

December 6, 2010

ALL REVVED UP - RECORD NUMBER OF REVERENDS ORDAINED

The Uniting Church has good reasons to refute the myth that people are losing interest in religion – 19 of them in fact.

That's how many new Ministers it will have ordained in South Australia during 2010, and that's a record for a single year.

Last year (2009), there were only four ordinations, and just two the year before.

“We haven't seen numbers like this before, and I gather other States are also seeing healthy numbers of ordinations,” said Uniting Church SA Moderator, Rob Williams. “I would like to think that what we are seeing is significant - and it is very exciting.”

The final five for 2010 were ordained at a ceremony on Sunday (December 5), and they reflect the diversity to be found in 21stth century Reverends. All are under 40, two are women, and their backgrounds vary from artist and army reservist to doctor in molecular biology.

“Many young people are finding the church increasingly relevant and we've taken deliberate steps to make the transition to new career paths more attractive and accessible,” Rev Williams said.

“You can take a traditional full-time course or be involved in part-time paid Ministry while you study. We're also recognising prior learning and making it easier to do on-the-job training in local churches.”

Rev Williams said people from all walks of life were attracted to Ministry.

“Dr Benji Callen, for example, is a scientist and 34-year-old father of two who will be moving to the country for the first time, while Sarah Agnew, 32, has an honours degree in English and a passion for the arts.

“They are very different people who will bring new perspectives to their new roles.”

Rev Williams said anyone interested in following in their footsteps should first talk to their local minister.

“The next step is to undertake a Period of Discernment – that’s church-speak for taking time to work out how you can best serve the church,” he said.

“That might not be as a Minister – there are many opportunities to serve as teachers or in other caring professions.

The Uniting Church employs about 8000 people across its churches, schools and UnitingCare agencies in South Australia.”

The five newly ordained Reverends are:

- Benji Callen – starting at Port Lincoln next year
- Andrew Robertson – starting next year at Clearview and Para Hills
- Naomi Duke – presently at Freedom, Paralowie and in March will move to Parafield Gardens
- Matthew Stuart – has started at Newland (Victor Harbor)
- Sarah Agnew – Esther Project and starting in the Belair Congregation (half time) in the new year