

Proposal 7

Funding for Church Plants

That the Synod of SA resolves to:

1. **THANK** the Synod for its support of Church Plants over past years.
2. **REQUEST** Synod Church Planting Task Group to develop a new schedule, for significant investment in funding future Church Plants, by the end of 2026.
3. **REQUEST** the Synod Standing Committee to ensure there is sufficient funding for proposal 2 from the New Church and Ministry Development Fund by the end of 2026.
4. **REQUEST** Synod Church Planting Task Group to explore and describe the models of church plants/ new forms of church and eligibility for funding, developing policy and process for access to funding.

Proposers: Simon Story
Mark Elford

Rationale

“Develop a church planting culture within the Synod...” (2026-2030 Synod Strategic Plan)

1. Background

Church planting is core to the work of the whole church. From the Book of Acts through to the modern church, it is vital that new communities of faith are birthed.

Church planting within our denomination stands on the shoulders of the Methodist movement that planted churches and spread across SA. Since Union we have planted new churches. In the last 8 years we have seen 13 churches planted across the Synod.

Church planting is an incredibly challenging space: starting from very little, replanting in challenging environments, access to buildings/facilities, building a team, the felt cost (financial and people) for planting churches when they release a team, and the challenging joy of working with God to reach the community they are called into.

In 2017 the Presbytery and Synod of SA launched Generate 2021 (name is a coincidence) which ambitiously sought to support 10 new church plants and regenerate 15 congregations over 5 years. To do this the Resources Board set up the Church Planting Fund of \$500,000 from the sale of Klemzig and Greenacres Uniting Churches. This fund provided for up to a total of \$50,000 over three years for green fields (new) church plants (usually \$25,000 in the first year, \$15,000 in the second year, and \$10,000 in the third year). The intention was that church plants would contribute back into the fund, however communication and other challenges have meant that this has not occurred.

During this time the presbytery restructure also meant that the role of working with congregations looking to plant, development of planters, and formal recognition of church plants is now done in each of the presbyteries. The Synod Church Planting Task Group continues to meet for communication/cooperation and to facilitate the use of the Church Planting Fund.

We give thanks to God and show our appreciation to the value the Synod has placed on this work.

2. Impact And Benefits

The benefits of church planting are numerous and include:

2.1 Reaching new people.

Church plants consistently reach

- Unchurched people
- De-churched people
- Younger generations
- New residents in growing communities
- Culturally diverse populations

2.2 Leadership Development

Church plants create space for:

- Emerging leaders
- New evangelists
- Ministry apprentices
- Innovative models of ministry

2.3 Renewal for the wider church

Healthy church plants often:

- Inspire existing churches toward evangelism
- Create networks of mutual encouragement

Church plants are often very missional in their effectiveness. In the 2025 Missional Vitality Questionnaire 8 church plants reported. This represents 4% of the total Synod, yet 10% of those who come to faith in 2024. They average almost 30 more people in weekly attendance compared to long term congregations. They score 1.4 higher for intentional discipleship and 1.2 higher for intentional faith sharing (on a 1-5 scale). Additionally church plants often have strong engagement of the younger generations.

3. Looking forward

Through the work of the Mission and Property Strategy the Synod is gaining greater clarity about strategic locations for church planting. This is assisting planting churches to discern God's call, and support alignment across the Synod. Similarly, the Synod Strategic Plan sets a goal to "Develop a church planting culture within the Synod...". To do this we must provide improved resourcing in suitable timeframes.

4. Rationale

The aim of this proposal is to provide needed funding for church plants in an ongoing and sustainable way.

Through the last 8 years of this focus in church planting several learnings have emerged from the challenges and joys of planting. Presbyteries continue to support planters and churches to navigate this space, learning from those who have been there before.

One of the most pressing challenges is funding church plants. \$50,000 spread over three years is simply not enough funding to plant well, and plant regularly. Ministry agents and sending churches (where there is one) are bearing a heavy cost. Severely under resourced by the Church, church plants are spending significant time sourcing funding from elsewhere to be viable.

The Synod Church Plant Fund is now reduced to \$147,272. This will need to be replenished.

It is estimated that church plants cost a minimum of \$250,000-\$300,000 per year in the first 3-5 years. Although resourcing varies across the UCA, the NSW Synod's Church Plant Commission is working towards 5 new strategic church plants with \$350,000 per team/plant each year for 5 years and an additional \$200,000 for property (rent and renovations). The SCPTG needs to consider the models of funding that have emerged and more suitable funding levels.

This proposal seeks to significantly increase investment from the Synod through reasonable, available, resources, while continuing to encourage the creativity of church plants, and discipleship of members in their giving.

By increasing funding available we will see capacity for more churches to be planted more frequently across the Synod.

To develop a church planting culture within the Synod, the Synod Church Planting Fund needs to be replenished, and the amount available to support church plants needs to be increased.

Appendix A

When imagining a church plant most people think of the leader or team, going into a new area to build a new community. However, this is just one way that the modern church around the world continues to plant and replant. Here are some examples of the types of church planting that we have experienced in the last 10 years in the South Australian Synod.

1. **New stand-alone church plant:** Encounter Prospect, CityView, Mitcham Hills, Outpost

These churches were started as leaders stepped out of the ministry context to plant a new church. They worked sacrificially, under financial pressure, built teams, found venues to rent and shared the gospel with the community. While teams were built from leaders coming from one or more congregations, they are not formally connected or supported by any sending church.

2. **New church plant as a campus or site:** Journey City, Seeds Kurralt Park, Encounter Henley, Waypoint Paralowie, Hope Valley Barossa

These churches are started out of a multiplication heart of an existing congregation who raise up leaders, invite a team to join them and help support those leaders in finding venues. They become their own faith community in a separate location; with designated leadership and a different community they are called to reach. They often have a shared vision and missional approach and can share resources and expertise including one church council. This approach is costly for the central church in both supporting and releasing leadership (often carrying the financial burden of paid staff for many years) and the cost of sending a wider team (potentially 30-50 people) to the new church. The campus/site may or may not be able to access a UCA building.

3. **Replants**

A replant is a plant into an existing context. Where a congregation is in decline, smaller in number, or unable to missionally reach its community, a planter and team may be invited by that congregation and/or presbytery to rebirth a new congregation amongst the existing congregation. It is a wonderful way to honour the legacy and mission that has been stewarded by the existing congregation. It is more than a renewal; it is a total reimagining of the existing congregation into a new congregation. This can mean there is important, and at times challenging pastoral work involved; focus on mission of planting, bringing those in the existing congregation along, and helping the new team and existing congregation build strong relationships (often over generations). Some resources may be present (building and

financial), however costs to staff team, fix building, build missional initiative is often very high. Experience has taught that replanting, even when resources are available, is a costly exercise.

4. **Standalone Replant:** Village Church Alberton, Vermont Fijian

An existing congregation makes the courageous missional decision to invite in new leaders and a team to replant the church.

5. **Parish Mission Replant:** Gardens Church

An existing congregation makes the courageous decision to invite leaders and a team to replant using the regulations available for Parish Missions. This highlights a unique ministry and engages wider support from the Presbytery and Synod, often including members of council.

6. **Campus Replant:** Seeds Hallett Cove

An existing congregation requests to become a campus of another congregation. New leadership is placed and a team is sent. The new replanted congregation or faith community will be a campus of the invited congregation, share the same mission, vision, culture, church council and more.

These are some of the models emerging. The SCPTG is asked to consider further models and ensure that appropriate funding and processes are in place to support this work.



The Uniting Church in Australia
Synod of South Australia