

# **The UCANZ Conference at St Francis Community Church, Hill Crest, Hamilton**

Some thoughts from my day (Saturday) 19 October) attending the UCANZ Conference at St Francis Community Church, Hill Crest, Hamilton.

At 7.00am Joan Massey (driver extraordinaire) along with Vivien Naylor and Malvina Rees, collected me for our trip to Hamilton. It was good to get to know these ladies better and to enjoy the fellowship with the Peninsula arm of W.D.C.C.

The day began with opening devotions led by Ron Malpass, the outgoing executive officer for the Interchurch Council for Hospital Chaplaincy, who had been a Chaplain with the United Nations. He spoke of the Power of Prayer. When praying, believe God will answer prayer. Not necessarily with the answer we expect! But he will answer. Lost people do matter. Our God has not changed!!

At 9am (approx) Peter MacKenzie, Executive Officer of the Uniting Congregations of Aotearoa New Zealand and a Presbyterian Minister who is currently doing research into the psychological processes of church mergers (which he personally finds fascinating) led us through an exploration of our various church journeys. His starting point was, "Competition is the Heart of Personality" and "An Us-ness and Them-ness". Our focus for the local church is a shared purpose. A person with no purpose is vital both personally and as a church. As a church, survival is not a purpose, but mission is! Our primary purpose is to share with the community both inside and outside of the church. Where we differ from others they/we are not wrong just different! We live in a post denominational age. We are on a journey to Them-ness and Us-ness. Jesus welcomes followers of Christ. We share the same D.N.A, find commonality, not differences. All believers are heading for the Kingdom of God.

After a great lunch and a walk around the block in the sunshine, we settled into the afternoon session led by Emily Wotton originally from the USA and educated in Catholic Schools and now working with the Presbyterian Church. Her theme was "Transforming the Generational Gene". As a church we are to use the different gifting of our people from the oldest to the youngest. She encouraged us all to be "Kidz Friendly" and to take up the new (?) concept of "People friendly" because where once children were marginalized, now many older people feel unwanted and not appreciated. She read two books suitable for All Age Services, "Mr Potato Head" and the "Story Blanket". We are to encourage and train; look at the ultimate outcome – "When you Give, you Receive"; share your story. We are meant to be interconnected.

Everyone can be involved and included. We need a new normal!! Ask yourself "What can I do?" A busy interesting day of learning and sharing with people from all over the country. If there is an opportunity to attend interchurch occasions, grab it. We are never too old or too young to learn and share and be enlivened and inspired.

**Helen Kavanagh**