rights against vexatious complaints? Is the church becoming a place where anonymous thought-police check your words for political correctness?

It is happening. This was revealed when our computer system check on who accesses our internet material (designed to reveal the numbers and origins of people interested but now not used) revealed from December to February '98 the most frequent access came from computers who included in their registration "nsw.uca" (synod computers). As the offices of Wesley Mission and the NSW Synod are adjacent, this does seem comical. On one Tuesday morning there were five accesses from the Synod office computers to my sermons in five minutes. Who is watching whom?

I reminded the complainant that Jesus says, (Matthew 18:15-17) "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector." I asked, "Why did you not ring me and suggest we talk if these issues troubled you?" I was told, "That is not the Uniting Church way."

I am sure God will not bless these "dirty tricks" campaigns. One journalist contacted me and said he'd have no part of this attempt to damage our work, despite being sent leaked information.

The Ordination Controversy.

The great aim of all student ministers is to graduate and be ordained. It took a total of six years full time study for me to complete both my theological studies and university degree. To graduate from both was a time of great excitement. It had been a long haul with much sacrifice being experienced by my girlfriend who later became my fiancée and eventually my wife, and myself. Beverley had worked for three years in the latter stages of my study enabling me to spend my full time efforts on my studies at the same time as I was working the best of 60 hours a week in the growing slum

church.

In between our social protest and social welfare work, the grind of studying philosophy, logic, biology, genetics, mediaeval philosophy and the like continued. Occasionally the exam results turned up honours and one dreadful year the biology paper failed and required a supplementary exam in the middle of the January holidays before a successful pass was achieved.

At the end of my theological course, the studies of Old and New Testament, New Testament and Classical Greek, Church History and Apologetics were completed. All that remained now was for graduation and ordination in November 1959. The fifteen or so students who were graduating with me were all looking forward to marriage. In most cases we had been engaged three, four or five years. We were not allowed to get married during our course and as soon as the graduation was completed there was a stampede for hometowns around Australia. The following two or three Saturdays saw the long anticipated marriages of almost all of those students.

The joy of marriage was only tinged with the sadness of leaving each other. When a group of 60 men plus a few women live together in a college for three, four, five or more years, a very close bond develops. The extended family is very real and to leave that family after all of those years was a traumatic experience. Fifty years after I first entered college I still feel the closest bond of friendship with those other young men who started studying with me.

The highlight of the whole course lay at the moment of ordination. The ordination was prepared for by spiritual devotion over the previous week. We fasted for the couple of days prior to the ordination in order that we might be in the right frame of spiritual dedication. We had studied the Biblical passages on the laying of hands and devotion, and fulfilled all of the spiritual requirements. Then a selection of ministers, church leaders, and representative ministers and Elders of the Federal Conference of Churches of Christ in Australia, representing several States where the denomination had students in the College, came forward to where the ordinands knelt before them on the platform. In an atmosphere of devotion we answered the questions about our faithfulness to Jesus Christ, our belief in the Trinity, the inspired word of the Scriptures, and our obedience to serve in the proclamation of the Word of God. Then, as we knelt, the representative Church Ministers, and Elders of the Federal Conference of Churches of Christ, gathered around us laying hands on our head and in prayer and dedication we were ordained into the ministry of the Word and Sacrament.

After all of those years I was now really a minister.

Of special meaning to me was the choice of one of the men of the Federal Conference of Churches of Christ, a former President, who joined with those who laid hands on my head. It was the same Dr. W.A. Kemp who had presided over my earliest growth in my mother's womb as our local family doctor, who had been there at the time of my birth, who had delivered and hung me up by the heels, spanking me on the buttocks to produce the first cry of life. It was he who, as surgeon, had removed my appendix and my tonsils and cared for me in all troublesome childhood illnesses. It was he who, as the President of our School Council, as Mayor of our City, as Magistrate in the Childrens Court, as Elder within the local church, and as family doctor, had guided me in my earliest days of boyhood need and questioning. He, with whom I had discussed entering the ministry, was also Chairman of the Board of the Federal College of The Bible of Churches of Christ in Australia.

It was only natural that he who had held me up in the air by the heels and spanked me on the buttocks at my birth, who had placed his arm around my shoulders at the time of my father's death in companionship and encouragement, and who had shaken my hand when I left the church to enter the College for training, should lay hands upon my head in blessing at the moment of ordination. I went out into the world of the Parish of Ascot Vale and Newmarket now as a newly ordained minister.

There was an interesting twist to all of this.

Twenty-one years later Wesley Central Mission Sydney invited me to come to be its Superintendent in succession to Rev. Dr. Sir Alan Walker. I had accepted that invitation in November 1977 and began ministry at the end of January 1979. A few weeks before my installation as Superintendent of Wesley Central Mission and welcome as a minister of The Uniting Church in Australia, a question was raised with the President of The Uniting Church in Australia, Rev. Dr. Davis McCaughey, about whether my ordination as a minister of Churches of Christ was accepted as valid by The Uniting Church. The Uniting Church had previously declared that any minister ordained by a denomination represented within the Australian Council of Churches was acceptable within The Uniting Church as a valid ordination. But the Presidential ruling which surprised all of us was that the ordination twenty-one years previously was not valid or acceptable to The Uniting Church. A fresh ordination was ordered.

There were many surprised leaders within The Uniting Church who received this news. But I must say I found the whole experience of my re-ordination a time of remarkable spiritual blessing. I found it strange that a church that did not believe in re-baptism should practise re-ordination. But because it was the ruling of the President of the Church I accepted it as a discipline and in humility. This time 1,300 people packed the Lyceum Theatre in Pitt Street to witness my second ordination. Scores of members of the Sydney Presbytery gathered round and letters were received from large numbers of people assuring me of their prayers and best wishes as I commenced a new ministry. This time I knelt in prayer and submission after answering the very same questions and re-submitted myself to the ministry of God.

No green student minister in the slums this time, but a minister of some twenty-one years standing. But I can assure you the same thrill of ordination was present as the leading church dignitaries of The Uniting Church in Australia gathered around my kneeling person and laid hands on my head.

In my speech afterwards I indicated that I believed the President was wrong and that my first ordination was a valid ordination but that I could never despise the prayers and best wishes of such a huge gathering of people and if it were in the mind of The Uniting Church to re-ordain me as an annual affair I would certainly be willing to comply. Subsequently the Presidential Ruling requiring my re-ordination was revoked - but after the event! That graduation, ordination and re-ordination remain as three of the highlights in my spiritual pilgrimage.

In the 20 years after my first ordination I completed further studies at Melbourne University, London University, studies in counselling, chaplaincy, Christian education, business management, psychology, and graduate theology at the Melbourne College of Divinity in the United Theological College, the college that trained ministers for the Uniting Church.

The direction to be re-ordained was highly improper and was theologically wrong. The Uniting Church did not believe in re-baptism and it certainly did not believe in re-ordination. No one wrote to me and told me that this was going to be a new requirement. I was just told by a phone message, shortly before the induction, that it would need to be a re-ordination on the basis that my first ordination was somehow or other not legitimate.

The Chairman of the Sydney Presbytery Dr. Jim Udy and the President of the Assembly of the Uniting Church Rev. Dr. Davis McCaughey had decided quite wrongly that I should be re-ordained.

It was like saying my marriage to Beverley had not been legal and that I should be remarried. The problem was that this was not discussed either with me or with anybody else, so when 1,300 people gathered in the Lyceum Theatre to witness my induction as Superintendent of Wesley Mission they were surprised to see on the order of service which had been hastily rearranged and reprinted that I would be re-ordained. Many of the guests including Bishop Jack Dain of the Anglican Diocese of Sydney were outraged.

The interesting thing was that this decision was neither explained to me before hand nor were there any apologies afterwards. Some like Bishop Dain of the Anglican Church wrote at length saying how theologically wrong the action was and went on to say “I greatly admired your fearless statements made so graciously in your reply and I think that as far as it was humanly possible you yourself have put the record straight. It was not until I was in enjoying that delightful cup of tea that I realised from others who spoke to me that the issue was quite a thorny one in the Uniting Church.” Thorny one indeed. The Uniting Church paper was full of letters from Ministers who were outraged that a colleague minister with 20 years of experience and mature ministry, who had conducted classes for other Uniting Church ministers in how to evangelise and to grow their local church, should be forced to be re-ordained.

It was regarded as an act that was injurious both to my standing as a minister and to that of Churches of Christ in general.

The Churches of Christ Federal Conference Executive who had previously written to the Uniting church affirming the fact that I was an ordained minister in good standing with their denomination, and the Department of Christian Union sent letters to the President and to the Assembly of the Uniting Church.

I found it strange that Rev. Winston O’Riley the new Secretary of the Assembly of the Uniting Church should send me drafts of what he proposed to say in reply of these letters for my comment. Winston O’Riley was a diplomat par excellence in the Uniting Church and he realised that in this matter the Uniting Church President and Assembly had goofed. However, this didn’t mean that anyone should apologise. Rather his letter said, “It is unfortunate that in dealing with the case of Mr. Moyes there was again some confusion on our part. In the procedures for the ordering of the life of the Uniting Church there are three levels of responsibility in this matter:

The Assembly, our national body is responsible for determining the criteria to be applied and the principles that should operate in the acceptance of ministers from other traditions. The Synod, or State Body, is responsible for determining whether or not a particular applicant complies with those standards, and in Mr. Moyes' case this was quite obviously so. Subject to the approval of the Synod it is our Presbytery or Regional Council, which is responsible for the actual reception and recognition and induction of any such minister into an appropriate settlement. It appears that some of those responsible for the exercise of responsibility of the various levels were not completely clear as to where their responsibility began and finished. In the event time overtook us and these matters were not properly and thoroughly resolved before the occasion for the reception of Mr. Moyes arose."

In other words the church had made a mistake. I have discovered that it is not the role of church bureaucrats to apologise for errors.

The church bureaucrats are no more willing to say "sorry" than some politicians. What they try to do is get out of it without people realising there is egg on their faces. I never received an apology from the President of the Assembly even though a later body reviewing his decision overturned it and indicated that his decision was wrong.

The Uniting Church set up a body from its Assembly to closely examine all the issues concerning ordination and to make some additional regulations so that this mistake would not happen again. Consequently I was not only the first minister of another tradition to be inducted into the Uniting Church ministry upon its commencement as a new denomination in Australia, but I was the first and last to be re-ordained.

Apart from indicating that the presidential ruling was wrong, I never went into debate on the issue. The issue raged as a debate in a number of church papers and many other denominations wrote about the issue indicating the sense of superiority that the Uniting Church had if it were to require ministers from other recognised denominations to be re-ordained. I chose not to become involved in the debate and there were few people apart from the President and Dr. Jim Udy who tried to defend their actions.

The thing I learnt out of this act was that human regulations can become complicated and are frequently in error. When they are in error it is the responsibility of the minister to humbly submit

to the discipline and direction of the church even when that discipline and direction is wrong. We are to believe that eventually truth will come out and wrong directions will be corrected.

I have seen enough of church life over the years to know that this situation re-occurs from time to time. However we have to be big enough as individuals to accept the discipline and direction of the church and bureaucrats within the church need to recognise that they can be wrong and learn when to say “sorry”.

From my point of view it would not be the last time I would need to correct a President or Moderator when they were plainly wrong in the eyes of Scripture and of God. I also learnt not to hold my breath while waiting for an apology.

It was the regulations of the new Uniting Church that was the problem. The Uniting Church in Australia has more regulations than there are words in the Gospels. What Jesus had made simple, we continued to complicate. As the same Dr Davis McCaughey said: “The Uniting Church has too many regulations. We do well with tearing the book of regulations in half and throwing away half. As far as I am concerned, it does not matter which half!”

Within the UCA the evangelicals are frequently defeated by the political skills of the bureaucrats. But they will win! The members of EMU (Evangelical Members of the Uniting Churches) and other evangelical organisations have been too submissive, lack the political nous for using the regulations to our advantage and too committed to working in the congregations where the only growth in this church occurs, to spend time fighting within the bureaucracy. But one of the Sydney Archbishops said to me recently that evangelicals had to at least tithe their time, so that at least one tenth of our endeavours should be directed into bringing the bureaucracy into line with evangelical truth.

The real issue is: is the Uniting Church still under the authority of the Bible, and does it accept the Bible's clear commands as relevant for today? Those who change moral standards, do so because they do not accept the scriptures as authoritative and relevant.

The high water mark of the liberal position has already been reached. The decisive factor in the emergence of a different kind of debate is the role of Christianity in the southern hemisphere. Thinkers from the growing churches of those lands have refused to accept the line of such as John

Shelby Spong, whom they see as saying something like, “Let us go forward to the nineteenth century.” The liberal theological position that flows from nineteenth century thought still sounds modern and progressive but it is fast losing its allure. For this reason alone, the Evangelicals will win the spiritual warfare in which we are engaged.

As Martin Robinson of the UK has written, “*The future of the faith is now in the hands of Lima and Lagos, not Canterbury and Chicago.*” In other words, the old liberal denominations with their immoral proposals are moving far from the faith of our fathers. Evangelicals hold to the truths set forth in the Scriptures, the Basis of Union and the confessional statements referred to therein. Those who hold to an evangelical and spirit-filled faith will enter the future.

But that will not come automatically: it will require the prayer life of The Covenanters, the political boldness of the Reformers, and the commitment of the Evangelicals. The political skills in using the regulations and out manoeuvring the evangelicals were learned in the old school of left wing politics, where some of the Church bureaucrats trained and served in local political branches.

The Uniting Church Assembly, which consisted of some 280 people mostly employed by the church in bureaucratic roles, has been soundly rebuffed by their membership.

The Melbourne Assembly gave to Presbyteries the additional right to approve ministers for ordination in spite of homosexual behaviour. Congregations across Australia were shocked and dismayed at this decision. Thousands have subsequently met in hastily organised protest meetings. A petition demanding the rescinding of the Assembly motion was presented to the Assembly Standing Committee meeting to consider the events of the Assembly.

24,000 Uniting Church members from over 500 congregations signed a petition, which was delivered in 16 volumes. Thousands of letters and notes expressed the deep spiritual and emotional dismay and concern of Uniting Church members and adherents following the Assembly's decision. They believe that the concept of "It is O.K if you happen to live in right relationships instead of being celibate if you are single, and faithful if you are married" was not acceptable Christian practise in the light of clear Biblical teaching.

The grass roots members believe that the Assembly of the Uniting Church have placed themselves outside the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, in contravention of paragraph 2 of their Basis of Union. They also are appalled that the proposal was not referred back to other Councils of the

Church as the Assembly is obliged to do where a matter is “*of vital importance to the life of the Church.*” The President, Dr Dean Drayton, was clearly in error in making a ruling that the matter was not of vital importance to the Church. This ruling must be over-turned.

The hierarchy have been rejected by their members. Some members of the hierarchy have expressed their total shock at the strength of the resistance from congregations. The celebration by the politically astute gay and lesbian lobby within the Assembly was short-lived. No church can proceed as a true Church of Jesus Christ by cutting and pasting bits of the Bible they find politically incorrect. The Church must live according to the precepts and commands of the New Testament.

Even the public at large acknowledge this. All of the opinion polls taken by newspapers and television stations concerning the ordination of homosexuals living in a relationship have strongly affirmed the Christian position that Church leaders should obey the scriptural injunction about holiness of living and freedom from all sexual relationship except for marriage.

There is a concern worldwide for the future of main-line denominations like the Uniting Church in Australia. Main-line denominations are in decline everywhere. Church membership has been eroding for the better part of the twentieth century. Some observers have predicted their demise. Prof. Thomas C Reeves, Professor of History at the University of Wisconsin in his well researched book "THE EMPTY CHURCH: The Suicide of Liberal Christianity" asks: "Why are (mainstream) churches failing to teach right from wrong? Why are young people abandoning them? Why are church leaders so quiet in the face of growing moral anarchy? And why do they spend much if not most of their time promoting counter-productive social and political causes?"

The American mainline churches have been in a serious and unprecedented numerical decline, losing between a fifth and a third of their membership. The US Methodist Church has lost 1,000 members every week for the last 30 years! Theologically liberal churches are rapidly greying due to aging membership. Methodist Professor Stanley Hauer was of Duke Divinity School said recently "God is killing mainline Protestantism in America, and we goddam well deserve it." The Anglican Church in Canada is being bankrupted by claims from sex abuse victims. The Roman Catholic Church in America, although powerful and wealthy is facing the greatest crisis in its history. How do theologically liberal clergy, out of touch with the members in the pews, gain control of mainline church structures? Why are views expressed by the hierarchy so often out of tune with their members?

Dr Jim Heidinger of the United Methodist Church claims the hierarchy "often have difficulties in the parish because of their views, and then they begin searching for power. There is little else for them to do. Conservative evangelicals, on the other hand, tend to stay out of the political side of church life and concentrate on spreading the gospel. The result is a liberal takeover of church authority." That is true of the Uniting Church in Australia. Consequently mainline denominations have fallen for current fads, political correctness, and cultural captivity. Liberal Christianity is indistinguishable from a dozen humanitarian causes. It may cease to be really Christian.

The result is terminal. Secular humanism has triumphed over the faith of our fathers. The social, political and sexual agenda of church officials find little support in the pews. Members of the church are discouraged about the direction and future of the church we love. The Uniting Church has undergone an intensive debate over sexual standards among church leaders, and the acceptance of homosexual activity as a Christian standard of behaviour. Yet two city churches appointed prominent lesbian ministers and their live-in lovers. These appointments are made in great secrecy without proper debate even though they affect the standards and public image of all of the churches. In the Uniting Church the weapons in such a debate are not Biblical arguments but slur words. Members who seek to uphold Biblical truth are called: fundamentalist, reactionary, sexist, homophobic, while critics describe themselves as inclusive, modern, liberated, victims. The debate has degenerated into slurs and derogatory terms.

Rev Craig Bailey says: "Our denomination and its structures have been hijacked by those who reject an informed, Biblical position on matters of life and faith. They have rejected it in favour of a liberal ideology that relentlessly extols universalism at the expense of truth; experience at the expense of revelation; and humanism and subjectivism at the expense of Biblical standards." Many members feel they are suffering more from the church than they have ever been called upon to suffer for the church. Can people who believe Biblical standards are the norm, accept what is not true to their convictions? Thousands of members have moved from mainline denominations into Baptist, Charismatic and Pentecostal churches. Others remain "believers" but cease to be "belongers".

The National Church Life Survey says The Uniting Church has become a church of older women. Close to two thirds of UCA members are women over 60 years, one third being over 70 years of age. Our numbers have declined: twenty-five years ago we were double the number of Baptists, today we have equal numbers. The Australian Christian Church, a network of Pentecostal, Apostolic and independent churches has replaced the UCA as Australia's third largest denomination. It has 1,000

churches and 180,000 members. In Sunday attendance it ranks as number two denomination in Australia. The inaugural President, Pastor Brian Houston said: "The ACC has drawn together a huge network of churches. Together they represent a vibrant, united and thriving Church with answers to the challenges of modern day life. This means a focus on social justice, supporting people in need through our welfare organisations and providing contemporary worship relevant to every sphere of Australian society." That was the kind of statement said a hundred times, thirty years ago when the Uniting Church came into being. Wesley Mission's International Congregation is the only very large evangelical charismatic congregation remaining in the Uniting Church. All the others have left.

Unfortunately, the democratic spirit is being eroded by a move towards centralised authority, financial recording and approvals. A Cardinal in the Australian Roman Catholic Church tells me he does not have the authority unchecked that one NSW UCA bureaucrat has!

There is a spirit in the UCA of mateship abroad. We have domesticated leadership passing it round among a bunch of mates. We must renew our church in several ways:

1. Uniting Church members must put their faith in Christ not in structures. Professor Herbert Butterfield said: "Hold onto Christ and for the rest be totally uncommitted." At the heart is our commitment to Christ as the incarnate Son of God, Saviour from sin, risen, reigning and soon returning Lord. We evangelicals have that commitment to Christ, so we weather aberration within or attack from without. Denominational structures are very human institutions, full of man-made regulations and less than Christian politics. Our faith is not in the structures of men but in the Lord of glory! The temple of God is holy, but that doesn't mean it is perfect. With Christ in our hearts, we can live in an imperfect structure. The problem is that structures move money from mission to bureaucracy. More structures, more Synod staff, more regulations, more duplication of oversight and over lapping committees, more meetings - but no increase in membership except for membership levies to fund the structures. Wesley Mission Sydney pays over \$800,000 in bureaucracy fees and levies annually - \$18,000 a week to belong! How that could be used to evangelise!

2. Uniting Church members must hold to the scriptures. Church leaders do not decide Church doctrine. We hold to the living Word as revealed through the written Word. The battle is: does the Bible have authority and significance today? Evangelicals present the intellectual and faith responses to the nature and place of the Scriptures in the church and our lives. We do not propose interpretations of the Scriptures: liberationist, feminist, post-modernist, or any other, which are

available only to the select few with particular training. We simply state in advance: we commit ourselves to obey what the Bible says as can be understood by committed Christians. We believe, not what is new, but what is true.

3. Uniting Church members must commit themselves to personal holiness and morality. High personal moral standards set Christians apart, help them witness to their faith, and uphold Christian values. Dean Kelley states, "No strong religious movement ever got far on a diffident, believe-and-let-believe approach." There is no future for any denomination in which anything goes and nobody cares. Any move from Christian moral standards is to a moral vacuum. We are committed to moral standards and that includes what we do in secret and in our bedrooms. Holiness and morality are expected of all Christians, especially those ordained.

4. Uniting Church members must obey the Great Commission to evangelise. We call the world to Christ, not the church to be conformed to the world. Without a commitment to bringing people outside of God to faith in God, from sin to righteousness, from death to life, the church is already dead. The only way a church with membership decline, growing older and failing to retain its youth, is to survive is to practise aggressive, intelligent and effective evangelism. Young adults respond to that enthusiastically.

5. Uniting Church members must come to grips with multi-culturalism. The Uniting Church has the highest proportion of people born in Australia of any denomination with more than 90% being English speaking only. But evangelical congregations have started more than 100 ethnic congregations throughout Australia with Korean, Chinese, and Pacific Islanders predominating. But most of these are mono-cultural, not multi-cultural. It was the people from non-English speaking backgrounds and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Congress that supported our views in the sexuality debate. They hold Christian values that should be in every church.

6. Uniting Church Members must serve the community. Many liberals talk about justice, but it is the evangelicals that do the work and give the money. Visit any of our caring centres for the aged, the sick, the mentally ill, the disabled, the disturbed, the homeless, the drug addicted and so on, and you will find evangelicals who express their faith in caring service. There is great community service being done in the Uniting Church, and the people who are active in personal service are the evangelicals, not humanists.

In the Uniting Church of Australia there is spiritual warfare (Ephesians chapter six). The battle is with spiritual and dark forces in high places. It is a battle primarily for the Bible's place in the life of a believer and its authority within the church. Although the issue has been fought over whether clergy living in homosexual relationships outside of marriage could be ordained as clergy within the Uniting Church, the bigger issue is what role has the Bible in the Uniting Church today and what is its authority. It is a battle the Evangelicals with their high view of scripture must win - but it is a battle that they will win. You might well ask why will they win? Here are ten reasons why the Evangelicals will win:

1. Evangelicals are better equipped for spiritual warfare. They may be naïve politically and have been out manoeuvred by the tactical nous of the church's multitudinous regulations that are constantly used against them. The battle essentially is a spiritual one and that is where the evangelicals are better equipped because they possess the whole armour of God. They know how to use the sword, which is the word of God both in attack and defence. Although reluctant to get into the nitty gritty of spiritual warfare, the evangelicals have realised that they are equipped for such warfare.
2. The Evangelical giant has been aroused. The decision made by the 2003 Assembly of the Uniting Church in Melbourne to approve the ordination of practising homosexuals has shocked the grass roots membership of the church. Thousands of ordinary members have now joined at crowded protest rallies held all across Australia. Evangelicals had to lose the vote at the Assembly in order to awake the slumbering giant within the pews of the churches. It is the same in the United States where the evangelical and conservative membership has turned the tide, which for twenty-five years has been successful in winning every liberal change brought about in the main line churches.
3. Old-fashioned liberalism in Australia is already a spent force. There is a lack of leadership within the Uniting Church in Australia. We are all mates together and every now and then we get someone whom we elect as first mate. The Uniting Church is like a cruise ship that keeps going round and round in circles. The small gay lobby ingratiated themselves into the church's bureaucracy. Even the President admitted that he was "greatly surprised" with the reaction of the grass roots membership. People who worked in the paid bureaucracy of the church are often greatly surprised by the grass roots majority. It is the sign of just how out of touch they are in spite of holding high office.

4. Para church ministries have taken the interest, the time and the money of evangelicals but now they are helping their evangelical colleagues by encouraging those within the Uniting church to stay there and fight for their rights as Christians whose time, interest and prayer has made the Uniting Church what it is today.

5. Evangelicals are younger, richer and more energetic. If you look at the old time liberal clergy in the Uniting Church you will discover that most of them were trained in the 1950's and 60's. None of them can stand up and point to any significant growth in any congregation which they have led as old time liberals. The clergy suit an aging and dying membership. But among the evangelicals, and charismatic Christians within the Uniting Church, it is the young adults who are making the pace. All of the growing churches in Australia are evangelical. The largest congregations are evangelical. While the average age of all the people that attend Uniting Churches is 66 years, the average age of the thousands of people who attend services at Wesley Mission Sydney is 31 years. The evangelicals across Australia are younger with more disposable income and are willing to put their money where their mouths are. They do not want their church hijacked by minority lobby groups.

6. There is a new ecumenical coalition coming into being. There is a commonality of doctrine and viewpoint on many of the great issues facing the church today found among Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Orthodox, Protestant and Pentecostal Christians. They have great concerns for the issues of quality of life, of faithfulness in marriage and celibacy in singleness in being opposed to liberal, abortionist, and euthanasia advocates. Those Christians across all the denominations are networking and they stand united and strong against the advance of homosexual clergy.

7. The Bible is never outdated. There are people who always want to talk about their interpretation of the Bible and who are willing to treat the Bible as a book of interesting characters and information with as much authority and inspiration as a telephone directory. But evangelicals know something that has been forgotten: *"you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring Word of God. For, 'all men are like grass and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall but the Word of the Lord stands forever.' And this was the word that was preached to you."* (1 Peter 1:23-25). Dean Paul Zahl of the Cathedral Church of the Advent in Birmingham, Alabama, USA, recognises that the recent election of the Episcopal church's first openly homosexual bishop has profound theological implications. He says the action *"demolishes the Good News of salvation.... It demolishes salvation because it asserts that what Scripture calls sin is not sin. When there is no sin,*

there is no judgement. Without judgement, there can be no repentance. Without repentance, there is no forgiveness. The decision fashions a God who is oblivious to sin. It thus denies the redemption of the world to a whole category of persons."

8. You cannot fool all of the people all of the time. The history of fifteen years of dialogue and discussion over the homosexual issues within the church reveals a litany of church cover-ups, lies and secret meetings. But the grass roots membership of the Uniting Church has woken up. They are aware of immorality in high places, of lesbian sex, heterosexual adultery, homosexual partnering among church leaders and they have had enough of it. They are no longer fooled by church bureaucratic cover-up and secret meetings. To our shame, clergy, living immorally, have even been recommended to more significant positions. Evangelicals have now drawn the line in the sand.

9. The fear tactic is losing its power. For many years ministers have been fearful about future placements, about their housing and superannuation but there is now a new sense of freedom. Ministers are standing up in public protest meetings saying "For years I have been fearful of my job because I know that if I speak out on these issues the church bureaucracy will fail to appoint me to any new church. I was fearful of my career. But not anymore. I realise I cannot be silent but I must speak out for the faith once and for all delivered to the saints."

In the same way churches were fearful of standing up against the trends of bureaucrats, however they are no longer frightened of the threatening talk that they would lose their property and that the church bureaucracy holds the titles. Many congregations have walked away from their properties and those who haven't are determined to stay in and fight for their rights as people who have both paid for and prayed for their church facilities. Evangelicals are no longer afraid of taking legal action to preserve their rights. Legal opinion at the highest level is being engaged. Class action suits are possible.

10. Evangelicals are learning to play the liberal game. For a long time the liberals counted on the evangelicals remaining silent or leaving the Church in disgust. Evangelicals are not known for their political cunning nor for their willingness to engage in long debate and bitter dispute. Now they are no longer leaving and remaining silent. They are prepared to speak up and fight for the truth. But they do so clad in the whole armour of God, "each piece put on with prayer." That prayer power cannot be underestimated.

The battle will be fought in all of the mainline denominations. In the United States and in the United Kingdom the great mainline churches which have been losing membership and significance in society for decades have found revival and renewal through the younger more committed evangelicals. The same will happen in Australia.

In mid 2005, I began to receive requests to consider nomination as the President Elect of the Assembly of The Uniting Church in Australia. These requests seemed to be totally unconnected with each other. They came from responsible members in most parts of Australia. But I cannot discount the thought that some hopeful person was e-mailing people of like mind across the nation. They all said basically the same thing – that they believed that God was leading them to ask me to consider his will for me, and to be prepared for election as the next President of the Assembly of the Uniting Church. God may have been speaking to them, but He was not speaking to me! I replied saying I was deeply honoured but declined. Our church does need leadership to take the bureaucrats back to Biblical lifestyles and beliefs, to where the grass-roots membership believed they should be. That would be a painful five years for a President, moving against an entrenched group of bureaucrats determined to hold their positions. For these people are basically unacceptable to congregations in any other position.

I declined, not because I was afraid of standing for election, because after all, in 2003 I had stood with 292 other candidates before 4.6 million voters, with my photograph on posters outside every polling booth in the state, and on two million “How to Vote” cards. I did not mind going before the public for election. And I did win, being elected by sufficient No 1 ballots so that preferences were not required.

That is the primary reason why I was not willing to stand for election as leader of the Assembly of The Uniting Church in Australia for the following five years. I had already been elected for the following eight years as a state senator to the Legislative Council of NSW. Now I was serving in the oldest parliament in the land, not only as a member, but also as the elected Chair of many important Government committees and Inquiries. I was writing reports to the Parliament and making recommendations that would impact on the lives of all citizens. In many of these recommendations, I was recommending a more Christian treatment of people and society. This was a new ministry. My speeches were unfettered, and I was able to make every comment I desired on Christian matters, delivering them into Hansard, and the official history of our land.

After retirement from 27 years at Wesley Mission, I would spend most Sundays preaching in scores of churches across the land who have invited me as a special visiting preacher. But I would also attend one local church as a worshipper. There are a number of good churches near our home, including two very large Community Evangelical Churches, each with hundreds of members. The Uniting Churches near our home we have visited regularly on our holidays. They exhibit the same divisive tendencies and spirit of despair as do the rest of the Uniting Church. When we visited one of the Community Evangelical Churches, we found not only large, young vibrant congregations, but several Uniting Church ministers, who, having left the Uniting Church ministry, have made this Church their home.

There is deep concern among grass roots members that the Uniting Church in Australia is dying. The statistics undergird this concern. One hundred and fifty former Uniting Church members are welcomed every week of the year, into membership in Baptist, Pentecostal, Evangelical and other denominational churches. The Winter 2005 edition of "The Travelling Emu" states in an article on the splitting of the Uniting Church that, "a lay and ministerial network of contacts throughout the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) provided information on losses from the UCA over the issue of homosexuals in leadership in the church. About one quarter of the losses occurred after the Eighth Assembly in 1997 and three quarters after passage of Resolution 84 by the Tenth Assembly in 2003. More than 6500 attendees have left the UCA, many of whom were leaders in their own congregations. There have been splits in 109 congregations (with an average loss of 50 persons per congregation) and 41 new congregations have been formed outside the UCA.

43 ministers have resigned or retired over the homosexuality in leadership issue, 14 uniting churches have closed and one presbytery is dysfunctional. The UCA is in denial over the losses and it was reported on ABC Radio National's Religion Report that the figures are "exaggerated". They are in fact less than the true total. Unless the UCA accepts the reality of the situation and rescinds Resolution 84 and reforms the church, a widening of the current schism is inevitable."

Many laypeople who have prayed and sacrificed for their church and are dismayed at the serious likelihood of their church splitting before it reaches its thirtieth anniversary. The same article continues: "During the 60's and 70's there was much enthusiasm for the union of the Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches in Australia. This was achieved in 1977 after the Methodists voted state by state in favour of union, but the Congregational and Presbyterian

churches voted church by church, with the result that about one third of Presbyterian and some Congregational churches did not join. Unfortunately, the formation of the UCA, which many hoped would promote church unity and witness, did not decrease the number of denominations.

In 1977 homosexual acts between men were illegal in Australia. Appropriate Christian sexual behaviour was paraphrased as “celibacy in singleness and faithfulness in marriage”, but the UCA Assembly in the 1980’s declined to affirm this principle for its ordained ministry. The trend in society towards acceptance of gays and lesbians was mirrored in the UCA by liberals and a gay lobby group. The Assembly Standing Committee (ASC) appointed a “committee not representative of the whole church” which produced in 1996 an *Interim Report on Sexuality*. The church was asked to respond to the report and there were more than 8000 responses. Overall 82% of the reports from synods, presbyteries, parishes, councils of elders, congregations and individuals were opposed to homosexuality in leadership. In the analysis commissioned by the ASC, it was estimated that 30,000 people had responded. Faced with this overwhelmingly negative response, the ASC did not accept that this represented the authentic voice of the church and the committee produced a final report, which was presented at the Eighth Assembly in 1997. This caused deep divisions within the UCA and losses of members, which were glossed over.

At the Tenth Assembly in July 2003 the issue of practising homosexuals in leadership within the UCA was debated and what became known as Resolution 84 passed after a strong appeal for “unity in diversity”. This caused severe destabilisation of the church. EMU (Evangelical Members within the Uniting church) arranged a petition protesting against Resolution 84, which was signed by over 22,000 people. The petition was presented to the ASC who chose to ignore it. In September 2003, EMU organised a Summit Meeting at which the Reforming Alliance (RA) within the UCA was formed. The RA organised a National Survey with three simple questions on the issue of homosexuality in leadership that was opposed by Synod General Secretaries, and by liberal church councils and ministers. Despite this opposition, completed questionnaires were received from 27,014 members and adherents in 1459 congregations of which 88% were opposed to Resolution 84. This overwhelmingly negative response is similar to the 1996 negative response of 82%, and shows that UCA members have not changed their opinion.” (Dr Howard Bradbury, Canberra, May 20, 2005).

The intransigence of the gay and liberal lobby in disregarding the viewpoint of its membership makes the splitting of the church certain. Already much of the strength of the Uniting Church has

already dissipated. The Uniting Church is not a democratic institution, but a rule by those who believe themselves fundamentally superior to ordinary believers, whose opinions do not count.

Loyal grassroots members should remember that the Uniting Church was essentially a piece of ecclesiastical carpentry, tacking one part of one denomination onto another. If it falls apart the whole church of Jesus Christ is not diminished. Faithful members will simply move to their neighbouring church where Jesus Christ is honoured, and the Bible is upheld as a source of authority for Christians.

This does leave the property assets, hospitals and aged care facilities in the control of the liberal lobby, which is what they want. Some of these will be sold to generate funds for their own salaries, as has already happened in some Synods. But the rest will gradually continue as secular institutions, funded by the governments as has already happened with some church schools. The Uniting Church will continue as a rump, until it peters out, as has happened with other branches of the Christian church over the ages. At the moment, the only uncertainty is who will eventually turn the lights out.