



## General Proposal 4

# Synod Ecumenical and Interfaith Relationships committees - governance change

### That the Synod

1. Conclude the Synod Ecumenical Relationships Committee (SERC) and Synod Interfaith Relationships Committee (SIRC) as committees of the synod from the rising of the synod date.
2. Requests the Project Plenty team to continue to work on ways to develop interfaith and ecumenical relationships within the synod
3. Acknowledges the significant work done by these committees in the life of the Synod.

### The Scope

This proposal seeks to shift the governing structure of these committees from being accountable directly to the Synod, and instead being accountable to and working alongside the Moderator as part of the Moderator's portfolio of responsibilities. The specific details of how this accountability and working process will happen will be determined as part of an ongoing consultation process with the current committees. This work aligns to the ongoing 'Shared Life, Flourishing Communities' mission priority work of Fit for Purpose, Life Together, and Transforming Communities.

### Rationale

The synod's 'Shared Life, Flourishing Communities' ambition has been an opportunity for different parts of the church to review their life and purpose to ensure they are being the most effective. The Synod Ecumenical and Interfaith Relationships committees have participated in a consultation review over the past 8 months, in order to identify the most appropriate structure and environment in which the work of ecumenism and interfaith engagement can occur.

It has been recognised that for some time the capacity of these committees has been constrained by a number of challenges relating to resourcing, broader buy-in and energy, communication, and networking within the church. The members of the committees have faithfully developed deep and long-lasting relationships with other denominations and faiths and are passionate about helping the

church understand and wrestle with how to hold difference in tension. And it has been affirmed again that this work is a responsibility of the whole synod, given it is a core element of our Christ-centred and 'uniting' DNA. Instead of leaving the work to a small under-resourced committee on behalf of the church, it is recognised that we need to find a way to remove the siloes of individual committees and create an environment of collective support and engagement in this work.

In conjunction with the ongoing Plenty work emerging out of the Transforming Communities mission priority, a draft operating and accountability shape has been created, in which the Moderator would take responsibility of overseeing this work alongside other social action and justice advocacy work, as part of the Moderator's portfolio. A working group under the project plenty banner will meet in June to continue the important work in the interfaith and ecumenical spaces that the church already has commitments in while also looking at new initiatives in these areas (Draft shape and structure attached – Attachment A).

## Proposers

### The proposer and seconder:

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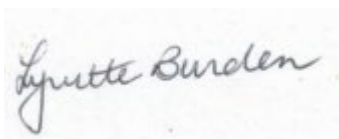


Signature:

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Signature:

# ‘Shared Life. Flourishing Communities’

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UCAQLD Plenty ambition 2025



We are one church active in every Queensland community, bearers of Christ's offer of life in all its fullness. Through our shared life we are committed to a flourishing future for church and community.

2025 ambition





## Discipleship

Foster a renewed discipleship culture within the church through modelling, educating, training and equipping.



## Transforming communities

We will be active partners in meeting existing and emerging needs and building upon the strengths of the communities and world in which we live.



## Fit for purpose

Our governance, service delivery and use of assets are shaped to support the missional priorities of our church, with effectiveness and efficiency as two key markers.



## Life together

Across the life of the church we seek closer collaboration to bring God's gifts to the world.

Each body within our church has its own part to play in realising the mission priorities and directions as it responds prayerfully to God's leading.

- Refresh discipleship culture across the life of the church through discovery, development and deployment of discipleship and evangelism training and toolkits.
- Pursue innovation in church and mission models and practices to suit a constantly changing world.
- Encourage and empower young people to nurture their faith, serve God and practise leadership in church and world.

- Develop tools, training and practices to support well-being in our communities, including in such areas as mental health and domestic and family violence.
- Pursue covenantal relationship with First Peoples.
- Deliberately engage in environmentally conscious processes and practices.

- Create enabling mechanisms to develop a contemporary, agile operating model, including reform of governance structures.
- Pursue operational efficiencies across the life of the church.
- Progress a strategic review of missional presence, health and vitality.
- Develop leadership across all levels and entities of the wider church.

- Encourage and resource local and regional mission partnerships.



# SERC and SIRC

*Current State of Ecumenism and Interfaith Engagement in the UCA Qld synod*

## **(WHERE THESE ARE MANAGED BY THE COMMITTEE)**

### **THESE ARE DONE WELL:**

- Strong relationships
- Gatherings
- Learning about each other
- Understanding difference
- Opportunities for collaboration in shared activities and goals

## **THESE ARE CHALLENGES:**

- Limited communication beyond the smaller group
- Hard to enable wider buy-in and participation
- Differences in theology within the UCA
- Struggle to create a succession plan in the current model of a synod committee's responsibilities
- Lack of resourcing for this work to be sustainable beyond the small committee



# SERC and SIRC

*Ongoing and Future Hope for Ecumenism and Interfaith Engagement in the UCA Qld synod (reframed out of current charter of responsibilities)*

We will seek to encourage and enable across the synod the flourishing of a culture of ecumenical and interfaith engagement, as an outworking of our Christ-centred and 'Uniting' life together, in order to contribute to the transformation of life in all its fullness for church and community.



# SERC and SIRC

## *Current responsibilities*



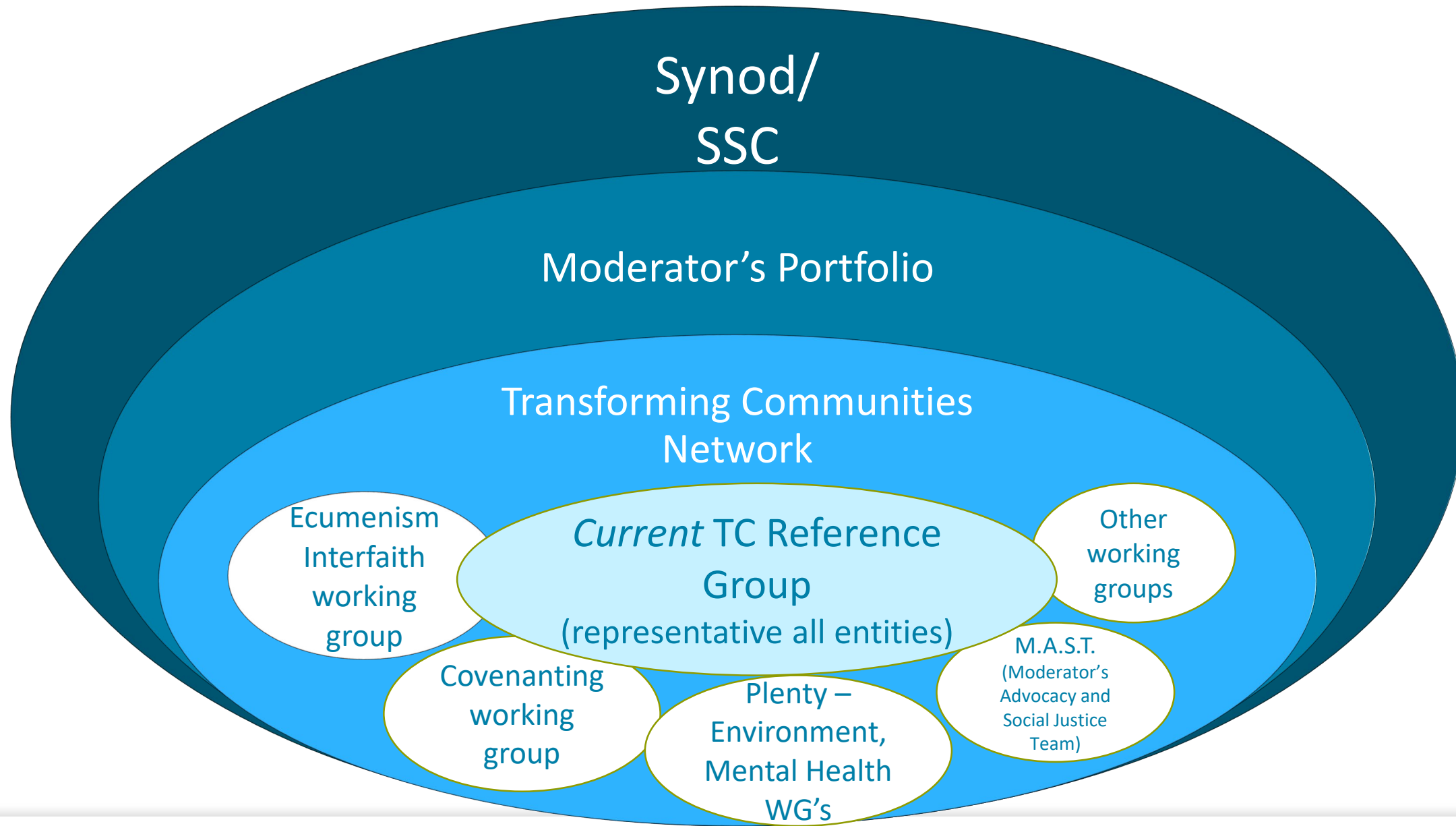
- Representation, liaison and presence
- Relationship-building
- Deep listening, truth-telling, theological and ecclesiological wrestling
- Enabling participation in opportunities to further God's mission of reconciliation
- Communication and information management





# Suggestions for how this work could be best managed

- Location within the *'Moderator's portfolio'*
  - Provides the **mechanism for appointing representatives** on behalf of the synod
  - Aligns with **Moderator's duties as the voice of the synod** with other churches and faiths
  - Greater **opportunity for work to be championed and actioned** through the Moderator's engagement across the synod and beyond, than through the SSC
  - Opportunity to be **connected into a larger network and platform** through a potential 'Transforming Communities Network', and the Plenty Life Together working group



# Moderator's Responsibilities

UCAQLD synod by laws, Q2.3.5:

- (d) in consultation with Presbytery Officers, **encourage congregations** in furthering their mission within their respective bounds and in such **areas of geographic, sociological and ethnic grouping** as may seem appropriate;
- (e) in consultation with the General Secretary of Synod, **encourage the provision of resources and material** for the **promotion of the mission of the Church**;
- (h) **issue media releases** in the name of the Synod on **matters of public interest**;
- (i) **liaise** as appropriate with the **General Secretary of the Assembly and the National Director for Social Responsibility and Justice**;
- (j) **initiate research and investigate studies** into **social justice and other issues which impact upon the missional development of the Church**;
- (k) **initiate both formal and informal forums** which will **reflect on the missional priorities of the Church and which may draft strategic missional directions**;
- (l) except in those cases in which negotiations are necessary with Governments and Government Departments or officers in respect of the work of the Synod, act as the **liaison person of the Church** with Governments in respect of **public issues**;
- (m) have the **oversight** of the Synod Ecumenical Relationships Committee and **relationships with other branches of the Church catholic**;

# Moderator's Portfolio

## MAST – Moderator's Advocacy and Social Justice Support

- Support the Moderator's public voice, on behalf of the Synod, in response to, external requests and opportunities for strategic, quality and timely submissions and statements about emerging social issues and justice advocacy.
- Reactive, responsive and timely
- meets fortnightly dealing with requests to Mod for submissions/opportunities to speak on behalf of the church
- Currently resourced from within the synod office and UCQ through existing policy/communications support
- Fits within the scope of the Moderator's responsibilities in the synod's by laws: Q2.3.5 (h), (i), (l)

# Moderator's Portfolio

## TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES NETWORK

- Moderator hosts **2 gatherings/year for the whole network** to come together and share stories, build capacity and learning, and identify opportunities for collaborative engagement in mission on the ground
- **Individual working groups meet according to their own cadence and rhythm**, with a connection into the Transforming Communities Reference Group with the Moderator
- **Potentially resourced from within the synod office with a focussed mission integration** role, with the purpose of connecting and catalysing the work of each of the working groups with the wider church and the Moderator
- Moderator **connects network to opportunities** emerging across the synod through the Moderator's travels and engagement with the wider church



# Moderator's Portfolio

## Current TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES REFERENCE GROUP (TCRG)

- **Prioritise** issues of social justice and responsibility in which the Uniting Church in Queensland should intentionally engage both in justice advocacy and practical local mission initiatives.
- **Oversee** the collaborative organisational response to identified Plenty commitments, by leveraging the diversity and expertise that exists across the synod, in order to build organisational capacity.
- **Report** on the Transforming Communities Mission Priority, through the Moderator, to Synod Standing Committee.
  - Representative, pro-active and capacity-building (up to 12 members?)
    - Moderator and Convenor (2)
    - Presbyteries/MC3 (1)
    - UCQ (1)
    - WMQ (1)
    - Schools and Residential Colleges Commission (1)
    - Trinity College Qld/theologian (1)
    - **Ecumenism** rep (1)
    - **Interfaith** working group rep (1)
    - **Covenanting** working group rep (1) *(The UCA's commitment to First Nations people should be included as BAU representation not just as a Plenty project-limited working group. Other Plenty working groups could just provide an update as they will be project-limited.)*
  - Meets 6 times/year for information sharing, prioritising whole-of-synod focus areas, enabling capacity-building across the wider church
  - Individual working groups meet independently throughout the year, self-organised

# 'Shared Life, Flourishing Communities'

## Guiding Principles

- Work together
- Grounded in theology
- Invitational
- Collaborative
- Alignment
- Supported autonomy
- Measurable
- Fit for Purpose
- Transparency
- Continuous improvement