

Perspective

A photograph of two women sitting at a table in a cafe or meeting room. The woman in the foreground is wearing a white short-sleeved top with lace detailing on the shoulder and large silver hoop earrings. She is pointing her right index finger towards the left. The woman behind her is wearing glasses and a white top. The background is slightly blurred, showing a wooden table and a chair.

*Canberra Region Presbytery
The Issue with Disability*

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Uniting Church in Australia, Canberra Region Presbytery

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View From the First Floor

O Lord, you have searched me out and known me. You discern my thoughts from afar... and are acquainted with all my ways.

(Psalm 139)

What does it mean to be 'known' by God?

Psalm 139 expresses the possibility of a deeply personal and intimate relationship with God; of being fully 'known' by the source of life itself.

David, a close friend over many years, has severe cerebral palsy with no control of any of his limbs. He does have some speech, although it is only those who are with him constantly (or have the time and patience to listen) who understand him.

Yet David is a great friend, sensitive to my needs and ready to share a joke or his love of classical music whenever we meet.

I also have in my possession a seven page document prepared by David's parents providing in intimate detail every little scrap of information that may enable others to care for him with the same sensitivity as they have done for nearly 53 years.

One such entry is "when drinking he likes his chin held firmly from behind his chair and drinks out of a special mug with a spouted top.

To avoid spilling, he likes to be given one mouthful at a time rather than the spout being left in his mouth.

If the spout is put in the corner of his mouth, it is less likely to wear out his front teeth through him involuntarily biting on it.

That is what it means to be fully known: loved and valued as one made in the likeness of God. When we are 'known' by another so intimately, they seem to become a part of us and we a part of them. So it is with God, the source of life itself.

This edition of Perspective is specifically exploring the related themes of disability and inclusion.

I personally dedicate this reflection to David and his family who have helped me to value and respect the uniqueness and integrity of all people. May we give thanks for and seek to know others as we are fully known.

Ivan Roberts
Presbytery Chairperson



Image by Duncan Macleod

Ivan Roberts, Presbytery Chairperson

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Having Fun with God

Black Mountain School (BMS), formerly Koomarri, is a school for students with disability of high school age and older. Peter Crimmins, a member at O'Connor Uniting Church, writes about some of his experiences in the classroom as a Special Religious Education teacher.

Trial classes

In 2009 I expressed interest in being involved in a series of trial classes with the Chaplain. While I had a background in teaching, the trial classes were a steep learning experience.

The friendly and engaging methods employed by the Chaplain along with the open and welcoming disposition of students, staff and parents convinced me to join "God's Team" in 2010. I was assigned a group of six students for Christian Education (CE) class once a week.

I quickly realised how important it was to build relationships with the students and not to worry too much about covering a prepared programme of work.



Brumby Franky Fainifo presenting a signed jersey to Black Mountain School students. Photo: Peter Crimmins.

Brumbies visit

In my conversations with the students, I found out that a few of them, along with some staff, were very interested in football. My son and I are mad Brumbies fans and have got to know Franky Fainifo, a Brumby winger who is a Christian. We arranged for Franky and another Brumby forward to visit our class.

Franky and his team mate sang our favourite Christian songs with the students, prayed and played with them.

They gave them Brumbies caps, scarves, bags and other memorabilia. I have never seen such joy in a classroom.

Down come the walls

The 2011 class was a much older group, several turning 20 that year. Some enjoyed talking about their interests and plans for the future. They also enjoyed drama. We spent many classes acting out stories from the Old Testament, particularly Moses and the tumbling down of the walls of Jericho.

They were in stitches watching me re-enact how a wall tumbles down. The small room would reverberate as they pretended they were Moses, banging their staffs on the ground and shouting to the Pharaoh, "Let my people go!"

Their prayers and concern for each other often brought tears to my eyes.

Christmas and the Class of 2012

My wife Vanessa was now a regular helper with me during these classes. Teachers and other staff were welcoming, supportive and often participated. The younger group, in 2012, always wanted to sing at the beginning and end of each class.

Towards the end of last year, we decided to build a Christmas stable. As we finished attaching old hessian bags to the cardboard stable, put straw on the floor and placed the star on the top of the stable, one of the boys in the class declared it to be "Jesus' box". And so it remained as each week they added animals, shepherds, wise men and, in the last class of the year, Joseph, Mary and Jesus.

Every week students would each have a mascot (soft toy) during class; a frog, monkey, bear. On the last day I suggested they give a present to Jesus – their soft toy. All but two responded readily. One girl held her soft toy close to her and refused to move. Then her classmate who was reluctant at first to part with his monkey came forward and placed it in the stable. The young girl watched and followed with her bear. Some moments defy words.

These young people are a joy and a delight to be with. The school's teachers, staff and parents are wonderful in their care and education of these special young folk.

*Peter Crimmins
O'Connor Uniting Church*

Making Space in Canberra

The Presbytery Disability Network, set up by the Canberra Region Presbytery in 2012, is open to all Uniting Church members with an interest in advocating for the rights of people living with disability. The network includes representatives from congregations such as St Margaret's, Hackett, and staff from UnitingCare Disability. Neil Johnston and Briony Griffiths have written a summary of the challenges relating to accommodation and disability.

It is no secret that recent years in the ACT have been marked by long public housing waiting lists, a shortfall in crisis accommodation and a dramatic decrease in housing affordability overall.

It is very difficult for the vulnerable in our society to secure affordable, long term accommodation. It is even harder if you are a person living with disability.

The ACT Shelter's recently released policy statement noted that there is a specific lack of housing that is appropriate and available for people with a range of disabilities in the ACT.

Private rental often fails to alter dwellings to accommodate the needs of people with physical disabilities; and while private rental cannot deliver appropriate housing options, social housing eligibility criteria exclude people with disabilities earning over a modest income threshold.

This produces very limited housing options for people with disabilities and, in many cases, their families or carers. The right of people with disabilities to choose where and with whom they live is then contravened.

Advocating increased choice

The Presbytery Disability Network has a particular interest in advocating for increased choice in accommodation options for people with disabilities. Ross Walker Lodge and the Stepping Stones 4 Life program at St Margaret's



A horticulture student from Black Mountain School weeding in the garden at Ross Walker Lodge, as part of a newly established partnership. Students will practise their gardening skills in the grounds of RWL each month, sharing time with residents and enjoying the vast garden space together. Photo by Briony Griffiths.

are excellent examples of the Uniting Church's ability to support people living with disability, their families and carers. The Community Living Project also has this objective with particular attention given to the needs of people with more severe disability.

More housing options

Current accommodation options are listed on the next page. Four new accommodation ventures will provide more alternatives for people with disabilities, particularly for those with less severe disability.

The Woden Intentional Community is planning for three self-contained units (supported by Hartley Life Care) within a Woden public housing development.

Project Independence is establishing three co-located houses each with provision for three residents with disability and a resident carer. Residents will be required to contribute to the capital cost of the facility.

The Community Living Project is seeking funding for a five bedroom facility with a resident mentor, with a focus on the needs of people with moderate to severe disability.

Community Connections is sponsoring home share arrangements which have the capacity to assist people who have moderate disabilities (particularly in later years) to share their homes in structured arrangements with tenants who contribute at least in part by way of home services.

Respite care

Respite care is a priority for allocation of increased funding this year as the ACT system transitions to introduction of the NDIS in 2014.

Respite accommodation is provided by Disability ACT in two houses for children and young people (in Kaleen and Narrabundah) and two houses for adults (in Charnwood and Hughes).

Tandem (in Kambah) and Hartley Life-care (in Hughes) also provide residential respite care places.

Tandem, Koomarri, Woden Community Service, Centacare and Respite Options ACT provide respite care in the home of a person with disability.

*Neil Johnston, Convener,
Presbytery Disability Network
margneil[at]bigpond.net.au*

Housing Options in the ACT

Accommodation Services

Have a look at the landscape of accommodation services that are currently available in the ACT.

The table on the right has been provided by Disability ACT, whose role and responsibility is to plan, develop strategic policy, allocate funding and provide and monitor services for people with disability in the ACT and the families that care for them.

See the previous page for alternative options being explored in Canberra.

Able	Accommodation support for twenty people
Abbeyfield	Accommodation for ten people with mild to moderate disabilities. Abbeyfield also provides accommodation for older residents in Garran and Ainslie.
Catholic Care	Four different types of accommodation support for up to twenty individuals: the LINC model, TWIn model, Dorothy Sails Cottage and support provided through Individual Service Packages (ISPs)
Capital Community Housing	Head Tenant for 61 properties for various organisations under a friendly landlord. This arrangement provides accommodation to approximately 120 service users and separates tenancy management from provision of support.
Disability ACT	Accommodation for 155 people with disability in up to 60 houses.
Focus	Accommodation support for 70 service users across various sites.
Hartley Life Care	Accommodation for 23 people with disability in both group settings and utilising ISPs.
House with No Steps	Accommodation for up to 8 service users across two houses in Macquarie.
Koomarri	Accommodation for up to 8 service users across 3 locations.
L'Arche Genesaret	Accommodation for 13 service users across 3 sites.
Marymead	Accommodation for one person with disability.
Ross Walker Lodge	Accommodation for 5 service users with disability - this project is in partnership with St Margaret's, Uniting Care and Stepping Stones.



Children in Church

Canberra Region Presbytery Lay Training

A 1st Third of Life Workshop - Godly Play
Saturday June 8, 2013

10 am to 3 pm, Kippax Uniting Church, Cnr Luke and Hardwick Sts, Holt, Canberra

Judyth Roberts is Godly Play, Messy Church and Playgroups consultant with the Uniting Church, NSW/ACT Synod. Judyth is leading a one-day workshop on Godly Play, faith formation for children and families, and dealing with challenging behaviour.

Godly Play is used extensively with adults and children in many settings from schools to hospitals, and churches to aged care facilities. It can be a way of preparing children or adults to join fully in the worship life of their congregations.

Costs: Lunch & Resources \$20.

Judyth's time is provided by NSW/ACT Synod Uniting Mission and Education, sponsored by Uniting Venues and MacQuarie Darling Presbytery.

Register by May 29 to [office\[at\]canberraregion.unitingchurch.org.au](mailto:office[at]canberraregion.unitingchurch.org.au). Enquiries: Duncan Macleod (Presbytery) at 0439 828 718 or Hannah Dungan (Kippax) at 0422 628 028.

A Journey in Progress

Canberra Region Presbytery Lay Training - Old Testament Studies

Canberra Region Presbytery is running "Understanding the Old Testament". Norm Schroeder tells us of their journey.

We have walked at the dawn of recorded time in the garden of Eden and there, in our nakedness, met God.

In the footsteps of Father Abraham, we left a safe dwelling place and journeyed, at the command of this one true God, into the unknown.

Suffering with Abraham's descendants in Egyptian slavery and joining them on their 40 year travails through the wilderness (possibly travelling around parts of modern day Arabia) and into the promised land we have slowly begun to appreciate that our God travels with us.

Able and interestingly led by Anne Ryan (Tuggeranong UC) and Duncan Macleod (Presbytery Minister), our group has been meeting at O'Connor Uniting Church on Wednesday nights this semester to explore the development of understanding of what it is to live in relationship with God that is the thread that runs through the Old Testament.

Genesis, Exodus and Leviticus are no longer just names from history, or from a Sunday School exam memory. They contain messages that enable our generation to take part in discovering the characteristics of our living God.



*Participants in the Presbytery Old Testament course compare notes on Judges, Samuel, Kings and Chronicles.
Photo by Duncan Macleod.*

It's easy to imagine that Jesus was a Christian when in reality he was a Jew, grounded in the message of this Old Testament.

Jesus valued the Old Testament; thus our studies of these documents are surely not only worthwhile but relevant to our understanding of the post resurrection New Testament.

Our studies are a journey in progress.

Norman Schroeder, Yarralumla Uniting Church

Understanding the Sacraments

Canberra Region Presbytery Lay Training

a two-weekend course

being held at Braidwood Uniting Church

June 1,2 and 29,30

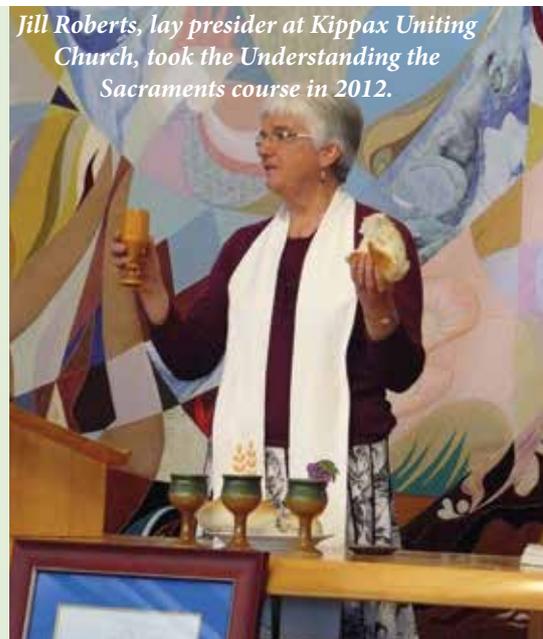
led by Duncan Macleod, Anne Ryan and Kevin Dilks.

Registration: Presbytery office 6248 9311

Cost: \$50 by cheque or direct deposit

BSB 634 634 Account:100037270 Reference: Sacraments+family name

Jill Roberts, lay presider at Kippax Uniting Church, took the Understanding the Sacraments course in 2012.



Looking to the future



Canberra in the next Century - The Uniting Church's role in shaping Canberra's community

Do you have a vision for the Canberra community in another 100 years?
Do you have ideas for how the Uniting Church can make that happen?
Do you share UnitingCare's passion for social justice and compassion?
Do you want to connect with others to build a stronger Canberra community?

If you answered yes to any of these, then come along to the café-style:

Canberra Community Development Forum

9:30am – 3:30pm

Saturday 15 June 2013

Weston Creek Uniting Church, Parkinson St, Weston Creek, Canberra, ACT

An opportunity to share your experiences, dream big dreams, meet others, identify collaborators, and map out practical ways for us all to help shape the Canberra community as we want it to be.

Guest Speakers: ACT Chief Minister, Katy Gallagher
UnitingCare NSW ACT Executive Director, Peter Worland

RSVP: 3 June 2013

Briony Griffiths, Community Development Worker, UnitingCare NSW ACT
Ph: 6248 9311 or Email: bgriffiths@unitingcaredisability.org.au



Uniting for change

Church website invites action on social issues

The Uniting Church community will have a stronger voice on the things that matter following the launch of *Uniting for Change*, the new website that encourages citizens to get active on important social issues.

Uniting for Change is UnitingCare Australia's new online social action and discipleship platform that aims to build an Australia where all people have access to the means for a decent life.

Uniting for Change offers a toolbox of advocacy and theological resources that help people advocate for change both locally and nationally, as well as create change in their own lives and in their communities.

The site currently looks at five important social issues: aged care reform, energy poverty, disability reform, income support justice, and gambling reform.

Discipleship

Resources include liturgies on energy poverty and disability reform. These worship resources allow congregations to engage in current advocacy issues and consider their theological implications.

You can find out more at www.unitingforchange.org.au

You can get involved on Facebook and Twitter, or by signing up to regular online updates. We're also conducting

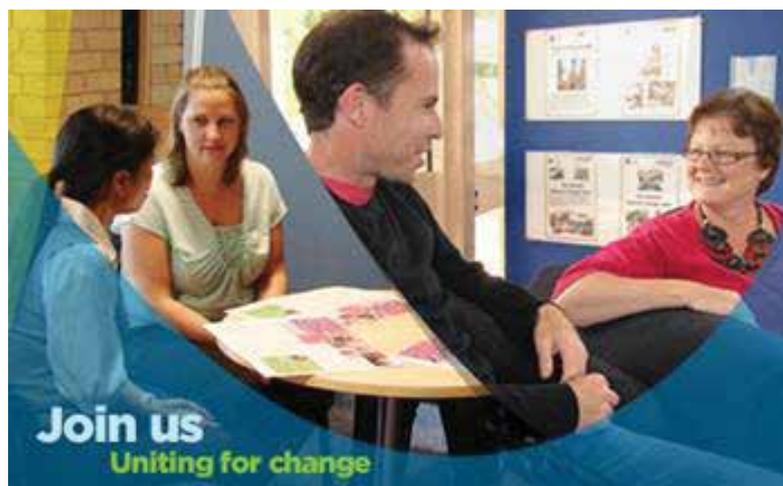
workshops on online engagement for social advocacy. Please contact us for further information.

Emma Lang, Communications Project Officer

UnitingCare Australia, Braddon ACT

Website: unitingcare.org.au

UnitingCare Australia is UnitingCare's national body working with and on behalf of the UnitingCare network to advocate for policies and programs that will improve people's quality of life. UnitingCare Australia is committed to speaking with and on behalf of those who are the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.



More Growth Opportunities



A Government Registered Training Organisation providing training from a Christian perspective.

Established in 1995, Unity College Australia has retained its strong worship ethos while becoming an exciting player in the wider Vocation Education Training sector, delivering a variety of courses as a Christian College nationally.

Courses (Certificate I to Advanced Diploma) include Celebrancy, Christian Ministry and Theology, Creative Arts/Music, English as a Second Language (ESL), GAP Year Program, IT, Pastoral Care, Training and Assessment and many additional courses such as front line management, hospitality and hairdressing.

Training seeks to be practical, majoring on personal transformation in the process. People can study full time or part time. Call 6161 6101 and talk to the College about cherry-picking subjects that interest you.

Mick Brown

Dean, Canberra Campus

Assisting churches

Unity College Australia also focuses on practical skills development in connection with such ministry areas as **worship, audio technology, music, creative arts, church planting, team ministry, local and cross-cultural mission.** "Students can come to us or we can send staff to train your people."

**Visit Unity College Australia at
Level 1, Belconnen Churches Centre,
54 Benjamin Way,
Belconnen, Canberra
or visit online at www.unity.edu.au.
Tel: 02 6161 6101**

Canberra Quiet Days

Canberra Region Presbytery is hosting three one-day retreats designed for Uniting Church members, in August, October and November.

Held at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture in Barton, and led by Sue Dunbar from Barnabas Ministries, the "Quiet Days" provide space and time for prayerful reflection and attentiveness to God's Spirit in our lives in company with others who share the same intention.

"Quiet Days" allow for rest, refreshment and new insights.

Each day is 10 am to 4 pm, costs \$50 and includes lunch. You can pay on the day.



Saturday 17 August
"Roots and Wings"

Saturday 26 October
"Spring Renewal"

Saturday 23 November
"Advent Preparedness"

Register your interest at the Canberra Region Presbytery Office [office\[at\]canberraregion.unitingchurch.org.au](mailto:office[at]canberraregion.unitingchurch.org.au) T: 6248 9311.



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COMMON DREAMS

CANBERRA SEPTEMBER 19-22

3rd Common Dreams Conference

*"Midwives of Change: Progressives
Shaping Religious Communities"*

Manning Clark Centre, Australian National University,
Acton, Canberra

19th-22nd September 2013

To register online & for more information, including other guest speakers and
key event times, visit the website at www.commondreams.org.au.

For enquiries call (03) 9571 4575 or email info@commondreams.org.au

The 3rd *Common Dreams Conference* will explore ways that progressive religion, including progressive expressions of other religious traditions besides Christianity, can contribute positively to the common good, so that religion enhances human life rather than diminishes it.

Common Dreams 3 will feature presentations by Professor Marcus Borg, Rev Bruce Sanguin, Rev. David Felten, Dr Val Webb, Dr Margaret Mayman, Dr Greg Jenks, Dr Nigel Leaves, Dr Lorraine Parkinson, Rabbi Aviva Kipen and Prof. Norman Habel. *Common Dreams* is an alliance of Australian and New Zealand kindred organisations which promote the study, discussion and implementation of Progressive Christian and other progressive religious streams of thought and action.

Progressive Christianity seeks to understand Christian beliefs and doctrines in the light of modern Biblical historical scholarship and current scientific knowledge, valuing inquiry and intellectual integrity, and open to diversity of opinion.

ACT Together with NSW

Myung Hwa Park, currently serving as Minister of the Word with St Columba's, Braddon, and Canberra City, has been elected as the next Moderator of the Synod of New South Wales and the ACT, 2014–2017.

Born in Il Shin Hospital, Busan, in the Republic of Korea (South Korea), Myung Hwa 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.

Myung Hwa came to Australia to reflect on mission at Pacific Mission Institute then began theological training at United Theological College in 1988.

She was ordained as a Uniting Church minister in December 1990.

Ms Park served in cross cultural ministry in the Georges River Presbytery (1991 – 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.

Ms Park was married to Brendan Kennedy, an Irish Catholic missionary, from 1992 until his death in 2011. She has two daughters, Sinead and Ita.

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

Faith Journey

Myung Hwa told the 2013 Synod she had been exceptionally lucky with having lived and been influenced by four major world religions in her life.



Moderator Brian Brown and Moderator's chaplain Valamotu Palu pray for Myung Hwa Park at the NSW/ACT Synod 2013. Photo: Duncan Macleod

She was born and raised in a Buddhist family, became a Christian while seeking reason and ideas, and worked among Muslim and Hindus. Her Christian faith is a lifelong love affair with God and people who constantly fashion her to be who she is, and what she is, now.

God at work

Myung Hwa see God at work in the safe shelter project at St Columba's. Although people thought it was a great idea for the unused church hall to be used for community service, turning a church hall into a shelter for the homeless people was not as simple as it sounded.

A small number of committed people believed that something had to be done for the people God cares about deeply.

"I saw God working, mysteriously and undetected through the faith and working hands of his people. God works beyond our measure and imagination."

Myung Hwa will move to Sydney when she begins her new role in September 2014.

From Stephen Webb at Insights

UnitingCare sponsors ACT Hospital Chaplaincy

Canberra Region Presbytery has over 22 years ensured our hospitals have been supported by a Uniting Church hospital chaplain.

We are delighted to announce the UnitingCare NSW/ACT board recently agreed to fund a full-time hospital chaplaincy position for the ACT, in response to an invitation from Canberra Region Presbytery.

The partnership between the Presbytery and UnitingCare begins on July 1, 2013.

Jean Shannon will move from half time to full time, working with patients, families and staff at The Canberra Hospital, Calvary Belconnen, Calvary St James, Clare Holland House hospice and Canberra Private Hospital.

Jean will continue to be supported by a team of volunteers. Canberra Region Presbytery will provide the accommodation component of the chaplaincy package. To support the hospital chaplain's work see the Presbytery web site: canberraregion.unitingchurch.org.au

Aimee's Journey

Inclusivity in a new faith community

Over the last sixteen months as we have begun to grow and develop the new faith community, one of the great joys has been the opportunity to explore our values and to discuss which of these values we wished to have as foundations for all that we do together.

By far one of the strongest values people have wished to embrace has been that of Inclusivity.

What has interested me about these conversations is that for those of a younger generation, issues of race, gender, ability and sexuality (the areas that are most often considered buzz topics for inclusivity) are almost non-issues.

The group is comfortable with the assumption that inclusion of all people in these categories is a given, but more than that, that all are part of the in-group doing the welcoming. For these young adults, it does not seem that this comfort is the product of naivety, or cultural insensitivity, but a cultural change that sees inclusivity as a normal part of every day life.

Interestingly, this does not mean that the conversation on inclusivity has ended there. Rather it will often take a turn into an area which some may consider a frustrating or trivial topic – inclusion of people with food sensitivities, allergies or other intolerances.

Responses to the rapidly increasing number of people citing negative reactions to certain foods has been wide and varied with extremes such as disbelief, feeling overwhelmed and ignorance all present.

For churches who pride themselves not only on inclusivity but also hospitality, food and other sensitivities will need to be an issue that is not overlooked.

Recently, one young boy in our community was found to have extreme reactions to both dairy products and gluten.

Whilst the discovery has meant increased health for him, it has also meant a need for the community to be diligent about ensuring that he is not excluded during communion, morning tea, or even the recent Easter Egg treats given to the kids.

It is nice for us all to be able to eat the same thing, so recently when we were celebrating two birthdays at Munch (our Dinner Church) we all enjoyed delicious gluten free dairy free chocolate cake (yes it does exist) rather than having the majority of people eat one thing whilst those with sensitivities ate something else.

For churches who pride themselves not only on inclusivity but also hospitality, food and other sensitivities will need to be an issue that is not overlooked.

It could be easy for people to become overwhelmed as they diligently try to be inclusive of every possibility, but in reality, for each of our church communities and for the individuals who are part of them, the needs that we

The Canberra Region Presbytery is supporting the development of a new faith community/ congregation in Goulburn, working with the local Uniting Church congregations to support new adventures in mission and ministry with people in the first third of life.

Aimee Kent was inducted as a deacon in January 2012 into the position of Minister: New Faith Community/ Congregation, Goulburn. She is writing a regular column here sharing with us the highs and lows of building a new network of people living out the call of worship, witness and service.

must be attuned to are different. Some communities may need to address physical access to spaces where the community meets, or translation of services into multiple languages; gender equality in leadership, or the ability for children and young families to participate in worship. For us, food sensitivities have been our most recent priority.

Aimee Kent



Munch Dinner Church conversation in Goulburn. Photo: Aimee Kent

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