



Wimala Presbytery

Introduction

Wimala Presbytery is one of three (3) created by a decision of the November 2018 meeting on the Synod of South Australia.

The seventy nine (79) inaugural congregation locations sit within state borders to the north, west and east of South Australia, while the southern edge runs from Gulf St Vincent at Henley Beach through the city and across the hills north of Mannum to meet the Victorian state border.

Central to Wimala Presbytery's ministry is to gather as the community of Christ, to connect with God and with each other, and to go in the power of the Spirit to be witnesses to God's love, foster discipleship, and engage in acts of outreach and works for justice, peace, reconciliation and the renewal of creation.

1. Presbytery meetings

1.1 16 November 2019

Wimala Presbytery held its first meeting at the conclusion of the November 2019 meeting of the Synod of South Australia. Known then as Presbytery A, this first meeting elected office bearers Trevor Phillips (Chair), Anne Wilson (Secretary) and Brian Dunstan (Treasurer). The foundational work of these office bearers and the interim Standing Committee elected at this meeting is acknowledged with gratitude – Ann Phillips, Leanne Davis, Dianne Holden, Rebecca Purling, Christine Secombe, Owen Roberts, Malcolm Wilson.

1.2 14 March 2020

More than 70 Presbytery members and visitors gathered at Gawler UC for a time of worship, celebration, fellowship and business. Office Bearers and a Standing Committee were elected: Trevor Phillips (Chair), Christine Secombe (Secretary), Richard Idzikowski (Treasurer), Bruce Ind, Dianne Holden, Owen Roberts, Rhanee Tsetsakos.

Carol Boyce has been a regular visitor and contributor to recent Standing Committee meetings.

At this meeting the Adnyamathanha word Wimala (used with the permission of the Elders) was adopted as the Presbytery's name to highlight our covenantal relationship with the First Peoples and reflect the Presbytery's values of gathering and celebrating, nurturing and encouraging, fostering discipleship and acts of outreach and social justice. Continuing to develop the Presbytery's relationship with the Uniting Aboriginal & Islander Congress is a Presbytery priority.

1.3 31 October 2020

One of the highlights of this meeting when over 90 people gathered at Spicer UC was the installation of Chairperson Trevor Phillips during worship. This gathering was pared back in the interests of health and safety during these COVID19 times whilst at the same time building in time and space for celebratory worship, joyful singing, catching up with long-standing friends, meeting new ones, and sharing stories. Eleven members participated in the meeting via Zoom, another of the signs of the 'new normal' times we are in.

Other meeting highlights include the election of Wimala's members of Synod and of Assembly, creation of the role/s of Regional Co-ordinator/s, and adoption of Wimala's statement of identity and the tag line:

Gather Connect Go

In the power of the Spirit.

Part of Standing Committee's work in the year ahead is to implement practices and programs to enhance and support this statement, and possibly to develop a logo that visualises its elements.

2. Standing Committee

The COVID19 pandemic reached Adelaide about the same time as this Committee was elected. Standing Committee has met 13 times by Zoom, on the first and third Wednesday of the month over the period April to November. It is hoped to be able to meet face-to-face in the new year.

Generally, the first meeting of the month focuses on missional, pastoral and visioning aspects of our work and the second receives reports and carries out the business of the Presbytery. Meeting papers can be viewed on the Wimala web site. Standing items at each meeting are a regular update about the Uniting Aboriginal & Islander Christian Congress, and a community building spot for sharing joys, concerns and items of interest.

Essential administrative tasks have been attended to – a *Memorandum of Understanding* with the Synod Finance Team and a *Financial Management Policy* are in place and the executive and administrative functions that remain with the Synod following the restructure have been formalised.

Standing Committee has developed Presbytery Rules that document processes and procedures for our common life together – membership, Standing Committee, and non-congregation bodies. Rules for the Pastoral Relations Committee and Period of Discernment are in the pipeline. A *Confidentiality Policy and Agreement* has been developed and adopted. Many thanks to the Synod, Generate Presbytery and the Presbytery of Southern SA for sharing their resources.

Standing Committee has resolved to create a Presbytery Property Team who, in consultation with the Pastoral Relations Committee and Regional Coordinators, will walk alongside congregations as they determine missional priorities for their properties, address any issues raised by their *Building Safety Report*, and assist with the administrative tasks in the event that a congregation closes.

The Officers of the Presbytery have participated regularly in a joint meeting of Officers of the Presbytery of Southern South Australia, Generate Presbytery, and Synod leaders and, since July, have been meeting by Zoom on the Monday evening ahead of the Standing Committee meeting.

While the March 2020 meeting designated a term of office of twenty four months for the Chairperson, it did not specify the terms of office of the Secretary and the Treasurer.

It is usually desirable that there be a staggered exit of office bearers and Christine Secombe has signaled to the Presbytery that she will stand aside at the time of the 2021 AGM and not seek re-election.

2.1 Communication

As mentioned above, Presbytery meetings have been welcomed as the primary space for seeing each other and being together.

A regular newsletter providing updates from Standing Committee began circulation to Ministry Agents, Church Councils and Presbytery Reps in May.

Our digital media is under development. While the web site is up and running, it is not yet utilised to its best capacity. Congregations are encouraged to promote their events on their own Facebook page and the Synod's UC eNews – at present announcements are 'shared' to Wimala's FB page from these media.

Standing Committee's hopes to worship with congregations, and/or enjoy their company in workshops or resourcing days and/or over a cuppa are reviving as we emerge into the 'new normal' of these COVID19 times. The Retired Ministers will gather at Broadview UC for morning tea with Standing Committee and the Pastoral Relations Committee on Thursday 26 November **.

While the concept of geographic clusters was received coolly at the March 2020 Presbytery meeting, some regional collegial clusters are developing. We watch and wait - where will the Spirit lead in coming days when Regional Coordinators are appointed to assist us in discerning where we can join God in mission?

2.2 Finance

Richard Idzikowski writes "As a result of the unusual and unexpected pandemic year that 2020 was, lower than expected expenses were resulted, with an anticipated surplus well over \$200,000 to be carried forward into 2021. This unexpected resource will provide for us an excellent foundation upon which we can consider, plan and develop funding for future mission and resourcing opportunities and activities, to help and support our member congregations and the wider church where there is real need, and to know that in some small way we can address some of the challenges in the wider world and hope to make a difference. Standing Committee will be considering the appropriate methods in which the funds can be accessed and used, ensuring appropriate guidance and governance is applied.

The 31 October meeting passed the proposed draft 2020/21 budget, including budget spend for up to 0.6FTE Stipend Equivalent rate for 3 x 2.0 Regional Coordinators (or hubs/clusters), increased maximum hours for the role of Secretary now up to 10hours per week and reduced costs as a result of ongoing decrease in expected face to face gatherings and administrative cost savings. The draft budget focussed on ensuring that we meet the anticipated 2021 operational expenses of the Presbytery, and still provide a considerable amount towards future mission & resourcing growth, yet not access the surplus funds unnecessarily, ensuring we maintain appropriate fiscal management.”

2.3 Committees

2.3.1 Wider Church

Alex Rodgers represents Wimala on the Public Theology and Mission Subcommittee of the Mission and Leadership Development Board, Sharonne Price is Wimala’s representative on the Synod Property Committee, Rebecca Purling and Marian Wicks represent Wimala on the Synod’s Advisory Committee on Ministerial Placements, Rebecca Purling represents the Presbytery on the Synod Selection Panel, and Trevor Phillips is Wimala’s representative on the Uniting Church Foundation Grants Committee.

2.3.2 Pastoral Relations Committee

Members elected in March 2020 are Rebecca Purling (Chair), Bob Hutchinson (Deputy Chair), Glenys Badger, Alan Biglow, Mark Boyce, Mark Dickens, Linda Forsyth, Wendy Prior, Geoff Tiller, Marian Wicks. Glenys resigned in August.

Rev Rebecca Purling writes “The Pastoral Relations Committee of the Presbytery is charged with overseeing the pastoral relations between the Ministers, Pastors and congregations within the Presbytery.

Given the unusual circumstances of this year we are slowly getting to know our Ministers, Pastors and congregations, and we are working together to understand the Placements and consultation processes and our other roles and responsibilities.

At the end of last year when the two geographic Presbyteries were created it was agreed that for the first six months of this year we would have a joint PRC that met in the Synod office with the remaining members of the Pastoral Relations and Mission Planning Team present. This was a helpful transition and allowed us time to recruit people to serve on the Wimala PRC.

Wimala PRC members have been meeting since July, initially by Zoom and now face to face.

We are grateful for the ongoing work and support of Peter Hollister in the Synod office who sorts out Supply arrangements for sick leave and LSL and ensures that our Ministry of Pastor people are in contract and paid properly. And Philip Gardner – Placements and Safe Church Officer – is a good sounding board and offers advice when asked.“

3. Congregations

Thanks be to God for God's faithful people engaged in God's mission in their localities.

We have celebrated the inductions of Rev Do Young Kim at Prospect Road, Rev Christa Megaw at Henley Fulham, and Rev Jesse Size at Para Hills, and the commissioning of Pastor Leanne Davis into The Plains Congregations**. Wimala took an active role in the service to commission Nola Branson as an Accredited Lay Preacher. We express deep gratitude to retired ministers of Wimala and other Presbyteries who continue to offer leadership and wisdom in all aspects of congregation life.

We've celebrated too with the South Sudanese congregation in transitioning to a congregation of the Uniting Church, and nurture with joy the International Pentecostal Prophetic Church as they journey towards becoming a Faith Community of the Uniting Church.

Driver River has transferred to Generate Presbytery and while Bute, Brentwood and Windsor no longer meet as congregations, winding up the property and other administrative tasks is on hold until the harvest season is past.

A couple of congregations have amalgamated – Jerusalem with Wallaroo, Cross Roads with Moonta, Arthurton with Maitland – and Urania is moving towards amalgamation with Maitland in the new year. At present, there are 71 congregations aligned with Wimala and two Faith Communities.

4. Looking ahead

Standing Committee has opened a space for discerning and brainstorming options for connecting and resourcing each other, Presbytery to congregations and between congregations. Our main thoughts are around developing a model for three regions within Wimala Presbytery. Regional Coordinators will become part-time placements in these regions to help to facilitate gatherings and access to resources and would be a pastoral resource for leaders and congregations within the region.

As many of our smaller congregations have struggled financially, we have been partnering with Synod in developing processes for consolidating our building resources and looking for ways to stay engaged within our communities. One way to continue that engagement may be to explore different ministry models, for example, regional ministry resourcing groups, so that congregations that can no longer support a placement may be able to engage in Lay led ministry with a resourcing team to support them.

Creating a church renewal and planting team to help identify and resource new church plants and congregations looking to re-energise is also part of Standing Committee's thinking. While this is in very early stages, it is hoped that such a team would work closely with the Synod Church Planting Team. There may too be opportunities for wider collaborations and creation of a Missions Engagement Team to help congregations identify and engage with God in mission in their communities.

Many of our congregations engaged in an “Online presence” during the COVID19 shutdown and have resolved to maintain that presence, further develop their expertise, and invest in appropriate technology and resources. As a Presbytery it may be helpful to explore ways of sharing our learnings as well as our resources and materials, so that we can all share in this new “Digital Church” and reach out to support and engage people who do not attend a service but would like to engage in worship.

5. Concluding remarks

Establishing a new Presbytery is a complex task. Bringing the Constitution and Regulations to life while navigating the challenges of the different ways of being church that COVID19 has demanded, has taken much prayer, time, patience and inspiration by those of us called by God into leadership roles, and offering with grace and generosity our many and diverse gifts and graces into this space.

Across the Presbytery, in congregations and faith communities, stories of faith have been shared, discipleship nurtured, and ministries of love and service transform lives in local communities.

Please continue to pray for the missional activity of Wimala congregations and the work of all Committees of Wimala Presbytery, for energy for the tasks and wise discernment in decision-making.

Christine Secombe

20 November 2020

*** SA government restrictions due to a COVID19 outbreak led to both events being deferred.*