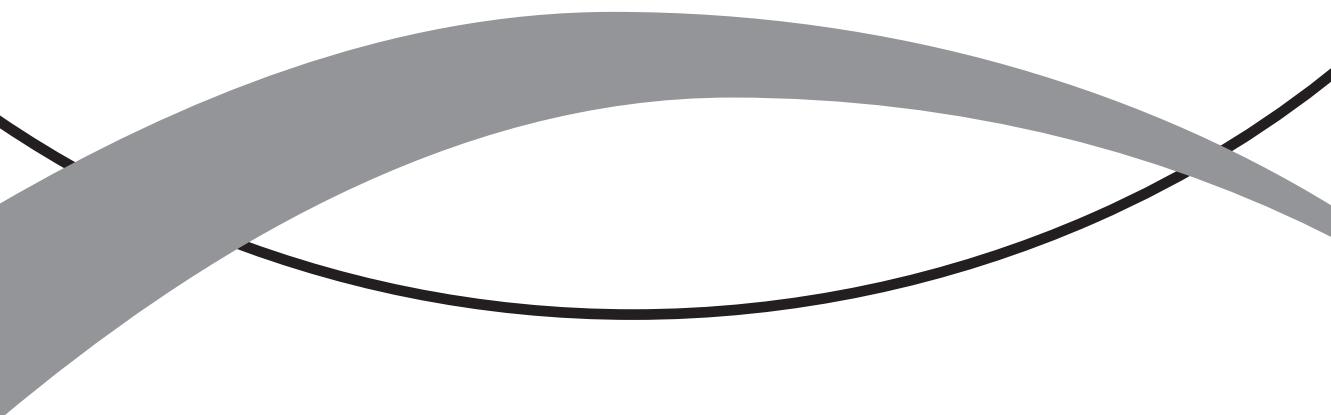


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EXTRACT

SALVATION, DISCIPLESHIP AND EVANGELISM

Embodying the Marginality of Jesus: The Creative Core of Mission and Evangelism in the Uniting Church in Australia

Cyrus Kung

Abstract:

The context in which mission and evangelism takes place has changed dramatically over the last century. Since Union and into the 21st century the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) has not manifested itself in political and social power; rather, the UCA like other churches in the west is continually coming to terms with its marginality in the wider spheres of community life, politics and society. This paper will challenge the UCA to take seriously its marginal identity by reflecting theologically on the marginality of Jesus and the implications this has on mission and evangelism in the UCA

Reflections on Being In-between

Peering over the balcony of a large UCA building, I watched the gathering of over 200 young people from various independent migrant churches around the city worshiping as a newly forming ecumenical community. Before me was the church building I grew up in, I found faith in, and developed a deep call to ministry in. Before me was a UCA building but not a UCA community. This place felt like home but we did not own it, we just gathered in that place. Home in this context did not mean security, it did not mean ownership, it did not mean power or even influence. It simply meant finding each other in the midst of our in-betweenness. For many of us who feel like pilgrims living in in-between spaces, finding and locating home can be excruciatingly difficult. What does it truly mean to be engaged in mission and evangelism as a pilgrim people especially when we *feel* like we have no home, no assets and no perceived power, even though we do?

The UCA has become a place I call home because I have always read its founding and foundational documents as an invitation for those on the margins to share in the fullness of the ecclesial family; a community defining itself in regard to its diverse participation in the mission of God. As I have engaged more with the depth and the breadth of the Church, however, my reflection is that there is also a concurrent narrative and identity within our church, a narrative that is fixated on our diminishing assets, declining church attendance, waning political influence and an increasingly lethargic ageing Anglo population. An over emphasis on this narrative has created tension when we reflect on our participation in mission and evangelism, as it measures and defines our success based on our power and status rather than the incarnational work and movement of God with us. Rather, as missiology David Bosch puts its: "It is not the church which

“undertakes” mission it is the *Missio Dei* which constitutes the church.¹ The mission of God is alive and well and continues to flourish despite our preoccupation with a “decline in power”; mission and evangelism continues to flourish in Christ’s own strange way, often in marginal and unexpected places around us. The UCA must move away from defining mission and evangelism as the things we fail to do but be reminded that who we are is shaped by the ongoing and diverse movements that continue to arise in the margins and calls for our participation.

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With such reflections in the background, the following paper emerges from my own struggle holding together the threads of contemporary missiology, UCA heritage, theology and polity and my identity as a marginal person living in between dominant cultures. The paper will draw on aspects of my own lived experience of in-betweenness and marginality within the UCA and argue that the lived experience of in-betweenness and marginality is a creative epicentre for new forms of mission and evangelism that fully embody the incarnational message of Jesus Christ. This paper will explore the in-between and marginal aspects of mission and evangelism in three sections.

Firstly, the paper will bring into dialogue the fascination we as a Church have with legacy, influence and power, and assert that these often subconscious postures we assume come from a deeply embedded colonialism. This first section of the paper will reflect on how the UCA understands its own history in light of its wider colonial heritage and how this self understanding needs to be confronted in order to fully embrace an in-between and marginal theology of mission and evangelism.

Secondly, the paper will reflect on the binary approaches to mission we have created between ‘social justice’ and ‘evangelism’, ‘progressive’ and ‘conservative’ and offer an alternative foundation by naming theologies of the in-between. This section will aim to articulate a more robust language to address the marginal aspects of mission and evangelism that are present in our founding documents as inspired by the missiology of 20th century British theologian Lesslie Newbigin.

Lastly, the paper will survey the in-between and marginal theology present in the writings of Korean American theologian Jung Young Lee. This final section will bring into conversation the lived experience of the UCA with the in-between theology of Lee, this section will add a robust way to point to and articulate the ongoing creative potential the marginal aspects of the UCA has always embodied in its DNA.

Our History

The *Basis of Union* begins with the acknowledgement of the three churches that came into union, it is important to honour the enormous effort and resources that were given for this project to be undertaken. However, it must also be acknowledged that this union takes place “in fellowship with the whole Church Catholic” and this means taking seriously what paragraph one of the *Basis* says of the three Churches entering union: “To this end they declare their readiness to go forward together in sole loyalty to Christ

¹ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Orbis Books, 2011)., 531.

the living Head of the Church; they remain open to constant reform under his Word; and they seek a wider unity in the power of the Holy Spirit" (BoU, 1).

The work of the UCA is ongoing, it is a participant in the wider work of the whole church catholic. Since June 1977 the emphasis of union has been focussed on the three founding Churches. This focus has both consciously and subconsciously created a majority culture within our life and work, bypassing opportunities of seeking wider union in the periphery and margins of the church. This work has historically been labelled under "mission" or "world mission" and more contemporarily labelled under "covenanting" or "CALD" alongside labels like "fresh expression", "church planting" and "development". These labels stretch broad and subtle distinctions within our understanding of mission and evangelism. One of these distinctions is between mission that happens at the centre (majority culture) and mission that happens at the margins (minority cultures). This often overlooked centre and margin distinction shapes our resourcing priorities. It is reflected our resourcing bodies as well as our posture when we amalgamate congregations and repurpose our resources and property. The centre and margin distinction becomes challenging when the UCA tries to determine who is in and who is out or what constitutes the "Uniting Church" and where the frontiers of mission lie. Centre and margin distinctions shape our ecclesiology, and is why it is important to reflect theologically on these to avoid defaulting to a subconscious reliance on centrist and inward thinking shaped by Christendom and our colonial heritage.

The UCA has been and is continually shaped by communities at the margins. This can be seen in the work of covenanting, the diaconate, our agencies, being a multicultural church, church planting and the decision on marriage to name a few. This work has been accumulating in the margins but has also been building up an identity that many inside and outside the Church would now associate with the contemporary context and culture of the UCA. These communities have expanded our understanding of the UCA and in fact have shown us how our church is continually finding new margins and places for uniting. To acknowledge the margins means to also acknowledge a centre, this means ongoing questions of power will continue to arise; questions such as: Where is the centre in the UCA? Who are the communities at the centre of the UCA? Are they the voices of our western heritage and our three founding European churches?

In the first report of the Joint Nominating Committee, the writers affirmed that

[f]or some time to come the Churches in Australia will have special responsibilities for building up the Church in the Pacific Islands. *The irrelevance of formulations arrived at in the domestic Christian disputes of Western Christendom is likely to become more rather than less apparent in this setting..... the Churches of Australia will equip themselves for their part in preaching the gospel to the ends of the earth and to the end of time.*² (emphasis added)

The decline in church attendance in aging Anglo congregations is an indicator that the primary work of the UCA is no longer at the intersections of our founding churches moving out "to the ends of the earth".

² Joint Commission on Church Union, "The Faith of the Church," in *Theology for Pilgrims: Selected Theological Documents of the Uniting Church in Australia*, edited by Robert Bos and Geoff Thompson, 10-64, (Sydney, NSW: Uniting Church Press, 2008), 40.

In light of our contemporary context the distinctive characteristics of our founding three churches have been dwarfed by previously unrecognised diversity in the global context of today. In this context the UCA is seen not as three distinct traditions but as one broad western tradition, one that is losing its status in the centre. The UCA is now situated in a post Christendom era and can no longer draw its power solely from our internal nostalgia toward a forgone Australian context. Coming to terms with our fading centrality will help the UCA address our gaze toward deeply embedded colonial structures and practices within the church. Christendom in the west has for centuries been associated with colonisation and the development of colonial structures across the world.

Phillip Jenkins describes the consequence of Christendom in these terms: “While it offered a common culture and thought-world, the era was characterised by widespread intolerance, symbolized at its very worst by aggressive crusades, heresy hunts, and religious pogroms.”³

The early 20th century in Australia was shaped by theologies steeped in a culture that exemplified western superiority and homogenous and colonial thought, not only within the church but also the wider Australian context. For instance, the first Prime Minister, Edmund Barton, introduced the first act of parliament; the Immigration Act 1901 to the House of Representatives with these words:

The doctrine of the equality of man was never intended to apply to the equality of the Englishman and the Chinaman. There is a deep-set difference, and we see no prospect and no promise of its ever being effaced. Nothing in this world can put these two races upon an equality. Nothing we can do by cultivation, by refinement, or by anything else will make some races equal to others.⁴

Jason Goroncy asserts that racism in Australia has explicitly Christian roots, he traces the history of racism in Australia by mapping how immigration policies and practices regarding assimilation have long standing commitments to the idea that Australia is both ‘white’ and Christian’.⁵ Within the history of the founding churches of the UCA there has always been opposition to these quasi theological claims made by politicians, but amongst this opposition it must also be recognised that there have also been high profiled ministers within our context that were strong advocates for the white Australia policy and other policies the Church would later oppose.⁶ Discussion of these intricacies within the histories of our founding churches is beyond the scope of this paper but it is worth noting that marginal and dissenting voices have existed in these histories.

The history of the Church in Australia has included both centrists and marginal voices within the political and theological landscapes of the 19th and 20th century. Toward the end of the 20th century in the 1970s the Whitlam government expanded the concept of multiculturalism, associating it with a refined notion of

³ Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2011), p16.

⁴ “House of Representatives, Debates, 26 September 1901 : Historic Hansard,” accessed December 11, 2024, http://historichansard.net/hofreps/1901/19010926_reps_1_4/, p5233.

⁵ Steven M. Studebaker, Lee Beach, and Gordon L. Heath, *Post-Christendom Studies: Volume 4* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2020).

⁶ For one example of such tensions see “Rev J. B. Ronald at St. Kilda West: Chinese poll-axed or poll-taxed,” *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic) 20 March 1901, 6.

nationhood.⁷ It is in these years that we begin to see policies and the shape of the multicultural Australia we now know in the present. In 1973 Al Grassby announced multiculturalism as government policy and spoke of “weaving an ever more complex fabric for Australian Society”.⁸ These multicultural sentiments would eventually make their way into foundational documents of the UCA through statements such as “We Are a Multicultural Church (1985) and “One Body, Many Parts” (2006).

These documents have been essential for bringing change into the church and its polity. My persistent question, however, is: have the underlying quasi theologies such as the doctrine of equality, which shaped much of the life and work of Prime ministers such as Barton, Menzies and Hughes been decolonised or even been fully acknowledged? Have we moved away or corrected these theologies or replaced them with more robust Christian theologies? Are we as a church able to name what theologies guide our identity and self understanding today?

Looking at the latest NCLS data we can see that the UCA has a lower representation of diversity than the wider national demographics despite our groundbreaking statements and the work invested in multiculturalism.⁹ This as well as the disproportionate Anglo leadership across our councils would point to the fact that our theologies that influenced our early Australian government and leadership has simply been left dormant, still subconsciously influencing our fundamental foundations and practices.

In the 21st century there is a collective responsibility for second peoples of all ethnicities to reflect seriously on the responsibility and response we can make to the past and present dissemination of colonial structures and ideals. There is ongoing work in our theological reflection needed in order to fully acknowledge our colonial heritage and its effects on our theology. This means acknowledging both the centre and the margins; acknowledging not only the formation of three churches and its particular nuances, but also acknowledging the many new and ongoing areas of mission that have been arising in the margins of the margins. The work of uniting our three founding churches will be ongoing and this part of the mission of God will always be shaping a part of who we are. However, there is also a need to de-centre this conversation in order to fully embrace new missional activities now present in the new margins of the broader UCA family. It is in these new margins that mission and evangelism will continue to flourish and transform our ongoing identity beyond our colonial heritages at union. The UCA must not be tempted to feel nostalgic for particular outcomes of union; that is, an overemphasis on the central power of merging three resource-rich churches, rather, the UCA must focus on seeking Christ’s renewal in the margins just as it has done in the margins of three diverse churches journeying as “pilgrim people on the way to the promised end.”

Our In-between Theology

Bringing our awareness to our history and acknowledging our foundations will help us to continue to press into our own self understanding. This can highlight the origin of our binary and either/or perspectives of mission and evangelism that still exist in our present day. The problem with our binary context will not be

⁷ Studebaker, Beach, and Heath, *Post Christendom Studies*, 49.

⁸ Studebaker, Beach, and Heath, *Post Christendom Studies*, 49.

⁹ “Denominational Church Life Profile for Uniting Church” (NCLS 2021, n.d.), 18.

solved by intellectual prowess or political domination. Rather, the problem lies in the underlying either/or theology that is shaped by our colonial heritage and rewards theological assumptions that thrive by dominating the other. These theologies are reinforced by our inherited postures in mission and evangelism, specifically those that are fixated on the subconscious gaze towards Christendom.

The work of missiologist and former bishop of the Church of South India Lesslie Newbigin addresses these dichotomies by situating the conversation in the pluralistic and secular world of the 20th century.¹⁰ The *Basis of Union* is a product shaped by this context and many of the principles addressed by Newbigin are woven into the fabric of the *Basis* and other founding documents in the UCA. Newbigin's understanding of an eschatological view of mission is one of these principles. He tries to encapsulate the grand narrative of creation, fall, redemption and eschaton in much of his description of mission.

Newbigin describes the Church as a “pilgrim people,” both witnessing to and participating in God’s redemptive mission.¹¹ It journeys toward the eschatological fulfilment of God’s kingdom, acknowledging its own incompleteness while calling others to reconciliation.¹² This tension between the “already” and “not yet” shapes the Church’s identity, preventing triumphalism and emphasizing its role as both a sign and recipient of grace.

Newbigin describes the Church as a sign, foretaste, and instrument of God’s reign, pointing to, embodying, and participating in its fulfilment.¹³ As a sign, it directs attention beyond itself; as a foretaste, it offers an anticipation of the kingdom; and as an instrument, it advances God’s redemptive work.¹⁴ This eschatological vision necessitates a missionary ecclesiology, as the Church, a pilgrim people, moves toward the kingdom’s consummation. For Newbigin, mission and unity are inseparable.

These eschatological foundations of Newbigin’s work do not place the emphasis on the final and finished work of God, it places the emphasis on the unfinished and ongoing participation we as the church continue to wrestle with. The second report of the Joint Committee on Church Union, published in 1963, touches on similar themes of eschatology under the heading “Her Duality” (albeit in the highly-gendered language of the time):

As the Church is set in the world, however, she must bear witness to the fact that not only is her life given from above, but, like her Lord, she is also immersed in the whole life of man. The Church is a truly temporal institution, because God seeks the redemption of man within the historical order.¹⁵

¹⁰ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 7.

¹¹ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God: Lectures on the Nature of Church* (Wipf and Stock, 2008), 18.

¹² Newbigin, *The Household of God*, 24.

¹³ Newbigin, *The Household of God*, 114.

¹⁴ Newbigin, *The Household of God*, 114.

¹⁵ Joint Commision on Church Union, “The Church: Its Nature, Function an Ordering,” in *Theology for Pilgrims : Selected Theological Documents of the Uniting Church in Australia*, edited by Robert Bos and Geoff Thompson, 69-186 (Sydney, NSW: Uniting Church Press, 2008), 85.

The description of the pilgrim people's image is the duality that exists in the Churches, temporality and sinfulness.¹⁶ This image points us to the in-between nature of not only the church but of Christ and the work of the cross, it touches on the humanity and divinity of a now and not yet worldview.

Newbigin, moreover, also locates the church sociologically:

The place of the church is thus not in the seats of the establishment but in the camps and marching columns of the protesters. The protest may be pacifist, claiming in the name of Christ to renounce all coercion; or it may be political and revolutionary, claiming to embody an alternative order of government. In either case, the protesters contend that as Jesus was crucified outside the wall of the city, the place of the Christian must always be outside the citadel of the establishment and on the side of its victims.¹⁷

These fundamental notions of marginal places in mission are embedded into the *Basis of Union*, and must be taken into account when we consider how to understand mission and evangelism. In-betweenness is what makes the UCA potent in a context that is constantly shifting. In-betweenness is essential when thinking about the incarnational work of Jesus and the cross. The report, "The Church; Its Nature, Function and Ordering" points us to this idea constantly. It provides a worldview and a context for the document and the later *Basis*. Yet some of this context is lost in our discussions in the UCA today. It is essential for us to reclaim the marginal and peripheral perspectives of the gospel and our movement as truly pilgrim people, living in the margins by taking statements written by the founding churches seriously. Not least statements such as this call to immersion and flexibility:

The Church must also reveal in her life characteristics that reveal her immersion in the world. She must keep her Church order flexible and free, in order to respond to Christ in the ever-new forms of obedience necessary to bring the Word of Christ to men.¹⁸

Christendom and our colonial heritage struggles with in-betweenness and it is what distracts us from the mission and evangelism that we have been called to participate in from our foundations as a church. Christendom wants to assume the finished work of God in a way that emphasises the complete eradication of opposition in all of our present realities. This over overemphasis does not recognise the lament, brokenness and ongoing grief that is still felt in our realities as people on the way. The over emphasis of inherited images of Christ as the conqueror king that we sing in our hymns and preach from our pulpits only further distance us from the reality of the now but also the not-yet realities of the Church embedded in the *Basis*. It is these practices expressed in our mission and evangelism that we need to continue to decolonise. Part of this work will be to again reflect on our Christology and what centrist assumptions we have as a church, ie; western colonial understandings of Jesus and the Easter message. The post-Christendom world has opened space for the church to re-engage with a Christology that interrogates rather than reinforces power and empire. However, this has also created a perceived instability in our understanding of truth and highlighted ongoing

¹⁶ The Joint Commission on Church Union, "The Church," 87.

¹⁷ Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans Publishing, 1986), 125.

¹⁸ The Joint Commission on Church Union, "The Church," 86.

dualisms present in our culture. When we operate from a Christendom worldview these dualisms seem to destabilize and cultivate unhealthy divisions between us and them, sacred and secular, and right and wrong. This draws us further away from the full reconciling and incarnational mission of God in all places. Getting lost in our dualism pressures us to over identify with the culture war discussions and approaches toward “progressive” views on social justice and “evangelical” views of sharing the gospel. These binary and divisive either/or paradigms take us further away from embodying the both/and saving work of Christ. It is this both/and work that shapes the call in paragraph 2 of the *Basis of Union* for the church to live out the unity of faith and life in Christ which transcends cultural and economic, national and racial boundaries.

So if a Christendom Christology and a western colonial Jesus are what distract us from our mission and evangelism, what is the alternative?

A Theology of Marginality (Another way to think about our in-between nature)

In *Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology*, Korean-American theologian Jung Young Lee presents a theology of marginality, positioning it as both a hermeneutical paradigm and a central aspect of Christian faith.¹⁹ He critiques the dominance of centrist theology, which prioritizes uniformity and power, often marginalizing those outside the dominant culture. In response, Lee, drawing on his experience as a Korean-American, proposes a praxis-oriented theology suited for a multicultural society.²⁰ His argument unfolds in three stages, beginning with an autobiographical account that highlights the assumptions and lived experiences shaping his perspective.

Lee defines marginality through its sociological origins, traditionally understood as an “in-between” state for immigrants assimilating into a new culture.²¹ Drawing from his own experience, Lee describes marginality as both neither/nor (in neither) and both/and (in both): a paradox he terms “in-beyond.” He argues that marginal individuals exist at the intersection of multiple worlds, neither fully belonging to one nor the other, yet connected to both.²² This “in-beyond” space, rather than erasing cultural centres, becomes a creative core where diverse identities merge without assimilation. This in-beyond stage holds similarities to the myriad of new creative centers created as a result of union in the UCA. I argue that at its core the UCA has missed the in-beyond aspects of missional creativity because we as a church have not fully articulated a theology of the in-between and have rather fallen back to a subconscious gaze toward Christendom and assimilation.

In the third stage of Lee’s argument, he develops his theology of marginality through reflections on incarnation and creation, exploring its implications for discipleship and the church. He asserts that Jesus-Christ is the ultimate marginalized figure, embodying poverty, rejection, and ethnic minority status. Through kenosis, God embraces marginality, making Jesus’ incarnation a divine act of self-marginalization.²³ Jesus’ life

¹⁹ Jung Young Lee, *Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 1.

²⁰ Lee, *Marginality*, 20.

²¹ Lee, *Marginality*, 36.

²² Lee, *Marginality*, 60.

²³ Lee, *Marginality*, 79.

and death exemplify the suffering of the marginalized, while his resurrection inaugurates a new marginal humanity, transcending cultural, economic, and ethnic barriers. Here, Jesus becomes the “creative core”, where divisions are reconciled “in-beyond” a different type of center; a marginal one.²⁴

Lee extends this argument to creation, asserting that humanity was created to be marginal. “The idea of *creatio ex nihilo*, or creation out of nothing, is not found in this text [Genesis 1:2]...Thus creating began with dividing the light from the dark.”²⁵ Genesis emphasizes differentiation (light and darkness), reflecting a plural God whose image is found in the diversity of creation and humanity. Lee defines original sin as “indifference,” a rejection of God’s creative diversity and differentiation.²⁶ The ideology of centrality, rooted in uniformity, Lee claims, has historically shaped the Church since Constantine. Thus, the mainline Church must “die” and be resurrected as a marginal Church – one that rejects power, prestige, and rigid hierarchy in favor of servanthood, communal praxis, and reconciliation.

Lee envisions a radical transformation, advocating for cell-group-based theological education and decentralized church structures with no fixed orthodoxy or orthopraxis. The Church must pursue liberation for both the marginalized and the centrists, subverting oppressive structures by “overcoming marginality through marginality”.²⁷ In embracing marginality, the Church fosters a truly multicultural society, where all can recognise their own marginality and exist within the creative core of “in-beyond.”

A theology of marginality challenges the narrative of dominance and centrality; it does this, not by taking the place of a victim but does so through the transformative work of Christ as the margin of marginality. I propose that the UCA and much of its polity (both explicitly and implicitly) aims to take on this radical approach. The UCA’s inter-conciliar councils can be seen as an expression of this decentralized notion of marginality,. Nevertheless, this requires the councils to focus not on their own central existence but to thrive in the new centres created by focusing on the intersection of its own identity and the identity of another council. It is in these new centres(marginal ones), that the in-beyond nature of creativity that Lee describes will thrive.

In the book *Angels in this Wilderness* Professor Andrew Dutney highlights the term “creative minorities” in a similar way to Lee’s creative core of “in-beyond”.²⁸ Dutney asserts that the creative minority seeks “neither to control nor abandon the world but to love it to new life through redemptive participation.”²⁹ He argues that “making unity in diversity visible is what the UCA was built for” and that this reconciling work happens in the context of minorities and the marginalised.³⁰ This means a theology of the in-between, of the marginal is also essential to hold our polity together.

²⁴ Lee, *Marginality*, 97.

²⁵ Lee, *Marginality*, 102.

²⁶ Lee, *Marginality*, 107.

²⁷ Lee, *Marginality*, 149.

²⁸ The term, “creative minorities” was originally coined by British historian Arnold Tonybee and reemerged in the contemporary context through Cardinal Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) and later missiologist Mark Sayers. For more on the background of the term, see Adrew Dutney, *Angels in this Wilderness: Reflections on the journey of the Uniting Church in Australia* (Unley: Mediacom, 2020), 91-100.

²⁹ Dutney, *Angels in This Wilderness*, 100.

³⁰ Dutney, *Angels in This Wilderness*, 102.

When we look at other significant statements and documents of the UCA we can see the outlines of this pilgrim/inbetween/marginal/minority theology woven into its fabric. It exists, for instance, in the Statement to the Nation, the Manual for Meetings, the work on the diaconate, the revised Preamble to the Constitution and the various statements addressing our vocation to be multicultural Church. A review and ongoing reflection into these statements is beyond the scope of this paper but what this paper hopes to do is give shape for ongoing reflection to be done in light of a more robust theology of the inbetween and marginal. It is in these spaces where we will find our identity as the UCA but also find the incarnate Jesus-Christ at work in the world, bringing together new and old voices and finding space for the ongoing reconciliation and renewal which is the end in view of the whole creation.

As Rev Dr Katalina Tahaafe-Williams writes in her article “Negotiating the Margins,” the *Basis of Union* continues to call us out of our complacency, energising us for the work that we still need to do.³¹ This work is embedded in our unpacking of our marginal identity and what it means to live in a context that moves beyond power, dominance and a command and conquer posture. The immediate challenge is to be able to see Jesus Christ at work in the places at the margins, and to withhold our subconscious tendency to impose and replicate a centrist Christendom theology of domination into our current context. The UCA needs to understand its marginality and this means articulating a more robust theology of the margins. These postures exist in our founding documents and also exist in much of the foundational statements we have made since union. Mission and evangelism continues to take place in the margins, the ongoing challenge is whether the UCA can acknowledge and embody this not only within our statements but also in the lived experience through all of our structures that support us to be a pilgrim people continuing to articulate and live out our priorities in seeking a wider unity in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Cyrus Kung is a Second Generation Hong Kong Australian. An ordained Minister in the Uniting Church, he currently works for UnitingWorld as a Church Engagement Manager for South Australia and Western Australia as well as in placement as a Mission Activator for the Mission Resourcing Team in the Synod of South Australia. Cyrus is passionate about seeing people connect with the deeper parts of themselves whilst also exploring the simplicity of Christ in the complexities of life in the twenty-first century. Creativity, third spaces, liminality, in-betweenness and hybridity shapes much of his approach to ministry and community life.

³¹ Katalina Tahaafe-Williams, “Growing Up Uniting: Negotiating the Margins,” in *Growing Up Uniting: The Proceedings of the Third National History Society, 11-13 June 2021*, edited by Patricia Curthoys and William W. Emilsen, 177-184, (Uniting Church National History Society, 2021), 183.

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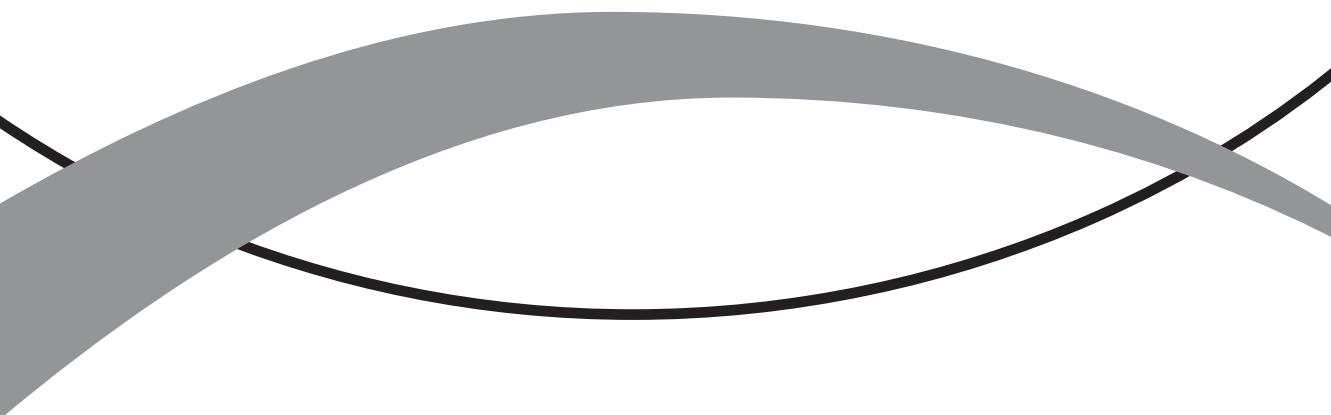
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