



Record of Service – Rev Andrew Prior

I grew up in the Methodist Church at Gladstone, South Australia, where I preached my first sermon aged nine, for a Sunday School Anniversary. I was mentored in senior high school by a schoolteacher, Mr Geoff Boyce, and then by Revs Nairn Kerr and Ian Tanner at Scots Church. I was confirmed at Scots Church in 1976. As I completed my Agricultural Science degree, I was recruited by Rev Bob Vawser, and spent almost six years at Pukatja (Ernabella) where I met my partner Wendy Porter, now Rev. Wendy Prior. Living in the Pukatja Community was a life changing experience. In my email signature I acknowledge that I live on Kurna land, and note the Nukunu and Ngadjuri lands of my upbringing. Then the last line says: forever in debt to the Pitjantjatjara people.

I candidated in the Northern Synod and we returned to Adelaide in 1983 where I began study at Parkin Wesley College. I was ordained at the end of 1989, and our family moved to my first placement in the Ascot Parish where I had primary responsibility for the Ascot and Plympton Park congregations in a team ministry with Rev Cliff Birch, another key mentor. During this time Wendy completed her ordination studies. The sports club at Ascot was a wonderful experience of the engagement possible between the church and the community. What I learned there shaped much of my future ministry. Circumstance would mean this was my only full-time ministry placement.

Now with two children, Deborah and Chris, and after Wendy's ordination, we moved to the Whyalla Congregation for three years in 1994, in a joint ministry placement of 0.75 FTE each. Friendships, community, and grace, flourished in unexpected places in Whyalla. The city gifted me with a window into what seemed all the world's hopes, and joys, and broken dreams, compressed into a few square kilometres. Both the city and the congregation blessed me with the understanding that my vision of the Christ, and the church, and the world, was too small. I needed a thorough rethink.

Our return to Adelaide in 1997 coincided with a time when the Synod had many more ministers than placements. Recovering from a period of ill health, I provided supply at St. Andrew's Hospital, and Pilgrim Church during 1997, and then spent most of 1998 at Royal Park and Alberton Combined Congregation, part-time, in an Interim Ministry. I also provided short term supply at Seacombe during 1998. During this time I began further studies in computing to enable a more stable income for the family.

We moved to the Gawler Parish in 1999, and I filled 0.25 FTE of the placement to enable Wendy to engage in further pastoral studies. I began full time computing work in January 2000, while providing occasional preaching support for Wendy, and gradually reframing my understanding of the Faith.

While in the Gawler Parish, we built a house in Elizabeth which shortened the commute into Adelaide for the children and me. The house enabled both Wendy and me to take multiple placements where manses were not available, and was a stable point for the family. I spent some seven years in the corporate sector, often enjoying the humour and opportunities of those moments when people discovered they were working with a Uniting Church minister. In God's curious serendipity I became friendly with a Muslim taxi driver who would

drive me between clients. Fata and I shared something of our faith stories, and one day I was struck by the similarity of our experiences of the God of love. At that moment it felt time to come back to a congregation.

In 2008 I filled a 0.3 FTE placement in the Greenacres congregation through until mid-2014. This included rewarding work with refugee families from South Sudan, and beginning a collaboration with an Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church which shared the property. I began to focus on a preaching ministry at Greenacres, preaching two Sundays a month despite the limited FTE of the placement. This was assisted by my work in an experimental online ministry for some three years at Scots Church, called church reWired, which often "wrote the sermons" for Greenacres.

Through the work at Greenacres and Scots, I developed a weekly online commentary on the lectionary gospel which I have maintained through to retirement, and hope to continue for some time. One Man's Web has had a significant readership in South Australia, and is read worldwide. In many ways it has been my key service to the church and energised everything else.

Part-time ministry placements offered me the opportunity to undertake ministry across more than one congregation at a time. In 2011, while in placement at Greenacres, I also filled a 0.4 FTE supply at Cornerstone Congregation for several months and, in July 2012, still in placement at Greenacres, I began a 0.25 FTE placement at Hare Street Congregation, which continued until mid-2020. Between the two congregations I preached weekly, commuting by pushbike where possible, and developing many sermons while riding the back-streets, creeks, and bike paths of Adelaide. Since 2007, I have provided IT support for various congregations and colleagues, and after leaving Greenacres this settled into regular support at Scots Church and Pilgrim Church. I think the computer bloke has had nearly as many pastoral conversations as the minister!

While at Hare Street I provided supply at Pilgrim Church during 2015-2016, and at Henley Fulham congregation during 2019, and a short supply in the Solidarity and Justice function in Synod. In January 2015 Wendy and I began a supply ministry at Lyell McEwin Health Service, filling the vacant Mental Health Chaplaincy. My role in this was to support the Faith Community which met in the hospital chapel, and after she took up the Chaplaincy Placement I continued to assist Wendy, cooking for the group when they met in our Elizabeth home.

I found Hare Street to be an extraordinary congregation, especially in its weekly bible studies which regularly dealt with issues of doubt, domestic violence and mental health and other challenging issues. The "no questions off limits" approach of that study was reflected in everything the congregation did. During this placement the congregation began a collaboration sharing the site with Filadelfia GPdI (Gereja Pantekosta di Indonesia) congregation, and with Liberty Baptist Church, which is largely Filipino. This placement was both exhausting and joyous, and I consider it a high point in what has been a privileged life of service.

I retired at the end of June 2020.