



Presbytery of Western Australia Standing Committee

Committee Members

<i>Chairperson</i>	Bob Hunt
<i>Immediate past Chairperson</i>	Rev Lorraine Stokes
<i>Secretary</i>	Des Cousins
<i>Treasurer</i>	Rev Marilyn Price
<i>Chairperson of CEDAL</i>	Rev Bev Fabb
<i>Chairperson of PRC</i>	Rev Dr Ian Tozer
<i>Chairperson of Thrive Mission</i>	Rev Greg Ross
<i>Member</i>	Yvonne Robinson
<i>Member</i>	Rev Nalin Perera
<i>Member</i>	Rev Luke Williams
<i>Member</i>	Louise Powell

1. THANK YOU

On behalf of the Presbytery Standing Committee I would like to thank all who have contributed to fulfilling God's work within the Presbytery of Western Australia over the past 12 months. It has not been without its challenges particularly with the spread of COVID-19 in the first half of 2020.

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on all aspects of the church's life and will do so into the future. The adaptation to the new and ever changing environment has pushed people out of their comfort zone. Who would have thought that they would attend worship in their pajamas, curled up on their couches with a hot cup of coffee!

The members of the congregations and faith communities are to be congratulated and thanked for the mighty effort that has gone into keeping the church functioning during this period. We all hope things will be less restrictive in the future.

Thanks also go to the Presbytery and Synod staff who have collaborated to provide website resources and opportunities to discuss the impact of the restrictions and share ideas. I would like to thank all committee chairpersons for their leadership and work within their committee.

2. PRESBYTERY COMMITTEES

There have been some changes to the Chairpersons of the Committees as follows:
Pastoral Relations Committee – Rev Mark Illingworth takes over from Rev Dr Ian Tozer
CEDAL – Rev David Kriel takes over from Rev Bev Fabb
Candidates for Ministry – Rev Bev Fabb takes over from Margaret Donovan

3. PRESBYTERY STAFF

Since February 2020, all staff positions have been filled but the onset of the COVID-19 has prevented it from functioning as envisaged. As restrictions are lifted, staff will return to their roles within the limits of the restrictions.



4. CRITICAL ISSUES

The Church is facing a number of critical issues which will impact the way we undertake ministry and mission. The message of God however, will not change only the methods used to deliver God's message needs to change.

COVID-19

COVID-19 has changed the way we live and it is highly likely that some these changes will remain and we will never return completely to the "old" normal" way of life. This is also true for councils of the Uniting Church within the Synod of Western Australia including the Presbytery, the congregations and faith communities and our ministry agents.

COVID-19 has shown that whilst God's message has not changed, there are new and exciting ways to spread God's message and to prepare us for God's calling. Greater use is being made of online/digital means such as live streaming, zooming and videoing. This has enabled us to attend worship, hold bible studies and meet over coffee due to the COVID-19 restrictions. It has also enabled us to reach out with God's message to a wider audience e.g. those in the community unable to be involved due to illness, distance, employment or disability.

The challenge is for the Presbytery to support and oversee the creation of a "new normal" that focuses on:

- *seeking God's call*
- *renewing and growing our faith*
- *sharing our faith with others.*

Presbytery Finances

The Presbytery provides assistance and support to congregations and faith communities in pastoral relations, mission planning, education and training, candidates for ministry and property. To undertake these responsibilities the Presbytery has 9.1 FTEs and many dedicated and passionate volunteers.

The Presbytery is very grateful for the funding it has received from UCIC (portion of rental income from property in the Perth CBD), congregations and faith communities via mission and service contributions, the Synod via grants and Trust funds allocations.

2020

The actual income for 2020 is less than was budgeted for due mainly to the downturn in the Perth CBD property market and the impact of COVID-19. To balance this loss of income, reductions have been made to expenses and funds have been sourced from the Presbytery Reserve. It is estimated that the Presbytery Reserve will have little or no funds at the end of 2020.

At this stage, mission and service contributions are being maintained as budgeted. However there are some congregations and faith communities that are not contributing or have not reviewed the level of their giving in recent times.

2021

Income for 2021 will be significantly impacted by the downturn in the CBD property market and COVID-19. Currently it's estimated that there will be a shortfall of \$460 000. This will have a significant impact on the Presbytery's ability to undertake all of the functions it is currently providing. Options are being investigated to overcome this significant shortfall of funding.

Presbytery Finance Committee

The PSC has established a Finance Committee to address financial issues facing the Presbytery and make recommendations to the Presbytery Standing Committee.

The Committee membership is:

- Bob Hunt

- Ps Marilyn Price
- Rev Bev Fabb
- Rev Lorraine Stokes

The challenge will be for the Presbytery to fulfil its responsibilities within the financial resources available.

Property

God has blessed us by providing, through the prudent management of previous generations, extensive property assets throughout Western Australia.

We as a church are the custodians or users of these property assets with the responsibility of using them to advance the kingdom of God now and into the future.

It is our responsibility to sustainably manage these God-given resources for the benefit of not only us today but also for future generations.

The Church is currently facing:

- declining and ageing membership
- an outdated model of church
- problems with the usage, locations and maintenance of some of our existing church buildings
- lack of churches in the newer, growing areas in the metropolitan area and in the major regional centres

The COVID-19 restrictions have been the critical catalyst that has highlighted the need for radical change to the way we do church, such as:

- delivering God’s message by using online/digital ministry methods in balance with “bricks and mortar” assets..
- rationalising our church centres to allow the development of new and adventurous ministry and mission programs in “greenfield” sites in the newer outer suburbs and in existing inner suburbs.

To make meaningful property decisions, history and people’s stories and sense of place need to be taken into consideration along with financial and structural factors. This makes property planning and decisions regarding the best use of properties for ministry and mission very complex. But it’s something we can no longer put in the “too hard basket”. The time to act is now!

The challenge is how to make the best use of the Church’s property assets to support the mission of God now and in the future.

Conclusion

At this time we need to heed the words of Paul in Philippians 3:12-14.

¹² Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Bob Hunt
Chairperson of Presbytery