

Dear Friends,

At the recent Synod meeting a group of artists led an evening session of 'Lacuna' – a spiritually nourishing smorgasbord of music, prayer, story, poetry and reflection. For many, it was a welcome change of gear from the more 'outcome oriented' sessions of our gathering.

Lacuna literally means a gap or a space. The *Call to Lacuna* is a challenge to make space for God, to attend more carefully to God's 'still, small voice', to make ourselves more vulnerable to the mysterious presence of the living God.

In the Synod Eucharist, our preacher, Sister Miriam, reflected on the story of Mary and Martha. Prayer and serving Christ should not be separated. However, prayer, or 'practicing the presence of God', has priority. That message reinforced for me the importance of the 'Call to Lacuna' – a call to attend intentionally to the presence of God in our communal life in the church as well as in our personal lives.

The Standing Committee in its October meeting resolved 'to encourage all members of the Uniting Church in Victoria and Tasmania to take up a period of Lacuna during 2003 and to encourage congregations to use the resource kit prepared by the Synod Lacuna Group'.

The biblical image that the *Call to Lacuna* brings to my mind is that of 'abiding in the vine' (John 15). In her new book, *Flesh and Glory: Symbolism, Gender and Theology in the Gospel of John*, Dorothy Lee writes:

'...*abiding* is an image of the relationship between disciples and Jesus...it is vital for survival; without such abiding, discipleship will die....The symbol of the vine produces both rest and joy for those who abide. It is restful because abiding is something to be achieved not by human effort but by the faithful work of the vinedresser who cares for and cultivates the plant in order that it might flourish and bear fruit...The vine is a vibrant image of fecundity and growth, the flourishing of human life in relationship with God'.

The Lacuna kit is not a comprehensive package. It contains resources, suggestions and ideas to encourage congregations and individuals to ground our lives more intentionally in the God in whom we live, move and have our being and who alone can empower us for Kingdom fruitfulness.

I commend this Kit to you and encourage you to use its resources in whatever ways you can – in communal worship, in church meetings, in your personal devotional life.

I pray that it might serve as a catalyst in the life of the church for a deeper connection between us, the branches, and Christ our vine, that we may bear much fruit to the glory of God.

Yours in Christ,

Rev Alistair Macrae
Moderator