

MINISTER'S LETTER:

The end of an era.....

In shortly over a month all of the buildings of Ormond Uniting Church, apart from the church itself, will be demolished. I am conscious as Cathy and I have rattled around in these buildings during COVID what a sad space this is, with all the life gone from it.

I grew up in a Presbyterian, then Uniting, church which had a similar array of buildings to Ormond: substantial church, old, rather tired, pre-war hall, and then a new suite of buildings opened in the early 1960s, with netball and tennis courts out the back. My family was part of all the activities that took place in these buildings: Sunday School, PFA, Boys and Girls Clubs, Tennis Club, women's and men's groups through the week. I recall the groups of men and women who collaborated and rallied to build and maintain and clean buildings and to tend the garden; how the place was cared for and deliberated over! I remember the two builders in the congregation who always seemed to be at the church, building or repairing something and consulting with others. I recall how sensitive decisions about whether to have a cross in the former Presbyterian church and where it would be placed seemed to take forever. Whether the flags had a place in the church. It was a place where community life was focussed and took place.

As I prepared to write this, I dipped into a stewardship brochure from another church from the same era. There are copious photos of booming families, lots of Sunday School classes, committees of men and women focused on the task of a stewardship program to raise money for new buildings. I am conscious of how that generation contributed to a vision of the church which has now passed away. In this time, it is a challenge to live into a new vision of the church; that 1960s vision casts a long shadow. It also casts a strong legacy.

The contributions that each family made in both their lives and their finances is a rich inheritance of dedication and faithfulness. The call to congregational life and mission runs throughout the pages of the history of this and so many other churches. It is so important to not lose touch with that vision and the commitment which undergirded it.

Nevertheless, there is a deep sadness about what is going. We shouldn't ignore the grief that we feel and the possibility of new life and inspiration which will arise out of our grief. It has been a courageous decision to undertake a rebuilding project and it has and still will require energy to sustain your life and push through the ensuing two years of disruption. In spite of COVID, I sense that the congregation is in good heart and people long to be back together again, to be in the church and each other's company again; to worship together.

The ghastly, protracted uncertainty of COVID is drawing to a close, we trust, and things will be able to return to normal. Look out for each other, attend to your own and each other's feelings of uncertainty and grief, tend to the Body of Christ. Out of this will come resurrection.

Grace and peace,

Andrew