



## **An Informed Faith: The Uniting Church at the Beginning of the 21st Century**

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From its beginning, despite its relatively small size, the Uniting Church has been convinced that it is a Church with a public role to play in Australia. This new book - from a variety of theologies and disciplines - is an important 'marker' of the Church's public role in Australia at the beginning of the twenty first century.

The study examines topics rarely discussed in denominational studies or by the authors of the standard texts on Australian religious history. It deals honestly with themes that have newly emerged in the first decade of the twenty first century. These include the distinctive nature of Uniting Church spirituality; the tension between good management and theological faithfulness; the political involvement and ecological engagement of Uniting Church people; the Church's extraordinary cross-cultural and inter-faith commitment; and the rise of Progressive Christianity.

The book also deals with topics that have received renewed interest and sometimes heated debate in recent years, including the weakening of the Church's commitment to ordained ministry, concerns over the Church's softening attitude to scholarship; the reception of the Uniting Church's founding document, the Basis of Union; controversy over Uniting Church schools; the complex place of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress, the Aboriginal wing of the Uniting Church; and the struggles faced by Evangelicals within its life.

The contributors, both lay and ordained, represent a broad range of disciplines (theology, history, social sciences, environmental studies, political science), bringing both scholarship and passion to their writing. They are scholars and academics who write out of personal and practical experience, and include leading lay scholars in the Uniting Church from Australia's most prestigious universities who offer fresh perspectives from outside the Church's own formal structures.

Many of the chapters in An Informed Faith are supplemented with up-to-date data provided by The Uniting Church in the New Millennium' national survey of Uniting Church clergy conducted by Rodney Smith and William Emilsen in late 2013.

The book is essential reading for all members of the Uniting Church, and for people - students, academics, leaders of other Christian Churches - who have a concern for the ministry and mission of the Uniting Church in Australia. It offers rare glimpses into Australian religious, political, social, environmental and educational history; and serves as an accurate witness of what is happening within the Uniting Church and many of the other Churches in Australia in our time.

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