ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY – MYSTIC HEARTS – August 2020

Our beloved Aunty Dorrie will be farewelled today in a memorial service near Lismore. Aunty Dorrie, friend of our Mystical Heart community, was praying for us since Robyn first shared the concept with her. She welcomed us to country during our gathering, asked for a copy of the input sessions and said that Kerrie’s “oneing’ was “black fella talk”. I first met Aunty Dorrie, in July 2017, at the inauguration of ANSD Northern Rivers at Rous Community Hall where she welcomed all of us warmly to country. Aunty Dorrie’s commitment to Family, her People, spirituality, hospitality, community and ecumenism was evident.

Reverend Dorothy Harris-Gordon was the first Aboriginal woman ordained in the Uniting Church in Australian Synod of NSW and the ACT and her grace and deep faithfulness to God’s mission over many years has been a blessing to those fortunate enough to have known her. Dorothy grew up as a Bundjalung woman, on a reserve near Lismore in the 1940’s and 1950’s, speaking the ancient language of her ancestors. This was the time when Aboriginal people’s movements and lives were tightly regulated by Aboriginal Protection Boards.

Dorrie married her beloved Charles Harris in 1963, the year that Martin Luther King shared his dream - and quoted the prophet Amos - that ‘justice would roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream”.

Charles became a Methodist Minister and together they serviced in Ingham, Townsville and Brisbane. Dorrie also worked in Prison Ministry. There was thought about forming a separate Church but it was Dorrie who was strongly discerning that they should not break the body of Christ and they found their place within the Uniting Church.

Throughout her life Aunty Dorrie worked tirelessly and actively for First nations and Islander people who were suffering the pains of dispossession, deprivation and discrimination. As the crusade for racial equality, land rights and self-determination gathered momentum in Australia through the 1960’s, 1970’s and 1980’s, Dorrie was a central presence in the movement that led to the founding of the Congress in 1985 and later in 1988 the March for Justice, Freedom and Hope. Aunty Dorrie never gave up her activism and was acknowledged as Lismore’s Aboriginal Citizen of the Year in 2016 in an Australia Day Award.

Aunty Dorrie is remembered as loving, faithful, passionate, wise, gracious, inspiring and a woman of hope. Her colleagues recall that she was an amazing woman of God and Minister of the Word who had a great love and personal relationship with Jesus the Christ.

Let each of us remember the First nation people on whose land we are today.

I acknowledge the Turrbal & Jaggerra people who once lived, and continue to live, north and south of the Brisbane River. These traditional Owners and custodians walked on and cared for this land for thousands of years and their descendants have maintained spiritual connections and traditions. We reflect on the millions of footprints that travelled the dreaming pathways.

Let us now observe a minute of silence to remember our beloved Aunty Dorrie, her inspiring life and her commitment to spirituality.