

> Culture of Safety

On **Sunday 17th April**, the Moderator, Dan Wootton joined us for worship to present our congregation with a Safe Church Recognition Program Certificate. Inviting Dan and representatives of different parts of the congregation where the work has been



done, Ian said *'Our congregation and the Uniting Church more widely is standing up for the Culture of Safety in the Church'*. During his sermon Ian proclaimed *'Today in our service we focus on one particular stand we are called to take as the Uniting Church, the whole church, in light of the Royal Commission into institutionalised child abuse and all that we already knew before it. Jesus calls us saying stand up, stand up against abuse in all its forms. Stand up to power used corruptly, destructively. Stand up for justice and healing. Stand with the vulnerable, the abused. Stand up as a community of compassion and hope. Stand up in love for one another and our neighbours. Stand up into the community of the new creation. Stand up as I stood up says Jesus to his church.'*

Dan Wootton, Shawn Whelan, Anita Brown-Major, Julie Perrin, Helen Rowe, Leanne Salau
Moderator, Church Council Chair, CY&YA rep., C&H Co-ordinator, Safe Church Contact, Olive Way rep.

Our congregation began this journey in 2013 when the Church Council appointed Helen Rowe to review existing Safe Church Policies. In 2014 Helen was appointed as our Safe Church Contact person and project leader for implementation of UCA Safe Church policies and documentation. She was ably assisted in this task by Tim Winkler, our then Children, Youth & Young Adult Elder and Julie Perrin, CY&YA Co-ordinator. Together they worked on policy development, procedures for risk management plans, Sunday Morning program enrolment and attendance, volunteer screening and monitoring the currency of WWC checks, facilitated Safe Church training and developed a Code of Conduct for volunteers across all programs. 2015 was a year of consolidation of processes and procedures for Children & Youth programs in particular. Recognizing that our duty of care extends to all vulnerable people we strategically began to refer to this work as developing a Culture of Safety. Safe Church training was and continues to be provided for church leaders, volunteers in Children & Youth Programs and our Olive Way Outreach program and congregation members involved in a range of pastoral care related activities.

Our documented evidence was submitted for consideration early in 2016 and we are delighted to be the second congregation in the Synod to receive the Certificate of Recognition. In his presentation Dan commented on the significance of the event and said *'Central tenets of Christian discipleship are love of God and love of neighbour. The way to express that love is to ensure that all people feel cared for and safe within the Christian community, especially those who are vulnerable.'* He commended the Church Council for taking the initiative to ensure that safeguards have been put in place for prevention of abuse. He said that *'displaying the certificate sends a message to children, parents and the community that this is a safe church to worship and enjoy each other's company.'*

Ian concluded the presentation by thanking Helen, Tim and Julie for their work and acknowledged Fiona MacDowall who has taken on the role of Sunday Morning Program secretary to assist with administration of rolls and enrolments. He encouraged us to *'stand up into the policies in order to bring about a Culture of Safety here'*, reminding us that *'it's about how we love one another, that's what this is all about'*. We shared the traditional baptismal commitment in response and participated in a Psalm 23 prayer walk around the church.

You can view the certificate [here](#) and listen to the whole presentation [here](#). The certificate is also now accessible via our website home page and displayed in the Gathering Space.



He leads me beside still waters

Saide Cameron