



## 2019 SPECIAL SYNOD MEETING MINUTES SATURDAY 9 FEBRUARY 2019

### OPENING WORSHIP

The Moderator, Rev Sue Ellis, opened the Special SA Synod meeting, welcoming the President, Dr Deidre Palmer. Rev Denise Champion and the Moderator brought an acknowledgement of Country. Opening worship was led by the Adelaide West Worship Team; Bible Readings were from 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 and 2 Timothy 1:1-10.

The Moderator's sermon: Timothy – beloved son – the call of Timothy

- “Don’t let people disregard you because you are young, but be an example to all the believers in the way you speak and behave, and in your love, your faith and your purity (4:12)
- “For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power and of love and of self-control” (1:7)

### SERVICE OF INDUCTION

The Rev Rob Brown, Interim General Secretary invited the Moderator/Chairperson, Rev Sue Ellis, to lead the Induction Service for Rev Sue Page, Associate General Secretary and Rev Tim Hodgson (Deacon), Executive Officer, UnitingCare SA.

The Moderator concluded with Holy Communion.

### PROPOSAL 1

#### OPENING PROPOSALS

The Moderator invited Rev Rob Brown to bring Proposal 1.

S19.17 It was AGREED that the SA Synod resolve to:

1. a. Adopt Standing Orders and Rules of Debate as set out in ‘A Manual for Meetings in the Uniting Church’, as recorded in the Constitution and Regulations, 2018 edition. (Reg. 3.8.4)  
b. Approve that the style of voting shall be by the use of coloured cards unless a written ballot is called for by the Moderator.  
c. Agree that in the event that a procedural motion for the council to move into “Private sitting” is carried by a simple majority then ALL those who are not members of the Council must leave the meeting. The required Uniting Technology and Presbytery/Synod staff will be able to remain to execute their respective tasks.
2. Note that at the beginning of each session the Moderator will deal with the business coming before the house in the following order:



## EXPLANATION OF PROCESSES

**GENERAL SECRETARY JOINT NOMINATING COMMITTEE (JNC) REPORT** – Business papers for members, including details about the candidate and the General Secretary JNC Report, were distributed at morning tea in preparation for a ballot. The Interim General Secretary asked that the result of the ballot be confidential until the candidate has time to speak with her family and community.

## PROCEDURAL PROPOSAL – Use of Procedures

The Moderator requested “Leave of the Council” to amend the style of procedures to be used for the appointment of a General Secretary to be by written ballot with a minimum 67% majority.

**S19.18 It was AGREED that the SA Synod resolve to use a 67% majority vote for the General Secretary appointment.**

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## PROPOSAL 9

### APPOINTMENT OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY

The Moderator invited members of the JNC to present their report. The Moderator asked the house to allow JNC members who are not Synod members to speak to the report. In attendance were Rev Rob Stoner (Convenor), Rev Diane Bury, Rev Do Young Kim, Elizabeth Megaw and Rev Dr Ian Price.

#### JNC REPORT

Rev Rob Stoner spoke to the report including:

- “It has been a long process”. When I first agreed to be the Convenor I thought the process would be 6 – 8 weeks – it has been 10 months.”
- There were two rounds of applications
- We needed to advertise widely across Australia
- JNC members and applicants all had busy diaries
- The JNC wanted to do all of the processes well
- We acknowledge that the long delay has caused difficulty to many people especially Rev Rob Brown, Interim General Secretary and the JNC members.
- Rev Felicity Amery (Deacon) is the person the JNC present to the members for appointment as General Secretary from 1 May 2019.
- Felicity is at the DUCA Business meeting in Sydney this weekend.

Rev Rob Stoner said Felicity is:

- An engaging person, thoughtful in her responses, works relationally, is able to be decisive and offer wide council and leadership, is wise, has experience in the city, rural and remote areas, leadership across diverse communities, significant work with first nations people and is involved in various Synod Committees, Assembly and Assembly Standing Committee.

The JNC believes, "The Position Description (PD) for the General Secretary role is huge. We believe Felicity can adequately undertake a sufficient amount of the PD and has the ability to go deeper into the role". Felicity has a deep and abiding faith in God and a love for the Uniting Church. She has the ability to offer wise and thoughtful leadership.

S19.19 It was AGREED that the SA Synod resolve to:

**APPOINT Rev Felicity Amery (Deacon) to the position of General Secretary of the Presbytery and Synod of South Australia in the Uniting Church from 1 May 2019 for an initial term of five years. [Reg. 3.6.3.3(b)]**

Mr Peter Battersby declared a conflict of interest and stood aside from voting as he is a direct report to the General Secretary.

The result of the ballot to appoint Rev Felicity Amery (Deacon) to the role of General Secretary was 174 for and 26 against (87% majority).

The Moderator prayed for Felicity's move back to South Australia; the Moderator was very mindful of the service of Rev Rob Brown who has occupied the role of Interim General Secretary for some time and also of Rev Mark Lawrence from the Vic/Tas Synod for this work and wisdom and record a vote of thanks to the whole JNC.

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**PROPOSAL 10**  
**DISCHARGE THE GENERAL SECRETARY JNC**

Rev Rob Brown and Rev Sue Page brought the proposal.

S19.20 It was AGREED that the SA Synod resolve to:

**THANK and DISCHARGE the General Secretary Joint Nominating Committee.**

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**PRESIDENT'S CONFERENCE - <https://assembly.uca.org.au/presidentsconference>**

The President, Dr Deidre Palmer spoke about the First President's Conference to be held July 13-17 in Fiji and is open to all Uniting Church members; with a focus on issues of environment, climate, gender justice and how we grow in Christian discipleship.

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**MODERATOR'S PRAYER**

The Moderator prayed for pastoral concerns including members unable to be at the meeting today because of illness.

## PROPOSAL 2

### TOWARDS A MORE PLASTIC-FREE WORLD IN THE UCA

David McKirdy and Jeff Telfer of the Environmental Action Group - <https://www.environmentalaction.org.au/>- spoke to this issue and proposal including:

- International Launch of Environmental Action Group's Lenten App – 'Just Earth' – by the President, Dr Deidre Palmer – 14 February 2019 – 7.30 pm at the Effective Living Centre
- Guest speaker – Dr Ingo Weber, Doctors for the Environment, Australia
- Topic: Health impacts of climate change.
- The Environmental Action Group will be working with the Church/congregations to address issues raised.

S19.21 It was AGREED that the SA Synod resolve to:

1. **INTENTIONALLY phase out the use of all non-essential single-use plastics, including, but not limited to, plastic products like disposable plates, disposable take-away cups, disposable cutlery, balloons, glitter and plastic straws at all SA Synod activities and events by July 2019.**
2. **INVITE congregations, Uniting Venues and schools, colleges and organisations associated with the Uniting Church to also adopt the above stance and phasing out of non-essential single-use plastics;**
3. **CALL on the State Government to:**
  - a) **Invest in the promotion and expansion of the local plastic recycling industry.**
  - b) **Intentionally phase out the use of all non-essential single-use plastics, including but not limited to plastic products like disposable plates, disposable take-away cups, disposable cutlery, balloons, glitter and plastic straws.**
4. **REVIEW the waste management policies and procedures for events and properties held by the Uniting Church.**

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### RELAUNCH OF THE MODERATOR NOMINATING PROCESS

Malcolm Wilson, Convenor of the Moderator Nominating Committee, spoke to the process to date and advised three names will be brought to the June 2019 meeting. Formal decisions are yet to be made as to the role of the Moderator. Currently the role is full-time for three years with adjustments to the role made during that time due to Presbytery restructuring.

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### NATIONAL REDRESS SCHEME

Assembly have submitted an application to the Commonwealth Government that the Uniting Church participate in the National Redress Scheme. This Scheme is survivor focused, wishing to treat survivors fairly

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and adequately. The Government is finalising its processes to allow the Uniting Church to officially enter the Scheme. The Uniting Church has established a UCA Redress Company Ltd to establish a single legal entity, UCA Redress Ltd, to engage with the National Scheme. All Synods will contribute financially to the Company. The Mission and Service Fund is not able to fund the Scheme therefore, congregations will be asked to contribute a 0.17% separate levy for the Redress Scheme which is additional to the 10% for the Mission and Service fund contribution.

Organisations associated with the Uniting Church have been invited to participate in the UCA Redress Scheme at a combined cost of \$16,000 annually for the next 10 years; \$26,000 annually for the UCSA to contribute. Congregations will receive a letter informing them of the levy system (\$20 annual contribution for congregations with very limited funds).

#### **PROPOSAL 4**

#### **FIVE LEAF ECO-AWARDS**

Jeff Telfer spoke about how churches can reduce their carbon footprint.

The Five Leaf Eco-Awards is an Australian ecumenical environmental change program specifically designed for churches and religious organisations which uses a series of non-competitive awards to assist, inspire and reward faith communities for taking environmental action and becoming more sustainable, in response to God's call to care for creation.

The Five Leaf Eco-Awards encourage holistic action for the environment covering five areas - Buildings, Worship, Congregation, Outreach and Community Leadership. To earn an award, churches simply complete actions to fulfil the criteria of that award, and are then presented with certificates of recognition for their achievement. More details on the Five Leaf Eco-Awards website, <https://fiveleafecoawards.org>

S19.22 It was AGREED that the SA Synod resolve to:

**COMMEND the Five Leaf Eco-Awards to congregations in the SA Synod, as a means to raise awareness of environmental issues in the local congregation.**

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#### **RESTRUCTURING TASK GROUP UPDATE**

Mr Barry Atwell, Project Officer for the Restructuring Task Group, spoke to the Group's progress since the November Annual Meeting in 2018.

- At the November 2018 SA Synod meeting it was agreed that the existing council structure in the Uniting Church SA of one Synod and one Presbytery, in place since 2005, would be modified to allow for more than one Presbytery.

- The meeting further agreed that:  
A Missional Non-Geographical Presbytery (MNGP) would be created to operate from 1st July 2019. At least one other Presbytery would be created. Congregations will be given the opportunity to join either Presbytery.
- In 2017 there were informal discussions around the effectiveness of the existing 10 Mission Networks and one Presbytery structure but no specific follow-up resulted from this review.
- The Non-Geographic Presbytery will have its first meeting prior to 1st July 2019. The remaining Presbytery structures will be in place as soon as Standing Committee feel that the consultation process has reached a satisfactory conclusion. If this level of satisfaction has not occurred prior to 1st July 2019, SA will operate on an interim basis with a 2 Presbytery structure.
- Synod staff have contacted congregations asking for a non-binding indication of which Presbytery they would expect to be a member of, e.g. the MNGP or another Presbytery. Currently, 161 congregations have responded, The Task Group and Standing Committee are committed to providing regular updates with consultation and multiple opportunities for feedback from congregations and Mission Networks. In obtaining this feedback a combination of face-to-face, survey and electronic communication will be used.
- The Missional Non-Geographic Presbytery Task Group have met with Rob Brown and Philip Gardner to discuss executive functions, i.e. functions that may stay with the Synod.
- Rob Brown and Barry Atwell have met with Regional Congress to talk about the Presbytery options.
- Both Task Groups report to the Standing Committee.

#### **PROPOSAL 7**

#### **BREAK THE SILENCE SUNDAY - 4TH SUNDAY IN APRIL**

Rev Lyn Leane and Rev Dr Paul Goh presented the proposal and Assembly resolution.

S19.23 It was AGREED that the SA Synod resolve to:

**ADOPT the 4th Sunday in April as a ‘Break the Silence Sunday’ or another suitable Sunday, to provide an opportunity for UCA congregations, faith community and organisations associated with the Uniting Church opportunities to open up a dialogue within the Church about rape and sexual assault.**

- 1. ACKNOWLEDGE the reality of rape and sexual violence in our world;**
- 2. SUPPORT survivors by creating a place where they can tell their stories, feel loved and supported, and find encouragement on their healing journey;**
- 3. COMMIT ourselves to the work of changing the world and creating a future.**

## PROPOSAL 6

### REQUEST FOR FAIR TREATMENT AND MERCY OF ASYLUM SEEKERS LIVING IN AUSTRALIA

Rev Liellie McLaughlin and Rev Paul Turley spoke to the proposal.

S19.24 It was AGREED that the SA Synod resolve to:

1. **REQUEST the Moderator to write to the Federal Government:**
  - a. **EXPRESSING our concerns with the restriction of access to the Status Resolution Support Service (SRSS) for people seeking asylum, and the level of support be increased to above the poverty line;**
  - b. **REQUESTING greater transparency from the Government with regard to support offered to Asylum Seekers; and**
  - c. **QUESTIONING the fairness and validity in the Government's requirement for payment by asylum seekers to process their visas every three years; and the high fees involved in these visa-applications.**
2. **REQUEST ongoing prayer from the SA Synod, churches, schools and organisations associated with the Uniting Church SA for the dignity and protection of all asylum seekers living in Australia, for those who are working to support refugees and asylum seekers, and for government decision-making and administration regarding the plight of asylum seekers.**

## PROPOSAL 8

### INCREASE THE LEVEL OF NEWSTART PAYMENT

Rev Liellie McLaughlin and Rev Mark Schultz presented this proposal.

S19.25 It was AGREED that the SA Synod resolve to:

1. **SUPPORT our request for a letter written by the President of the UCA, Dr Deidre Palmer and the Moderator of the UCA SA, Rev Sue Ellis to the Government of South Australia and the Government of Australia (in particular to the Prime Minister Scott Morrison, Social Services Minister Paul Fletcher, Federal Opposition Leader Bill Shorten, and Federal Social Services Spokesperson Linda Burney) advocating for an immediate increase (of at least \$100 per week) of Newstart and requesting an explanation for the disadvantage imposed by Centrelink and Housing SA on recipients of Newstart; and**
2. **REQUEST that the Moderator seek the cooperation of the leaders of other faith-traditions to assist in helping to recognise and highlight the state of poverty and mental health suffered by recipients of Newstart.**

**CLOSE**

The Moderator thanked members of the Presbytery and Synod, Lynne Aird and the people of Adelaide West Uniting Church and all those who were involved in putting the meeting together including Sue Page in her first meeting as Event Manager.

Mr Peter Battersby offered thanks to Rev Rob Brown for leading the Presbytery and Synod SA over the last 12 months as Interim General Secretary.