



Synod Standing Committee

<i>Moderator</i>	Rev Steve Francis
<i>Acting Ex-Moderator</i>	Robert Watson
<i>Moderator-Elect</i>	Susy Thomas
<i>General Secretary</i>	Rev David de Kock
<i>Members elected by Synod</i>	Steve Higgins Margaret Martin Alison McCubbin Julie Ridden Rev Dr Ian Tozer Alison Xamon
<i>Appointed by Standing Committee</i>	Rev Andrew Syme (Schools Forum) John Berger (UnitingCare Forum) (From 12/2019)
<i>Appointed by Presbytery of WA</i>	Robert (Bob) Hunt
<i>Appointed by Congress Regional Committee</i>	Rev Robert Jetta Mitchell Garlett
<i>By Invitation</i>	Rev Mark Illingworth (Deputy General Secretary) (Until 12/2019) Maureen Bourke (Minutes)

1. MEMBERSHIP OF SYNOD STANDING COMMITTEE

1.1 Membership

The elected members of Synod Standing Committee serve until the next meeting of the Synod in session. The following members were elected at the September 2019 meeting of Synod:

Steve Higgins, Margaret Martin, Alison McCubbin, Julie Ridden, Rev Dr Ian Tozer, Alison Xamon.

Robert Watson was appointed as ex-Moderator in September 2019 when Rev Ken Williams first became ill. The Standing Committee noted with deep sadness the passing of Rev Ken Williams who had served for an extended time as ex-Moderator and who continually offered wise counsel and advice to the Standing Committee.

In the absence of an appointee by the Schools, the Standing Committee appointed Rev Andrew Syme, Executive Officer – Schools and Agencies to represent the schools, and Robert Watson, Executive Officer – UnitingCare Forum was appointed by the Forum to represent the caring agencies. Subsequently, John Berger was appointed by the Synod to represent the caring agencies when Robert Watson took the role of ex-Moderator.

The Presbytery of Western Australia Standing Committee appointed Robert (Bob) Hunt, Chair of the Presbytery of WA, to the Synod Standing Committee.

The Regional Committee of Congress appointed Rev Robert Jetta and Mitchell Garlett as members.

Rev Mark Illingworth (Deputy General Secretary) attended by invitation to resource the meeting until he resigned to take up the placement at South Perth Uniting Church in January 2020. Michael Patchell – CFO and Muralee Nair – Manager Risk and Insurance also attended as required.



1.2 Meetings

Six ordinary meetings of the Synod Standing Committee were held on 7 October 2019, 9 December 2019, 10 February 2020, 20 April 2020, 8 June 2019 and 10 August 2020. As a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the meeting in April was held on-line and subsequent meetings have allowed for on-line options.

A combined gathering of the Synod and Presbytery Standing Committees met on 17 August 2020 to discuss matters of mutual interest, including the budget for 2021.

The Synod Standing Committee and other affected parties were invited by the Business & Finance Services Committee to attend the Synod Budget Forum on 24 August 2020.

A joint gathering of the Synod Standing Committee with affected parties met at the invitation of the Synod Resources Commission on 22 August 2020 at the Annual Resources Workshop to address the subject "Towards a Property Strategy".

2. MATTERS ADDRESSED

2.2 Decisions of the 2019 Synod

2.2.1 Statement from the Heart

The Synod Standing Committee resolved to note Synod Resolution Statement from the Heart presented at the Annual Meeting of Synod 2019:

"That the Synod resolve:

1. *To support the 2017 Statement from the Heart made at Uluru as a consensus position of 250 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders from across Australia as the preferred pathway towards reconciliation, and urge the Commonwealth Government to implement:*

1.1 *The establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution to empower First Peoples to have a greater say in policy and legislation which governs their affairs and, in so doing, improve their autonomy and prosperity;*

1.2 *The establishment of a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations, and provide a means for truth-telling about the history of Australia's First Peoples.*

2. *To urge the Western Australian State Government to establish an independent Commission to advance the development of treaty making with Western Australian Aboriginal Nations;*

3. *To commend the Statement from the Heart to congregations, presbyteries and agencies for prayerful engagement and discussion."*

2.2.2 Reform of the Community Development and Cashless Debit Card Program

The Synod Standing Committee resolved to note Synod Resolution Reform of the Community Development & Cashless Debit Card Program presented at the Annual Meeting of Synod 2019:

"That the Synod resolve:

1. *To acknowledge the discriminatory nature of the Community Development Program, which sees higher requirements placed mainly on First Australians seeking employment in remote areas than on people elsewhere in Australia.*

2. *To call on the Commonwealth Government to work with First Peoples organisations to develop a new program to assist First Peoples in remote Australia who are looking for work, such as the proposal put forward by the Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory in May 2017. This should include reforming the program to move from a punitive, attendance-focused approach towards one which rewards participation in activities that are selected and valued by the community and, in turn, provide skills and experiences which improve the quality of life of all participants and their future employment prospects.*
3. *To acknowledge the discriminatory nature of the Cashless Debit Card which mandatorily restricts purchasing choices of people who are unemployed, with up to 78% of whom identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.*
4. *To call on the Commonwealth Government not to expand the Cashless Debit Card trials and instead work with communities on transitioning to a voluntary scheme co-designed with communities that includes holistic and coordinated support services.”*

2.2.3 Community Refugee Sponsorship Program

The Synod Standing Committee resolved to note Synod Resolution Community Refugee Sponsorship Program presented at the Annual Meeting of Synod 2019:

“That the Synod:

1. *noting the long-standing commitment of the Uniting Church to seek justice for refugees and people seeking asylum; most notably the Shelter from the Storm statement and associated resolutions adopted by the 14th Assembly in July 2015, and*
2. *recognising the ongoing dedicated efforts of Uniting Church congregations and members who continue to offer direct support and advocacy for people seeking asylum in our community,*
 - (a) *Write to the Federal Government expressing our support for a new Community Refugee Sponsorship model, and*
 - (b) *Encourage congregations to express their interest in supporting a new Community Refugee Sponsorship model, and*
 - (c) *Provide resources and information to those congregations expressing interest in supporting a new Community Refugee Sponsorship model.”*

2.2.4 A Generous Australian Aid Commitment

The Synod Standing Committee resolved to note Synod Resolution A Generous Australian Aid Commitment presented at the Annual Meeting of Synod 2019:

“That the Synod:

1. *affirm that Australian development aid, funded by government, church and individuals, is an effective and powerful way of combating poverty and injustice throughout the world, thereby addressing the root causes of conflict, instability, people displacement and disease;*
2. *express profound concern regarding recent cuts to Australian aid, reducing it to the lowest levels in our history;*
3. *call on the Federal Government to*
 - 3.1 *begin restoration of overseas aid cuts from the budgets of the past six years; and*

3.2 *commit to achieving the internationally agreed aid target of 0.7% Gross National Income (GNI) by 2030, beginning with a return to the top half of rich country aid donors by the end of next parliamentary term.”*

2.2.5 Voluntary Assisted Dying

The Synod Standing Committee resolved to note Synod Resolution Voluntary Assisted Dying presented at the Annual Meeting of Synod 2019

That the Synod:

1. *affirms that:*

(a) *life is a gift of God, and all human life, regardless of circumstance, is precious to and has dignity before God;*

(b) *‘neither death nor life, neither suffering nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord’ (see Romans 8:38-39);*

(c) *as followers of Christ and through God’s accompanying grace, gifts of fresh wisdom, peace, courage and compassion can be birthed in the midst of suffering, which is a deep and abiding mystery;*

(d) *‘while death is the end of mortal life it marks a new beginning in our relationship with God’ (see Uniting in Worship 2; Funeral Liturgy);*

(e) *as followers of Christ we are called to spiritual discernment and responsibility as we journey through life and death;*

(f) *as the body of Christ we are called to be a loving and supportive community around people in need of care as they or their loved ones move closer to the end of mortal life;*

(g) *as citizens in a pluralistic culture we also seek to care for and respect our neighbours who may not hold to our faith in God yet may experience fear, uncertainty, pain, grief or sometimes, extreme and extended suffering, as they prepare for their own death or that of their loved ones; and*

(h) *multi-disciplinary palliative care is a vital service that can optimise the quality of life for someone who has an active, progressive, advanced disease, with little or no prospect of cure even as they move closer to their death;*

2. *Recognises that within the Church there is a diversity of faithful Christian understandings and responses to dying and to voluntary assisted dying which are consistent with the affirmations in clause (1);*

3. *Requests the Synod Standing Committee to develop a process for consultation with congregations, faith communities and agencies about the issue of Voluntary Assisted Dying, ensuring that this is appropriately resourced and with the hope that a proposal be brought to Synod 2020.*

4 (a) *Commends the WA Government for its commitment to increased financial allocations to Palliative care services; and*

(b) *Urges the WA Government to live up to. and in future years extend, its commitment to increased support for quality palliative care services with better access across the State; and*

5. *Communicates these decisions to the Premier, the Minister for Health and the Leader of the Opposition.*

2.3 Appointments by Synod Standing Committee

2.3.1 Disaster Response & Community Recovery Committee

In accordance with By-Law S5.2 the Synod Standing Committee appointed the following members to the Disaster Relief and Community Recovery Working Group:

Rev David Jackson (Convenor), Rev David de Kock, Rev John Dihm, Ps John Tomkins, Rev Gordon Scantlebury, Rev Mitch Fialkowski, Rev Don Dowling, Ps Lindsay Ginn and Rev Sophia Lizares.

2.3.2 Legal Advisory Committee

The Synod Standing Committee appointed the following members to the Legal Advisory Group:

Rev David de Kock (Convenor), Luke Edmonds, Alison Xamon

2.3.3 Council for Mission

The Synod Standing Committee appointed the following members to the Council for Mission:

Rev David de Kock (Convenor), Julie Ridden, Chris Walker, Rev Hannes Halgryn, Rev Greg Ross, Rev Stephen van Schalkwyk, Richard Patterson. Each represents and is nominated by their committee.

2.4 Risk Review

The Synod Standing Committee approved the Risk Management Policy and Framework in February and received regular updates to the Risk Profile of the Church in WA from the Manager, Risk and Insurance. These are previously discussed by the Risk Review Group comprising members of both Synod and Presbytery.

2.5 Legal Matters

2.5.1 Constitutions

The following Constitutions with changes agreed by the Church Law Committee were approved:

- i. UnitingCare West (trading as Uniting WA)
- ii. Good Samaritan Industries (trading as Good Sammy Enterprises)
- iii. Trinity - A Residential College of the Uniting Church in Australia at the University of Western Australia

Updated Constitutions and By-Laws are available on the UCA website as soon as they are approved.

<https://unitingchurchwa.org.au/administration/synod/by-laws/>

2.5.2 By-Laws

The following By-Laws with changes agreed by the Church Law Committee were approved:

- i. Ecumenical Affairs Network
- ii. International Partnership and Development Commission
- iii. UnitingCare Forum
- iv. Resources Commission
- v. Moderator

Updated Constitutions and By-Laws are available on the UCA website as soon as they are approved.

<https://unitingchurchwa.org.au/administration/synod/by-laws/>

2.5.3 Policies

The following Policies were approved by the Synod Standing Committee:

- i. Responding to Complaints of Past Child Abuse Policy
- ii. Direct Personal Responses (DPR) Guidelines
- iii. Persons of Concern Policy Framework

2.6 General Secretary

The matter of the General Secretary's Term of Office was regularly discussed and considered in view of the specified end of placement at the ebd of February 2021.

At the June meeting it was agreed to extend the placement of Rev David de Kock as General Secretary until the end of September 2022 (alternatively the end of the month of the 2022 Synod Meeting).

It was also agreed to proceed with the recruitment of an Associate General Secretary to replace the Deputy General Secretary who had taken up a congregation placement.

The General Secretary presented a Future Directions Paper to the June meeting of the Standing Committee which is attached to this report for information.

2.7 Synod/Presbytery Relations

The Chair of Presbytery is a member of the Standing Committee and provides a regular report on Presbytery matters. He contributes actively in discussions and decisions.

The Synod Standing Committee met with the Presbytery Standing Committee to consider matters of mutual interest, including budget matters on 17 August and it is planned to hold a regular Synod/Presbytery Forum with related staff, chairs and secretaries in the future.

2.8 Financial Matters

2.8.1 Loans to Congregations

The Synod Standing Committee approved the adoption of the Uniting Church Investment Fund Loan Guidelines for Congregations as recommended by the Resources Commission. In terms of the guidelines the UCIF will not consider loan applications from Congregations which will have the potential to place a financial burden on the Congregations and detract from their worship and mission priorities. Requests for funding to facilitate Mission are referred to the Council for Mission.

2.8.2 Cash Flow Forecasts

In the wake of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Standing Committee requested in April that the CFO to prepare a cash flow forecast for the next two years based on different scenarios relating to the longevity of restrictions arising from the Pandemic.

These forecasts revealed that the cash flow situation for the Synod would be only marginally affected but that the Presbytery would be severely affected from July 2020. The reports were provided to the Presbytery for consideration in the development of their budget for 2021.

2.8.3 Stipends & Allowances

In April, the Standing Committee endorsed the decision of the General Secretary to continue to pay ministers and staff on the Synod payroll system (includes Presbytery and some congregation staff) even if congregations were unable to contribute because of reduced income in the wake of the Pandemic. As it turned out, this was not required.

The Synod was not initially eligible for the Jobkeeper Allowance but since the decline in contribution from UCIC in July, a reassessment review has been undertaken by our auditors and an application has

been submitted to the ATO. The allowance will be credited to each congregation and to Presbytery and Synod according to the number of eligible staff.

The Standing Committee considered the proposal from the Ministerial Benefits Committee to increase stipends and allowances for 2021 by 2% and agreed to approve for budget development purposes only. The adjustment will be confirmed only once the budget is approved.

2.8.4 Uniting Church Centre Refurbishment

A proposal for the refurbishment of the Uniting Church Centre was considered and subsequently put on hold in the light of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Any further consideration would require a complete review given the learnings from workplace responses during the Pandemic.

2.9 Media & Communications Review

Jennifer Duffecy was appointed in January as a Consultant to review the Media & Communications services of the Church in WA. The review was held up during the WA government's Phase 1-3 roadmap for dealing with the COVID-19 Pandemic but is in process again. A final report will be presented to the Standing Committee in August.

2.10 Council for Mission

Several Mission Projects were considered by the Council for Mission. Details are provided below.

2.10.1 Mowanjum Community Centre

An application from the Boab Network was successful and they were granted \$70,000 for the development of a Community Centre in Derby for the benefit of the Mowanjum Community and the Boab Network. The grant includes \$10,000 for the fitting of solar panels.

2.10.2 Beldon Early Childhood Centre

An application from the Beldon-Iluka congregation (now Northway Uniting Church) for \$100,000 for Stage 1 development of the Beldon Early Childhood Centre buildings was successful. An additional amount of \$150,000 was also approved subject to the provision of final building plans. The congregation have positioned the Early Childhood Centre as an integral part of their mission plan.

2.10.3 Christians Against Poverty (CAP) Program

A re-application from the Busselton Uniting Church for \$200,000 for the establishment of a CAPS program in the region was approved after being referred back by the Council for Mission for further information. The program now fully integrates with their three pronged missional outreach plan (Opshop, Café and Poverty alleviation)

2.11 Uniting Aboriginal & Islander Christian Congress

The Standing Committee mourned the passing of Rev Garlett and noted the significance of his life work.

The Congress is able to nominate two members to the Standing Committee. Most work is done by the Covenanting Commission which is reported elsewhere.

2.12 Beanang Kwuurt Institute

BKI is a separately incorporated body under the Uniting Church in Australia (WA) Act and provides limited assistance in the area of emergency food relief.

2.13 Culture of Safety

2.13.1 National Safe Church Unit

The NSCU provides policy guidelines and assistance in the area of relational safety in churches. As such it deals with child safety, safety of disabled persons, ethical behaviour etc. The General Secretary is a member of the Governance Committee.

Regular reports are provided to the Standing Committee.

The Synod contributes 6.7% of the cost of the Unit (\$32,443).

2.13.2 Uniting Church Redress Ltd

Uniting Church Redress Ltd (or UCARL) is a company limited by guarantee to deal with applications and processes of the National Redress Scheme on behalf of the whole Uniting Church. The Standing Committee is a member and is represented at Board meetings by the General Secretary.

The Culture of Safety Unit deals extensively with UCARL in dealing with redress application.

The Synod contributes \$42,000 pa to the running of UCA Redress Ltd.

2.13.3 Safety Programs

The Culture of Safety Unit has regularly informed the Standing Committee on matters of child safety in the Church and has provided several policies on dealing with child abuse matters including dealing with perpetrators and supporting survivors. The team works widely across the Church in congregations, schools and care agencies.

2.13.4 Historical Child Sexual Abuse

The Culture of Safety Unit researches information for all reports of child sexual abuse in institutions which are or were part of the Uniting Church or its predecessors (Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational). Regular reports are provided to the Standing Committee.

2.14 Schools Liaison

The Standing Committee regularly discussed the relationship with the Schools and suggested the creation of a Forum involving Chair and Principals along the lines used by the UnitingCare Forum. An Alignment of Identity approach is under development which will provide guidelines for future Church/School relationships. The Synod Executive Officer: Schools & Colleges, Rev Andrew Syme, reports regularly to the Standing Committee.

2.15 UnitingCare Forum

The Forum is chaired by Robert Watson with the Chairs and CEO's of our caring agencies as members. The Synod Executive Officer: Caring Agencies, John Berger also attends. Regular reports are provided to the Standing Committee.

2.16 Remote Area Ministry

Remote Area Ministry is the responsibility of the Synod. Bush Chaplains report directly to the General Secretary who brings reports to the Standing Committee each month. The General Secretary is also the Convener of the National Remote Area Working Group of the Uniting Church.

Ps Lindsay Ginn was appointed as Bush Chaplain in the Goldfields Patrol, serving from Leonora to Esperance. He is based in Kalgoorlie and leads regular worship services in Kalgoorlie and Esperance.

A significant part of his work is with schools (particularly remote Aboriginal schools) where he is able to extensively use his music talents.

After serving for many years as a congregation minister in Carnarvon, Ps John Tomkins was appointed at the Bush Chaplain for the Gascoyne Patrol in July. He will continue to serve the

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congregation and the wider community as he has always done. Much of his community work is with Aboriginal people and Pacific Island workers on the fruit farms.

Rev John Dihm continues his work in the Pilbara Patrol based in Tom Price, working mainly with the mines but also with stations and local Aboriginal communities.

Rev Mitch Fialkowski also continues in the Murchison Patrol based in Meekatharra working mainly with the local Aboriginal communities but also with the stations.

2.17 Voluntary Assisted Dying

The proposals requested by the Synod in 2019 in relation to communication with government were completed and a Task Group, under the Convenorship of the Moderator was appointed to consider the Resolution of the 2019 Synod. A separate report will be provided by the Task Group. Members of the Task Group are:

Rev Steve Francis (Convenor), Susy Thomas, Rev Ken Devereux, Dr Doug Bridge, Dr Arthur Criddle, Dr Rachel Currie, Dr Brian Hill.

2.18 Royal Commissions

2.18.1 Aged Care

The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety was established in October 2018 with the date for the final report now extended to February 2021. In the case of the Church, only Juniper is affected. Juniper works closely with UnitingCare Australia on the issues.

2.18.2 Disability

The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability was established in April 2019 with the date for the final report set as April 2022. The Synod has established a Task Group, chaired by Melanie Kiely, the CEO at Good Sammy Enterprises to assist the Church in her response. The members of the Task Group are:

Melanie Kiely (Convenor), Rev David de Kock, Rev Dr David Ferguson, Cindy Gorton, Gillian Muir, Robbie Muir, John Berger, Michael Chester (Uniting WA), and Sue Thomas (Uniting WA).

Rev David de Kock
General Secretary
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FUTURE DIRECTIONS PAPER

BACKGROUND

This Paper has been prepared in response to the consideration for the extension of the term of the current General Secretary.

The Term of Appointment for the current General Secretary ends on 28 February 2021. The Synod Standing Committee considered the possibility for the extension of the term of the current General Secretary and appointed the Moderator and Moderator-Elect to discuss the options with the General Secretary. This main purpose of this discussion was to ascertain how the General Secretary envisaged the role of the General Secretary in the Future Direction of the Church.

In discussion, the General Secretary highlighted the following three goals which remained incomplete:

1. Improvement in the working relationship between the Synod and Presbytery
2. (Re)launch of a Strategic Plan in an effective way
3. Implementation of the learnings from operations in the COVID-19 Pandemic in addressing both of the above.

Subsequently, the Synod Standing Committee apparently endorsed these three goals and agreed to a possible extension of the appointment to the Synod meeting in 2022. The Standing Committee also appointed a sub-committee to discuss further and then to meet with the current General Secretary.

On 26 May 2020, the Moderator-Elect, Susy Thomas, and Chair of Presbytery, Bob Hunt, met with the General Secretary to confirm the approach. They represented the sub-committee which also consisted of Margaret Martin and Steve Higgins.

The following key tasks were highlighted:

1. Review the Impact of the COVID-19 Restrictions/shutdown
2. Create a new Strategic Plan 2021-2026 by September 2022
3. Create a finance strategy for the UCAWA to emerge from the COVID-19 period by December 2021
4. Create a property strategy which will provide for the future requirements of the UCAWA post COVID-19 period by June 2021
5. Complete the Delegations document and have teams and committees develop terms of reference
6. Complete the Values and develop and implement an implementation strategy

It was further agreed that the General Secretary would provide a written report on each of the above areas at each Synod Standing Committee meeting to highlight work done in each area and discuss blockages and challenges. This report would be shared with the Synod and Presbytery Standing Committees and regular communication provided to the wider Church every six months to coincide with Presbytery and Synod meetings.

The General Secretary would also meet every three months with the Moderator and Chair of Presbytery to review progress and to determine what actions are needed to ensure all parties are contributing to the key tasks as planned.

A brief outline of the discussion is provided below with comments, proposals and suggestions where appropriate.

1. REVIEW THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS/SHUTDOWN

This Review is ongoing in an informal way through the COVID-19 Action Group (which until recently dealt mainly with compliance in the restrictions imposed by Federal or State government) and the Synod Executive Team (which regularly considers the forward picture for the Synod in the area of strategy and operations).

A formal structure for this review involving both Synod and Presbytery staff and appropriate governance persons will be created once the COVID-19 Action Group have implemented the “Back to the UC Centre” work program. (Currently scheduled for 2 July 2020).

In the meantime, both groups are currently giving consideration to the following:

1. What changes were required because of the COVID-19 restrictions?
2. What worked well?
3. What did not work well?
4. What restrictions may never be lifted as we go forward?
5. What opportunities have arisen for addressing the future of the Church in WA? (Office and congregations)
6. What changes might we recommend to the way the Church in WA delivers Worship, Witness and Service?

2. CREATE A NEW STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2026 BY SEPTEMBER 2022

The current Strategic Plan did not, for various reasons, have an effective launch despite the broad and deep consultation which took place. Further, the various attempts to create traction were frustrated by a number of different situations and circumstances.

Nonetheless, the Church as a whole has adopted the Vision Statement – *A Christian Community for Everyone* and a number of committees and staff units are using the Four Strategic Directions as a backdrop to their work.

What largely failed to develop were the actions under each Strategic Direction which had been determined by the Strategic Planning Team consisting of representatives from across the Church, including the Schools and Agencies who met in a culminating weekend at Shoalwater.

What is required now is an agreed Strategic Plan for the period 2021 to 2026 developed again through broad and deep consultation within the Church but which is effectively launched and progressed through its life and witness.

An effective launch will be noted by a sign off of both the Synod and Presbytery in full session. It is envisaged that the Vision and Values of the new Strategic Plan will be effective for the whole Church, including, in some respect, the Schools and Agencies, recognising that they each have their own Strategic Plans.

The focus of a new Strategic Plan should however focus primarily on rebuilding congregational life in the post COVID-19 era.

Given the congregational focus, the General Secretary, as the Project Director, will work co-operatively and constructively with leaders of the Presbytery to create a common Vision, Purpose and Values statement with the Synod and Presbytery developing their Strategic Directions and Actions separately.

The Synod focus will primarily be based on developing directions in resourcing mission through the Finance, People and Property space while the Presbytery will focus on post COVID-19 ministry and mission activities at the local level.

TIMELINE:

2020 - Synod & Presbytery meetings in session to review the current documents in Table Groups
2021 – Synod & Presbytery meetings in session to consider the draft Strategic Plan and develop towards a finalised Strategic Plan

2022 – Synod & Presbytery meetings in session to confirm the Strategic Plan 2021-2026.

PRACTICAL FIRST STEPS:

Appointment of an Associate General Secretary

The future of the Deputy General Secretary role has been deferred during the COVID-19 Pandemic. This was a positional role inherited by the current General Secretary which was intended to oversee the non-Resource Division aspects of the Synod/Presbytery staff.

Later this role was redefined to include the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2018-2021 but with the potentially fatal collapse of the ceiling at Melville Church and the emergence of many other structural building risks, the role became focussed on managing the building and pastoral aspects of this situation.

It is proposed that the position be redefined as Associate General Secretary (a term generally used in other Synods) with responsibility as Project Manager for the development and implementation of the new Strategic Plan.

The position description would largely fulfil the requirements envisaged in the both the Strategic and the Values project plans developed late last year in the Compelling Vision exercise undertaken with guidance by Rev Andrew Syme and Monica Pettersen.

Such an appointment is also supported by the recommendation of the group who worked on the Strategy Project Plan – Greg Ross, Muralee Nair, Bob Hunt, Ian Tozer and Susy Thomas, and the group who worked on the Values & Behaviours Project Plan. Both had a recommendation for a 0.5FTE role with additional admin and consultancy support based on a model using principles used in the Queensland Synod.

It is further proposed that the position be advertised nationally in the Uniting Church with the expectation that a successful candidate would bring related experience from similar roles in other Synods and/or Presbyteries. Such experience would be useful also in other areas within the WA Synod and Presbytery.

PROPOSAL:

- 1. The Standing Committee request the General Secretary to work with the Moderator-Elect, Chair of Presbytery and Manager, People & Culture to develop an appropriate Position Description for the role of Associate General Secretary – Strategy**
- 2. The Standing Committee authorise the advertising on a national basis for the role of Associate General Secretary – Strategy through the Uniting Church in Australia**
- 3. The Standing Committee appoints the Moderator-Elect, Chair of Presbytery, General Secretary and Manager, People & Culture as the Interviewing Group and instructs them to bring a short list for review and appointment by the Synod Standing Committee.**

3. CREATE A FINANCE STRATEGY FOR THE UCAWA TO EMERGE FROM THE COVID-19 PERIOD BY DECEMBER 2021

In the past four years, considerable attention has been given to developing a finance strategy which ensures a strong financial foundation for the Church in WA. Amongst these has been the redevelopment of the Foundation Trust, Council for Mission funding for congregational mission, rolling three year balanced budgets, a review of the appropriate uses of Trust and Special Purpose Funds, the tendering for external management of our investments, and the tendering for an insurance broker (including proper disclosure of costs, noted elsewhere in the General Secretary Report).

The COVID-19 Pandemic has however highlighted a particularly vulnerable dependence of the Presbytery on the grant income from a single provider heavily reliant on rental income from property, namely Uniting Church in the City.

Further, it is clear that our funding for Congress and BKI could be improved. A Finance Strategy will be developed to include specific involvement of Congress and BKI.

An adequate Finance Strategy will need to particularly address these concerns in such a way that all parties are adequately informed in a timely manner to ensure that future financial decision-making is wise and strategic. It should be noted that a Finance Strategy must dovetail with a Property Strategy and Investment Strategy. This should include the development of the BKI site.

One major difficulty has been our antiquated accounting system and a staff untrained in financial strategy, budget development and budget management. Some hands-on guidance by the General Secretary has partially improved the situation but a significant step-up is required to achieve a comprehensive finance strategy.

In this regard, we are currently working with Lester Blades to appoint an accountant on a contract basis to introduce the software system recommended by our auditors (Dynamics 365 which runs on the Office 365 platform and in the Azure cloud which we already use) to replace our current system. The two systems will run in tandem until the end of the year but work on the budget for 2021 and beyond will take place on the new system. The cost for the position will be covered by the budgeted but unfilled role for an Accountant in the Finance Unit, as well as savings in auditing costs in future years.

With an adequate accounting system in place which can be used by the Synod Finance Unit, Investment Unit, Property Unit, and Insurance Services, as well as the Presbytery and Congress, we will be in a better position to finalise an overall Finance Strategy (and properly formulated Budget) by December 2020 to be presented to the Presbytery and Synod Meetings in session in 2021.

The Finance Strategy will be reviewed by the Resources Commission through the Business & Financial Services Committee, and Investment & Corporate Finance Committee annually prior to each budget cycle.

4. CREATE A PROPERTY STRATEGY WHICH WILL PROVIDE FOR THE FUTURE REQUIREMENTS OF THE UCAWA POST COVID-19 PERIOD BY JUNE 2021

Since the appointment of the General Manager (Property), there has been a systematic review of the property holdings within the Property Trust. It is clear that there are a number of properties which are either surplus to our needs or do not satisfy current requirements, or, like the BKI property, have no intentional plan for usage. Further there has been negligible planning for the development of future congregations for at least two decades.

Steps towards the development of an adequate property strategy are often hampered by slow progress through various committees with varying understandings of the UCA National Property Policy and the intent of the Regulations with regard to property. The re-establishment of the Property Services Committee which has both Synod and Presbytery representatives is beginning to develop some traction in property decisions but a full-on property strategy remains elusive.

In the development of a Property Strategy, it will be important that the Associate General Secretary – Strategy, Property Services Unit, Property Services Committee and Presbytery Property Committee work together. In each case, there needs to be a valid understanding of the extent and limitations of their role and responsibilities, and the critical need to develop a mutual goal across the Church in WA. The work undertaken in the Delegations project plan late last year will assist in the development of clear Terms of Reference for each Committee to be included in each appropriate By Law and Rule by the Church Law Committee.

The Property Strategy should contain a complete review of current property holdings, an assessment of their viability as to structure and use, and a 20 year vision for future property requirements in the Church. Included in this should be a professional review of commercial property and the potential for long term (100 year) leasehold development. The latter should be aimed at releasing the

dependence on aging structures and focussing on long term cash flows, as an integral part of the Finance Strategy.

The initial Property Strategy Plan to be finalised by June 2021 and presented to the Synod and Presbytery meeting in session in 2022.

5. COMPLETE THE DELEGATIONS DOCUMENT AND HAVE TEAMS AND COMMITTEES DEVELOP TERMS OF REFERENCE.

Under the guidance of Rev Andrew Syme and Monica Pettersen, three groups, including a team reviewing Delegated Authority in both the Synod and Presbytery developed comprehensive project plans. The Delegated Authority team consisting of David de Kock, Bev Fabb, Richard Patterson and Cindy Gorton produced a document detailing all the delegations contained in the Constitution, Regulations, By Laws & Rules and various policy decisions determined by both the Synod and the Presbytery Standing Committees.

While the document is complete, it is a raw set of rules which does highlight some inconsistencies which have developed over time. The work done last year in the Strategy, Values and Delegations project plans was an attempt to commit to “One Church Together” and thus to create a collaboration between Synod and Presbytery, Governance and Management in order to successfully deliver the vision of a compelling vision plan for the Church.

This collaboration needs to be further developed through the building of effective teams (committees of Synod and Presbytery) working independently but together in the outworking of the directions of the new Strategic Plan.

The General Secretary has the responsibility to drive this process to ensure that teams (committees and staff) share their work and create a culture of mutual support and commitment sustained by transparent communication.

6. COMPLETE THE VALUES AND DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT AN IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Again, under the guidance of Rev Andrew Syme and Monica Pettersen, three groups, including a team reviewing Culture and Behaviours in the Church in WA developed comprehensive project plans. The Culture and Values team consisting of Monica Pettersen, Robert Watson, Steve Francis, Anne Wright, Michael Patchell and John Berger.

The Project Plan envisaged the determination of a set of values and behaviours (partly completed by Monica Pettersen and Anne Wright, but still to be approved by Synod and Presbytery Standing Committees) for Table Discussion at a Presbytery meeting in session and to Synod in session in 2020.

A final set of values approved by the Synod and Presbytery Standing Committees to be presented to Synod and Presbytery in session in late 2021.

The process for embedding of the Values and Behaviours to be initiated amongst the Church Centre staff, flowing out to Ministry Agents and committee members of both Synod and Presbytery, and then to Church Councils and congregations. The Manager, People and Culture to take the lead in the process and some consideration to be given to the appointment of a 0.5FTE resource person, along the lines of the Queensland Synod model. This consideration is partly addressed in the proposed appointment of an Associate General Secretary but will need further discussion and thought.