



Moderatorial Nominating Committee

Synod Standing Committee appointed the Committee as follows:

Co-convenor	Rev John Dunn (Past Moderator)
Co-convenor	Robert Watson (Past Moderator)
Members	Rev Ken Devereux
	Steve Higgins
	Livia Hool
	Rev Anne McAndrew
	Alison McCubbin
	Trevor Thomas
	Hanamoia Vaitogi
Administrator	Maureen Bourke

NEEDS AND ISSUES FOR THE CHURCH IN THE 2020-2023 TRIENNIUM

In accordance with the By-Laws and Rules, The Synod Standing Committee prepared advice for the Moderatorial Nominating Committee (MNC) concerning its assessment of needs and issues for the Church during the 2020-2023 Triennium, to be considered alongside the gifts and skills of nominees. This document is attached to the Synod Standing Committee's Report to Synod.

NOMINATIONS

Nominations were declared open on 11 April 2019 in a letter from the General Secretary to all ordained ministers, lay appointees to the ministry of pastor, regional pastors, secretaries of church councils and secretaries of councils and boards of the Church in Western Australia. Notices followed in 'News and Notes' and a video presentation from three past moderators was made available to a meeting of Presbytery. The video was also available on the Synod website for use by congregations and agencies and posted on Facebook. The MNC thanks the Media Unit and the Business Committee for this publicity. Nominations closed on 28 June 2019 with two nominees submitting the required profiles and both being properly nominated.

THE WORK OF THE MODERATORIAL NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The MNC met several times and communicated electronically as was necessary to prepare its documentation and timetable; review nominee profiles; met with the General Secretary and Moderator separately to listen to their wisdom on the role of moderator into the future; met for conversations with nominees; received referee reports; and finalised its recommendations to Synod.

STILL A TIME OF PRAYER AND DISCERNMENT

The *Basis of Union* reminds us that there is no gift without its corresponding service and so, for the Christian, life is characterized by ongoing prayerful discernment of call in relation to the gifts and graces with which one has been endowed. When it comes to discerning a call to serve in the Church, the process is one that is shared by the member and the Church. The Moderatorial nominating process and ultimately the election is set firmly within this context.

The nominations, of the Rev Don Dowling and Mrs Susy Thomas were received and are now placed before members of Synod to discern prayerfully whom, might be the one called by God to serve as Moderator during the 2020-2023 Triennium.



THE NOMINEES AND THEIR PROFILES

The MNC is required to submit to Synod the names of all nominees “who have demonstrated they can work within the visions and needs of the Church for the relevant triennium” (By-Laws and Rules 6.5.4(f)(i)) and has determined that the nominees meet this criterion.

That said, the MNC is mindful that, when it comes to making a choice, members of Synod must rely heavily upon the profile statements submitted by the nominees. Therefore, the MNC has requested that nominees address, in their profile statements, how they envisage working with certain important aspects of the role of Moderator that may not have been part of their experience to date. An opportunity will be provided for each nominee to address the Synod prior to the ballot taking place.

The brief given to nominees was to re-read the Synod Standing Committee’s assessment of needs and issues for the Church during the 2020-2023 Triennium [mentioned above] and then to prepare a two-page profile statement addressing within it the following matters:

1. Your sense of call to the role of Moderator.
2. Your approach as Moderator to the diversity that exists within the Church and to what has been termed “a Fresh Expressions” mindset.
3. Your approach as Moderator to relationships with the schools and agencies of the Church.
4. Your understanding of the role of Moderator vis-a-vis the Standing Committee, the General Secretary and the Chair of Presbytery.
5. How you anticipate that your Moderatorship broadly would be categorised.

The profile statements prepared by the nominees are appended to this report.

PROPOSALS

That the Synod:

1. **Receive the nominations of the Rev Don Dowling and Mrs Susy Thomas for election as Moderator for 2020-2023 Triennium.**
2. **Thank and discharge the Moderatorial Nominating Committee.**

(Rev) John Dunn – 0409 100 731
Robert Watson – 0477 710 713
Co-Convenors
Moderatorial Nominating Committee



Moderatorial Nominee Profile

Mrs Susy Thomas

(provided by the Candidate)

Short Bio

Born in Kerala, India, to Christian parents I was blessed to have a happy childhood steeped in faith. Sunday school, Church, youth groups – these loving communities played an important part of my life and shaped who I am today. I believe in equality and justice, underpinned by mercy for all. Every day my purpose is to walk humbly with God.

Forty-eight years ago, after completing my studies (B.A. Economics) in India, I met my husband, Phillip Thomas. We married and began our life together in London. We lived in England for 12 years until 1982 when we migrated to Perth with our two young daughters, Sonia and Sarah.

Career and Service Overview

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| 1985 – 2011 | CEO of Drug Arm WA (now called Hope Community). A community service organisation, we provided much-needed support to people who are most disadvantaged and marginalised. |
| 1994 – Present | Serving our community as a Justice of the Peace. |
| 2002 – 2008 | Represented Community Services at the Governor’s Prayer Breakfast. |
| 2010 | Runner-up of Citizen of the Year, Western Australia. |
| 2011 – 2012 | Appointed as Independent Visitor by the Inspector of Custodial Services. I was a frequent visitor to both Rangeview and Banksia Hill Detention Centres. In my role, I was responsible for meeting with the detainees, investigating and resolving issues raised, as well as writing reports on my findings. |
| 2012 | Candidate of a major party to WA Parliament. |
| 2018 | Appointed chair of Uniting World WA – International Partnership and Development Commission. |

Sense of call to the role of Moderator

I was approached by a Minister of the Uniting Church who asked me if I would consider allowing my name to go forward as a nominee for the upcoming Moderator’s position. He prayed with me and made me realise this is a “discernment process for all”. I was challenged by the words. *“Discerning is to listen to God, also, there are others discerning, the right person for this position. It is God’s church and God will direct the person God is choosing.”*



During the following weeks, God spoke to me through different messages given by our Congregational Minister. As a family, we prayed for God's will to be done. After much prayer and soul searching, I realised that it is indeed a discerning process, and I have to be obedient and allow my name to go forward.

Approach

I am from a culturally and linguistically diverse background. Our God is a God of all. I've had the privilege of living in three continents and have always been involved with the life, witness and worship of local congregations. I believe that God accepts all forms of worship in all languages and forms. Isn't it fantastic to see all cultures praise our God together!

The statement to the nation, in the 1977 Basis of Union, "*A Christian responsibility to the society has been regarded as the fundamental mission of the Church*". There are many communities around us. Churches have to be relevant in the community. The Fresh expression is mainly for the community. Our challenge is to know how to journey with them and tell about the Risen Christ. I believe, as pilgrims' people, we have an opportunity to take a leading role in caring for all of God's creation and environment.

Schools and agencies

I deeply value Uniting Church schools and our relationship with them. I am a mother of two girls who attended a Uniting Church girls' school in WA. I've seen how Church-based school education helped our daughters grow into the confident young ladies they are today. In fact, one of our daughters teaches in a Uniting Church WA boys' College.

Our congregation has a close affinity and a working relationship with the local Uniting Church School. The Moderator is a person who wears different hats... a visitor, supporter, encourager to the staff and council. In addition, the Moderator must provide encouragement and pastoral care to the Headmaster and the Chaplain. It is important to have open and honest communication.

Understanding of the role

I believe the role of a Moderator is to work pastorally as a servant and a shepherd. Because of my career working in a care agency I understand and appreciate the need and role of support.

I believe the Moderator has to lend a listening ear and be a support to all Agencies of the Church, as per their need. I believe we are a body of Christ. We all have different tasks or functions as God has given different gifts to different people. We all are here to exercise our God-given talents to the betterment of the church to the glory of God. Moderators have work alongside people of different committees and provide support and encouragement, to help identify their strength and support them.

I believe I am a team player with many years of experience in working with government and non-government organisations, community organisations and committees. This work has been done within the multi-faith, multi-cultural communities of WA.

I will follow the example of my servant King. God's grace, mercy and forgiveness which I received; I want to share with others. I have the many years of experience needed to be a spokesperson for our organisation, whether that's in dealing with the media, government agencies or non-governmental organisations. I feel confident that I can represent the Church in different forums. I will bring that experience with me if elected, while being willing to learn more with God's grace.



Moderatorial Nominee Profile

Rev Don Dowling

(provided by the Candidate)

I. A sense of call.

Initially on being asked to consider the position of Moderator I was hesitant, however like all significant calls to ministry I could not ignore the invitation. On receiving the profile questions a gentle stirring began and a sense that I did have something to offer grew. At this point I felt a genuine call developing. I am deeply aware that my call needs to be discerned by members of Synod. So in the spirit of experiencing a gentle push in this direction and my desire for the Synod to discern with me, I submit this profile for your consideration. If the Synod discerns that I am the

person for this position I will do my best to serve and care for the Church. I will devote time and energy so that the Church of the future might be life giving, full of love and hope.

2. Diversity and “Fresh Expressions Mindset”

My attendance at Assembly as a visitor in 2018 gave me a profound insight into the diversity of our Church, from First Peoples to our myriad of cultural groups, all presenting theological and spiritual diversity, and all playing a part providing vitality in the mission of the Church. Within the diversity are the intergenerational groups contributing further challenges as they seek to offer ministry from their perspective. Given this context “Fresh Expressions mindset” of Church becomes essential.

Next February I celebrate 40 years of ordained ministry during which time I initiated and supported numerous missional activities. The Warehouse Café, Mission Planning for congregations within the Synod and Presbyteries of NSW and a special ministry at UCIC (Wesley) and more recently within the Margaret River Congregation with our Deep Listening Forum.

Ultimately a missional understanding of Church needs to be our future direction. Missional in the sense of finding ways to be the presence of Christ wherever we find ourselves, be it as a community of faith or as individual Christians. Missional is following the way of Jesus, sharing the love of God thus offering an invitation to transformational living.

I do hold to the notion that our diverse nature will be a positive force and one of the greatest blessings we have as a Uniting Church. I would want to maintain a respectful and engaging dialogue across the diversity, always mindful of each other’s situation.

If I am chosen to be Moderator, I will commit myself to the current Vision and Mission strategy of the Synod and would deliberately devote a substantial amount of my time and energy supporting, encouraging and being involved in the diversity of our missional ministries. I am a creative person who enjoys initiating and working alongside other creative people. I would use this skill and gift in the ‘Fresh Expression’ journey of the Church.



3. Relationship to Schools and Agencies.

During my ministry I have had the privilege of being a School Chaplain and connected with some of our Synod Agencies. I had governance experience initially on the Board of St Stephens, Duncraig and later as a member of Council of Wesley College, Sydney, a residential University college. These experiences have been positively memorable and have strengthened in my mind the importance of the broad ministry we can achieve. I learnt the wisdom of collaboration through my work with Schools and Agencies connecting with thousands of people, many who had little or no contact with church. It is my understanding that in these environments we are invited to be a meaningful presence of Christ offering transformation, hope and love.

If I am chosen to be Moderator I would add value to the connections already made and intentionally develop further relationships that would augment positive connections with our Schools and Agencies.

4. Role of Moderator vis-a-vis Standing Committee, the General Secretary and Chair of Presbytery.

At the heart of my entire ministry has been the pastoral relationship. This has included respect, kindness, listening and empathy to the uniqueness of all God's people. I would comprehend the role of Moderator in all councils of the Church and in particular the relationship with the Chair of Presbytery and the General Secretary to be of a deeply pastoral relationship, and would work hard at maintaining a positive and transformation relationship in these areas. Not to do so would be counter productive to the mission of the Church.

I am generally a good-natured person and love being with people. My ministry in Congregations, Schools, the Defence Force, Hospital and Hospice has allowed me to meet an extensive range of people, developing significant relationships, and journeying with people through the joys and challenges of their lives. These pastoral experiences would enable me to work closely with the Standing Committee, the General Secretary and the Chair of Presbytery.

I have noted the 'Synod Standing Committee's Advice to the Moderatorial Nominating Committee' regarding the role of Moderator. This extensive document gives clear expectations of the role and I fully support the understanding of the needs and issues for the 'Next Triennium'. In particular I would want to bind together the people of the Uniting Church in WA so that I am able to provide positive leadership in 'Particular Circumstances and Events'.

I am committed to the consensus model of the Uniting Church and will endeavour to deeply listen to the many voices within our Church. I am fully aware of the challenges the Church faces with regard to being a Spiritual Leader in a 'New World' and look forward to "think into the future, (with imagination) engender hope, encourage innovation and especially engaging with a wide range of age and cultural groups.

5. Categorization of Moderatorship.

If chosen to be Moderator I would hope that members of the Uniting Church in WA and other significant people would categorize my leadership foremost as one in which I encourage and initiate creative mission in the church.

I would also hope to be categorized as a deeply pastoral and caring person who was a faithful presence of Christ.

Don Dowling
August 2019