

Among the hugely diverse range of people who united for the common good at Synod 2013 were 15 young people, still at high school yet full voting members of the Synod. As a fifteen year-old, I went having absolutely no idea of what to expect or how Synod operates, and minimal knowledge of even what the Uniting Church stands for. Four days later, this had changed completely. What really amazed me was the incredible relevance of our church, and the diversity that exists within it.

I feel overwhelmingly proud of the Uniting Church's dedication to discerning, through the Holy Spirit, God's will for us with regard to some very significant issues in today's world. The very fact that a group of rowdy 13-17 year-olds were allowed to infiltrate this important meeting shows exactly who we are as a church: If we're uniting for the common good we *all* unite, young *and* old.

India Nash - Bangalow



India Nash (left) serving communion from a billy with Rev John Jegasothy (holding some of Dianne's damper)

Some highlights of a church that speaks many languages. Rev Dorothy Gordon UAICC was a delegate in the opening of worship each morning, led by delegates from the UAICC as they accompanied forward those who would speak & lead in worship. Dianne Torrents UAICC took part in the synod, including a mammoth task of baking loaves & loaves of damper loaf (in a home kitchen oven !!) for the communion service. Rev. Myung Hwa Park has been chosen as the next Moderator 2014–2017.

Ms Park is the fifth woman and the second person from an Asian background to be elected Moderator of the Synod.

Ms Park is minister of the word at St Columba's Uniting Church and Canberra City Uniting Church in the ACT .

Born in Il Shin Hospital, Busan, (South Korea), Ms Park studied at Ewha Women's University, taught hearing impaired children for two years and then served in Pakistan as a Methodist missionary from 1984 where she ran a centre for disabled children, & was ordained as a Uniting Church minister in December 1990. Ms Park has served in cross cultural ministry in the Georges River Presbytery (1991 until 1996) and as a parish minister in Lakemba (1996 – 2002) and Auburn (2002 – 2004).

In 2005, she moved to Ireland and worked as a full-time community worker for intellectually disabled adults through Sunbeam House Services, Arklow, County Wicklow.

She returned to Australia in 2008 and most recently has been working to establish a "Safe Shelter" for homeless men in the city of Canberra.

Ms Park was married to Brendan Kennedy (an Irish Catholic Missionary) from 1992 until his death in 2011. The couple had two daughters, Sinead and Ita.

Ms Park speaks four languages, Korean, Urdu, Tongan and English and sustainable living is her passion.

On hearing the news that she had been chosen as Moderator-elect she said: "Like the boy who offered only small things — five loaves and two fish [to Jesus to feed the 5,000], I don't have much but all I have I offer to serve."

Inspiring.

Rev Ken Day Resourcing ministry & mission in the FNC Presbytery.

To the right:

*Rev Myung Hwa Park
Information on Myung
from INSIGHTS website.*



The theme for this event was "Uniting for the Common Good." Meetings were held at Knox Grammar School at Wahroonga. 400 people came together – from Synod Departments, Presbyteries & Congregations across NSW.

I'd like to share some of the things that were for me, highlights of this gathering.

Number one was **Worship**. The mix of praise and worship songs and variety of music backing complemented the strong multicultural involvement – and was truly inspiring.

Bible studies brought the Synod theme into focus by concentrating our reflections on how the Church, creation, community and the Synod all unite for the common good within the context of the Kingdom of God.

Highlight number two was the **Good News Stories** from congregations around the State, including a community garden, new Messy Church programmes and an Eco-ministry project.

The third highlight was the **UnitingCare Report**, which featured a 10 minute professionally-produced video presentation of the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) development at Yamba. This included interviews with a new resident, Christine Preston and Yamba church leaders.

Highlight four proved to be the presentation of the **Uniting Financial Services report**, which served to encourage me and de-bunk much of the financial doom and gloom that has been seeping through in recent times.

In conclusion, I have to say that I've avoided Synods like the plague for more than 25 years now!

But it appears that Synods have changed. Gone is most of the old adversarial approach to issues – replaced by more emphasis on working together and reaching consensus on issues. This leads to an approach characterized by cohesiveness, inclusiveness and joy.

I consider the governance of our church is certainly in safer hands today as we embrace many different ethnic and culturally diverse communities. I am encouraged by the fact that the Uniting Church appears to have the right balance of love, humility and vision – and that makes me glad to be a part of a church that is serious about uniting for the common good.

Chris Sparks

Northern Light



The 2013 Synod was not the first Synod I have attended, they have them in QLD too but it was the first NSW/ACT Synod for me.

This was a great opportunity to help me get a "feel" for the Synod at large and meet some of the people whose names I have heard or seen on various emails.

For me the Synod was a positive experience, the business was handled efficiently and with the required sensitivity when needed.

Attending Synod helped instil in me confidence for the future, we are truly blessed to have such great leaders both young and mature.

*Rev Christopher Barr
Alstonville - Rous Mill*

July 2013 EASTER
Far North Coast
Uniting Presbytery
Synod of NSW & ACT.

FAR NORTH COAST DELEGATES:

Rev Christopher Barr, Rev Ken Day,
Louise Lancett, India Nash, Denise Seaton, Ps

Colin Scott, Rev Chris Sparkes, Bruce Robinson.

UNITING ABORIGINAL & ISLANDER CHRISTIAN

CONGRESS DELEGATES (from the FNC): Rev

Dorothy Gordon, Dianne Torrens.

In April the NSW/ACT Synod met. Synod is made up of delegates from the presbyteries, as well as delegates from the boards. It is 'chaired' by the moderator. Our present moderator is Rev Dr Brian Brown. The Synod General Secretary, Rev Dr Andrew Williams, assist the Synod attend to the business.

The presbytery asked our delegates to bring back to us their comments on Synod. Thanks to the delegates who did this.

Right from the start this was a friendly, friend-filled visit to Sydney. We sometimes make the mistake by thinking that English is the language of the Gospel. It was a beautiful and encouraging experience to hear so many other languages expressing the faith, that the 'slogan' for Synod was truly emphasised, "Uniting for the common good".

The only disappointment I came away with – I wasn't able to buy a sound track of the beautiful music content. Even the President of National Assembly – Andrew Dutney, entertained us with a song and played his own guitar accompaniment.

I could have listened to Jan Sutch Pickard all night. She is from the Iona Community and is a published author. Iona Community has a world wide ministry.

There were some contentious issues discussed.

I feel really blessed to have been able to attend Synod as a delegate from the presbytery – and I passed the peace with Premier Barry O'Farrell, and had lunch with the Moderator – along with about fifteen others.

I recommend leaders in all congregations keep a close connection with Synod meetings in our changing world.

Denise Seaton - Kyogle.



From left to right: Rev Dr Andrew Williams,
Rev Prof Andrew Dutney (National Assembly
President), Rev Dr Brian Brown.

All meetings of the Synod consist of highs and lows with lots of 'other stuff' in between. For me the highs included the wonderful musical contributions of MLC, the Tongans and Koreans and others, the congregational singing in which we all engaged, the constructive daily bible studies and worship experiences, especially those who presented the studies. Another highlight was the opportunity to engage one-to-one with those who lead our church. I was fortunate to be sitting with both Rev Jane Fry and Rev Dr Andrew Dunkley both of whom showed interest in what our Presbytery was up to. The quality of lay leadership so evident all around was uplifting and encouraging as also was the leadership of Moderator Brown and GS Williams. On balance the positives of Synod far outweighed the negativity of personal agendas and power politics. This was the best Synod of the four I have attended and I am encouraged to return in 18 months when our Church takes a giant step forward and installs a Korean woman as our new moderator.

Bruce Robinson Presbytery Treasurer.

What a joy to attend this year's Synod! The highlight for me was the Multi Cultural Worship every morning at Synod which was spiritually uplifting and a great way to begin the day. On the Saturday, the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress prepared and helped serve communion. I found this to be a wonderful experience.

The wine was served from a billy can and the damper was made by Diane Torrens from UAICC. It was so good to learn and grasp an understanding of how other cultures embrace the sacraments. During the lunch break I spoke to Rev Dorothy Harris Gordon, who explained that using billy cans was a safe way to transport the wine from community to community I came away feeling uplifted and blessed.

Synod embraced the Multicultural theme from beginning to end. It is great to see the Church moving in this way.

The Synod is also embracing the practise of 'Fair Trade' and we are all encouraged to begin in our own Church activities to simply start by introducing 'Fair Trade' coffee and tea. The Alstonville UC Basement has taken up this challenge to start in the small way of purchasing our fair trade coffee and tea as they need replacing. We encourage all op-shops to join with us in helping people to understand the Fair Trade concept.

Louise Lancett - Alstonville

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