

John Case and Sharon Kirk give notice that at a time to be determined by the Business Committee, they will propose that the Synod -

1. Establishment of a Synod Post Disaster Recovery Team/s

- (a) Establish a Post Disaster recovery team/s of appropriately trained people to work with and alongside the local Congregation and ministry agent/s in placement to assist in the provision of pastoral care to a community affected by disaster event.
- (b) Sources training from recognised "experts" in the field of Disaster Recovery.

RATIONALE:

In his book 'Ministry in Disaster Settings', Stephen Robinson reports the following comment; "When you need the most support is about twelve months to two years later. And nobody gives two hoots about you then. 'That's over and done with. That's in the past.' " (p. 190)

Observations by those involved in several recent disasters in this state suggest that this is true of those who have been through a disaster event.

If, as a church, we are serious about supporting those who have been through disasters we need to recognise that such support will be long term and not just at the time of the event.

In the past this ongoing pastoral support has often been left to the ministry agent/s in placement but we forget that he/she will be feeling the effects of the disaster event themselves. This will affect their capacity to provide the appropriate support required.

A way forward to provide ongoing pastoral support within a disaster affected community would be to equip suitable people to move into affected areas and work alongside the minister and congregation to provide ongoing support to the wider community. The intention would be for this to occur 6 to 18 months following the event for an indeterminate period. It could be for a week or two or for an extended period depending on the circumstances and need.

Such people would need to be properly trained and equipped. Such training should include but not be limited to - Psychological first aid, Dealing with loss & grief and Communication skills, for example, Lab 1.

Brian Gilbert and Helen Prior give notice that at a time to be determined by the Business Committee, they will propose that the Synod -

2. Disbanding of the Synod Bioethics Committee

Thanks and disbands the Synod Bioethics Committee.

RATIONALE:

The Synod Bioethics Committee (SBC) was originally formed to advise the Church and its agencies on matters of medical ethics and related issues. At the 2001 Synod meeting, it was identified that the best way of providing that advice was by the employment of a bio-ethicist, and approval was given for the appointment of a fulltime bioethicist to work with the SBC. No suitable applicant was identified and no appointment was able to be made. The committee continued in its role therefore without the support of a bioethicist.

At that time, the committee was asked to address the church's policies regarding Assisted Reproductive Technology, and using a particular Applied Ethics framework, papers were produced on Right of Access, Pre-Implantation Genetic Diagnosis (PGD), and The Use of Donor Gametes. However, the complexities of having to work as a committee without support of a synod bioethicist meant that the process took a long time. That really is the problem with working as a committee- responses are usually required quickly, and there is usually a lot of background investigation that needs to take place.

In recent years, there have been two requests for comments or advice on government papers (e.g. stem cell research), however the timeframe allowed for response made it impossible for a committee to make a reasoned response.

For this reason, it is felt that the SBC should be disbanded. At any time it is possible for a particular task group to be formed to address a specific issue if timing allows. For urgent matters, a trained bio-ethicist is really the only answer if a competent response is to be provided.

It is recognised that UnitingCare Qld also considers bioethical issues as they pertain to services and care offered in its Service Groups, particularly Blue Care and UnitingCare Health. There may be opportunities for Uniting Care Qld to support the Synod in any bioethical exploration or decision making process, as many of the bioethical issues intersect with the services it provides and the ethical concerns it deals with.

Lauren Ash and Linda Hanson give notice that at a time to be determined by the Business Committee, they will propose that the Synod –

3. Supporting Micah Challenge's FINISH THE RACE campaign

- (a) Resolve to actively encourage the church to continue our support for the Make Poverty History and Micah Challenge coalitions and engage with the *Finish the Race* campaign in 2013 through prayer, promotion and political and community engagement.
- (b) Request the Moderator write to the Prime Minister and the Federal Opposition Leader indicating the Synod's support of the *Finish the Race* campaign.
- (c) Encourage Uniting Communications to continue to share information on the *Finish the Race* campaign.
- (d) Invite Church members, councils and groups to actively promote the *Movement to End Poverty* petition.

RATIONALE:

The Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod has been strongly committed to the Micah Challenge and Make Poverty History coalitions whose aim is to encourage governments to keep their promises made when they signed the Millennium Development Goals. In 2000 Australia joined 188 other member countries of the United Nations in a commitment to provide a focused framework for aid delivery and development. The goal was to halve poverty by 2015. Australia promised to contribute 70 cents in every \$100 of Australia's national income to assist in meeting these goals.

Australia's contribution in the 2012-2013 Federal Budget was 35 cents in every \$100, falling far short of the UN target despite bipartisan support for the goals. In the last Australian election before the MDGs finish in 2015, now is the time to hold our political leaders accountable to delivering the promises they have made to the world's poor.

The *Finish the Race* campaign invites Church members to visit and contact their local politicians, distribute promotional information throughout their church and community networks or host an event in their community to raise awareness of poverty and the campaign. It also encourages us to actively promote the *Movement to End Poverty* petition calling upon our political leaders to fulfil their promise made in 2000.

This type of support is consistent with our *Together on the Way, Enriching Community* commitment to work for justice, which includes the goal of being known for "reaching out and speaking out for justice and peace for all creation".

Synod in session provides another opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to Make Poverty History and the Micah Challenge coalitions. Committing ourselves again publicly to the *Finish the Race* campaign says that we support asking our government to contribute 70 cents of every \$100 of Australian national income to poverty alleviation programs through foreign aid.

However, providing our support at this Synod is only the beginning. From this meeting, we can take action within our communities and electorates, pray for and promote the campaign, hold events, share stories, speak truth and uphold God's vision for justice to see extreme poverty eradicated.

For more information about the campaign, visit www.micahchallenge.org.au/finish-the-race-and-movementtoendpoverty.org.au.

Andrew Ross and Tricia Tschernez give notice that at a time to be determined by the Business Committee, they will propose that the Synod -

4. Closure of the Housing Acquisition Fund (HAF)

- (a) Directs the Governance Nomination Remuneration Committee / Finance, Investment and Property Board to close the Housing Acquisition Fund (HAF), and
- (b) Disperse the assets of the fund in accordance with the wishes of each individual fund member, in one of the following ways:
 - (i) Where the member has an existing historical loan agreement with UCIS for housing that the Synod hold the assets in HAF as Equity against current loan;
 - (ii) Where no loan exists, do either of the following:
 - Rollover any HAF balance to a complying super fund of the member's choice and use the General Reserve in HAF to pay for any tax impact on members rolling over into a complying super fund; or
 - Pay out the HAF Balance to the nominated financial institution or Fringe Benefit Account held by the member of the Fund and use the General Reserve in HAF to pay for any tax impact on members;
 - (iii) If there is any balance left in the general reserve apply it back to the Synod.

RATIONALE:

Shortly after the establishment of the Uniting Church in Australia, the Queensland Synod established the Home Acquisition Fund (HAF) for ministers. Given the general practice at the time was for ministers and their families to reside in a Church provided manse, the purpose of the HAF was to enable ministers to set funds aside for the purchase of their own residence in retirement. To assist in this process, the Synod provided a subsidy in addition to personal contributions and the Fund is recognised as a superannuation fund with attendant taxation benefits on retirement. In the years since the HAF was established there have been considerable changes in the profile of people who are recognised by the Church in ministry. There is now a wider diversity in the composition of the "ministry family" and many people are now entering ministry after pursuing other careers. In addition to changing situations for individual ministers, changes in the housing market over the last 10 years or so raise other questions about the appropriateness of the HAF in these circumstances.

In October 2005 the Ministerial Support Funds Committee began a process of reviewing the effectiveness of HAF. At that point in time; a total of 148 people replied to the survey. The average duration of membership is 12.8 years and the average age on joining the scheme was 38.3 years. There are currently 118 Members in the fund. and 65 have an existing loan through UCIS. In response to the survey the following was identified:

Do you believe HAF will provide for your housing needs when you retire?

Yes. 28.7% No. 51.7% Not sure. 19.6%

Have you used your HAF balance early for security to borrow other monies?

Yes. 44.9% No. 50.6%

Prior to 2009, members were able to borrow against their equity in the fund less (15% for tax purposes). This enabled ministers to enter the housing market earlier than retirement. Post 2009 this option was no longer available, effectively meaning that those who have not chosen to take out a loan earlier are locked into the retirement age of 60 before they can access their funds. As such, these members of the fund are now at a significant disadvantage as they have no access to their balance as equity to use in entering the housing market. The Synod is being asked to correct this disadvantage.

In reference to Option c) ii) ;

The tax liability to the member if the funds were paid out as a lump sum would be at the member's nominal tax rate up to 30%, compared to 15% at retirement. Effectively nullifying any significant benefit from being in the fund or advantage gained from paying out the member. So to correct this imbalance the Synod could utilise the reserve fund of HAF to offset this difference.

David Ferguson will move, and Suzy Sitton give notice that at a time to be determined by the Business Committee, they will propose that the Synod -

5. Report of House Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Australia

Commend the Report of House Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Australia

(Link:

http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=ra/fifodido/report.htm) to individuals and congregations as a source of information regarding what is happening in rural communities.

RATIONALE:

Previous feedback to the Presbytery from Synod has requested further information regarding the impacts of mining on regional communities. While we anticipate the work that has been commissioned by Uniting Care, we also wish to recognise the significant work undertaken by the House Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Australia. This report is freely available from the parliamentary website and provides information on the impacts of these new work practices, both within the regional communities hosting the miners and those that the families stay within. We wish to commend this report to those who seek ways of serving in mission in these communities.

David Ferguson will move, and Suzy Sitton give notice that at a time to be determined by the Business Committee, they will propose that the Synod -

6. Support for Candidates for Ministry

- (a) Direct the Board for Christian Formation and Governance, Nomination and Remuneration Committee to determine measures by which ministry candidates may receive improved financial and other support, particularly during their candidature and upon exit, and
- (b) Report on this to the 2014 Synod in session.

RATIONALE:

The Synod exercises its duty to determine the level of support of candidates for ministry through the Governance, Remuneration and Nomination Committee (GNRC). At this stage, support for candidates is predominantly through government assistance, which has diminished in recent years and not all candidates are eligible for this assistance. There have been instances of candidates leaving college due to financial pressures or the pressures of balancing work with study or field placements.

Several decisions of this council, due to good reasons and regulatory changes, have the potential to have a negative effect on ministry candidates. Due to regulatory factors, candidates exiting college no longer have access to low interest exit loans that many used to set themselves up in their first placement. The combination of the accumulation of a HECS debt and the inability to participate in the Housing Acquisition Fund will also have implications for these candidates upon retirement.

It is suggested that the GNRC work with the Board for Christian Formation to discern what effect the current support arrangements have upon current and prospective candidates and suggest ways in which our candidates may be more effectively supported. This should be undertaken with particular consideration of the effects this may have upon the diversity of the candidates we attract and the welfare of those within and leaving Trinity Theological College. We then suggest that appropriate measures be presented to the Synod in session so that the Synod may exercise its proper oversight of these important decisions.
