

Report for 31st Queensland Synod October 2014



Report from the **Moderator**



Bundaberg Congregation August 2014 - singing again after all the hard work of repairing the flood damage 27 -29 January 2013

Context:

The Moderator provides pastoral leadership for the Synod, speaks on behalf of the Church in the public space and chairs or attends a range of meetings across the life of the Synod. The Moderator chairs the Synod Standing Committee and works closely with the General Secretary in crafting a response to emerging issues and implementing the regulations with regard to discipline matters. Leaders of Presbyteries, lay and ordained, inform the Moderator about sensitive and pastoral matters and the Moderator works closely with Presbytery Ministers to support them in their complex leadership roles. Participating in some key committees of the Synod (Synod Standing Committee, Board for Christian Formation, Governance, Nomination and Remuneration Committee, plus the Finance Investment and

Property Board and UnitingCare Board) provides visibility of the life of the whole synod and opportunity to speak into the work of those Boards and Committees from that perspective. From time to time, after consulting with appropriate parties, the Moderator uses the powers of the role to intervene or to make remedy.

I have sought to enact an incarnational approach to the role, by visiting widely for celebration events of congregations, schools and agencies, attending dinners, retreats and routine meetings of Presbyteries and preaching engagements wherever possible. From time to time people have brought their concerns about the church and their experience of its processes and I have offered a listening ear and inquired about what further support might be appreciated. I have participated in conversations with other Church leaders and Moderators from other Synods as well as conversations in the wider community on significant social issues. In particular ways I have come alongside the multi-cultural congregations e.g. attended South Sudan Day of Hope 31 May 2014, greeted the Korean National Conference 21 July 2014, sent a greeting to the newly formed Matu Christian Uniting Church Faith Community in South Moreton Presbytery (29 November 2013) and attended the tenth anniversary of the Logan Multi-cultural Congregation (June 2013) .

Responses to our Priority Directions since last Synod

Enabling a demonstrated commitment to the shared Call and Vision

When I visited congregations and schools I sought to identify and affirm the ways in which I saw expressions of the Call Statement for Together on The Way Enriching Community. For example, we are Uniting in Christ when we gather for the World Day of Prayer, or when ministry agents meet with other Christian leaders to plan a prayer service or community event or respond to a disaster. You are acting with love when you take time to have a conversation with an elderly member of the congregation who can no longer attend church. You are living in hope when you buy Christmas gifts through Uniting World that provide a micro loan for a woman in West Timor or sponsor a child from an indigenous community to attend school. You are witnessing in faith when you talk to your neighbour about how you miss a loved one who has died but that you feel the comfort of the words of Jesus – that he has “prepared a place for all who love him.” You are working for justice when you write to your local politician and share your concerns about social issues such as seeking adequate funding for aged care.

I have attended the Heads of Churches meetings and represented the Uniting Church at events such as the Consecration of new Anglican Bishop, Cameron Venables, and the Ordination of the new Roman Catholic Bishop of Rockhampton Diocese, Michael McCarthy. On 31 May 2014, I was a guest at St Stephen’s Cathedral, Brisbane, when the Sisters of Charity celebrated 175 years since members of their order arrived in Australia. Rev Bruce Johnson represented me at the Induction of the Presbyterian Moderator at the end of July this year and also at the funeral service of Bishop Michael Putney in Townsville on 7 April 2014.

I joined with the other Heads of Churches to meet with the Premier to bring before him a variety of issues which included changes to School Chaplaincy and the demise of Local Chaplaincy Committees and the plan to dismantle REAC (Religious Education Advisory Committee), the change to surrogacy laws in Queensland, Gay unions legislation, the need for a system of accredited Disaster Recovery Chaplains and the proposed increase in the number of casinos in Queensland.

Ecumenical events attended include the Queensland Churches Together (QCT) Assembly and AGM and the commencement service of The Lutheran Conference, Dinners, Commencement Services for Kings College and the World Methodist and Uniting Women Conference in July, plus visits to Schools and Colleges including Founders Day for Moreton Bay College and The Lakes College. It has been really delightful to be involved with the commissioning services of the new principals at Shalom Christian

College (Mr Chris England) and Scotts PGC (Mr Simon Shepherd) and the new Chaplain at The Lakes College (Rev Ben Webb.)

During Reconciliation Week this year ecumenical services were held in four different locations. I attended the service hosted by Uniting Church at Glebe Road Ipswich. Uniting Church leaders were present at Slacks Creek, Frenchville, Bracken Ridge and Booval.

NAIDOC celebrations at Shalom Christian College are held in September and last year I was able to accompany Rev Ronang Garrawarra, Chair of Uniting Aboriginal Islander Christian Congress, for the event in Townsville. It coincided with the Commissioning of the new Principal.

The Moderator seeks to foster Queensland Synod's support of the covenant with Uniting Aboriginal Islander Christian Congress through assistance to Calvary Presbytery. In addition, many relationships with individuals and congregations e.g. Ellie's Pantry Moreton Rivers and Indooroopilly Congregation with Mapoon. Support stretches beyond denominational boundaries for initiatives to develop Indigenous Christian leaders such as the Grass Tree Conference. Attendance of several Indigenous young people at Summer Madness and at the President's National Young Adult Leaders Conference has helped to strengthen the relationships between First and Second Peoples in Queensland.

I have sent pastoral letters for significant milestones e.g. a congregation celebrating a Centenary or a minister celebrating a fiftieth anniversary since ordination. It is worth noting that the Synod office does not have the staffing to identify all such anniversaries so the Synod relies on family members and colleagues to make us aware of such milestones.

UnitingCare Queensland works on many fronts to improve the lives of Queenslanders. I was delighted to be present at the opening of BlueCare Centres in Gatton and Coomera Centres, the renovation of Toowoomba Centre, Redlands Community Centre and toured the new Azure Blue Aged Care complex at Carina, Brisbane.

I was present at the closing services at Goomeri (22 September 2013) and Moorooka (9 March 2014). Those ceremonies became worthwhile times to celebrate the role that congregation had in a different era. Many of the people I spoke with at those events now attend a congregation elsewhere. Like people relinquishing the family home, some congregations need to recognise the changes in demographics and go through the difficult process of closing because everyone else has made a home in another place. I encourage other congregations to consider becoming "legacy congregations" gifting and making available their buildings or funds to another generation to meet the missional need of this era. I encourage Presbyteries to continue this difficult task of assisting congregations through changes.

The Synod also needs to consider a related matter, which are the aging Mission Development Fund deposits which are generated when the congregation sell a property that is no longer needed. The Synod has not acted on the existing decision of the Synod that after ten years the Synod can take that money from the beneficial use of that congregation and apply it to other needs identified in the life of the Synod. Can we continue to discern how to be good stewards of the resources in our control?

While the prevention of child abuse has always been important to the church, The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has focussed the Church's attention on how we prevent abuse and how we respond to current complaints and support survivors of historical abuse. The office of the Moderator has been supported with briefings and information about the public hearings, writings of the Royal Commission and its associated legal process. Through the Queensland Task Group the Moderator has contributed to the conversation about current policies, how to record abuse from a previous era and what responses the Church can or should make. Informal discussions with other Heads of Churches have explored the workload in responding to the requests of the Royal Commission, the lessons to be learned so far and what further support existing survivors might need to help them in their life at this time. The Royal Commission has caused us to again express that all abuse of children is

abhorrent and to pledge ourselves to seek to put in place safeguards so that our church will be a safe place for all people.

Working towards our Priority Directions in the future

I recognise that many congregations, schools and Uniting Church agencies have their own vision statements, mottos and strategies to promote values and mission. Sometimes it doesn't seem like we are Together on the Way Enriching Community! We need not be using exactly the same words, but I urge people to identify the links so that the community becomes aware of the collective impact of our church in Queensland.

The many brands that we use fragment the picture that the community has about the Uniting Church. Indeed, some parts of the whole are determined to be defined as different from the wider Uniting Church! One ongoing challenge is to be a recognisable presence in the community and to be valued collectively for what we do and to speak up about how the gifts of service and financial contributions that we make draw people to Jesus and make a difference to the daily lives of thousands of people every day who have a connection with the UCA in Qld. Perhaps we need an advertising campaign about the many faces of the Uniting Church in Queensland?

Responses to our Priority Directions since last Synod

Promoting a discipline of prayer and spirituality (individual and corporate)

Monday Midday Prayer: Thanks to all who have participated in praying for the work of the Synod on Mondays at midday and for praying on a regular basis in worship and prayer groups. A Prayer Chapel now exists for the duration of the Synod in Session and a prayer roster allows for people who are not attending to support the meeting with their prayers.

Each year Presbyteries run Retreats for ministry agents and sometimes for lay leaders as well. I conducted retreats at Bremer Brisbane (August 2012), South Moreton Presbytery (August 2013) and The Downs Presbytery (February 2014). In a variety of ways we explored the theme of "Thriving in Ministry."

In April I participated in the Redlands for Refugees Prayer Service which provided a focus for prayers and a chance to listen to stories from refugee and asylum seekers.

On 15 May 2014 I was able to join many other Christian leaders to attend the Lord Mayor's Prayer Breakfast at Brisbane City Hall.

Working towards our Priority Directions in the future

There are many groups that meet regularly to pray for the needs of their families and communities and for the Church and the world. Perhaps congregations could covenant to pray for a neighbouring congregation and for one that is far away.

I believe that the congregational base of our church still looks for news about the passing of significant leaders, long term volunteers and retired ministers and missionaries. I believe we still need an opportunity to share this information with the church. Recognising that this is not the focus or function of Uniting News, I think the email network could be used to distribute a Pastoral Note from the Moderator

regarding such matters and for calling the church to pray in response to significant tragedies and concerns.

Responses to our Priority Directions since last Synod

Developing sustainable mission orientated organisation (way of being) for the Church in Queensland

Thank you for your gifts through the weekly offering and the Mission and Service Fund which enable so much of the work of the Synod. I recognise and acknowledge that UnitingCare Queensland, Wesley Mission Brisbane and the Mission enterprises also contribute significant funds without which many of our services would not be funded. The Synod office seeks to be a responsible steward of the resources entrusted to us and you will read evidence of that in other reports. An annual Stewardship Sunday has been identified as a reminder that it costs money to keep the doors of the church open and as a regular opportunity for people to review their commitment and to hear how those gifts are applied. I encourage you to find and tell the stories of the people who are helped when people give towards the ministry in their local church and beyond.

For example, the Synod budget provides for support services (Payroll, Insurance, Property and Finance and office of General Secretary and the Moderator) Presbytery staff, Theological College to equip clergy and lay people, Chaplains in hospitals, prisons and aged care. Perhaps we could do better to help the people on the ground understand how the funds are used and who misses out when funds diminish. I recognise that droughts, floods and financial markets greatly affect the capacity of members to support their church. It is at times like this that the stronger parts assist the weaker parts.

Calvary Presbytery asked the Queensland Synod for assistance to conduct a review of the life of the Presbytery. There were three people appointed by the Synod Standing Committee to do this work, being Rev George Woodward, a former Moderator of Northern Synod, who did some of his training for ministry at Nungalinga College and had several years ministry experience in the Northern Territory; Rev Dorothy Harris Gordon, widow of Rev Charles Harris, and member of Congress who offers leadership in NSW; Rev Richard Cassidy, who at the time was in part-time ministry with Uniting Care Community Prison Chaplaincy. Each member brought valuable perspectives and experience from the wider church.

They embarked on a listening tour visiting each of the seven congregations and based on their observations and the needs expressed by members and leaders of congregations in Calvary Presbytery they brought recommendations to the meeting of the Presbytery in November 2013. That resulted in the termination of the two Presbytery placements Development and Outreach Officer and the Education and Resource Officer. New positions were developed and through the Priority Placements process the Presbytery now has two Presbytery Ministers, one part-time as Presbytery Minister Pastoral Leadership (Chair) and the other, a full time role, as the Presbytery Minister - Administration and Resources.

It is clear that the congregations in Calvary Presbytery do not have capacity to manage ongoing maintenance of buildings and all except West End Townsville are totally dependent upon the money made available from Mission and Service Fund contributions from the wider Church. That means that the gifts of each congregation and the contribution of the Uniting Church Agencies enable the provision of ministry across Calvary Presbytery. The team in the Department of Finance and Property Services have provided significant assistance to help Calvary Presbytery manage its assets and relationships with local government authorities.

Mission has many different shapes across the Church but growing the church will give us more capacity to respond to community need and maintain our presence in communities large and small.

Working towards our Priority Directions in the future

In years gone by, non-indigenous people went to live in Indigenous communities and came alongside local indigenous leaders and shared in worship and community life. Those communities were strengthened by the presence of Christians who went to live and work amongst them and the people who went to live in those communities were forever changed by the relationships they forged there. As I spoke with people in Charleville some of the locals expressed the same hope i.e. that some Christians from elsewhere might spend some of their life in the outback. Perhaps it is time to revisit that model? Many people, even ministry agents seem unwilling to move beyond their present location to participate in the mission of God. How do we help people to hear the call of God, “Go forth...”?

The National Church Life Survey commissioned by Rev Prof Andrew Dutney, has revealed some interesting data. Simply put, 100,000 people attend worship in a Uniting Church on Sundays. It seems that 75% of congregations have between 20 and 50 in attendance at worship. Across the nation only 8% have more than 100 regularly in worship and 1% have more than 250 in worship each Sunday. Surprisingly, congregations are largest in Queensland. Nationally, four out of ten congregations are in small rural areas.

How we sustain and nourish those small congregations that can barely pay stipend and allowances or who can no longer support a ministry agent will remain a challenge for us. If we want to remain a denomination with a presence across Australia and not just on the “Green Edge” then it will be necessary to consider how that will be funded. The Synod Standing Committee has begun some conversations about that and seeks further conversation across the church.

Setting Stipends and Allowances is always a case of balancing capacity of congregations to pay against needs of stipended agents. I am concerned about the number of part-time placements in rural areas particularly where the stipend is the only household income. There is a justice issue here.

There are some suburban congregations that are quite small (less than 20 regular worshippers) and have the expectation that they are entitled to a minister of their own. In some places I have observed behaviours that suggest that they are not interested in what happens in a neighbouring congregation. Presbyteries are deeply challenged by the need to cluster some congregations and the resistance exercised by some people in congregations who are not prepared to work together. In some places retired ministers are propping up very small congregations by taking fractional placements that simply put off the hard conversation about it being time to amalgamate or cooperate.

In the season of the church’s life when we had parish arrangements there was an acknowledgement that the weaker congregations would benefit from the capacity gained by being linked with a larger congregation and vice versa. In some places retired ministers are propping up very small congregations by taking on fractional placements and that simply puts off the hard conversation about it being time to amalgamate or co-operate.

Responses to our Priority Directions since last Synod

Facilitating renewal of leadership for the mission of the Church

The retreat for ministers nearing the end of their first placement had not been held since 2009. That means there were in the vicinity of 25 people who had not been given the chance to pause and reflect in a structured way on what they had learned in placement, about themselves and about the practice of ministry. Rev Dr Wendi Sargeant and I hosted the retreat and fifteen people participated from 2-5 June 2014. The participants named the benefit of the retreat for strengthening collegial bonds, for self-

reflection, for normalising the experiences in the early ministry years and the opportunity for sharing resources. The Board for Christian Formation will consider offering this style of retreat regularly. It is my conviction that it will contribute to the retention and resilience of ministry agents.

The focus of lay education in Pilgrim Learning Community, now Trinity College Queensland, has equipped people from all over the state to be able to think theologically and offer leadership in local councils and worship. As I have moved about I have been surprised by the enthusiasm of students who have discovered that they can do theology and become better equipped to read scripture and serve in their community. How much more accessible now that it will be available as an on-line learning experience?

Some of our ministers engage in research and during the past few months I have participated in three book launches. Rev Dr Clive Ayre has published Earth, Faith and Mission. Rev Dr Noel Preston has published Ethics: With or Without God and Rev Dr David Pitman published his work Twentieth Century Christian Responses to Religious Pluralism : Difference is Everything. These events reminded me that our ministers who undertake the discipline of research are able to enrich the whole church by contributing to the conversation about mission, ethics and theology. Some of the academic staff at Trinity College Queensland has also recently published their works but you will read about them elsewhere.

The National Ministers Conferences this year have been held in Parramatta Nepean Presbytery, Charleville and Jerusalem. The presenters urge us to consider mission as an inter-cultural experience. I joined with six other Queenslanders and 16 people from inter-state in Charleville. The local context gave us an insight into mission in the outback and the work of the Patrol Padres, Remote Area Family Services and Outback Links of Frontier Services. I stayed on a few days and visited some drought affected families with Rev John Case, about to retire after twelve years in the Burke and Wills Patrol.

Working towards our Priority Directions in the future

Ministers are required to send an annual report the Presbytery and that is supposed to include an account of how the Continuing Education for Ministry (CEM) has been used. It is difficult for Presbyteries with limited resources to adequately follow up on that accountability. The CEM is one means of supporting ministers to remain renewed and refreshed for the mission of the Church so it is vital that the conversation continue about how best to administer and support the requirement.

I have had many conversations about leadership in the church during my season as Moderator. We celebrate that many lay people have offered themselves in local settings and have taken up opportunities for study to equip themselves for serving God. Some have taken up the commitment of being in a specified ministry of Lay Preacher or Pastor. However, the church will always need people who can commit for a life time of service in ministry. Indeed many of the significant leadership roles in the church require people who have a depth of experience across the life of the church, so we need to continue to ask the question of suitable and gifted people, "Is God calling you to ministry?"

Putting words around the invitation to the kind of people that the church needs to recruit might look something like this:

"The Uniting Church in Queensland is seeking young men and women who will become the new leaders of a Church that will be made up of faithful and culturally-engaged Christian communities that bear witness to the presence of God's Kingdom in a secular and pluralist Australia.

These women and men will be intelligent, creative and visionary leaders who have a strong sense of Christian identity, a theologically-formed commitment to discipleship-formation, and missional orientation.

If you feel called to this role within the Body of Christ, you are invited to engage in a Period of Discernment so that together you and the Church might hear God's call on your life and how God might be equipping you for this exciting and challenging mission."

Responses to our Priority Directions since last Synod

Engaging in opportunities for intentional, open community connections and partnerships

At one of the Reconciliation Services I struck up a conversation with a young woman wearing a Uniting Church Badge. She poured out her excitement about having become a Christian just a few months earlier after wandering into "Stroll Through Bethlehem" part of the Christmas outreach of Indooroopilly Uniting Church. I was energised by her excitement about being introduced to Jesus and being nurtured by some folk in that congregation. Community Service and community connections can help people to find their way into the kingdom of God.

I am heartened to hear about local congregations and the many ways that they connect with the wider community. Some have established Men's Sheds and I attended the opening of a Men's Shed at Yeronga. Others provide Play Groups and programs to assist parents and children. I attended the 40th anniversary of Tiny Town Child Care which is an integral part of the Emmanuel Congregation at Enoggera. Day Camps hosted by congregation or run on a Presbytery basis build connections with thousands of families every year. At New Life Uniting Church Robina hundreds of people gather on Fridays for the Cross Roads program for people with a disability. In other places connections are made through free English classes and craft groups.

A phenomenal number of community connections occur through the services provided by Uniting Care Queensland and Wesley Mission Brisbane which is, by and large, more formally regulated than the activities in congregations.

This year the Synod has approved a Community Services Oversight Framework so that as a Church we can be more intentional about managing the risks and understanding the way a variety of programs and services fit with the mission of the whole Church.

The natural disasters in recent years have in many locations strengthened the connections between congregations and the wider community. Partly in response to reflections on those experiences and partly in response to the decision of the last Synod in session to establish a Peer Support network, I gathered a team of people to establish a Disaster Response Committee for Queensland Synod. The purpose is to support the Uniting Church in Queensland in its preparation for and response to disasters and in particular to support congregations and Presbyteries to make an effective response towards recovery in their communities. Recognising that other agencies and organisations have designated roles e.g. Qld Police Service control of disaster site, Salvation Army catering, SES emergency support, Life Line Community Recovery, the committee will focus on helping ministry agents and congregations to make an effective response and support them to remain healthy. The National Disaster Recovery Officer, Rev Dr Stephen Robinson has been like a mid-wife in bringing the committee to birth. Mr Jason Reid, The State Operations Manager of Life Line's Community Recovery Program has given valuable input regarding the complimentary work over which he has oversight. It will not be a fund raising group but will establish protocols for distributing funds that have come from other sources such as the National Disaster Relief Fund. It will have responsibility to train Peer Supporters and to work with Presbyteries to identify where additional ministry or chaplaincy is needed.

I met with Jane Frazer-Cosgrove to consider how our congregations might become better equipped to support people who have a mental illness and the families impacted by that situation. It has been a privilege to lend my support to promoting *A Nouwen Network* and to invite people to pray on World Mental Health Day held on 10 October each year. For more information visit www.nouwen-network.com

I have been resourced by the Uniting Communications Team to have conversations with politicians and journalists about social issues. I have written a number of letters and released press statements on Youth Justice Legislation, the introduction of Bkie Laws and Australia's treatment of asylum seekers and refugees. I am deeply concerned that the language used around social issues shapes our attitudes and thinking. This is particularly evident when asylum seekers and refugees are labelled "illegals" and "queue jumpers." It is not illegal to seek asylum and there is no queue. Speaking at the Asylum Seeker Rally in King George Square in Brisbane on 12 April gave me a chance to express my passion for this issue.

Language like "being tough on crime" is used to develop legislation which ignores the basic human rights of our citizens. On many occasions I reminded politicians that we should be asking questions like "what are the causes of the high rate of detention of young Indigenous people?" The statistics clearly indicate a failure of the whole community to provide a sturdy scaffold so that these young people can develop a strong backbone as they mature.

In a small way I was able to support the Chaplains who visit the Correctional Centres by preaching a message of encouragement at the Prison Ministry Conference Uniting Care Community at Indooroopilly UCA in March 2014.

It is clear that over several decades Blue Nurses, now BlueCare, have connected with people beyond the church door. I was fortunate that my term as Moderator coincided with the celebration of 60 years since it was founded by a local congregation responding to a need in their community. When Sister Olive Crombie stepped onto a tram in West End the congregation only had enough money to pay her wages for three weeks.

In 2013 Life Line also celebrated a significant milestone. For half a century the Life Line brand has been known for its work as a crisis line, providing a listening ear and working to prevent suicide. Sales in the Life Line shops continue to contribute to providing that ministry. Thanks to those who donate goods, who volunteer in the shops and who train to be Telephone Counsellors and in many ways enrich their communities.

My visit to Mapoon for the Panja Festival in November last year enabled me join with a small congregation on the beach for worship led by Rev Michelle Cook. It was a time for celebrating the strength of the Indigenous people and to remember what happened 50 years ago. A Presbyterian Mission was established in 1891 at Mapoon on the Western Cape, but in 1963 under the government's assimilation policy and with pressure from a mining company the Indigenous people were driven off the settlement and the homes were burned. By the 1970s and 1980s the people began to return. I enjoyed the celebration of culture evident in the festival held in the community hall. The local Mayor called it a celebration of survival. Worship was held within site of the old mission, and I wondered what the new mission in this context would look like?

I have written to support The Downs Presbytery in their efforts to protect prime farming land and the families who live in their region who feel that they are not heard in their conversation with government regarding the impact of extracting coal seam gas on their properties.

Queensland has had a Uniting World Support Group for many years which includes many people who served as overseas missionaries in years gone by. Several congregations are building relationships with our partner churches through Uniting World connections. For example, Beenleigh has a link with Solomon Islands, Caloundra with Tonga and North Queensland Presbytery with Papua New Guinea. My husband, Owen and I chose to have a holiday in Timor Leste and while we were there we visited the

Moderator and attended Ekaristi Congregation in Dili. Glebe Road Uniting Church in Ipswich has an ongoing relationship with that congregation so I was delighted to meet with the Principal of the School, Mrs “Leo” and youth worker, Izak, when they came to visit early this year.

My life has been enriched by attending schools awards presentations, events at Government House such as International Women’s Day and Queensland Day and Parliament House for the Royal Commonwealth Day Celebrations.

Attending the Destiny Together gathering on 18 March 2014 in Canberra was an expression of solidarity expressed through prayer and fasting as we gathered for worship in sight of the Parliament House in Canberra. All kinds of people participated in the invitation to fast and pray even though they could not travel for the event. There is a groundswell of support for our Indigenous brothers and sisters and this was one small but tangible way of showing it.

I attended the NAIDOC Week celebration at Musgrave Park in July 2014. We were able to meet with some Indigenous leaders at the Elders Chill Out tent hosted by Uniting Care Queensland (UCQ). It was a practical expression of hospitality. I want to affirm UCQ for being intentional about implementing its Reconciliation Action Plan and providing opportunities to celebrate the milestones along the way. I want to acknowledge the leadership offered by UCQ in providing appropriate governance oversight, expertise in delivery of care and services, plus employment pathways for Indigenous people through BlueCare Indigenous Services and Australian Regional and Remote Community Services.

Working towards our Priority Directions in the future

There is an opportunity for us all to join in the campaign for Recognition of Indigenous people in the Australian Constitution.

I have been working with the General Secretary of Queensland Churches Together and other ecumenical partners to negotiate with the state government to establish a system of Accredited Disaster Chaplains for Queensland.

Key achievements/initiatives

- Disaster Response Committee established and Peers Support training implemented.
- Calvary Presbytery Reviewed and the scope of ongoing work identified to further support congregations in Indigenous communities.
- Presbytery placements facilitated in four presbyteries and Orientation and Induction process conducted with the assistance of Synod Office staff and CEO UCQ. The Induction process was coordinated by Andrew Gunton as Associate General Secretary. Thanks to members of Joint Nominating Committees who gave prayer and energy to the discernment processes.
- Relationships maintained across the Church through participation in the board and committee meetings, attendance at events and induction processes.

Challenges/risks as we progress:

Development of Ministry agents and lay leaders to prepare them for significant leadership roles across the life of the wider church takes time and experience in a variety of roles. As we grow the Church the synod will need to continue to address the issues around recruitment and retention of ministry agents and assist ministers preparing to retire.

Recommendations/strategic decisions for Synod:

I would like to recognise the work of the previous General Secretary, Dr Shirley Coulson, Particularly:

- her passion to drive the Together On the Way Enriching Community Strategic Directions,
- responding to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse,
- assistance to resolve significant discipline matters,
- work to connect with other synods,
- drive for the amalgamation of Trinity Theological College and Pilgrim Learning Community,
- efforts to equip Presbytery Ministers with the skills to more effectively manage projects; and
- her achievement of bring the Synod Support Staff together on one floor and facilitating the renovations of the Office.

and to publicly thank Rev John Cox for stepping into the role of General Secretary with fairly short notice and picking up the reigns and responsibilities.

Issues to be addressed:

I would like to leave the Synod with some observations.

We do not spend enough time celebration and advertising the amazing work that is offered across the state.

Many UCA ministers offer leadership in their communities and conduct excellent pastoral rituals such as funerals and weddings and in some places hold together the ecumenical work in their district.

The impact of schools ministry, hospitals and community care and counselling services, and the provision of hundreds of congregations as a spiritual home for those who choose to belong.

We are a wide church, and we won't all agree, but I urge you to participate in the conversations about Marriage and Eldership.

Thank you for investing your life in the work of making Christ known and making the kingdom of God a reality for people who make a connection with the Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod. Thank you for the life expanding adventure of serving as Moderator 2011 – 2014.

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