



The Uniting Church in Australia
Synod of South Australia

Synod Strategic Plan

2026 – 2030

Congregational Renewal

Discipleship & Leadership

Living in Covenant

Faithful and Wise Stewardship

Workbook

Congregational Renewal

Developing life-giving Christian communities that participate in Christ's reconciliation and renewal of all things.

As communities we constantly need to be seeking the renewing work of the Spirit in our lives. Some of this is accomplished by through practices of worship, prayer, Bible Study and Christian community. There are also times that it is helpful to review and refresh those practices and initiate new work and practices. A key part of congregational renewal is for congregations to have given thought to how people with no espoused faith in God move to becoming mature followers of Jesus. This will include intentionally identifying and strengthening current practices and pathways, and developing new ones where needed.

An opportunity for congregational renewal and for sharing the good news with new communities is church planting. Another is the renewing of current congregations. A third is a new expression of being a church together. The Basis of Union reminds us that "In his own strange way Christ constitutes, rules and renews them as his church" (*Basis of Union*, paragraph 4).

Congregational renewal calls for intentional reflection and discernment. Congregations are encouraged to regularly ask:

- How are we growing as disciples of Jesus?
- How are we connecting with people beyond our current community?
- What practices are life-giving, and where might renewal or change be needed?

Objectives

Sustaining life-giving communities of lifelong discipleship through worship, witness and service

Developing strong missional connections with local community

Reimagining rural and regional ministry to make it more effective

Strengthening evangelism and capacity for faith sharing

Building intercultural capacity and inclusion

Supporting and facilitating new and renewing expressions of church

Goals

Ensure the majority of congregations have articulated plans for helping people go from no espoused faith in God to being mature followers of Jesus.

Develop local, rural and regional ministry models.

Revitalise lay education in the Synod.

Develop a church planting culture within the Synod (including strengthening of accredited courses).

Affirm our heritage, strengthen our identity and engender hope and courage for our continuing mission.

Foster avenues for active engagement that is intergenerational and intercultural.

Congregational Renewal looks like:

- A mission plan in every congregation
- A strengthened culture of evangelism
- Congregations that have a growing connection with presbytery and synod
- New churches planted and new expressions of church developed
- CALD communities strengthened
- Intercultural capacity developed
- Congregations that have strengths in a variety of areas eg. Worship, children and youth, seeking justice, prayer, evangelism and service
- Congregations have at least one (or two) ministry programs and activities with their local community
- Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the UCA within every community.

Your reflections on Congregational Renewal:

Let's talk about: _____

Let's work on: _____

Discipleship and Leadership

Growing mature disciples who reflect the character of Christ and who have a positive impact on places where they live, work, serve and play.

Discipleship and leadership are central to the life and mission of the Church. This is a lifelong journey of following Jesus – shaped by worship, learning, service, and community. It involves both personal transformation and active participation in God’s mission .

As the *Basis of Union* states, “Through human witness in word and action, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ reaches out to command people’s attention and awaken faith; he calls people into the fellowship of his sufferings, to be disciples of a crucified Lord” (Paragraph 4).

Discipleship is being formed in the character of Christ so that we can live in relationships marked by the “love, care and compassion that was embodied in Christ” (Code of Ethics 1.6).

Communities of faith are called to help people explore and discern their vocation. This includes through our daily living, place of work and a life in community. God calls every member to be in ministry in the world, For some this will be in specified ministries. In response, we will intentionally work on a variety of leadership pathways to equip all people to participate in God’s work in the world.

Objectives

Understanding what mature discipleship looks like, and creating plans to help people of all ages grow as followers of Jesus

Developing clear and sustainable leadership pathways

Strengthening and resourcing theological education

Equipping disciples for local community mission, advocacy and service

Strengthening intercultural capacity in leadership and discipleship

Equipping leadership in CALD communities

Goals

Increase clarity across Synod around what mature discipleship looks like.

Foster reflection by congregations on discipleship to help increase the intentional growing of mature followers of Jesus.

Encourage the growth of lay education in congregations, presbytery and across the Synod.

Create and support leadership pathways for new and emerging leaders.

Develop ways to oversee and encourage a stronger professional development culture for ministry agents.

Consider culturally appropriate ways to support development of CALD emerging leaders.

Consider culturally appropriate ways to support development in leaders in UAICC.

Explore ways to help people enter into theological education through UCLT and Presbyteries.

Discipleship and Leadership looks like:

- Increased participation in a Period of Discernment
- Increased ministries engaging people of all ages
- Increased number of Ministers of the Word and Deacons
- Councils of the UCA encouraging healthy leadership development
- Leaders who are well informed about community expectations and embody 'integrity, trust and compassion' CoE, and are able to engage with the wider councils of the church
- Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the UCA within every community.

Your reflections on Discipleship and Leadership:

Let's talk about: _____

Let's work on: _____

Living in Covenant

We commit ourselves to the continuing work of living out the Covenant between UAICC and the Uniting Church in Australia.

Living in Covenant calls the Church into a deeper way of being – one shaped by relationship, truth, and shared faith. It is an invitation to walk together, learning from one another, and participating in God’s work of reconciliation and renewal in Australia.

As a Synod we commit ourselves to the continuing work of strengthening and renewing the Covenant between the UCA and UAICC. The Covenant is a gift and a calling. It invites the Church into a deeper relationship grounded in faith, shaped by history, and expressed through shared commitment to reconciliation and justice.

As expressed in the Revised Preamble to the Constitution:

“10. After much struggle and debate, in 1994 the Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia discovered God’ s call, accepted this invitation and entered into an ever deepening covenantal relationship with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress. This was so that all may see a destiny together, praying and working together for a fuller expression of our reconciliation in Jesus Christ. AND THUS the Church celebrates this Covenantal relationship as a foretaste of that coming reconciliation and renewal which is the end in view for the whole creation.”

REVISED PREAMBLE TO THE CONSTITUTION
Uniting Church in Australia

This vision continues to guide the life of the Church. Living in Covenant is not a one-time commitment, but an ongoing journey – one that calls for listening, learning, humility, and action.

Objectives

Broadening, deepening and personalising our living out of the Covenant between UCA and UAICC

Advocating for respect and reconciliation in Australia between First and Second Peoples

Understanding and learning from the history of engagement between First and Second Peoples (such as through the Preamble)

Deepening Second Peoples’ engagement with First Peoples’ worldviews including spiritualities for authentic Christian discipleship, understanding and relationship

Create spaces that respect, honour and listen deeply to UAICC

Goals

Resource Congregations to mark and participate in significant events for First Peoples, e.g. Day of Mourning, NAIDOC week, Reconciliation Week.

Equip Congregations and Councils of the Church to create their spaces and environment for welcoming First Peoples, and expressing the Covenant.

Resource Second Peoples to engage with opportunities to deepen understanding of First Peoples, colonisation, history, current Australian context and indigenous theology, including experiences of country.

Review governance structures of the Synod to ensure they enable and honour UAICC.

Engage in conversation with UAICC to ensure Congress can minister to First Peoples in culturally appropriate ways.

Living in Covenant looks like:

- Visible representations of First Nations People and culture through language, arts or acknowledgement of country
- Recognising anniversaries and significant dates
- Creating space for new relationships
- Shared understanding of the past
- Growing connection and trust between First and Second Peoples.

Your reflections on Living in Covenant:

Let's talk about: _____

Let's work on: _____

Faithful and Wise Stewardship

Faithful and wise stewardship of resources in the present – to honour the past and bless the future.

All that we are and all that we have is first a gift from God. We seek to respond to God's generosity to us through faithful and wise stewardship, using what has been entrusted to us in ways that sustain and grow the Church's mission, now and into the future – nourishing our people, resources, property and the wider creation.

To the church in Corinth, Paul wrote that he had laid a foundation on which others had built. "Each builder must choose with care" how they will build on that foundation (1 Corinthians 3:10). In John 4, Jesus says to his disciples "others have laboured, and you have entered into their labour" (John 4:38).

Both of these verses are talking about ministry rather than property or finance. However, they help us understand some key principles about stewardship. The recognition that we receive and step into the work of others, and in turn pass on our work or responsibilities to others. Stewardship recognises that we are called to service, protect and invest in the present and then graciously pass it on to the next people.

Wise stewardship in the present – to honour the past and bless the future – is a key part of our life as a church, so that we may pass those resources on to the next generation. Stewardship is therefore wise financial management and use of property. It is also about the care and development of people, and the care of God's creation. God calls the church to act with care, courage and responsibility – to use what has been entrusted to us in ways that sustain and grow the Church's mission now and into the future.

Objectives

Growing the number of vibrant congregations and communities of faith, in safe buildings that are fit for purpose to ensure a sustainable future of the Synod

Identifying and investing in new and emerging opportunities for mission

Ensuring a Uniting Church that is a safe place for all

Living out our calling to be stewards of God's creation

Goals

Partner with congregations through presbyteries to reflect on their mission and the use of property, developing plans that support safe, sustainable buildings and strengthen ministry; especially in rural, regional, and strategically important communities.

Build the knowledge, skills and capacity of people in congregations for their mission.

Ensure sustainable financial and property resources are available.

Develop sustainable ways to deliver fit for purpose theological education and formation for the Synod of SA .

Develop and implementing systems that improve communication, transparency, and reporting for presbyteries and congregations.

Strengthen policies and practices to ensure the safety and wellbeing of people in the life of our congregation and ministries.

Faithful and Wise Stewardship looks like:

- The Uniting Church being a Safe Church for all
- Safe buildings that are fit for purpose
- Sound financial practices encouraging wise investment and missional entrepreneurship
- Financially and organisationally encouraging active engagement with the Synod Climate Action Plan incorporating NetZero initiatives
- A just resource base for UAICC
- Building the capacity of people and communities.

Your reflections on Faithful and Wise Stewardship:

Let's talk about: _____

Let's work on: _____

To minimise our environmental impact, we've chosen a landscape format for this document to make it easy to read on screen.

If you'd like to print it, we recommend the following settings, if they're available:

- double-sided
- colour
- flip on short edge.

Enquiries and feedback:
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