

Wanted –big ideas for small churches

Spring is in the air. The sun is shining and the birds were singing when I walked down the hill to catch the bus this morning. The sun had even come up from behind the hill that shades the bus stop in the middle of winter at eight o'clock in the morning. The magnolias in the Botanical Gardens are flowering, and there are many other signs of spring around. The sun shining made everything seem better and the fact that I had washed our breakfast dishes in the tub in the laundry did not seem so bad, especially as I know my new kitchen kitset is in our garage and soon the now empty room with holes in the walls and wires hanging around will be transformed into a sparkling new kitchen with shiny new appliances and a Ferrari red splash back behind the hob.

Is spring in the air for Uniting Congregations? Are we about to see some new growth, new ideas emerging of ways to be church in our place? Are our Partners helping us to be the face of God in our communities? Are we working with other local churches in our area to help support people in our communities who are less able to help themselves? Is Uniting Congregations of Aotearoa New Zealand the ecumenical organisation it started out to be? What about our youth? What about our rural communities? What about our diversity of cultures?

I don't have the answers to any of these questions and as I am putting the statistical data that local churches have recently completed into my computer, I see that local churches are generally quite small and in some of them a significant number of members are in the 65+ age group. Not many are in the under 25 age group, which means that somewhere along the line we have not been successful at succession planning, which is the "in thing" for Lions Clubs (at least the one I belong to) to be aware of at the moment.

A time is coming soon when some of these issues and other ideas will be discussed at St Marks Church, Woburn Road, Lower Hutt. This is where Uniting Congregations Biennial Forum will be held from 15 -18 October 2015. "Big Ideas for smaller churches" will give attendees an opportunity to hear interesting speakers, attend workshops that will address some of the issues raised above, and enjoy



some cultural entertainment from members of Hutt City Uniting Congregations who will be hosting us for the occasion. The business of Uniting Congregations including electing a new Standing Committee will be conducted on Thursday evening. The events on Friday and Saturday are open for anyone. You do not need to be member of a Cooperative Venture. If you have an interest in smaller churches and would like to attend, come and join us. There is a registration form on the Uniting Congregations website

www.ucanz.org.nz .

As spring brings new growth and transformation and my kitchen is being transformed, will we find spring, new growth and transformations for Uniting Congregations? Will we be inspired to find new ways of being church in our communities?

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