The Uniting Church in Australia
**Synod of South Australia**

# Continuing the Mission

## Discerning the use of Property Resources for Worship, Witness & Service

The Uniting Church in South Australia has received, and established properties over many years as places for the people of God to gather. All Uniting Church properties are vested in the Property Trust for the benefit ('common-wealth') of the whole Uniting Church.

Congregations have beneficial use of properties, but do not own them. Church Councils are responsible for the management and administration of properties held for the use of their congregation.

Mission is the driving factor for all congregations and this includes any property decisions. Property is a vehicle to help the church (the people) to participate in God's mission.

The Synod has the responsibility to provide wise stewardship of the properties entrusted to it. The Resources Board, on behalf of the Synod, has oversight of all properties owned by the Property Trust.

At times, congregations may hand a property on when it no longer serves its missional purpose. This is usually after the existing congregation closes, in which case the property is transferred to the Synod.

This brochure explains the framework of transferring property to the Synod which opens the possibility of discovering a new missional use for it, or deciding that the property will be sold. Most recently, this process was used to plant a new church at Kurralta Park, on the site of the former Hare Street Uniting Church.

The process can be considered a cycle, with six stages, as shown on the next page.

## 1 Congregation using the property

A Uniting Church Congregation has use of the Church property. As per the Uniting Church Regulations, the Congregation Church Council is responsible for the management and administration of the property, including care and maintenance of the property. The Congregation pays holding costs, capital costs and maintenance costs associated with the property.

## 2 Congregation closing

When a Congregation closes, the property it was using usually becomes surplus. All maintenance responsibilities and costs remain with the Congregation until the Synod Standing Committee recognises the closure. The Presbytery should help the congregation prepare for closure.

## 3 Property transferred to Synod

After the Presbytery and the Synod have recognised the Congregation's closure, responsibility for the property transfers to the Synod. The Synod's Property Services Team takes responsibility for property management. The Synod funds holding, capital and maintenance costs. The Resources Board, in collaboration with other Councils of the Church, discerns the future use of the property. If a property is safe to occupy, each Presbytery, the UAICC and Uniting Venues SA are invited to consider future missional uses of the property. If a future missional use is identified, mission planning commences (see # 4 below). If no future missional use is identified, the Resources Board determines the best course of action, which may include retention or sale. If sold, the majority of property sale proceeds are deposited into the New Church and Ministry Development Fund for the benefit of the wider church.

## 4 New church plant or other missional project

If a Presbytery, UAICC or Uniting Venues SA identifies a future missional use for the property, such as a church plant or other missional project, it is required to prepare a competent mission plan. The mission plan is evaluated by the Church Planting Task Group, which then makes a recommendation to the Resources Board based on the competency of the mission plan. While the property is being held for the Presbytery, UAICC or Uniting Venues SA, holding costs are shared 50:50 with the Synod. If the mission plan is approved, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is created between the Synod and the Presbytery, UAICC or Uniting Venues SA. If the mission plan is not approved, further time might be granted for its development, or the project might be discontinued (and the process returns to the Synod and stage #3 above).

## 5 Property safety matters

If the Resources Board sets aside the property for the use of the new church plant or missional project, the Synod's Property Services Team will coordinate work(s) to ensure the property is safe to occupy. At this point, the Synod pays for safety improvement costs, and holding costs are shared 50:50 with the Synod. However, if UAICC or Uniting Venues SA are utilising the site, they will pay all the safety improvement costs.

## 6 Property allocated

After safety improvements are complete, the church plant or missional project can use the property. At this stage the Presbytery, UAICC or Uniting Venues SA and the church plant/missional project will pay for all costs associated with the property, except for unforeseen major capital repair works which will be funded by the Synod. UAICC and Uniting Venues SA will continue to be responsible for all capital works if they are utilising the site. Progress against the mission plan is monitored, through regular reviews.

## New Uniting Church body using the property

The Uniting Church body associated with the church plant or missional project is granted (beneficial) use of the property, as outlined in the MOU.