



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

# **Synod of New South Wales and the ACT** Uniting Church in Australia

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**Tuesday, December 21, 2010**

## **Change the world this Christmas — love your enemies**

The Christmas message is tough if we respond to life and relationships, politics and power, religion and values in accordance with the life and teaching of the one whose birth we celebrate.

Uniting Church Moderator, the Rev. Niall Reid, says if we want a better world for our children, surely responding to Christ and turning the other cheek is worth a try.

### Christmas message of the Rev. Niall Reid, Moderator of the Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of New South Wales and the ACT

In 21st century Australia it seems to be hard to engage with the Christmas message in anything but a superficial way.

That is a pity because the Christmas message, if we could really embrace it, is world-changing and life-giving.

As with anything world-changing it is costly but not because of greater expenditure on booze and food and gifts. The cost comes when we respond to life and relationships, politics and power, religion and values in accordance with the life and teaching of the one whose birth we celebrate at Christmas.

The birth of the baby is the birth of a new idea, a new vision, a new hope, a new way of relating to one another.

That message is brought into sharp focus when Jesus says, “Love your enemies.”

What tougher teaching could there be? Many a Christmas table will no doubt exclude those who are disliked, out of favour, unforgiven.

The message of Christmas is not some soppy, feel-good-for-a-moment story of long ago. It is about something we all find really hard to do; it is about loving the enemy, the bastard who wrecked my life, the soldiers who tried to kill us in a war fought by our nations, the other, those who are different, those we do not understand; it is seeking their wellbeing, wanting the best for them, trying to understand, building bridges, forging relationships.

This teaching of Jesus asks us to refrain from the cruel retort, angry blows, violent or vengeful responses, both at a personal and corporate level, in our play and in real life.

Many will say it doesn't work, that we can't change human nature.



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But in what ways does the alternative create a safer, better world for our children?

The human child, whose life we celebrate at Christmas, tells us that it does work and that people can change. For Christians that human life speaks of God and the God-potential within all of us.

Yes, Christmas is about the children. It is about their wellbeing and their future, providing better role models, a different way of responding to our fears and to that which we do not understand, discovering how to make our enemies into friends.

The Christmas message is tough and not always easy to put into practice. But if we want a better world for our children, surely responding to Christ and turning the other cheek is worth a try.

**For more information: Stephen Webb, Media Officer, 0423 259 945**

**Images of Niall Reid: <http://nsw.uca.org.au/church/moderator.htm>**

**A video version of this message: <http://vimeo.com/18073313>**