

## PRESBYTERY HAS A VISION OF HOW IT CAN BE

*Canberra Region Presbytery seeks to be a Presbytery in which:*

*a) Congregations:*

- a. Know they are appreciated and valued as the first line of the mission of Christ in the Community;*
- b. Are encouraged to seek the signs of the Spirit within them, calling them to authentic Christian community and mission that is appropriate to their context;*
- c. Recognise they are part of a larger whole that is not a threat to them.*

*b) Ministry Agents:*

- a. Know they are appreciated and valued in their roles with congregations*
- b. Recognise they have a key role in helping their congregations discover their authentic calling as Christ's people;*
- c. Generously offer and receive support with colleagues.*

*c) Presbytery Staff:*

- a. Know they are appreciated and valued as they guide the Presbytery in considering future directions by looking for and responding to signs of the Spirit in timely and effective ways so as to "get on board" with what God might be doing in contexts we might not have expected*
- b. Grow the confidence of ministry agents, lay members, congregations by being available and present to the needs and opportunities that emerge in our Presbytery;*
- c. Ensure that, in an age of increased compliance requirements, the decline in volunteer engagement does not hinder the effective business of the church.*

*d) The Presbytery:*

*Is able to participate with other Presbyteries and the Synod as a whole in*  
*(i) discovering the call of God on our Church; and*  
*(ii) addressing the issues facing our church with transparency, trust and honesty.*

COUNTRY, COAST & CAPITAL



## THE UCA IS A CHURCH OF COUNCILS

The Uniting Church is so structured that there are 4 Councils:  
Church Council (representing Congregations)  
Presbytery (representing a region)  
Synod (roughly aligned with State boundaries)  
Assembly (national)

Each Council consists of Ministers and Lay Members in different configurations.

Each Council has specific responsibilities given to it in the Regulations. (See last page for the responsibilities of Presbytery.)

No Council can tell another Council what to do in its set area of responsibility.

Each Council can, and does, seek the advice of other Councils in certain circumstances.

**Each Council meets for formal meetings in which key decisions are made.**

In between these meetings Staff and Committees carry on the work of the Council.

NOTE – The Presbytery is NOT the Presbytery Staff. The Presbytery engages staff to assist it to fulfil its responsibilities and, in certain circumstances, act on its behalf alongside of its Office Bearers.

## THE PRESBYTERY MEETING

### 1. Relational Oversight

All of the functions of Presbytery are dependent upon the key factor of the Presbytery having relational oversight for those congregations within its bounds.

This is not oversight that exercises power or control over congregations. Relational Oversight is the focused care that a council or person has for another that involves ensuring they keep the faith of the church, are given support and encouragement for ministry and are held accountable for faith and action. It is a relational way of being where the gathered members of the Uniting Church work together to discern the will of God for the congregations for which the Council is responsible and thus fulfil their call to discipleship in Jesus Christ.

### 2. How often does Presbytery meet?

Regulation 3.5.4 (a) states: *Unless otherwise determined by the Synod, a Presbytery shall meet at least twice a year and at such other times as the Presbytery may determine.*

Our current practise is that **Presbytery Meetings** are held quarterly on a Saturday.

The meeting begins at 10.00am. We aim to finish no later than 3.30pm.

### 3. Who takes part in the formal meeting of Presbytery?

According to Regulation 3.3. the following people form the membership or Presbytery:

- The Chair and Secretary of Presbytery
- Ministers in active service
- Pastors in approved ministry locations
- Lay Preachers who are active in such numbers as Presbytery determines
- One confirmed lay member from each Congregation whose membership is under 150.  
Two confirmed lay members from each Congregation whose membership is between 150 – 250.  
Three confirmed lay members from each Congregation whose membership is over 250.
- Two confirmed members representing recognised bodies.
- Confirmed lay members and ministers who are not otherwise members of Presbytery co-opted for reasons Presbytery considers appropriate

The educational sessions are open to full participation by everyone who chooses to attend.

*It is expected that the Presbytery Reps will report back to each Congregation and Church Council concerning the matters dealt with at Presbytery meetings so that congregations are kept in the loop as to developments across our region and beyond.*

### 4. What happens when Presbytery meets?

#### a) Education/Inspiration

For a few years now we have been focussing our meetings on adding value to the life of our congregations, not simply doing the business of making decisions.

Each meeting, therefore, has a particular educational/missional focus.

Over the last three years we have looked at issues such as:

- What does the ministry of Chaplaincy have to say to the mission of congregations?
- How are we to engage with the Government's policy on Indigenous Issues?
- How do we hear what the Spirit is saying to us about being the church in our increasingly secular world?
- What does it mean to be part of a (growing) movement rather than part of an (dying) institution?

These sessions, normally in the morning, are focussed on presentations and table conversations around the theme and are a means of building relationship and giving a sense of vision.

Those attending are encouraged to spread the word about what is discussed.

#### b) Formal Business

In recognition that the Presbytery has institutional responsibilities the time after lunch is devoted to more formal business. The business is arranged to be as efficient as possible:

Reports from Standing Committee, Pastoral Relations Committee, Treasurer and Finance & Property Committee are taken as read. Members are asked to notify the Presbytery Office prior to the meeting of any questions arising from the reports.

The business of Presbytery covers a range of issues relating to the local church context (eg extensions of placements, selection of candidates, approvals for ordinations) and also the wider context (eg the UCA position on refugees, proposals for re-structuring of Presbyteries).

A comprehensive list of the things Presbytery is responsible for are found on the following page.

## **PRESBYTERY HAS RESPONSIBILITIES**

### 1. (Constitution para 26)

The Presbytery shall have such oversight as is necessary to the life and mission of the Church in the area committed to it; it shall stimulate and encourage the Congregations within the bounds, providing them with opportunities for counsel in the strengthening and assistance of one another and in their participation in wider aspects of the work of the Church.

### 2. (Regulations)

#### **- Oversight of Ministers**

- a. pastoral and administrative oversight of all Ministers including:
  - i. counselling and disciplining of Ministers in accordance with Regs 5.4.1 – 5.4.3
  - ii. ensuring Ministers receive regular professional supervision;
  - iii. providing opportunities for further training;
  - iv. determining the intervals at which Ministers shall be counselled by its Pastoral Relations Committee in accordance with Regs 3.7.3(b) and 5.4.3(a)
- b. maintaining and reviewing annually the roll of Ministers;

#### **- Oversight of Congregations**

- i. the formation of, the alteration of the bounds of and the dissolution of Congregations and other pastoral charges within the bounds; (See Reg. 3.4.1 and 3.4.4)
- ii. conducting consultations on the life and witness of Congregations within the bounds in accordance with Regulation 3.1.4;
- iii. receiving and dealing with matters referred to it by Congregations and Church Councils as provided for in Regulation 3.3.3(d) and the transmission of those matters where appropriate;

#### **- Wider Work of the Church**

- i. promoting the wider aspects of the work of the Church;
- ii. setting up agencies as may be determined;
- iii. arranging for the contribution by Congregations of funds for the purposes of the Presbytery, the Synod and the Assembly and other approved purposes;
- iv. the promotion and conduct throughout the Presbytery of such activities as will encourage and instruct the people generally toward a better understanding and a fuller participation in the whole range of Christian witness and service;

#### **- Selection and Oversight of Candidates**

#### **- Ordination, Accreditation or Recognition of Specified Ministries**

#### **- Oversight of Lay Preachers**

#### **- Placement and Appointment of Specified Ministries and Supervision of Vacancies**

#### **- Administration including:**

- i. receiving and dealing with applications to acquire property or to sell, mortgage, exchange or lease the property of pastoral charges in accordance with the provisions of the relevant Acts and Regulations;
- ii. submitting Presbytery reports and records annually to the Synod;
- iii. appointing a qualified auditor who shall audit the books of account and report to the Presbytery at least annually.