

a daring
HOPE
SYNOD 36



Report from
The Moderator



Report

Introduction

My term as Moderator has in large part been shaped by our response as a God's people to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was clear right from my Induction into the role in October 2022 that was held online, that this would be a time of much uncertainty in the world and that we needed, as God's people, to go back to the certainty of our God. During this time, I have been reminded again through the scriptures of the faithfulness of God's people as they continued to honour God in their own struggles and the providence of God in their lives. I have also been challenged to look again at Jesus teaching on the good Samaritan and the question about being a good neighbour. I believe it challenges us to take steps to protect the health of those people who are most vulnerable even when we ourselves might not find gain or benefit from this. To this end I have been so grateful to the congregations and communities who went above and beyond to implement safe COVID practices and in doing so share Christ's deep compassion for all people. I have also been extremely impressed by the quality of online services that seemed to spring up overnight and have participated in services right across the state without leaving my living room. The creativity and flexibility and the willingness of so many people to join in online demonstrates a great willingness to change as we meet the current challenges of our times.

Above all I am reminded that as the body of Christ we are continually called to use our gifts to build each other up, to support, and care for on another in the love of Christ and share his Good News to the world. I believe that everywhere I have visited in my time as Moderator I have seen this care and compassion for each other and the communities that they serve being demonstrated in so many ways. My report is then a snapshot of how I have experienced this call to be Christ's body in the many communities in which we are called to minister the grace of God, the love of Christ and the ongoing fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

Congregations and Presbyteries

While the pandemic did put a stop to some travel and unfortunately caused more than one cancellation or postponement of a visit to a congregation or presbytery, I still found myself visiting many places over the course of my term. From visits to Aurukun for the opening of a new manse to a 150th Anniversary service in Warwick, I was able to visit many congregations and celebrate with them in their worshipping lives. One of the more memorable visits was to Bowen where I worshiped with the congregation on Sunday morning and celebrated with the Tongan community in the afternoon. Made up by a large number of seasonal workers in their annual 'Tali-Ui' which is a time to celebrate women leaders in the church and for them to bring their testimonies of how God has worked in their life. This was followed by a great feast. It was a privilege to have been invited and participate in this event and a reminder of the multicultural nature of the church.

I have also managed to visit all the presbyteries on a number of occasions and shared with them in their life together as they supported each other in their work of upholding and supporting the congregations in their care.

After the retirement of Rev. Chris Crause as Presbytery Minister for the Mary Burnett Presbytery, I was appointed as chair of the JNC and we set about the process of discernment for calling a new

Presbytery Minister. It was with great delight that on the 11th March 2022 Pastor Graham Huth was commissioned into that ministry.

Agencies, Schools, Residential colleges

The engagement with the missional work of the wider church continues to be a source of great encouragement. As moderator I serve on the Uniting Care Queensland board and have gained a greater respect for the work of Uniting Care and the many facets of the community that they engage with. This will be fully presented in the UCQ report to the Synod but I must congratulate the women and men of the Uniting Care board for the dedication that they show to the work of UCQ and the care that they take of the church's mission in this space. One event I would like to highlight is the Uniting Care Qld Full Circle and Reconciliation awards which are a fantastic celebration of the diversity and great work being done right across UCQ.

Wesley Mission Queensland also continues its work in many communities across the state. I was privileged to meet with young people involved in the ORCA project. This program supports young people living with a disability, aged 17-21 years, to give them skills for success in the workforce and engagement with meaningful employment.

I participated in many school celebrations across my term including commencement services, commissioning of new principals and graduation services. The amazing young people who come through our schools are not only a reflection of the dedication of the school staff but of the values-based education that they receive.

I visited most of the residential colleges and participated in commencement services, valedictory services and special events. The ongoing support of those students attending a tertiary college is also part of our mission to the community.

I also participated in the commissioning of the new Presbyterian and Methodist Schools Association CEO Mr. Shane Coppin on 6 December 2021 at Somerville House with the General Secretary.

Moderators Medals

The delivery of the Moderators medals was a little different this season. With no presentation during the Synod in Session, I went to visit the recipients in their local areas. This meant visits to Cairns, Toowoomba, Warwick, Bundaberg, Indooroopilly, Beenleigh, and hosting one presentation on site at the Synod office. These were great celebrations with the medal recipients surrounded by family and friends as well as support staff from agencies that had nominated them. I will continue to present the medals this way into the future.

Covenanting

The covenanting working group has been very busy under the co-chairs of Kym Korbe, a GoA, Wakka woman and Manager UCQ RAP Program and myself. The covenanting working group continues to work on many initiatives across the life of the Synod including sharing and learning First Peoples culture story and faith, developing First Peoples leaders, renewing and strengthening the relationship between UAICC and UCAQld and contributing to the wellbeing of First Peoples across Qld.

Amongst the many engagements in this space a highlight was a gathering of nearly 30 people including myself and the General Secretary in Cairns from the 11th - 12th of May 2021. These included first nation peoples from across Cape York and Mornington Island, Cairns, Townsville and a number of people from the South East corner of the State. We were very ably lead in our listening by

facilitators Kim Korbe and Gavin Mackey. This was an important time of listening and the first step to reengaging in the UAICC space in Queensland.

Presbytery Synod Interface

The Presbytery Synod Interface, the gathering of Presbytery Ministers, the Director of Mission UCQ, The Principal of TCQ and the Moderator and General Secretary, has been undergoing a discernment process over the past 18 months. This started with a team building retreat in February 2021 and the realisation that the structure or lack thereof for the PSI was inhibiting the group's ability to deliver on many of the missional challenges facing the church. This started the journey of inquiry into what was it that we trying to deliver on and what structure would enable this to happen. Consultation with the Synod Standing Committee, Presbyteries and BCF, led to the proposal before the Synod 'Missional Collaboration and Coordination Committee' (MC3). It is hoped that this new committee of the Synod will enhance the church's response to missional initiatives.

The PSI continued to develop throughout the term with monthly meetings and ongoing team building opportunities. The PSI continues to be a strong interface between the work of the Synod, Presbyteries, Trinity College Qld and UCQ.

Voluntary Assisted Dying

With the introduction to the Qld Parliament of the VAD legislation on 24 May the church had significant media enquiries into the church's stance on VAD. I recorded a TV interview, some radio interviews on the ABC and 96.5 FM and was quoted in new papers. I was extremely grateful that we had done a major piece of work that was passed at our Synod meeting in 2019 about this issue. We communicated a VAD statement to the church in the weekly wrap on 27 May 2021 please click [here](#) if you would like to know more.

I was invited to meet with the Attorney General, Shannon Fentiman along with the Catholic Archbishop Mark Coleridge to talk about the church's concerns regarding VAD specifically about Institutional conscientious objection.

The church made a submission the Parliamentary Inquiry on VAD and I along with Rev. Dr. Adam McIntosh presented to the Parliamentary Enquiry on Voluntary Assisted Dying on the 14th July. This was a good opportunity to present our suggested amendments in person. The Voluntary Assisted Dying Legislation was tabled in the Queensland Parliament on the 18th September. No significant changes that we have promoted have been actioned although we did receive quite a few references for concerns that we have raised. The government passed the VAD legislation without amendments. The church will now need to work out what this mean for all people who pastorally care for people in end-of-life, particularly for our Hospitals, Aged Care facilities and other spaces where people may choose VAD. The government has promised to work with institutions that have a conscientious objection. The legislation will come into effect in 2023.

Moderator's appointment to Synod Standing Committee

The 35th Synod appointed only 7 members to fill 8 available member positions to the SSC, thus a vacancy existed on the SSC. Following a process outlined in the Synod By- law Q2.2.14 two nominees were approached and interviewed by the Remuneration and Nomination Committee and upon recommendation by the RNC, I was able to appoint Rev. Annelisifa Matangi as a member of the

Synod Standing committee on the 4th March 2021. Fa has made a great contribution to the work of the Synod Standing committee over the past 12 months.

Queensland Community Alliance

The Qld Synod is a member of the Queensland Community Alliance, formed in 2014 this is a group made up of faith groups, community groups and unions that all have a concern for promoting civil society, empowering people to do their best for the common good. This group supports local organisers through training and ongoing support to engage local communities, through listening campaigns to seek to hear what are some of the most pressing issues for their communities. Then supports those communities through a process to work together apply pressure to decision makers to address their needs.

They also look at more state-based issues and after a wide listening campaign across the state presented four key issues to both sides of government at a forum prior to the State election in October 2020. These were:

- Further support for local community/neighbourhood centres with a marked increase in support called for post Jobkeeper.
- Call for government to commit to support renewable energy investments.
- Support for training funding for migrant/asylum seekers and access to training for temporary visa holders.
- A focus on social isolation.

President and Moderators gathering

I have met with the President of the Assembly and Moderators from around the country via numerous zoom meetings and one face to face gathering in Adelaide from the 27th-29th April 2021. These meetings are opportunities to build connections amongst the moderators and the President and share common concerns across the life of the church. Some of the areas discussed include discipleship, governance, covenanting, discipline, formation, and sustainability to name just a few issues.

16th Assembly

I attended the 16th Assembly online and was privileged to attend the installation of the new president Rev. Dr. Sharon Hollis in person. It was a very abbreviated program due to the online nature. A couple of points to note were the election of the president elect Rev Charissa Suli, the extension of the General Secretary Colleen Geyer for another three-year term and the election of the new Assembly Standing Committee including two ministers from Queensland Rev. Roberta Stanley and Rev. David Busch. I look forward to the reconvened Assembly meeting at Alexander Park 6-9 May 2022.

Synod Ecumenical Relations and Synod Interfaith Relations Committees

The SERC and SIRC committees spent some time discerning together how this important work of the church fits into the Project Plenty framework. To that end together they came to the conclusion that

this work could be done in a new and creative way and this has led to the proposal regarding the ongoing nature of the committee's structure.

The work of SERC and SIRC was also hampered by the Pandemic restrictions. With many ecumenical and interfaith gatherings cancelled and some moved into the online space. However, many great events did go ahead right across the State.

Queensland Churches Together

The Synod continues to be a member of Queensland Churches Together. The QCT under the leadership of the new General Secretary Rev. David Baker, has set its strategic framework in three themes - Collaboration, Capacity Building, and Community. It resources its member and non-member churches to collaborate on issues of mutual interest. Examples of that are submissions to government on Legislative reviews, and other matters, including the Commonwealth Government's Redress Scheme, Ecumenical Chaplaincy opportunities, and the Qld Churches Environmental Network. QCT resources the churches in Capacity Building by offering courses and resources in Family and Domestic Violence awareness, and pastoral care training courses. It runs and sponsors activities that bring the churches together to reflect on our call to unity, as the prayer of Jesus to the Father explicated in John 17, that we may be one as He and the Father are one, that the world may know - this includes activities such as the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, and the Michael Putney Memorial Lecture. QCT is engaging more regionally, supporting ecumenical endeavour across Qld. For more information, see qct.org.au

Interfaith

The Synod is a member of the Qld Faith Communities Council. The Queensland Synod has 3 representatives to this council, Revs Heather Allison, Heather Griffin and Fa Matangi. Rev. Heather Griffin is also an elected member of the QFCC Executive. This group offers the space for Interfaith Dialogue and appreciation. It has resourced the development of short videos on the perspectives of various faiths on end-of-life issues for the Qld Health Department. The QFCC has collated food guidelines for multifaith gatherings, and dates of religious festivals and these are available on their website. <https://qfcc.org.au> The Group also acted as a resource for engaging with government through the COVID pandemic.

The Toowoomba Interfaith working group continues to be very active with their conference in November 2021 titled 'Interfaith Insights to the Global Pandemic'. This annual conference attracts a large number of people from different faiths from across the Downs and beyond. Due to COVID restrictions, no IFTAR Dinner was held in 2021. In 2022 we are planning a number of 'Friendship Dinners' (not during Ramadan). A special thank you must go to Rev. Heather Griffin who stepped down from SIRC during this term. Heather has been a tireless worker in the interfaith space and has built great relationships with many people across the different faith communities. Her passion for this work has been instrumental in the Synod's involvement in the QFCC and we give thanks for her commitment to SIRC and assure her of our prayers into the future.

Ecumenical Tertiary Chaplaincy Committee

I attended the closure service for the ETCC which has been operating chaplaincy at QUT and Griffith University for over 40 years. It was inspiring to hear the great work of the chaplains in the universities over the years. Both Universities are exploring chaplaincy options for their students. QCT will continue to explore chaplaincy models in universities.

Religious Instruction

The UCA Qld Synod is also a member of the Christian Religious Instruction Alliance, a group of 14 churches which supports the delivery of Religious Instruction in State Schools. Over 150 000 children are estimated to participate in RI every week, delivered by an estimated 3000 volunteers.

Heads of Churches

As moderator I attend a regular gathering of the Heads of Churches in Queensland. This is a group that meets together, sharing the word and prayer and discussing the common issues that face the church in Queensland. We have released joint statements about Voluntary Assisted Dying and worked together on a submission on the Anti-Discrimination Act Review (see below).

Anti-Discrimination Act Review

The Qld Government has instigated a review of the Anti-Discrimination Act. I have participated with a group of Christian church leaders lead by the Rev. David Baker Gen. Sec. QCT to develop a combined response to this government review. We engaged Professor Nick Aroney from the University of Queensland to help us produce the submission for the deadline of 1 March 2022. This submission was not only an opportunity to produce a high-quality response to an issue of significance to the life of the church, it represented a positive sense of collaboration between the churches in Queensland. [The Joint Churches Submission can be found here.](#)

Moderators Advocacy and Social justice Team (MAST)

The MAST is a group that support the Moderator's public voice, on behalf of the Synod, to communicate pro-actively, and in response to, external requests and opportunities for strategic, quality and timely submissions and statements about emerging social issues and justice advocacy. This team meets fortnightly to respond to issues that require public comment or submission. The MAS team are Rev. Dr. Adam McIntosh, Natalie Clements, Rebecca Riggs and Kellie Broderick. Some of the issues that we have worked on include VAD submissions, Anti-Discrimination review, Truth, Healing and Reconciliation grants program, Raise the Age, Social Isolation and Loneliness inquiry to name but a few. I want to thank this group for the support that they give me in responding to the areas of social justice.

Proposals to the 36th Synod

It is proposed that the 36th Synod receive this report.

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