



Presbytery of Western Australia

<i>Chairperson</i>	Bob Hunt
<i>Immediate past Chairperson</i>	Rev Lorraine Stokes
<i>Acting Secretary</i>	Rev Bev Fabb
<i>Treasurer</i>	Ps Marilyn Price

OVERVIEW

The role of the Presbytery is “to perform all the acts of oversight necessary to the life and mission of the Church in the area for which it is responsible, ... exercise oversight over the congregations within its bounds, encouraging them to strengthen one another's faith, to bear one another's burdens, and exhorting them to fulfil their high calling in Christ Jesus.” (Basis of Union, para 14 (c))

The Presbytery, therefore, is to encourage and strengthen congregations and enhance the life and mission of the Church. It has been doing a lot of work to enable congregations to develop mission activities in their communities e.g., providing Mission Shaped Ministry courses, developing Mission Planning Process, facilitating community-based mission events and activities, providing various ministry and leadership courses. Some congregations have grasped these opportunities and are endeavouring to engage with their community and grow and share their faith.

But the Presbytery also at times has a role in exhorting congregations to fulfil their calling. The sad reality is that there are a number of congregations and faith communities that are unwilling or unable to make the transition from a format of church which is not relevant in today's society especially for the younger generations. There is a need to engage and listen to the community, to identify opportunities to love and serve and to share God's love with our neighbours. Congregations need to take realistic look at their situation and be prepared to make radical change for the sake of the mission of God.

In its role in oversight of the life and mission of the Church, the Presbytery at times has to make difficult decisions. The recent building inspections have highlighted the fact that some congregations have not been adequately maintaining the buildings for which they are the responsible user. Lack of funds and ageing membership will in some cases make it more difficult for congregations to adequately maintain some buildings into the future. The Presbytery is currently developing a “Property Mission Strategy” to aid decision making on which buildings should be retained and which we need to let go of, in order to release resources for mission in other areas.

The Presbytery consists of the congregations in its area working together, funded largely by the giving of the congregations through Mission and Service contributions. However, we now discover that over half our congregations (including some of our larger congregations) and faith communities contribute nothing, and others contribute very little to Mission and Service. Within the Presbytery, congregations are urged to “bear one another's burdens” and giving to Mission and Service is one way to do this. At its last meeting, the Presbytery called upon all congregations to review their giving to Mission and Service and asked all those congregations who currently give nothing to begin contributing. This will enable the Presbytery to encourage and support those congregations who are seeking to live out the mission of God in new ways.

Congregations will need to realistically and honestly assess their willingness and ability to thrive into the future by asking themselves the following questions:

- **Why does your Congregation exist?**
- **How does your Congregation intend to not only survive but to also thrive?**
- **What are your Congregation's long term (+10 years) and short-term goals (next three years)?**



FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The Presbytery continues to undergird its worship, witness and service with the Four Strategic Directions (adopted May 2015):

- Developing a culture of open communication
- Increasing the church's capacity for community engagement
- Developing and/or promoting relevant education, training and leadership development resources, programmes and projects
- promoting a culture of faith formation and faith sharing.

Declining congregations and diminishing local leadership is a major concern of the Presbytery. Following are some of the goals and actions currently being taken to support and encourage congregations to address their current situation:

A. CEDAL

Recruiting the next generation of ministers: In collaboration with the Candidates for Ministries Committee, a recruitment strategy has been developed, which involves:

- Advertising of ministry training and calls to ministry via media outlets across Perth such as 98.5 radio, advertising at Perth Bible College and Murdoch.
- Resume running a "Ministry Expo Evening" after advertising has occurred in 2019.

Phase 1 Period of Discernment: In collaboration with the Candidates for Ministries Committee:

- Create a program of intentional meetings to support and encourage those in Period of Discernment so that there is a smooth transition into discerned ministry direction with adequate support for applicants and preparation for candidacy.
- Retreat day in February and three other meetings during the year for intentional reflection on discernment and ministry experiences by early graduates. (2019).
- Encourage potential church planters by selecting those who have started various activities, businesses or ministries from scratch.

Phase 2 Ordinand Formation: A formation program focused on Equip, Inspire and Encourage.

- Ten formation days per year plus short courses (another ten days per year) so that formation can be added to simultaneous academic study.
- Particular days of training open to those who may be transferring from another denomination (achieved in 2019).
- Using the three-year cycle from PTH's prior program and with more practical upskilling and a focus on pioneering.
- Active partnerships with interstate UCA theological colleges for academic studies. Implement a variety of pathways to ordination - not a one size fits all program.
- Pathways created for current Pastors to be prepared for ordained ministry, using an apprenticeship model, supplemented by study and formation.

Phase 3 Recent ordinands:

- Two retreat days per year,
- A mentor and supervisor in place.
- Regular contact with graduates to ensure that they are engaged in continuing education and have support.

Phase 4 Continuing Education:

- Regular training events made available which include upskilling in leadership, education, conflict management, Intercultural awareness, Indigenous Sovereignty, professional supervision and mandatory requirements (Safe Church, Ethical Ministry and Basis of Union etc.).

- In collaboration with the Thrive Mission Committee, facilitate training in Mission Shaped Ministry and encouragement of Fresh Expressions of Christian community and outreach. In collaboration with Synod, continue to work on processes for those transferring from other denominations to the UCA and provide intentional training.

Lay Education and Formation:

- Provide training and assessment for Pastors in the Core Competencies and develop Learning Agreements with all Pastors for development of General Competencies.
- Develop a program for assessment of competencies for Lay Preachers which accords with Assembly Standards.
- Deliver training for lay people to be authorised to preside at the sacraments, and provide refresher courses every three years.
- Certificate IV programs being taught weekly with Dr Elaine Ledgerwood - suitable for Lay Preacher or Pastor training and for development of lay leaders. By 2021, diploma program added to PTH in conjunction with another UCA training institution.
- A monthly meeting via Zoom to provide training and support for lay leaders already developed.
- Weekly English and theology classes provided to enable people from non-English speaking ethnicities to develop theological skills and enable completion of Certificate IV and become candidates.

Assembly Review 2020

In the first half of 2020 the Assembly Standards for Ministry Committee will undertake a review of CEDAL to determine if we are meeting the current Standards set by the Assembly for theological education and formation for specified ministries.

B. CANDIDATES FOR MINISTRY

- Review of Period of Discernment to make it more user friendly and better assist participants to discern their calling to ministry.
- Actively promote the call to ministry, both ordained and lay, within the UCA, with the aim of increasing the number of candidates for specified ministries, and also attracting younger candidates.
- Encourage more people to become commissioned Lay Preachers.

C. THRIVE MISSION COMMITTEE

Mission

- produced a new Mission Planning Resource for use by all Congregations/Faith Communities, Committees and Agencies in developing their Mission Plans.
- provided access to small grants to establish or step up a Fresh Expression of Church or Mission Activity.
- appointed and trained a team of people to deliver the Mission Shaped Ministry Course in various ways across the Presbytery in the coming years.
- trained a team of 6 Mission Coach Trainers to train more Mission Coaches to assist ministry agents, congregants and groups to encourage and sharpen focus on their Mission and Mission Planning and will continue to enhance and further develop this skill base in 2020.
- started developing a series of video resources for sharing Australian stories of Fresh Expressions of Church and Re-generation of Churches and to train more Mission Coaches and Resource people to undertake Mission Shaped Ministry.
- hosted the National Pioneer Ministry Gathering in Perth in March this year and agreed to the National Pioneer Gatherings request to do the same in 2020.

Property

The Thrive Mission Committee has the responsibilities of the Presbytery Property Committee and to assist Thrive in this work a Property Advisory Group [PAG] has been formed. Action is in hand to delineate the areas of responsibilities between Synod and Presbytery and communicate this to the congregations.

Recently it was suggested that the level of authority for a local decision in relation to property should be reviewed as the current level of \$5,000 that triggers referral to Synod is considered too low.

The Property Advisory Group will undertake the tasks in Regulation 4.3.1 including:

- The development a long term (2020–2045) Strategy for Property and Resources in conjunction with Synod’s Property Services Committee.
- The development of process and policies such as assessment of property submissions and making recommendations to Synod.
- Monitor the undertaking of maintenance works identified in the recent building inspections.

D. FINANCES

The issue management of surplus funds has now been resolved.

A review of Mission and Service Contributions has revealed that half of congregations do not contribute to Mission and Service which is a significant income source for the Presbytery. In addition, the main contributor, UCIC, has indicated that, due to the downturn in the rental market in the CBD, it may not be able to make contributions at the same level in the future. It is intended to write to those congregations not making any contributions requesting them to review their finances and make contributions if possible.

E. PEOPLE

Over the past 12 months the Presbytery has developed 5 key committees and 4 networks as follows:

Committees:

Standing Committee
Thrive Mission Committee
Commission for Education for Discipleship and Leadership (CEDAL)
Pastoral Relations Committee
Candidates for Ministry Committee

Networks:

Rural Ministry
Uniting Generations
Multicultural
Congregational Community Services

Most of the Committees and Networks have now been resourced and are starting to operate under the new rules.

A Chairperson or a Coordinator have been appointed to each of the Committees and Networks apart from the Multicultural Network.

Most of the Presbytery staff positions are now filled and the intention is to fill the balance by the end of 2019.

The Presbytery Secretary position has yet to be filled. Rev Bev Fabb acted in the position up to the August 2019 Presbytery meeting and Rev Des Cousins will act until the November Presbytery meeting.

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