



Rev Bev Fabb

Rev Bev Fabb grew up in a church family, her father being a Presbyterian minister. However in her late teens Bev gradually dropped out of church activities. After completing a BA and Diploma of Education at University of Melbourne, Bev worked as a high school teacher for three years, and then went with Australian Volunteers International to teach in a Methodist high school in Fiji. It was during this time that she made a renewed commitment to Christ.

After her return to Australia she heard a call to diaconal ministry and began studies in 1974 at United Faculty of Theology in Parkville. After two years of full-time study, Bev was appointed to work part-time in a team ministry in Fern Tree Gully, while she completed her Bachelor of Divinity degree. She was commissioned as a Presbyterian Deaconess on 28 March 1976 in Boronia, Victoria.

In 1977, Bev was called to work in a team ministry at Mitcham Joint Methodist/Presbyterian Church, where her main role was in children's and youth ministry and adult Christian education. Bev worked with a team of 16 lay youth leaders to run five different youth groups with an involvement of 300 young people. One highlight was the conversion of a disused manse into an accommodation project for homeless young people.

In July 1982, Bev was called to Kensington Joint Congregation (a joint Anglican/Uniting Church) where she worked in an ecumenical team ministry of six people with Bev and an Anglican priest as co-team leaders. Her main role in Kensington was in the development of new mission activities which responded to the needs of the low-income residents, many living in public housing. These included establishment of an After School Club for children, job

creation project for unemployed teenagers, respite care for children from single parent families, a Home Tutor Scheme to teach English to newly arrived migrants and the inclusion of El Salvadorian refugees into the congregation with worship becoming bilingual, Spanish and English. A highlight of her time in Kensington was her involvement in local community organisations, such as chairing the board of Kensington Community Health Centre and being appointed by the Victorian State Government to chair a committee whose role was to allow local residents to have a say in a major urban redevelopment project. Through their efforts much upgraded public housing was included in the re-development and a Community High School for school drop-outs was established.

In January 1990, Bev was called to join the Uniting Church prison chaplaincy team. Her main responsibility was care of women prisoners in four prisons, two in the city and two in the country, as well as support of prisoners after release. Bev also worked with Father Peter Norden, the then Catholic prison chaplain, to establish the Victorian Criminal Justice Coalition which advocated for reform in prisons and the legal system. She was also very involved in the Save Fairlea Women's Prison Coalition which finally defeated changes proposed by the Kennett government which would have greatly disadvantaged women prisoners.

From 1979–1991, Bev was a leader in the movement to renew the diaconate in the Uniting Church, and was delighted when in 1991 the National Assembly made the decision to do this. Bev was, together with 11 others, recognised as a Deacon of the Uniting Church in a service in Wesley Church, Melbourne on 7 February 1993. From 1990–1994, Bev had been teaching

part-time in the Uniting Church Theological Hall and when the Hall offered her the full-time position of Sanderson Fellow for six months from January 1995 to develop new courses for Deacon candidates, she took up the offer.

After this, Bev was asked by Synod to take up the position of Co-ordinator of the Broadmeadows Project which aimed to promote greater unity and collaboration between three Uniting Church congregations and four UnitingCare agencies located in the low-income community of Broadmeadows. When it was discovered that one of the UnitingCare agencies was bankrupt and urgent action was needed to save it, Bev was asked by Synod to become its Chief Executive Officer and this became her main focus for the next three years. Over this time the agency got its financial affairs in order, established new services and undertook much needed building works.

From 1990–1997, Bev returned to study in her spare time and completed a Graduate Diploma in Community Development and a Master of Arts in Women's Studies.

In January 1998, Bev responded to a call to ministry in Port Hedland, working half-time as Frontier Services Patrol Minister and half-time ministering in the Port Hedland congregation and community. Highlights of her time in Port Hedland included chairing the Hedland Women's Refuge Committee and overseeing a \$1 million rebuild of this facility; working as a volunteer with the state emergency services providing support for remote stations during cyclone seasons; co-chairing the local branch of Australians for Reconciliation, which won a national award for its efforts towards reconciliation; founding the local branch of Rural Australians for Refugees, which provided support for asylum seekers in the Detention Centre; and establishing a new faith community in the Detention Centre, including baptism of 35 men who were all new converts to Christianity. At one time she had the most unusual Uniting Church congregation in Australia — all male, all under 40 and all new converts to Christianity!

In January 2003, Bev was called to the Uniting Church in the City (UCIC) to provide leadership in the process of promoting greater unity and collaboration between the four city congregations and two large community services and developing new mission activities in the city. To assist in this task, Bev began studies towards a Masters of Leadership and Management at Curtin Business School. In 2005, Bev became part of the Planning and Implementation Team which brought about the amalgamation of eight UnitingCare agencies into UnitingCare West. Highlights included the forming of relationships with many people in the city and the development of several new mission activities, including Uniting Friends, a support group for gay and lesbian Christians. During her time at UCIC Bev's partner, Elizabeth

Paterson, died and she greatly valued the support she received from the church over this difficult period.

Over the years, Bev has had many roles in the life of the wider church. In Victoria she served on the Faculty, Ministerial Education Board, the Doctrine and Liturgy Committee, the Candidates Committee and was the inaugural Chair of the Synod Commission for Mission. In the WA Synod she served on Standing Committee, General Council and Business Committee, was part of the task group who developed the proposals to re-structure the Uniting Church in WA, and was the inaugural chair of the Strategy & Mission Planning Commission. She attended every National Assembly from 1979–2009, either as member or visitor, served on the Ministerial Education Commission and Assembly Commission for Mission, was chairperson of the Assembly Social Responsibility and Justice Commission from 1997–2003 and was a member of Assembly Standing Committee from 2003–2009.

After three and half decades of fulfilling and varied ministry, Bev is now enjoying life in retirement and continues her diaconal ministry in a number of non-church community service activities.

Rev Marion Millin