



35th Synod Reports Summary



The following are highlights drawn from each report as presented to Synod. This summary is provided for your reference.

This report has been updated as at 19 October 2020.

R00 Moderator's Report

Moderator: Rev David Baker

I encourage the Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod to have confidence in the gospel; for all of us to bring our gifts of heart, mind, and strength to the work of being a sign, instrument, and foretaste of the coming promised kingdom of God, in all our broad and diverse opportunities of witnessing to the goodness of God in Christ. The COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated how deeply committed our people are to the mission of God, and how adaptive and innovative leadership can be. Project Plenty is a tremendously encouraging message from our members that should give our leaders and councils in the church the courage to bring transformational change.

The Moderator's role has been summed up as giving pastoral and spiritual oversight to the life of the Synod, bearing witness in the public space, and leading the Uniting Church's engagement with other churches and the wider community. It involves several regulatory responsibilities, along with chairing the Synod Standing Committee—the body charged with giving general oversight to the life of the church between Synods in Session.

R01 Synod Standing Committee

General Secretary: Rev Heather den Houting

The Synod Standing Committee strives to hold the vision and mission of the church in its sight as it deals with the significant risks and incidents that arise between general Synod meetings.

It has been buoyed by the Uniting Church's response to the Project Plenty process, which indicates that the church is inspired and responsive to the constant call of God on our life together.

This report highlights the important decisions made to give effect to the vision and direction of the whole of the church.

R02 General Secretary

General Secretary: Rev Heather den Houting

But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted about many things..." (Luke 10:41)

I've always struggled with the teaching on this passage. As one who is always distracted and worried about many things, I find any interpretation which involves a rebuke to Martha and sympathetic reading toward Mary a frustrating experience. There are always so many things that present before us in our lives and getting as much done as possible to make life easier and equitable for all just seems to make sense to me.

Sometimes it feels as though the role of General Secretary is essentially the service ministry of Martha. Is the house safe and secure for guests? Has the food been sourced to prepare for the feast? Is the bedding laundered and the guests adequately accommodated? Do people know where to find us? Is information about how and where to gather appropriately circulated? Is the communal kitchen compliant with all work health and safety requirements? ... You get the drift.

This passage makes more sense to me if we do not read it as an either/or approach.

What if we stood gently in the space and understood that God loves the builder as much as the architect, loves the cleaner as much as the visionary, loves the reader as much as the author. This approach encourages us to reflect and understand that in all that we do, we are asked by Jesus to reflect the question, “who am I and who are we” as part of God’s good creation? Why are we here? What are we called to do? How do we return to the practice of sitting at the feet of Jesus? This doesn’t mean you have to put down activity. But it does mean you have to get the balance right.

In the last 18 months, Project Plenty has been such a heartening experience and delight to see unfold. This has been the church practicing this very skill. It has taken the time to ask itself the question about its nature and purpose, and is a testament to the hope and inspiration we find through Christ.

It is only in the light of this glorifying and illuminating purpose, as followers of Christ, that the ministry of service can continue in a balanced way. This report will let you know of the activities of the General Secretary and the Synod office in overseeing, maintaining and operating this service ministry of the church, informed by discipleship to Christ.

R03 Synod Advisory Committee on Ministerial Placements

Secretary of the Placements Committee: Rev John Ruhle

The Placement Committee has sought to do the following since the 34th Synod:

- Support the “call” process within the life of the church.
- Streamline and make this process more transparent and efficient.
- Update our data base and documentation supporting the placements process.

R04 Finance, Investment and Property Board

Chair: Ralph Collins

Good stewardship of Uniting Church assets and funds is a primary focus of the Finance, Investment and Property Board (FIP Board). The FIP Board demonstrates this by:

- Working with congregations, presbyteries, schools and agencies to ensure church assets are used to achieve the best long-term outcomes.
- Seeking investments that balance the risk/return equation and increase revenue into the church.
- Making available (within its power and responsibilities) funds that are used to grow the mission of the church.

R05 Board for Christian Formation

Chair: Rev Peter Armstrong

The Board for Christian Formation (BCF) 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 BCF is maturing in its capacity and functions to be more able to serve the church. Trinity College Queensland continues to revitalise its educational philosophy, its formation program, and its course offerings to increase its reach and engagement across the church.

These are exciting times with significant challenges before us. It has been pleasing to see the development of both Trinity College Queensland, as well as the offerings that the BCF is developing in service of the wider church and councils.

The future is encouraging with developing 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 for Christian Formation in the Queensland Synod.

R06 Schools and Residential Colleges Commission

Chair: Noela Lister

Our schools and colleges continue to provide an amazing opportunity for the Uniting Church to engage in the lives of thousands of families across the state, bringing the love of Christ into their lives. In schools alone (excluding ecumenical schools) we have approximately 8500 students and approximately another 1300 in residential colleges. The Schools and Residential Colleges Commission is working with the Synod office and our schools and colleges to bring greater accountability and alignment of the schools to the church. The school's strategy implementation will be the key piece of work in the 2020–2022 synodal term.

R07 Synod Chaplaincy Commission

Chair: Rev Brian Hoole

The Synod Chaplaincy Commission is reimagining its future and how it might best serve the church through a strategy development process to produce a strategic plan that aligns with Project Plenty and gives direction and purpose as an integral ministry within the Queensland Synod.

Chaplaincy remains a significant expression of the mission and ministry of the whole church as it engages with people and communities across Queensland. The community-centric nature of the ministry of chaplaincy continues to have much to offer to the church's exploration of future directions and expressions of Christian community.

The Synod Chaplaincy Commission seeks to fulfil its mandate and responsibility for the oversight and development of chaplaincy within the Queensland Synod of the Uniting Church.

R08 Synod Multi-Cross Culture Reference Group

Chair: Rev Louisa Yu

The Multi-Cross Cultural Reference Group (MCCRG) has gone through some major changes in membership and leadership. As a result, one key focus of the MCCRG is to expand its membership and to maintain stable and sustainable leadership. It is currently in a stabilising stage and is actively looking for members who are passionate and able to contribute to the vision of being a multicultural church.

The MCCRG is focusing more on connecting with presbyteries, congregations and faith communities to intentionally build relationships and bridges, especially with those which are not connected with Next Gen Arise (NGA), MCCRG initiatives or are still navigating through the impact of the Assembly resolutions on same gender marriage and the COVID-19 pandemic.

R09 Synod Ecumenical Relationships Committee

Secretary: Rev Russell Morris

The Synod Ecumenical Relationships Committee (SERC) has undergone a process of regeneration with some new members and discovered some new opportunities for ecumenical engagement, while continuing to nurture existing relationships through Queensland Churches Together and other groups.

R10 Synod Interfaith Relationships Committee

Chair: Rev Lyn Burden

The committee is functioning well, appreciative of the work of Rev Heather Griffin and Rev Garth Read. We will keep up with promoting interfaith understanding, as we believe it broadens our horizons, promotes respect and tolerance, and challenges us to be better followers of Christ! Members of the Synod Interfaith Relationships Committee attend different interfaith forums and events that enable the church to be visible in these spaces.

The Synod Interfaith Relationships Committee has valued the wisdom and expertise of Rev Garth Read, Rev Bryan Gilmour and Lesley Bryant who have retired from the committee.

R11 Presbytery of Bremer Brisbane

Presbytery Minister: Rev Glen Schweitzer

Bremer Brisbane Presbytery says its purpose is “creating healthy Christian communities, living God’s mission”. God has begun a work in Bremer Brisbane in reorganising and regenerating congregations which will be a focus in coming years. In Christ the best is yet to come!

R12 Presbytery of Carpentaria

Presbytery Minister: Rev Christy Allen

The Presbytery of Carpentaria is committed to mission and growing disciples in every context and every community within its bounds. We continue to seek God’s plan for our new Presbytery and build relationships between ministry agents, lay persons and the communities in which we are present.

R13 Presbytery of Central Queensland

Supply Presbytery Minister: Rev Suzy Sitton

This report reflects the collaboration, communication, and care within our presbytery and has been compiled by a group of voices from across the presbytery.

The challenge before the Presbytery of Central Queensland is to see and hear how the Spirit is calling us to use our expensive building assets in a different way, and to efficiently deploy our ministerial agents to support the many congregations who are finding it difficult to financially support them.

R14 Presbytery of Mary Burnett

Presbytery Minister: Rev Chris Crause

Inspired by the imperative to “be my witnesses” call from Acts 1:8, Mary Burnett Presbytery will be making and growing disciples; serve others in mission; and working collaboratively for intentional mission and ministry. We’ve created a Strategic Missional Alliance Resource Team (SMART) and appointed a part-time (0.5) Mission Engagement Officer. We are moving from a mostly reactive mode to one of being proactive.

R15 Presbytery of Moreton Rivers

Presbytery Minister: Rev Mark Cornford

Moreton Rivers Presbytery has responded well to the challenges of COVID-19 and many congregations have used the opportunity to develop an online presence as a new way of connecting with people. Congregations in the Moreton Rivers Presbytery have many positive stories and opportunities for mission; however, congregations and the presbytery do also face challenges for the future related to workloads and sustainability which COVID-19 has intensified.

R16 Presbytery of South Moreton

Presbytery Minister: Rev David Busch

COVID-19 has been a game-changer for congregations in their operations and their missional thinking. Each context has its own opportunities, capacities and limitations in responding to these challenges. In each place, the question we face is not, “When will this end?” but rather, “Where might this lead?” and “What does faithfulness to the gospel require of us?” We celebrate significant mission initiatives at Flagstone Community Centre, Southside Uniting Church, NewLife Coolangatta and emerging in Redland City. We face big challenges in having a strong missional presence in the burgeoning northern Gold Coast corridor and through congregation revitalisation in other places.

The presbytery has lost three multi-cultural church communities since the 34th Synod over same-gender marriage. In the wake of budget cuts that have seen the equivalent of one ministry position lost, the presbytery is reviewing its life and strategic priorities which will also inform decisions about future resourcing needs.

R17 Presbytery of The Downs

Presbytery Minister: Rev Yvonne McRostie

- Gratitude to God for the support from across the whole Synod as we face many natural disasters.
- BlueCare Grief and Loss Program continues to grow and benefit many within the presbytery and beyond.
- People and healthy living systems are our greatest resource for growing the mission of the church.
- Project Plenty highlighted the community needs surrounding issues of mental health and well-being.
- Ecumenical engagement across the presbytery is vital to future ministry.

R18 UnitingCare Queensland

Chair: Nigel Alexander

This report to the 35th Synod in Session demonstrates UnitingCare Queensland's (UnitingCare) commitment to reaching and serving the people and communities of Queensland in ways that have the greatest positive impact on their health and quality of life.

In the past year, we have embodied the biblical theme of the 35th Synod—grow—as we continued our transformation journey. We have demonstrated measurable progress in stabilising our financial situation, and strengthening the organisational capability so we can successfully achieve our aspiration of becoming a leader in health, aged care and community services by 2030.

Through UnitingCare's ongoing response to the COVID-19 crisis, our people have demonstrated the heart of service that differentiates us from other providers. They have gone above and beyond to keep delivering the services for those who need us most. Our people have achieved this while meeting increased demand for some services, the suspension of others, all against a backdrop of ongoing sector review and reform.

During the coming year, we are turning our attention to embedding increased strategic thinking across all areas of UnitingCare, with a strong focus on delivery and outcomes that achieve our mission.

R19 Wesley Mission Queensland

Chair: Geoff Batkin

We acknowledge as a church that the resources with which God has entrusted us are a gift to be used for mission and ministry in our community. We are small, but we are big—the people of Wesley Mission Queensland seek to have a very big heart. As part of the Uniting Church we are people who love God and want to make a difference; we are congregations—God's people gathering in worship, witness and service; we offer service programs supporting thousands of people in need at all ages and stages of life; we are thousands of staff and volunteers from all different backgrounds, faith and cultures united in the mission of God—towards reconciliation, transformation, justice and hope for all people.