

Dollars & Sense

News for Church Treasurers and Financial People

March 2012 Newsletter from Financial Services, UCA Presbytery and Synod of SA



Peter Battersby
Deputy General Manager,
Resources/Manager,
Financial Services Team

Dear Friends

Each year the Financial Services Team strives to improve its services and support to you.

Over the past few years the team has made many advances in our processes, modernising our systems to help us work better together. However it may be that you are not aware of how these advances can help you. This year we are focusing on how best we communicate our message, to provide you with resources and to help you through some of the intricacies of the finance matters facing your congregation. In addition to our Congregational Bookkeeping Unit helpline (available during office hours), in 2012 we will be offering three of our popular (and free) Treasurers workshops. Also, this newsletter has now gone electronic which allows more congregational leaders to access it while at the same time reduce our costs. Finally, the Uniting Church SA web site will be renovated this year to make it easier for you to find the information you require more readily, when you need it most.

We understand that communication is a two way process. Therefore, we genuinely want to hear from you – tell us the financial matters that cause you concern. The Financial Services Team is here to listen, to find answers to your questions. We look forward to hearing from you whether by email, carrier pigeon, telephone, letter, or in person.

Wishing you all the best throughout 2012.

Regards

Peter Battersby



Meeting the team

Amy is the newest member of the Financial Services Team and was recently appointed to the Congregational Bookkeeping Unit. She has quickly settled in and is now busy helping both Uniting Venues and some Uniting Church Congregations with their bookkeeping and payroll needs.

Amy comes to us with both academic and practical credentials. After six years of study, in her spare time, she completed a Bachelor of Business with UniSA. Having been bitten by the accounting bug she now hopes to work towards becoming a CPA. However, our Amy isn't all academic theory. She comes to us with years of real life accounting experience, having worked for a chain of supermarkets and with companies in the automotive and industrial cooling industry.

But wait! There's more! Not only does Amy share a delightful sense of humour and a commitment to professionalism but we also discovered someone who has been a lifetime part of the Brooklyn Park and Adelaide West Uniting Churches. She helps with the youth group and plays piano and drums for the church. Finally, Amy loves reading, cooking – and cleaning! It's not that she's weird; she just likes things neat, tidy and clean. Amy, welcome to the team.



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Treasurers

Need Regular Income for the Mission of Your Congregation

UC Invest Local Support Investments can be used to finance your congregation's mission project, to offset a loan your congregation has taken, or provide a regular, safe income source for your church. These investments have often been used for supporting building developments, but can also be used for mission projects such as a staff person, new program or an area of mission your congregation is seeking to begin or expand. Participants in the investment elect not to receive any interest. All interest received is paid as a grant from UC Invest to the nominated congregation and project. Interest is calculated daily and paid quarterly. Grants are paid based on the UC Invest at call interest rate.

For more information go to <http://ucinvest.com.au/personal/local-support.html#page=page-3>

or phone: 08 8236 4220 Country Callers: 1300 766 956.

Everything you need to introduce this into your congregation can be found on the Spirited Generosity section of the Resources website <http://resources.sa.uca.org.au/finance/stewardship.html>. There are suggested letters and a fact sheet for introducing the idea.

Fringe Benefits Accounts/ Ministers Trust Accounts

Churches and charities benefit from laws which allow congregations and specified persons to take advantage of GST concession, Income Tax Exemption and Fringe Benefit Tax exemptions for Religious Practitioners. As a result, Ministers can opt to have part of their remuneration in the form of a tax-free amount, which is held in trust by the church (by the congregation or Synod, depending on who is administering the Fringe Benefit Account) and is used to pay third parties or reimbursements on behalf of the account holder.

As these funds are 'held in trust', they must form part of the congregation's or Synod's annual Financial Statements. It is therefore extremely important that these Fringe Benefit (or Ministers Trust) Accounts are administered properly, in line with the Australian Tax Office and UCA Assembly requirements.

The Uniting Church SA has put the Fringe Benefits Account Handbook on its web site, and this can be found at <http://resources.sa.uca.org.au/finance/fringe-benefits-account.html>

In particular, we would draw your attention to the following key points:

1. Only specified persons are eligible for a Fringe Benefit Account
2. Whilst it is strongly encouraged that Ministers and congregations avail themselves of the fringe benefit and payroll accounting services provided by the Finance Team, congregations can elect to administer these accounts themselves

3. If administered by the congregation, the Treasurer should be in a position to operate the account in accordance with the guidelines within the handbook
4. Income allowed in a Fringe Benefit Account comes from the church in the form of the maximum approved percentage of a stipend and associated allowances
5. Wedding fees, funeral income and book sales cannot be paid into these accounts and must be declared on a personal income tax return as they are taxable income
6. The Fringe Benefit Account can be used for the approved expenses as incurred by a Minister, their spouse or dependent children
7. All expenses should be approved by the account holder before payment and should be supported with appropriate documentation (such as tax invoices)
8. Accounts should never be overdrawn or treated as a loan to an account holder
9. Non-approved expenses are listed in the handbook
10. These are not savings accounts and should therefore be regularly drawn down

As always, if Treasurers or other persons have any questions, please feel free to contact the Financial Services Team at finance@sa.uca.org.au. If a Fringe Benefit Account is held in the name of the congregation, and you have any concerns please contact the Associate General Secretary, Malcolm Wilson. mwilson@sa.uca.org.au

2012 Mission & Service Fund Response Forms Are Due

The Mission and Service Fund provides vital financial support to every aspect of our church's mission. Together, congregations and faith communities make a significant contribution to the work of the church. Response forms are important for Presbytery & Synod budgeting and are now overdue. If you wish to discuss the completion of the form or this particular aspect of your congregation's finances please email finance@sa.uca.org.au or call Peter Harbison on (08) 8236 4270.

C.B.U. NEWS

In 2012, the Congregational Bookkeeping Unit welcomes the following congregations as new clients:

- Broadview Uniting Church
- Adelaide Congress Ministry
- Playford Uniting Church

In the latter part of 2011, we also welcomed Verdun Uniting Church.

This brings our bookkeeping client list to 27 Uniting Church organisations. Of course, we are available not only to our regular bookkeeping clients, but also to all Uniting Church



Treasurers

congregations to provide advice on bookkeeping and GST matters as required. The unit continues to grow, with Amy Ralph recently joining our ranks and we now have 1 full time and 3 part time staff. There is someone available to answer your queries from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

As congregations' needs in the financial area change, the CBU is here to provide support. If you have comments on the services we provide, or feel that there are other ways in which we could support you, we welcome your feedback at any time on (08) 8236-4215 or cbu@sa.uca.org.au

Treasurers' Workshops

In 2012 we will again be offering workshops for Treasurers to provide information to assist you in the performance of your important role. The workshop topics will be:

- New Treasurers
- GST
- Financial Reporting

Dates and venues are still to be confirmed for these workshops and all treasurers will be advised.

MYOB

Reminder: MYOB End Of Year Rollover

Even though you have not completed the 'Start A New Financial Year' process, MYOB will allow you to enter transactions for the New Year.

You should NOT roll over to start a new financial year in MYOB until your auditor has signed off. Once you start a new financial year, it will not be possible to make any changes in the year just ended.

Instructions on how to complete the process are published with this issue as a separate document.



Service

The Resources Board – a Service Board

Not only does the Resources Board manage the legal affairs and administrative processes linked to the property and finance of the Uniting Church, they also have an approach which sees them provide services to congregations and other UCA groups. Here are some you may not know about yet

- **Caring for Creation** The Resources Board has designed an application to help you be greener with ways to assess your energy and water usage and practical ways to show our love for our Creator by caring for creation <http://resources.sa.uca.org.au/environment.html>
- **Computers** Preloved computers (Laptop or PC) are given to UCA groups to assist them realise their mission. Computers are supplied free of charge, and have Windows operating system installed (currently Windows XP). <http://resources.sa.uca.org.au/finance/computer-redeployment.html>
- **Bookkeeping** Probably better known is the Congregational Bookkeeping Unit. With the increasing requirements in a complex world of financial and taxation reporting and the demands of our modern society it can be difficult to find the right solution. Whatever the situation in your congregation, the team is able to help you with either short term or long term assistance, including doing your 'books' on a fee for service basis <http://resources.sa.uca.org.au/finance/congregation-bookkeeping-unit.html>
- **Human Resources** This is another area of increasing complexity with paid and volunteer staff. The website provides accessible resources and staff can answer your questions to ensure we are caring for people as they work and volunteer with us. <http://resources.sa.uca.org.au/human-resources/human-resources.html>
- **Motor Vehicle Lease Scheme** This is offered by the Uniting Church SA to ensure that all ministers and lay people in a placement have access to a motor vehicle at the most cost-effective rate to both themselves and the congregation they serve. <http://resources.sa.uca.org.au/motor-vehicles.html>



Dates & Reminders

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Change To Christmas Bowl Remittance Address

Treasurers please note, all cheques for Christmas Bowl should be made out to NCCA Ltd and posted to Christmas Bowl, Act for Peace – NCCA, Locked Bag Q199, Queen Victoria Building NSW 1230. The due date was Friday 24 February 2012. Any queries should be directed to Virginia Macaspic at Act for Peace on (08) 8232 7071.



Pancake Day 10th Anniversary

In South Australia, 18 UnitingCare agencies provide a wide range of services across the state. These include welfare, hospital and health care, advocacy, emergency support, aged care, accommodation, children, youth and family support, and disability services. Pancake Day is a time to raise awareness and funds which go directly to these local agencies to help them provide practical support to South Australians in need. Visit <http://unitingcare.sa.uca.org.au/pancake-day.html> or freecall 1800 060 543 for more information.

Database Accuracy

Under law we are required to keep the church database as accurate as possible. We would therefore ask that you encourage key office holders in your congregation to ensure that we have up to date information, especially when roles change.

See <http://sa.uca.org.au/online-directory-services.html>

Auditing Of Financial Statements

In accordance with a decision by the full Presbytery & Synod meeting in session, copies of audited financial statements of congregations or groupings of congregations should be forwarded to the Financial Services Team by 30 June 2012. Audit regulations can be found at <http://assembly.uca.org.au/resources/regulations> in Section 5.5.10.

Financial Services Team - Contacts

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Resources Department web site resources.sa.uca.org.au

On the left hand side 'Resources Menu' simply click 'Finance' for more information about the Financial Services Department and its services.