

a daring **HOPE** SYNOD 36



Report from Board for Christian Formation



Report

Context

The Board for Christian Formation (the BCF) assists and advises the Synod Standing Committee (SSC) in fulfilling its responsibilities to provide for the effective supervision of theological and ministerial education and Christian formation for lay and ordained within the bounds of the Queensland Synod of the Uniting Church (the church).

For Regulation 3.1.5(i)(vi), the BCF is designated as the appropriate body to exercise the Ministerial Education Board's responsibilities.

- The **Responsibilities** of the Board of Christian Formation are as follows –
- The BCF performs an advisory role and acts with delegated authority of the SSC as detailed in this Charter in carrying out its functions, authorities and powers.
- The BCF must fulfil its responsibilities, as stated in Regulation 3.7.4.3(c).
- The BCF is the body for the purposes of Regulation 2.4.4(a).
- The BCF shall have responsibility to:
 - (a) make recommendations to the SSC regarding the appointment, or termination of appointment, of the candidate educators of Trinity College Queensland (the College)
 - (b) ensure annual performance reviews of the College's academic staff members are conducted
 - (c) support the College in the fulfilment of its responsibilities under Regulation 3.7.4.3(c)
 - (d) promote the College as a resource for:
 - theological teaching and scholarship
 - continuing education for ministry
 - lay education and education in biblical studies
 - (e) oversee the relationship of the College with any universities, colleges and other educational institutions affiliated with the College
 - (f) create and resource a network of learning in theology and ministry for the Church and community within the bounds of Synod
 - (g) develop strategies for theological, ministerial and lay education within the bounds of Synod;
 - (h) ensure adequate staff, facilities and other resources for education and formation for the lay and ordained ministries of the Church, including continuing education for ministry
 - (i) maintain a roll of candidates, and as required by the Assembly, provide information contained in the roll to the Assembly
 - (j) consult with presbyteries on the ongoing needs for continuing education for ministry of persons involved in the lay and ordained ministries of the Church
 - (k) ensure the theological, ministerial and lay education provided by the College meets any standards prescribed by, or requirements of, the Assembly
 - (l) approve a policy about the granting of study leave to staff members of the College designated by the SSC to provide theological education to candidates
 - (m) at each ordinary meeting of Synod, provide a report on how it is fulfilling its responsibilities;

- (n) provide reports about any aspect of its responsibilities as required by the SSC.
- In carrying out its responsibilities, the BCF shall:
 - (a) oversee, and be responsible to the SSC for, the College's finances
 - (b) ensure an annual budget is prepared for the College in accordance with Synod budget processes
 - (c) comply with Synod's financial and accounting policies and requirements.

The Board of Christian Formation serves the formation and educational needs of the mission of the church through offering governance and strategic leadership that is responsive, innovative and diligent. The Board continues to mature its capacity and functions to be more able to serve the church. The Board's integration and ways of working with Project Plenty, the Mission Engagement Team, Synod Office staff and Trinity College Queensland is slowly being matured, bringing capacity and better outcomes.

These are challenging times with significant disruptions but also emerging innovations. I have been proud of the way Trinity College Queensland has navigated these challenges.

The future is inviting further innovations and partnerships across the Synod with congregations, presbyteries, agencies and schools.

I wish to take this opportunity to give thanks to God's faithfulness and provision of people with the gifts and graces to serve on the Board, Committees and through our College. Thank you to all who have served the purpose of the Board of Christian Formation in the Queensland Synod.

Key priorities since the last Synod - Strategic Priorities 2021-2023

1. Focus on the full breadth of Charter - Christian Formation across church (Discipleship / Leadership)
 - a. Resourcing the teaching and formation life of the Church
 - i. Create and resource a network of learning in theology and ministry for the whole church
 - ii. Develop strategies for theological, ministerial and lay education for the whole church
 - iii. Resourcing for education and formation of the specified ministries (Lay and Ordained)
 1. Resources for Presbyteries (POD and Selection Panel)
 2. POD resource – completed
 3. Phrase 2 Handbook – completed
 4. Ministry of Pastor Handbook (Ministry Location & Placements) – Completed
 5. Lay Preacher Handbook – completed
 - iv. Oversight of Assembly processes and standards for all phases of ministry formation for specified ministries (Lay and Ordained)
 - v. Improving the governance capacities of the BCF
 - b. Resourcing of the BCF to fulfil its Charter
2. Develop ways of working between BCF, Project Plenty, wider Synod office and networking whole church
 - a. The BCF has invited Scott Guyatt (Project Plenty – Discipleship), Steven Drinkall (Manager – Mission Engagement Team), Liz Henderson (Consultant to the Synod Office), Jennifer Mundt and Alan Hewson (Policy Writers), Natalie Smith (Chairperson Synod Remuneration Nomination Committee) to join meetings to improve

understanding, engagement and outcomes for the ways of working between the BCF and the wider Synod Office. The Chair met with Multi-Cross Cultural Committee of the Synod and participated in two meetings of the Chairs of Boards, Councils and Committees of the Synod.

- b. The integration of BCF into the Synod Office work and our interface with presbyteries is vital
- c. The possibilities of BCF engaging with our agencies and schools is still before us and is yet unrealised. Resourcing the BCF will support this engagement.

3. Stewardship of Trinity College

Specific Actions for 2022:

1. Develop Non-HEP Pathways for Ordination (currently underway)
2. Develop Lay education and mapping (mapping the educational needs to be completed first)
3. Develop training, communication and coordination of training and education (discipleship/leadership)

Shared Life, Flourishing Communities

In what ways have you been approaching the challenge of making disciples of Jesus?

Trinity College Queensland

Trinity's activities and strategic priorities are shaped by four overarching goals, each of which has a part to play in reinvigorating the church through theological education. These four broad goals are to:

1. Equip the Whole Church for Discipleship
2. Develop Missional Leaders
3. Train UCA Ministry Agents
4. Promote Trinity's Identity and Reputation

Each of these has key activities:

1. Equip the Whole Church for Discipleship
 - events, short courses & conferences
 - increase biblical literacy (intensives, Trinity on Tap)
 - assist in defining a culture of discipleship
 - develop community experiences

Develop

2. Missional Leaders
 - train Christian leaders for vocations in secular marketplace & in UCA schools & residential colleges
 - accessible & relevant evening units and short courses
 - strategic use of adjuncts to draw new students
 - purposeful integration & networking among postgrad's
3. Train UCA Ministry Agents

- sustain positive relationships (trust) with Presbyteries
- provide tools and resources for minister/pastor training
- high quality formation program
- develop culture of training local trainers
- 4. Promote Trinity's Identity and Reputation
 - develop platform as think-tank for QLD Synod
 - avoidance of jargon; intentional use of language
 - clarify ecumenical and denominational ethos
 - retain close connections with congregations with
 - practical and relevant outputs

Specific courses offered by Trinity College Queensland in missional and transformational discipleship include:

Christian Spirituality / Ministry Formation / Missional Discipleship / Principles of Evangelism / Youth Ministry / Preaching 1 / Pastoral Skills and Methods / Chaplaincy Skills 1 / Church Planting / Missional Hermeneutics / Missional Leadership in the 21st Century

In what ways have you been drawn into Transforming your Community:

The strategies and outcomes of the BCF's, through Trinity College Queensland and partnerships with the wider church aims to responded to the rising challenge of wellbeing and mental health support, supports the commitment to the Uniting Church's ongoing work of covenanting with First Peoples, builds a deeper understanding about what is possible as a church, called to care for all of God's, and seeks to listen and respond to the needs of our communities.

In what ways have you been sought to reshape your part of the Synod, to be Fit for Purpose and wise stewards of all that God has given you?

Trinity College Queensland

Level One at Bayliss Street has been redesigned and re-developed to be more fir for purpose to the current and emerging teaching and training needs of Trinity College.

The staffing model has become more lean and adaptable with a smaller faculty core and more teaching adjuncts.

Candidate Process Review

Purpose

- Review whole process by which the Church selects candidates for Ordained Ministry
- Implement a renewed process by which the Synod selects candidates for Ministry

Outcomes

- Stakeholders engaged
- Lessons from history learned
- Contextual-Cultural issues identified
- Issues addressed through appropriate means e.g. policy, procedures, resources, etc

- Improved Candidate process plan for implementation

Process

1. Scope the Review
2. Map out the review plan and timeline
3. Conduct the Review
4. Identify issues and way for these to be addressed
5. Receive approvals
6. Implement the improvements

The Stakeholders of the Review:

- Presbytery Ministers
- Synod Placements Committee
- Synod Selection Secretariat
- Trinity College
- Presbytery Pastoral Relations Committees
- Candidates and recently ordained (since 2017)
- Synod Multi-Cross-Cultural Committee

Issues and actions

Item	Outcome Area	Issues/Changes	Who
1. Policy on Ordination process	Policy work – Ordination HEP and Non-HEP pathways	English Language Requirements Residency and Citizenship Requirements Age guidelines Non-HEP pathways – including innovative pedagogies (e.g. apprenticeship, inter-cultural)	Synod Office - Policy Writer BCF Synod Consultation
2. Policy & Procedural documentation around Synod Selection Panel (SSP)	SSP – practice improvement, once policy in place SSP Secretariat to align process and operations with policies	Documentation Role of Dean of Formation with SSP	Rev Nigel Rogers, Mr Trent Wheeler, Rev Paul Yarrow, Rev Leonie Gaffel, Ms Jill Bow
3. Ordination and Specified Ministries resources	Resource on Ordination for Presbyteries	Resource for Presbyteries / Church Councils / Ministry Agents	Rev Nigel Rogers Rev Dr David Rankin, Rev Lyn Burden, Dr Paul Jones
4. Discernment for Ordination Resource	Discernment on Ordination Resource	TCQ Short Course offering 2021 / 2022	Rev Nigel Rogers and Dr Paul Jones

6. Handbook – from POD to Synod Selection Panel	Working document from POD to SSP. Candidature and Selection Panel – journey, map process flow.	Dean of Formation working SSP Secretariat for updated documents	Rev Nigel Rogers and SSP Secretariat
7. Handbook on Pathway through Phase 2	Pathway from phase 2 handwork (working document)	Phase 2 Handbook up to date – some offerings for Non-HEP pathway	Rev Nigel Rogers

Policy Work undertaken

Out of the review of the Candidate process we identified the following issues to be addressed, firstly at a policy level. These are currently in a consultative process

- Age Considerations
- Citizenship

This is in a development stage

- Flexible Educational Pathways (Non- Higher Education)

Project Plenty

The Plenty process reached a significant milestone in October 2021 in delivering its ‘Project Report’ to the Synod Standing Committee. This report captured the thinking of the 10 working groups that had been meeting over the last 6 months and included over 115 initiatives and actions that were recommended to progress the church in Discipleship, Transforming Communities, being Fit for Purpose and doing Life Together.

The Standing committee received this report well and endorsed the recommendations which:-

- Affirm the project to this point and allow the working groups to continue
- Give affirmation of the general direction of all projects and permission to get on an implement many of the smaller initiatives
- Ask the Plenty Governance Board to now shift to an implementation phase which will require further prioritization, workshopping around initiatives that involve several large areas of the church, and the development of business cases for larger projects.

The ‘Progress Report’ mentions the BCF in 2 main places and each of these will require further discussion in to 2022.

The Leadership Development Working group developed a document which seeks to give clarity as to what kind of leaders we are seeking to produce within the UCAQ over the next decade. It includes a grounding statement and a set of Leadership Practices which they proposed could become a standard around which the BCF could align and steer the building of a consistent leadership culture across the UCAQ. The actual wording of the proposal in the report reads as follows:

Strengthen and resource the existing governance role of the Board for Christian Formation (BCF) in its responsibility to develop and form leaders across all entities within the synod.

- The BCF will adopt the Leadership Culture Framework outlined above as the foundational standard to align all Leadership Programs within the Uniting Church. It is not proposed that the BCF will conduct leadership training but rather that they provide a level of accountability,

governance and strategy to enable networking and coaching around how leaders are developed and formed in this consistent Uniting Church way.

The Discipleship working group proposed that the BCF takes a lead (and oversight) of the development of training for ministers in the understanding and skills of disciple making as part of their ongoing training. The actual wording of the report is as follows:-

D5. Foster a deeper understanding of what it means to be a disciple of the way of Jesus and to 'reproduce/nurture' that in others.

- Re-examine the role of the BCF as the focal point and champion of all Christian formation throughout the Synod.
- Commission the BCF to implement a greater emphasis on discipleship and the skills needed for forming discipling relationships within the current educational and formational processes including theological training, ministerial formation, code of ethics training and lay leadership training.
- BCF will also oversee the creation of a discipleship refresher training unit for ministry agents to be undertaken on a regular basis and used by presbytery ministers as part of their annual review.
- BCF will prioritise continued work with both Trinity College Queensland (TCQ) and other key stakeholders to identify and promote additional educational resources and partnership opportunities for growth and development in discipleship.

Tell us about the pain points you identified in your operations that need to be addressed in the next season

To fulfil the potential that the Charter requires, there is a need for a specific Executive Officer to operationalise the work flowing from the Board in an integrative way with TCQ, the Synod Office, Presbyteries and Agencies. At this stage this is managed through the General Secretary and relevant Synod Office staff in a project approach. There is a need for a coordinated and collaborative approach through strategic leadership.

In what ways have you sought to collaborate with others across the Uniting Church as an expression of our commitment to doing Life Together?

The BCF has held forums and engagement processes with the wider church in a variety of ways. The Charter of the Board of Christian Formation provides a clear mandate for collaboration. We cannot do our work and reach outcomes without the Synod Office and TCQ and the working with Presbyteries. The proposed MC3 is another step in better collaboration.

Tell us about where you see relational tensions that need to be addressed over the next season

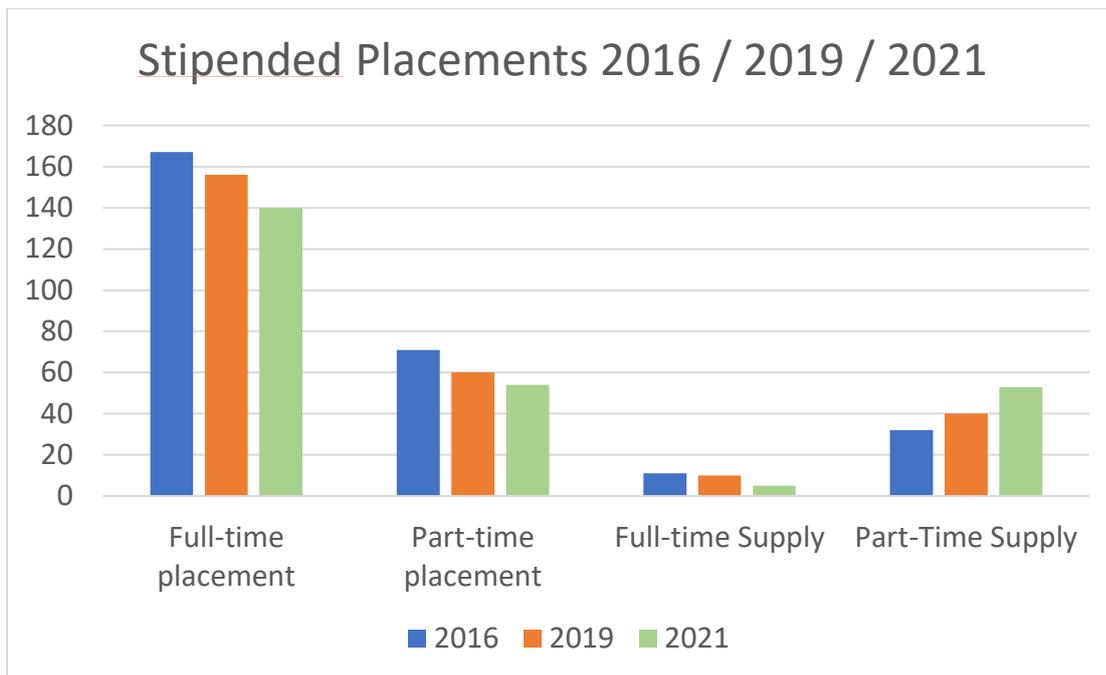
There is tension due to ongoing constant changes in the Synod Office which need to be managed through communication and consultation as the integration of BCF, Project Plenty, PSI, MET and emerging initiatives (e.g. MC3 and MMU)

Threats and opportunities as we step into the future together

Threats:

An un-resourced and disconnected Board is a threat to fulfilling its charter.

A changing ministry (placements) workforce needs to be understood and adapted for, see table below: (Data Source-Synod Payroll)



Some questions worth exploring are:

- What are the projections of the current rate of decline for 2030? Do we assume a similar trajectory as we think ahead to 2030?
- What's the implications for ministry in terms of bi-vocational and other models?
- Do we have a regeneration strategy up until 2030 or do we assume the same decline trajectory?
- What is the shape of the future church that we need to start a pathway for now?
- What assumptions does our current training and model have about the shape of ministry in 5-10 years?
- If a Regeneration approach was our assumption, and we had a different set of projections, what would we need to do differently in our training, equipping and resourcing of lay and ordained leaders?
- What will be the role of full-time ordained ministers in the future – is the time of a minister for a congregation over? And what does this mean for both formation and culture change across the synod
- Given house prices do we need to re-invest in manses to make part-time ministry a viable option?

- How do we engage and develop ministers who are struggling to find placements?
- When many of our available placements are also not attractive to ‘missionally innovative’ ministry agents what does this mean?

Opportunities:

The above questions lead to opportunities.

As the Board’s work becomes resourced, connected, communicated and increasingly collaborative, the outcomes of Project Plenty can be addressed.

Membership

The BCF notes the conclusion of terms for the following members:

Rev Peter Armstrong (Chairperson)

Rev Peter Armstrong joined the Board for Christian Formation (BCF) in 2014 and as Chair in 2019. During his time as Chair, the BCF has undergone transformational change.

As Chair, Peter worked closely with Trinity College Qld and the Principal as the college joined in partnership with the Australian College of Theology. Peter supported the wide-ranging changes that took place at Trinity College Queensland in the last couple of years while managing the diversity of relationships in this role.

Peter also was Chair of the Specified Ministry Education Formation (SMEF) subcommittee of BCF.

The Synod gives thanks to God for the work of Rev Peter Armstrong as the Chair of the Board for Christian Formation.

Rev Lyn Burden

Rev Lynette (Lyn) Burden was elected to the Board for Christian Formation (BCF) at the 30th Synod in May 2013 and her contribution to the Board has been highly regarded with her depth of knowledge and experience in the ministerial and educational areas. In this time Lyn taught as a casual lecturer at Trinity College. Lyn served for many years on sub committees of BCF; the Synod Selection Panel (SSP) Secretariat and the Specified Ministry Education and Formation Sub Committee (SMEF) as well as many other Synod Committees. Lyn is currently fulfilling an Intentional Interim Placement at Southside Uniting Church. The Synod gives thanks to God for the work of Rev Lyn Burden as a member of the Board for Christian Formation over the past 9 years.

Rev Neil Story

Rev Neil Storey joined the Board for Christian Formation (BCF) in 2019 and his contribution to the Board has been highly regarded in the ministerial and educational areas.

Neil is currently the Minister and Church Council member at the Faith Works Uniting Community.

The Synod gives thanks to God for the work of Rev Neil Storey as a member of the Board for Christian Formation.

Mr Peter James

Peter joined the Board for Christian Formation (BCF) in 2019 and his contribution to the Board has been highly regarded in the governance, leadership and ministry areas. Peter is currently the CEO of Scripture Union and member at the Emmanuel Uniting Church Community. The Synod gives thanks to God for the work of Mr Peter James as a member of the Board for Christian Formation.

Mr Trent Wheeley (re-nominating)

Mr Simon Gomersall — Lecturer in Historical and Contemporary Mission

We are most grateful to Simon for playing a significant role in the shaping of Trinity's culture and ethos over the past five years. Simon developed our Activate program (2017-2019) and has taught a range of units relating to church history, pastoral care and evangelism. His prayerful and wise counsel has been much appreciated by students and colleagues alike, and his contributions to working groups for Project Plenty have also been of high quality. We wish him well as he moves into another educational space (Somerville House) for the next chapter.

Proposals to the 36th Synod

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

Contact for report questions

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