

It is Time: Letting Go into Retirement

I am announcing today that on Sunday 2 February 2025 (Candlemas in my native traditions), I am intending to conclude both my placement as Minister of Pitt Street Uniting Church and full-time licensed ministry as a whole. This is a decision I have thought and prayed about at great length over a long period and which I believe is both right and timely.

Over the best part of four years, I have rejoiced to share ministry with Pitt Street Uniting Church and that experience has been extraordinarily rich and fruitful, as well as sometimes demanding. I am deeply thankful for this and to so many people. However, due to a combination of pressing family, health, and vocational issues, it is time for me to step back and allow space for new developments in my own and the church's journeys.

Simply put, it *is* time. For 2025 will have several key landmarks for me, including my 40th wedding anniversary. My wife Penny also reaches her pension age in a few months and I reach my own original pension age at the beginning of 2025. Between us, Penny and I will have completed over 80 years of licensed and ordained ministry in a very wide range of settings, here and overseas. One or both of us have always served in a congregational setting. We have also been significant pioneers in several highly challenging and edgy areas of life and ministry. We have enjoyed much fruitful border crossing and bridge building but that does sometime come at a cost. We feel therefore we have certainly done our part and it is time to pass the ball to others. As the sports saying goes, we have 'no regrets, having always left everything on the field.'

Vitaly, 2025 will also be 10 years since I purposely started coming out - intense years for queer people that have been both fraught and fabulous, not least for

gender diverse people. Happily, this year has been historic for trans people like me, with, among other things, the passing of the Uniting Church Assembly's transgender affirmation in July and the recent successful Equality Bill in NSW Parliament - in both of which achievements I have had a part. However, as a public figure, with such things, and the exaggerated but debilitating 'God versus the queers' culture wars, I have been variously caught up, and periodically near exhausted, as well as wonderfully empowered. Consequently, I am looking forward to the significant sabbatical time I had planned but lost during the pandemic, and then in moving to Pitt Street UC. After a substantial break, Penny and I then have plans for continuing work of support, resourcing and inspiring, as well as some far too delayed writing, and being more available grandparents.

It seems fitting to conclude my full-time active ordained ministry at Candlemas, when the seasons turn and we recall two people (an ageing priest and a female prophet) letting go, having seen the light and promise of the future. In the meantime, Penny and I look forward to continuing ministry in our current locations, including a blessed Christmas and New Year to come.

May God bless us all in the steps ahead.

Josephine Inkpin. 3.11.24