

NOTICE OF PROPOSAL FOR THE 13th ANNUAL MEETING of the PRESBYTERY of WESTERN AUSTRALIA - 16 JUNE 2018

Pastoral Relations Committee & Strategy and Mission Planning Committee

That the Presbytery agree:

1. that existing Congregations with less than a total of 16 confirmed members and members-in-association be designated as a Faith Community (Regulation 3.9.2(a)).
2. that 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)).

Rationale

This proposal seeks to provide a pastoral response to Uniting Church congregations with less than 16 confirmed members and members-in-association who:

- i. 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
- ii. are worshipping together and seeking to relate to the Church for nurture and support.

Uniting Church Regulation 3.9 provides alternative local church structures like Faith Communities to enable the Uniting Church to provide oversight to all its members and members-in-association.

There are two key drivers for this proposal:

1. a Faith Community is not required to fulfil the purpose and responsibilities of a Congregation (Reg 3.1.1) and a Church Council (Reg 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 (Reg 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 is a struggle to get a quorum. This proposal will reduce the number of Congregations (from 118 to about 80 – see attached graph) without restricting any group from sending a representative if they choose to.

In agreeing to the number of 16 members as the minimum for a congregation in Part 1, the Presbytery under Regulation 3.8.5(b):

- i. accepts that the quorum for a congregation is a minimum of 8 members; and
- ii. determines that a quorum will be at least $\frac{1}{2}$ of its members if there are less than 30 members (ie $8 \times 2 = 16$ members are a minimum)

Mover: Pastoral Relations Committee Second: Strategy and Mission Planning Commission

Please forward questions or comments to mark.illingworth@wa.uca.org.au

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Can we still be designated as a congregation with less than 16 members and members in association?** Yes. The Presbytery can authorise you to operate as a “Small Congregation” (Regulation 3.9.3) as you continue to meet the purpose and responsibilities of a congregation (Regulation 3.1.1) and the responsibilities of a Church Council (Regulation 3.1.2).
2. **Can we be a Faith Community with more than 16 members?** Yes. There is flexibility regarding the number of members for a Congregation, Small Congregation and Faith Community. If there are 40 or more members then the Presbytery will ask the group to become a Congregation (cf Regulation 3.9.3(c)).
3. **Can we become a Congregation again?** Yes. A Faith Community may apply to Presbytery to be recognised as a Congregation (Regulation 3.9.2(e)). It is recommended that this occur when there are 40 or more members (compare Regulation 3.9.3(c)).
4. **Will there be clear guidelines provided as to the Faith Communities relationship and responsibility to and from the Presbytery?** Yes to support and nurture worship, witness and service.
5. **Can we keep our current name?** Yes. The designation of “Faith Community” is an internal designation use only so you don’t need to change your name with regard to government services such as building connections (eg electricity) or taxation purposes (eg ABN) or for communication within or outside the denomination.
6. **Do we need to nominate a contact person for our Faith Community?** Yes. Please notify the Pastoral Relations Committee Administrator with the contacts details.
7. **Are Members of Faith Communities still part of the Uniting Church under the Basis of Union?** Yes. Official Faith Community members are full members of the Uniting Church. A record of their membership will be held by the Presbytery. Records are to be sent to the Pastoral Relations Committee Administrator.
8. **Can we still welcome new members into the Uniting Church?** Yes, and please notify the Presbytery Relations Committee Administrator who will hold a master record of all Uniting Church members who are part of Faith Communities (Regulation 3.9.2(b))
9. **Can we still hold a Church Service?** Of course! As a Faith Community you are encouraged to explore how best to nurture, support and serve God in your time and place.
10. **Can we still have a Minister or Pastor?** Yes, however the person will be designated as being in a Congregation or in a Presbytery position that is then linked with you. This is to ensure appropriate oversight is provided to the person.
11. **Can we have input into the specified minister who is designated to provide guidance, encouragement, development and accountability to us?** Yes this will be discussed with you.
12. **Can we form a cluster of congregations and faith communities?** Yes. A great example is the Warren Blackwood Cluster where a representative from each group come together to help provide leadership in areas such as pastoral and financial as well as provide representation to the denomination.
13. **Can we meet with other denominations?** Yes. Worship can be shared with other denominations as a faith community or as a congregation.
14. **Can we continue to operate a bank account and hold assets?** Yes. The responsibility for money and assets will continue as is unless you request the Presbytery to take over responsibility.

15. **Can we continue to use our building?** Yes. A Memorandum of Understanding is being developed to clarify the expectations and responsibilities of all bodies (eg Congregation, Faith Community, Presbytery Property Committee, Synod Resources Board) regarding property owned by the Uniting Church Property Trust (WA). Under Regulation 4.5.1(b) the responsible body shall be the Presbytery for properties held for use by a Faith Community.
16. **Can we still let other groups use our building?** Yes. Updated processes are being developed to bring clarity to how we share our resources with others.
17. **Can we have input into the future of our building if we handover responsibility to the Presbytery?** Yes. Local knowledge is essential to determine the best use and future of the facility.

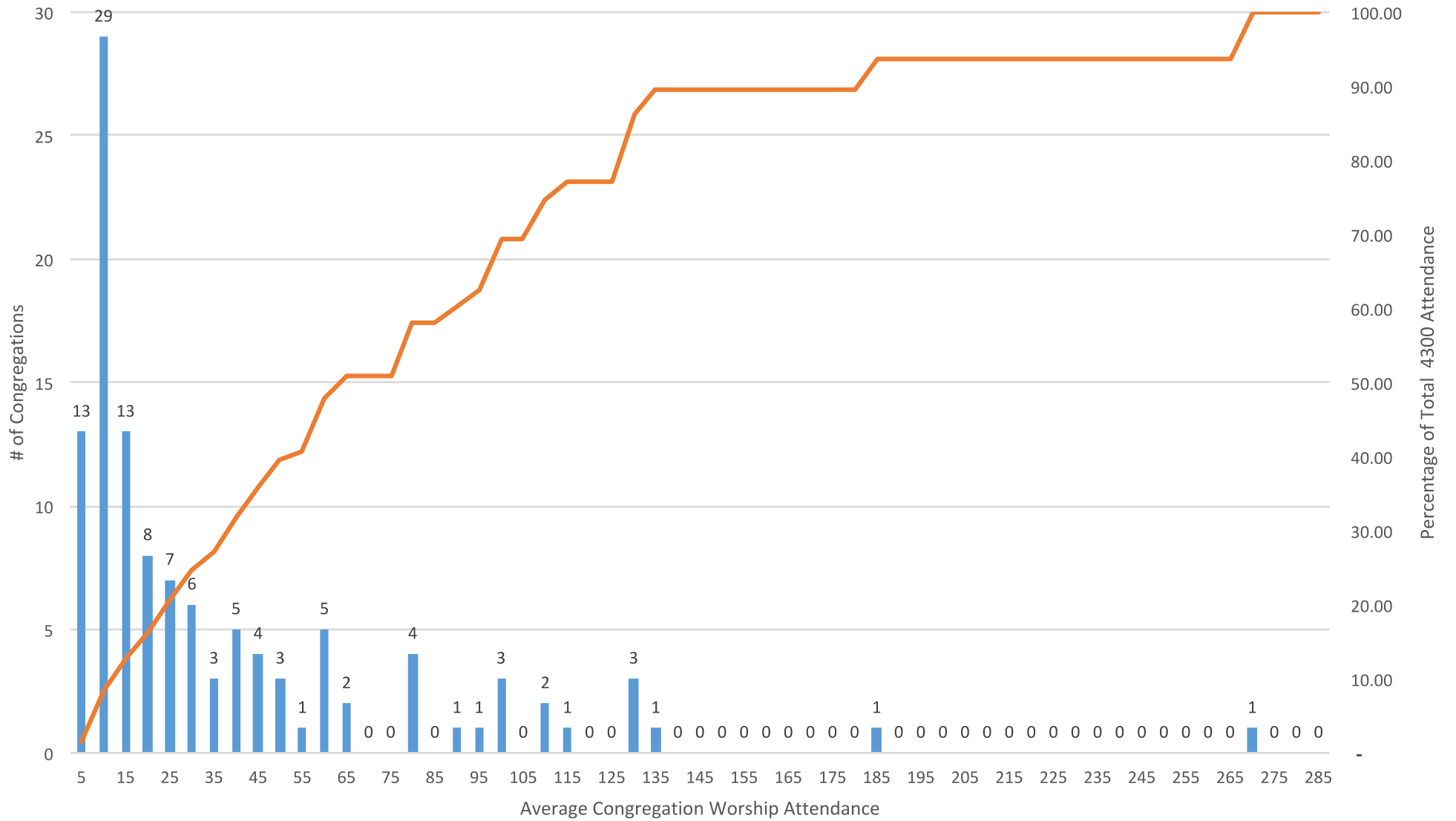
Presbytery Contact Information

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Average Attendance of WA's 118 Congregations and Faith Communities



■ Total Congregations
 — Percentage of Total Average Sunday Attendance