



Tuesday 26 June 2018
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The 13th Annual Meeting of the Presbytery of Western Australia was held on Saturday 16 June at Tranby College. More than 120 lay and ordained members from our congregations and faith communities from around the Presbytery came together for fellowship and to seek the will of God for the business of the Presbytery.

Rev Mervyn Anderson began the meeting with an acknowledgement of country.

Liberty from Slavery

Worship, led by Rockingham Uniting Church, prepared the members of Presbytery for a day of discussion, discernment and decisions.

Rev Toby Keva reflected upon the Bible readings from Mark 2:23-3:6 and Deuteronomy 5:12-15, which highlights the gift of observing the Sabbath and the peril of being enslaved to it.

“The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath,” said Jesus (Mark 2:27).

Toby pondered on modern day ‘slavery’ in Australia with the situation of backpackers and the requirement that they do 88 days work in specific jobs in rural and regional areas and how this leaves them very vulnerable to being poorly treated and exploited.

“Slavery is alive and well today, including here in Australia. Now, it may not be fair to equate what happens in these rural areas to the kind of slavery that people endured in ancient times, but any kind of exploitation is a form of slavery,” said Toby.

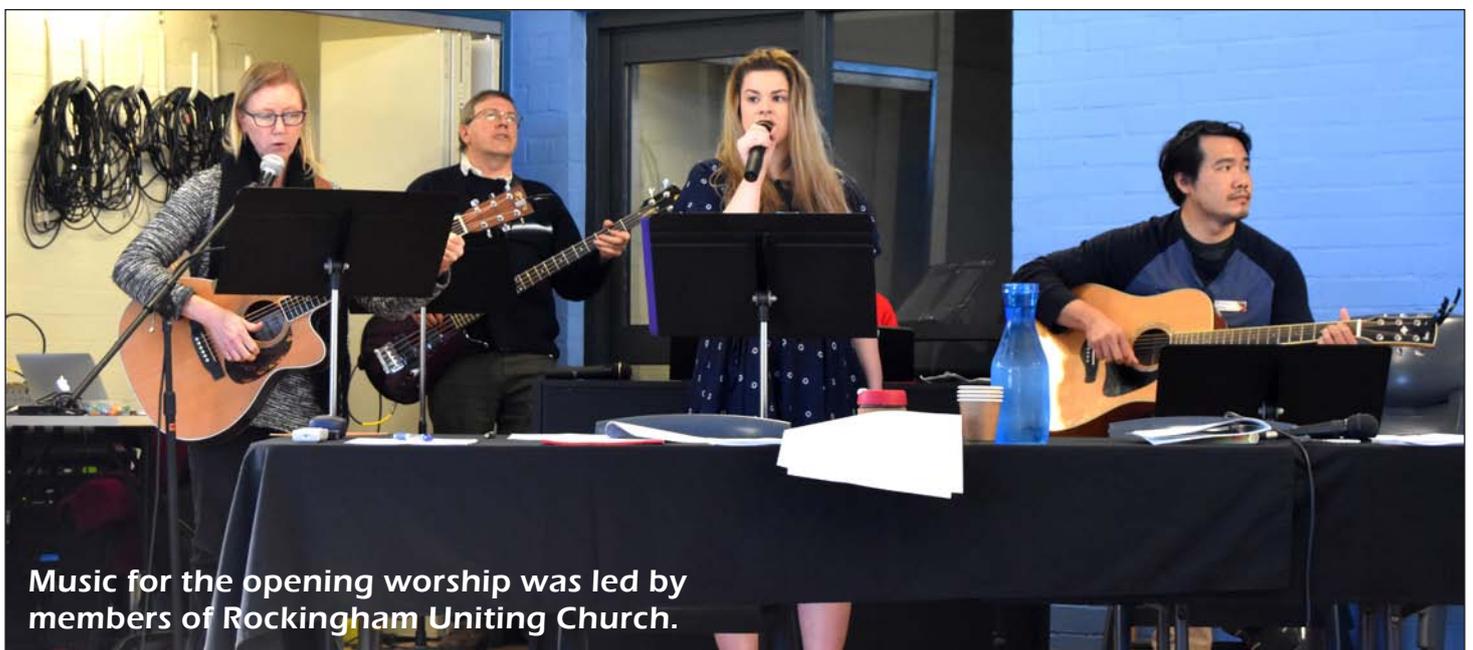
“The Sabbath was given to safeguard generations after generations from the blight of slavery. The Sabbath is to be observed, so that no one will be exploited as slaves any longer.

“The Pharisees turned the Sabbath into a religious tradition that must be observed at all costs. As such, ironically, they turned the Sabbath into another form of slavery.

“Indeed, if we are not careful, religion can become a tool that puts people into the bondage of slavery. Religion turns into slavery when we live our religious life at the expense of our or other people’s wellbeing; creates or brings death in our or other people’s life; when our attachment to a belief makes us see others as less than human and when performing a religious duty has become more important than caring for others.

“We must take Jesus’ words seriously. Sabbath, or any religious duty or belief, is given for our wellbeing. If performing a religious duty or honouring a religious belief has led us to a destructive act or behaviour, we need to stop.

“God sent God’s son, not to condemn the world into



Music for the opening worship was led by members of Rockingham Uniting Church.



slavery, but to free people from all kinds of bondage. We are children not of slavery or fear, but of the Spirit that brings freedom and empowerment."

Community time

Presbytery of WA members were given the opportunity to share with their table groups the hopes and struggles of their congregations and faith communities over the past four months, since the last Presbytery of WA meeting held on Saturday 10 February.

Deliberations and decisions

As agreed at the 11th Annual Meeting of the Presbytery of WA held in November 2016, reports to the Presbytery were received individually to enable issues and questions to be addressed and discussed more effectively. For each report there was the opportunity for members to comment and raise questions on their tables giving each member the opportunity to voice their thoughts on the report. Participation of all members was encouraged.

Reports were received from Presbytery Standing Committee (PSC), Strategy and Mission Planning Committee (SMPC), Congregational Community Services Committee (CCSC), Commission for Education for Discipleship and Leadership (CEDAL), Candidates for the Ministries Committee (CMC), Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC), Rural Ministry Committee, Uniting Generations Committee, Multicultural and Cross-Cultural Committee, Presbytery Property Committee (PPC) and Nominating Committee.

Presbytery journey update

The Chairperson of Presbytery advised that there were discussions continuing between PSC and SSC as the journey to be come separate councils within our inter-conciliar church progresses. She told of how our Presbytery has more committees than any other presbytery in Australia and there is a need to discern how we can best structure our Presbytery to achieve God's purposes.

Presbytery Secretary

The Presbytery of WA agreed by consensus to appoint Rev John McKane as acting Secretary of the Presbytery until Wednesday 31 October 2018.

The current appointment of Rev John McKane as acting Secretary made at the last Presbytery of WA meeting on



Saturday 10 February concludes on 30 June 2018.

Due to extenuating circumstances, the PSC was unable to bring a name for the appointment of a Secretary. This short-term appointment allows the work of finalising the new Secretary position to be completed and a name to be brought to the next Presbytery of WA meeting on Saturday 13 October.

Presbytery Minister (Mission) appointed

SMPC chairperson, Rev Greg Ross was excited to announce the appointment of Rev Alison Gilchrist as Presbytery Minister (Mission) from Saturday 1 September.

Alison is from the United Kingdom. She has been a priest in the Anglican Church in Australia for six years and is currently working in the Anglican Diocese of Perth in the position of Evangelism Enabler.

Alison understands from others, that the central aspects of her ministerial make up, is to be "a team builder and player; an initiator, not a maintainer or a finisher; able to listen to God, the congregation and the local community and able to empower a church which is not 'to' or 'for', but 'of' the people."

This position, previously titled Mission Planner, became vacant when Rev David Kriel accepted a call to Trinity North Uniting Church from Thursday 1 February.

Faith Community and congregation designations

At the last Presbytery of WA meeting on Saturday 10 February, the Presbytery received this 'Notice of Proposal' and corresponding 'Frequently Asked Questions' (FAQ) documents for discernment at this Annual Meeting held

on Saturday 16 June regarding faith community and congregation designations in the Presbytery.

The proposal sought to provide a pastoral response to Uniting Church congregations with less than 16 confirmed members and members-in-association who are seeking to explore as a small group the implications of faith in God, gathering in order to serve the community and/or nurturing one another in faith; or are worshipping together and seeking to relate to the Church for nurture and support.

The two key drivers for the proposal were that:

- (1) a Faith Community isn't required to fulfil the purpose and responsibilities of a Congregation (Regulation 3.1.1) and a Church Council (Regulation 3.1.2), but rather to focus on ordering its life, under the oversight of the Presbytery in order to encourage its participants, develop its mission and be accountable for its resources (Regulation 3.9.2(c)).
- (2) the quorum of Presbytery requires one-third of the voting members representing at least half the number of Congregations of the Presbytery (Reg 3.8.5 (d)). With the large number of small congregations that do not send a representative, it's a struggle to get a quorum. This proposal reduces the number of congregations (from 118 to about 80) without restricting any group from sending a representative if they choose.

At the Annual Meeting, members received handouts of Regulations 3.1.1 Purpose and responsibilities of a congregation; 3.1.2 Responsibilities of the Church Council; 3.9.2 Faith Communities; and 3.9.3 Church Councils in small congregations. Members were asked to work together in their table groups to identify the

top two issues the group had about the proposals, if the FAQs answered the issues and what further questions needed to be asked. These were answered by the PRC and SMPC representatives who presented the proposal.

The Presbytery agreed by consensus:

- (1) that existing congregations with less than a total of 16 confirmed members and members-in-association normally be designated as a Faith Community (Regulation 3.9.2(a)), with the provision that any such congregation may request to be designated as a small congregation (Regulation 3.9.3).
- (2) that the Presbytery hold a copy of the membership records for each Faith Community (Regulation 3.9.2(b)).
- (3) that the Presbytery in consultation with the Faith Community appoint a designated specified minister for each Faith Community to provide guidance, encouragement, development and accountability (Regulation 3.9.2 (c)).
- (4) that in accordance with the current Presbytery Rule P2.1.3 each Faith Community may appoint a participant who is a confirmed member of the Church as a member of Presbytery.
- (5) that the responsible body for property used by Faith Communities shall be the Presbytery when and if the Faith Community is no longer able or willing to be responsible for the property (Regulation 4.5.1 (b)).

Rural ministry staffing

The Rural Ministry Committee proposed that the Presbytery approve the placement of two additional full-time equivalent (FTE) ministry agent positions (making a total of three FTE) to work with rural and small communities to assist those communities in their missional life and outreach from the start of 2019 for a period of five years.

Presbytery members expressed concern regarding the budgetary implications of the proposal and after considerable discussion passed by majority to: note the request of the Rural Ministry Committee for two extra FTE placements; put on hold the appointment of any further staff positions until the state of the Presbytery's Budget can be discerned and brought for adoption to a subsequent Presbytery meeting and requested the PSC to give its primary attention to the development of a considered strategic mission plan and budget.



Church Law

Presbytery approved by consensus Presbytery Rules P3.1 for PSC and P3.12 for Presbytery Delegated Sub-committees. These rules specify the authority, responsibilities, membership, meetings, technology, quorum, delegations, minutes, circulating resolutions, officers, calling a meeting, conduct of meetings and conflict of interest of the committees. The Rules of the Standing Committee now include in its membership the Convenors of PRC, Property, SMPC and CEDAL. This will allow for a better information flow across the Presbytery committees and give a broader view in decision-making.

Presbytery Standing Committee elections

Congratulations to Kalo Fotu, Louise Power and Rev Nalin Perera who were elected as members of PSC.

Multicultural and Cross-cultural Ministry Committee

The Committee told us of their future vision, including the continuing development of awareness about multicultural ministry, including intercultural understanding, cross-cultural communication and building bridges between all members of the Uniting Church. They will also have an emphasis on Next Generation Leadership as part of the Youth Intercultural Reference Committees strategic plan for 2018 and are keen to help develop stronger relationships between CEDAL and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse congregations in the area of training and leadership development.

Presbytery Property committee

The meeting was advised that guidelines are being prepared for church councils for the use of properties by UCA and NON-UCA congregations and community programs in order to facilitate better relationships between congregations and users of their properties.

To help congregations with the use and maintenance of their properties there is a Property and Safety Checklist and Property Budget worksheet available on the UCA website, unitingchurchwa.org.au.

Rev Dr Ian Tozer acknowledged

PSC member, Travis Windsor gave the Minute of Appreciation for Rev Dr Ian Tozer as Presbytery of WA secretary from May 2016 until February this year.

Ian took on the challenging task of leading the effective separation of the Presbytery and Synod and was integral to creating the Presbytery of WA's distinct identity. He took up the position having had long experience in many different aspects of the life of the Uniting Church, both inside WA, as

well as in other Synods.

"This gave the Presbytery a voice with an excellent understanding of the role of the Presbytery at a time when such an understanding was critical to its development," said Travis.

"Ian brought both wisdom and knowledge to his role; he encouraged and supported the PSC and could be both pastoral and legal as required. It was with great sadness that the Standing Committee received his resignation from this role.

"As a Presbytery, we wish Ian every blessing in his future ministry and thank him for the many hours he has given us."

Establishing priorities

The final session of the day was given to table discussion. The tables were asked to write down their top 5 priorities for the Presbytery for the next 6 months to give guidance to the Standing Committee of the wishes of the Presbytery as a whole.

Commissioning service

The 13th Annual Meeting of the Presbytery of WA concluded with a Commissioning Service.

Presbytery of WA chairperson, Rev Lorraine Stokes was joined by the Convenors of the nine committees of the Presbytery of WA: PRC, Rev Trevor Waters; SMPC, Rev Greg Ross; PPC, Rev David Kriel; CMC, Moira Mathie; CEDAL, Rev Bev Fabb; Rural Ministry Committee, Yuko Tonai-Moore; Multicultural and Cross-Cultural Committee, Rev Nalin Perera; Uniting Generations, David Beards and CCSC, Yvonne Robinson. They committed to undertake their responsibilities to lead their team, convene meetings, work in their field of service, bring reports and, in doing this, to show Christian love for the glory of God.

Rev Lorraine Stokes then asked the Presbytery of WA members who serve on these committees and work with the convenors to stand and she prayed for them as they seek to use their gifts and skills to fulfill this special calling.

Save the date

The next meeting of the Presbytery of Western Australia will be held on Saturday 13 October.

Rev Dr Ian Tozer

