

UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

PRESIDENT'S CHRISTMAS MESSAGE 2012



Christmas is a time of great joy.

It's a time to gather together and count our blessings.

For Christians like me it's a time of worship a time to praise God who promises peace and justice for all people, and fulfils that promise with the gift of Jesus Christ.

For all Australians it's a time to come together and renew the bonds of family and friendship over the Summer holidays in our lucky country.

Over this season of joy, I'd urge all Australians of faith - and those of no religious faith - to spare a thought for those who are not so lucky.

While we are rich country there are many around us who will experience hardship this Christmas. People in our communities; people in our towns and cities; people in our region. Often we see that hardship but for one reason or another we find ourselves looking away. The message of Christmas is one of hope. So please share that hope by opening your hearts to your neighbour welcoming the stranger, helping whoever it is who needs your care.

This year the Uniting Church has marked the 100th year of the Australian Inland Mission, founded by the Reverend John Flynn and continued in the work of Frontier Services. Flynn's dream was to provide a "mantle of safety" over the outback. His life and legacy is a testament to what can be achieved through faith, vision and compassion.

While we celebrate lives which were lived so generously they're not just a thing of the past. We can have vision and compassion on that same grand scale today in our own endeavours.

God calls us to envision and work for better lives for the most vulnerable and for a world reconciled. As you and your loved ones celebrate Christmas this year and reflect on the year just past I encourage you to open your hearts and minds.

At this time, in our time, we have opportunities to anticipate the fulfilment of God's promise in our own lives and communities to share a foretaste of peace on Earth and goodwill to all people.

On behalf of the Uniting Church I wish all Australians a safe, happy and blessed Christmas.