



### **A Message From Brendan**

Dear Heathmont UCA:

During the course of last year, and especially in the latter half of last year, as it became increasingly apparent to Church Council that HUC would need to pursue a policy of a shared future with another congregation if we were to avoid closure at the end of 2024, concern was expressed within Church Council about how such a change would effect me.

Specifically, Church Council could envisage that any shared future with another congregation would not necessarily require two full-time ministry agents. Accordingly, Church Council did not want to place me in a position in which I was potentially facing the conclusion of my placement at Heathmont without a new full-time placement to go to - which would have a significantly negative impact upon my family's economic security.

To this end, Church Council extended an act of considerable generosity and grace toward me, inasmuch as Council agreed to inform the Presbytery and the Synod that they would grant me early release in the event that the opportunity for another full-time ministry placement became available to me. Thus, if the Synod Placements Committee became aware of a full-time placement for which they thought I had the appropriate gifts and graces, they could refer my name to the relevant Joint Nominating Committee for conversation.

In late December 2023, I was contacted by one such JNC and commenced a conversation that concluded a couple of weeks ago. As a consequence of that conversation, I have been issued - and have accepted - a Call to a new ministry placement.

The placement in question is to the UCA's Ecumenical Chaplaincy role at the University of Melbourne. This ministry is attached to the Wesley (Lonsdale Street) congregation in the CBD. In this new role I will be co-ordinating the chaplaincy services within the University Student and Staff Welfare Services Department, as well as participating in team ministry in the Wesley congregation.

So - what happens next?

Firstly, I am required by the UCA's Regulations to give 3 months notice to the congregation, which effectively means that I won't be formally concluding my placement at Heathmont until mid-May. However, because I am also required by the UCA to take my accrued unused annual leave before I commence my new placement, and because COVID and lock-down, etc mean that I have a large unused accrued amount, I will be on leave effectively for 10 of the 12 weeks of my notice period.

That, however, does not mean that I will "disappear". I intend to take the Communion service each month, and I hope that one or more of my recently retired ministry colleagues will be able to take at least one service a month as well. This will hopefully mean that a minimum of two services a month will be held at HUC from March 2024. For the remaining services each month, Church Council is encouraging HUC members to attend worship with our friends and neighbours at Ringwood.

Furthermore, during the notice period, Church Council will be working with Presbytery to source Supply Ministry for HUC - preferably sooner rather than later, but at least commencing from the conclusion of my notice period. Similarly, I intend to continue attending Church Council meetings as well as meetings between HUC and RUC during the notice period.

Church Council will also be working with Presbytery to organise an official Conclusion of Placement service.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the HUC Church Council for the grace and generosity that have extended to me through this process, and for the pastoral concern for my and my families' welfare they have demonstrated. And while I am excited by the possibilities of this new ministry opportunity, I am saddened to be leaving the Heathmont community and the many kind and supportive people I have encountered here - especially given the potentials for new directions and new opportunities for community embodied in any shared future with RUC.

This is undoubtedly a time of mixed feelings for many, myself included. Nonetheless, as I say, I will still be around to support the HUC community as it continues its journey toward a new future.

Blessings,

Brendan



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