

Placements and Safe Church

1. Introduction

Over the past eighteen months, the work of the Placements and Safe Church Ministry Centre has continued to serve the life of the Synod. Much of this work happens quietly and often behind the scenes, yet it is deeply connected to the health, integrity, safety, and mission of the church. Through this Ministry Centre, the Synod supports ministers, congregations, chaplains, committees, councils, and communities in ways that seek to strengthen faithful ministry, safer practice, accountable leadership, and hopeful participation in God's mission.

The work of this Ministry Centre is wide-ranging. It includes placements, relationships with presbyteries, support for Pastoral Relations Committees, the work of the Placements Committee, chaplaincy, supervision, professional standards, discipline matters, Safe Church policy and practice, screening and compliance, disability advocacy and inclusion, Disaster Recovery ministry, church planting, and training.

1.1 The work of the team

I remain deeply grateful for the team who support this work. The breadth and complexity of the Ministry Centre mean that none of this can be sustained by one person alone. All of what has been achieved during this period has depended on the placements and safe church team who hold together administration, systems, communication, training, pastoral support, coordination, and practical follow-through.

2. Placements, presbyteries, and the support of ministry

A central part of this Ministry Centre continues to be the support of ministry placements across the Synod. This work sits at the intersection of discernment, governance, pastoral care, and practical administration. It includes supporting congregations and ministry agents through vacancies, appointments, transitions, reviews, and periods of uncertainty. It also includes helping sustain healthy relationships between congregations, presbyteries, and Synod processes, and ensuring that the church's procedures are followed in ways that are both clear and pastoral.

In practice, placements work is deeply relational. It depends on strong partnership with the presbyteries, and especially with the Pastoral Relations Committees, whose work is often both demanding and pastoral. These committees are frequently the place where the realities of ministry life are most clearly seen: the joys and strains of local ministry, the needs of congregations, the support of ministers, the management of conflict or concern, and the discernment required when transitions are needed. The relationship between this Ministry Centre and the presbyteries, particularly through

the Placements Committee, remains essential. It is through these relationships that concerns are heard early, support can be offered wisely, and decisions can be made with greater clarity and trust.

This work has continued in a context where many congregations are facing changing realities, including aging leadership, financial pressure, questions of sustainability, and the need for renewed imagination about ministry. Ministers themselves continue to carry the weight of complex expectations in local placements. In this environment, placements work is never simply transactional. It requires listening, careful judgement, pastoral sensitivity, and commitment to the wellbeing of both ministers and congregations.

3. The Placements Committee

The Placements Committee has continued to be a vital part of this work. It provides not only procedural oversight, but also wisdom, discernment, and a wider strategic lens on the life of ministry across the Synod. Through the Placements Committee, the church is able to reflect on individual placement matters whilst also engaging the bigger questions facing ministry in this time: how we support ministers well, how we respond to congregational change, how we work with presbyteries, and how our structures can encourage both faithfulness and adaptability.

Barry Littleford's service as Chair of the Placements Committee for 3 ½ years has been appreciated. He has provided structure, guidance, and insight as he has contributed throughout this time.

Placements Committee had its annual planning day in September, with time set aside to consider ongoing and future strategic matters which have appeared throughout the year. Key areas of focus were regional and rural ministry, and the development of Ministry of Pastor. Discussion centred on core principles including fostering a spirit of generosity, adopting a whole-of-church mindset, and serving the wider church. Emphasis was also placed on cultivating a healthy and vital culture, ensuring governance that provides clarity and mission focus, and strengthening administrative support. The need for flexible and creative resourcing models was highlighted, alongside the importance of leadership development, coaching, and maintaining evangelism as a central priority.

- Movements and placements completed see **Appendix 1**

4. Chaplaincy and supervision

Chaplaincy remains one of the church's clearest expressions of ministry in the wider community. Chaplains serve in contexts of vulnerability, grief, crisis, transition, care, and public engagement. Their work extends the pastoral and spiritual presence of the church into places where many people may not otherwise encounter it. Supporting chaplaincy well therefore remains a significant responsibility of the Placements and Safe Church Team.

Over this period, work in chaplaincy has included maintaining relationships with chaplain-hosting organisations, supporting chaplains in the exercise of their ministries, attending to reviews and pastoral support, and working with the wider structures that sustain chaplaincy appointments.

Supervision likewise continues to be a vital discipline for reflective, healthy, and accountable ministry. In a church environment that asks much of its leaders, supervision is not an optional extra but a necessary practice of support, reflection, and sustainability.

At the time of preparing this report the Synod has oversight of 30 chaplains, the number varying due to changes in part-time and supply arrangements. Our chaplains currently work in the following areas:

- o Tertiary Chaplaincy at Flinders University
- o Hospital Chaplaincy in three local area health networks (Southern, Central and Northern)
- o Correctional Services or Prison Chaplaincy
- o School Chaplaincy (Westminster School, Prince Alfred College and Annesley Junior School)
- o Hospital Chaplaincy at private hospitals (St Andrew's and 3 ACHA affiliated hospitals – Ashford, Memorial and Flinders Private)
- o Aged Care Chaplaincy at Eldercare, Helping Hand and Resthaven

Chaplaincy Area	Number of Chaplains	Total FTE
Flinders University	1	0.5
SA Health Hospitals	7	3.5
Corrections	1	1.0
Private Hospitals	4	3.1
Aged Care	14	7.707
Schools	3	2.2
Total	31 Chaplains	18.07 FTE

5. Bush Chaplaincy & Frontier services

Since 2025, Frontier Services has continued to strengthen its ministry and outreach across remote and regional South Australia, offering practical assistance, pastoral care and community connection to people experiencing isolation and hardship. Through the dedicated work of our Bush Chaplains Rev Sunil Kadaparambil and Julia Lennon (MOP), Outback Links volunteers and local congregations, Frontier Services has supported communities affected by drought, flooding and social disadvantage, while also fostering hope, resilience and reconciliation. A significant milestone has been the partnership support for the new church and healing garden in Oodnadatta, creating a lasting place of worship, culture and community connection for First Nations people and the wider township. This ministry inspires me to give thanks for the faithful service of volunteers, supporters and ministry leaders whose compassion continues to embody Christ's presence in the outback and remote communities of our state

6. Redress

As part of our commitment to being a safe church and responding to the injustices of the past, we participate in the National Redress Scheme for survivors of child sexual abuse. The Scheme anticipates an increase in applications for redress as it approaches its closing date in mid-2027 and advises that processing times may extend well beyond the original date mid-June 2028.

Responding to these applications can require significant time and care from our team, as well as being a difficult area for the life of the church.

7. Professional standards, discipline, & Complaints

One of the more demanding and sensitive parts of this Ministry Centre is the work of professional standards, discipline, and complaints. This includes matters related to the Code of Ethics, complaints handling, accountability, discipline, and the pastoral and procedural processes required when concerns arise. This work is often unseen by the wider church, and appropriately so, but it is a crucial expression of the Synod's commitment to integrity, justice, safety, and care.

A significant development during this period has been the implementation of the revised Section 5 of the Regulations, which came into effect on 1 January 2025. These revised regulations provide a clearer framework for complaints, discipline processes, the role of responsible bodies, the work of Pastoral Relations Committees, and the handling of sexual misconduct complaints through the Synod Sexual Misconduct Committee. The Assembly Standing Committee approved the revised regulations for use from 1 January 2025 and requested training and implementation planning before commencement.

These changes have had practical implications for the work of the Ministry Centre and for the councils and committees involved in complaints and discipline matters. They have required renewed attention to process, clearer understanding of responsibilities, and the strengthening of structures that can respond well to complaints while remaining grounded in the pastoral life of the church. Within this context, an important focus of the Ministry Centre has been the implementation of training and ongoing formation for the Committee for Counselling, the Committee for Discipline, and the Synod Sexual Misconduct Committee, so that members are better equipped for the discernment, care, and procedural responsibility required of them.

8. Safe Church: from compliance to culture

Safe Church remains a major priority across the life of the Synod. Over the last eighteen months, this work has included policy oversight, training, compliance support, screening administration, audit processes, and the ongoing encouragement of safer practice across congregations and ministries. Increasingly, it has become clear that safeguarding cannot be reduced to compliance alone. Compliance matters, and it must be taken seriously, but the deeper task is the formation of culture:

communities in which safety, accountability, healthy boundaries, and the dignity of each person are woven into the life of the church.

Significant effort has gone into strengthening the Synod's Safe Church posture through support for local communities, and a more intentional approach to audit and compliance processes. The Safe Church Audit process has highlighted both encouraging commitment and ongoing areas of concern. Many communities are working in good faith to strengthen their practice. Others continue to find these responsibilities difficult, particularly where volunteer capacity is stretched or local systems are underdeveloped. This has sharpened the need for an approach that is both clear and pastoral.

Planning has also begun for a National Safeguarding Conference to be hosted in Adelaide in August 2026. This work is helping position the Synod to contribute to a wider conversation about safeguarding, culture, leadership, and resilience.

Last Synod (2024) we reported the end of the National Safe Church Unit. Since then, the staff from each Synod who are responsible for safe church matters have gathered as a Community of Practice (COP) to share ideas and resources. Together they have developed general guideline for Persons of Concern. The SA Safe Church Committee will work with these guidelines to produce a Persons of Concern Policy before the end of 2026.

9. Screening and changes in the DHS environment

An important feature of this reporting period has been the changing screening environment in South Australia.

From 1 December 2025, DHS removed Vulnerable Person and General Employment Probity (GEP) checks from its screening application, limiting checks to those required by legislation. Available checks from DHS now only include Working with Children Checks and Aged Care Sector Employment checks.

The discontinued DHS Vulnerable Person checks will not be replaced. The GEP will be replaced by the Nationally Coordinated Criminal History Check (NCCHC), commonly known as a Police Check. Requirements for the NCCHC will differ slightly from the previous GEP. The Duty of Care Policy is currently being revised and will be distributed along with information sheets when possible.

These changes have highlighted the need for stronger systems, clearer communication, and closer support for congregations and ministry settings as they navigate legislative requirements and community expectations.

10. Disability inclusion and advocacy

The Disability Advisory Committee has met four times since its establishment in August and has provided valuable support to Anna in the role of Graduate Disability and Advocacy Officer. The Committee has offered guidance when asked on the work and progress of the role, while a sub-

committee is developing an Access and Inclusion Plan: Disability to assist congregations in considering contextually appropriate changes. This work is progressing well with strong engagement.

Anna has been actively engaging with congregations on accessibility, researching inclusive practices, and sharing resources through UC E-News. Participation in webinars and information sessions has strengthened knowledge in inclusive and accessible approaches, alongside collaboration with Property Services to support building improvements and accessibility initiatives. A key focus has been the Disability Access and Inclusion Policy, released following the October 2024 Synod meeting. Anna has supported congregations in implementing this policy, beginning with a pilot group across presbyteries, with plans to extend this work more broadly. Emphasis has been placed on accessibility as an ongoing commitment, with continued support provided as needs evolve.

The work of disability inclusion and advocacy remains an important and deeply theological part of this Ministry Centre. It reminds the church that inclusion is not a peripheral concern but a matter of discipleship, justice, and belonging. The body of Christ is diminished when people with disability are excluded, overlooked, or left on the margins, and it is enriched when all are enabled to participate fully in the life of the church.

Over the past eighteen months, this work has continued to invite the Synod into deeper reflection and more practical engagement around accessibility, participation, advocacy, and welcome. I remain grateful for the leadership offered in this area and the way it continues to call the church into deeper attentiveness and faithfulness.

11. Disaster Recovery ministry

A further important area of work within this Ministry Centre is the Disaster Recovery ministry of the Synod, led by Wendy Perkins. This ministry continues to be a significant expression of the church's pastoral presence in South Australia, particularly in times of natural disaster, local crisis, and long-term community recovery.

Disaster Recovery ministry requires responsiveness, relationship-building, practical coordination, and sustained care. It is often quiet work, undertaken over an extended period, long after the first public attention has faded. Through this ministry, the Synod is able to accompany communities as they navigate grief, uncertainty, rebuilding, and resilience.

See The Disaster and Recovery Ministry report Section 5.1

12. Church planting and signs of renewal

Ongoing Church Plants

<i>Name</i>	<i>Launched</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Launched</i>
<i>Mitcham Hills</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>Seeds, Kurralta Park</i>	<i>2023</i>
<i>Outpost</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>Encounter Church</i>	<i>2024</i>
<i>The Journey, Adelaide</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>Gardens Church</i>	<i>2025</i>
<i>City View</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>Hope Valley, Barossa</i>	<i>2025</i>
<i>Waypoint, Paralowie</i>	<i>2022</i>	<i>Seeds, Hallett Cove</i>	<i>2025</i>

Amid the many responsibilities held within this Ministry Centre, it is important to name signs of encouragement and renewal. One of these has been the continuing work of church planting and the ministry of the Church Planting Task Group across South Australia.

This work reflects a hopeful commitment to the future of the church. It recognises that alongside supporting existing congregations and ministries, the Synod is also called to encourage new communities of faith, fresh expressions of ministry, and emerging forms of Christian witness. There remains energy, imagination, and commitment for new ministry to emerge, and the work of the Church Planting Task Group is helping the Synod think carefully about how these communities are initiated, supported, governed, and sustained.

13. Looking ahead

Looking ahead, several priorities remain clear. We need to continue strengthening the culture and practice of Safe Church across the Synod, continue to provide clearer expectations, support, and stronger accountability. We need to respond well to the changing screening environment and community expectations in terms of safeguarding and ensure our systems and communications are adequate for what is now required. We need to continue embedding the revised Discipline Regulations in the life of the Synod, including ongoing training and support for the Committee for Counselling, the Committee for Discipline, and the Synod Sexual Misconduct Committee. We are also excited about the strengthening and education that sits alongside the Disability and Inclusion policy roll out across our congregations.

14. Conclusion

I conclude by expressing my gratitude to all who have contributed to this work over the past eighteen months: staff, committee members, chaplains, congregational leaders, ministry agents, presbytery leaders, members of Pastoral Relations Committees, members of the Placements Committee,

members of the Committee for Counselling, Committee for Discipline, and Synod Sexual Misconduct Committee, members of the Church Planting Task Group, Disability Advisory Committee, The Disaster and Recovery Ministry Coordinating Committee and the Synod colleagues, and those across the wider church who continue to partner in this demanding but essential ministry.

Much of this work takes place quietly, and often under pressure. Yet it matters deeply. It matters for the safety of people, for the integrity of ministry, for the credibility of the church's witness, for the support of communities in times of crisis, for healthy relationships across the councils of the church, and for the hopeful renewal of the church's life and mission.

Rev Andrew Robertson

Associate General Secretary Placements and Safe Church

14 May 2026



The Uniting Church in Australia
Synod of South Australia

Placements/Appointments Made (since October 2024 and not previously reported to Synod)		
Congregational Placements/Appointments (Note titles are listed as at the time the placement/appointment was made)		
Generate Presbytery		
Goolwa UC (0.8)	Rev Christine Manning	1 September 2025
Morialta UC	Rev Anne Butler	1 June 2025
Salisbury UC	Rev Emily Hayes	1 March 2026
SWF UC (0.6)	Rev Nola Gibbons	1 January 2024
The Vines (0.5)	Rev Shelley Alexander	1 April 2026
Woodside	Rev Nick Patselis (0.5)	1 March 2024
Presbytery of Southern SA		
Bridgewater UC (0,5)	Rev Chelsea Size	1 October 2025
Brighton UC	Rev Craig Schultz (0.8)	1 January 2026
Pilgrim UC	Rev Vicki Aitken	1 February 2026
Rosefield UC	Rev Peter McDonald	17 July 2025
Seacliff UC	Rev Scott Cadman (Baptist)	1 January 2025
Wimala Presbytery		
Presbytery Placements/Appointments		
Generate Presbytery		
Generate Building Legacy Officer (0.3)	Rev Marty Rosenberg	22 September 2025
Presbytery of Southern SA		
Presbytery Minister	Rev Lawrie Linggood	15 June 2025
POOL Minister	Rev Darren Lovell	1 November 2025
POOL Minister (0.8)	Sonia Armani (MOP)	1 February 2026
POOL Ministry Chair	Rev Craig Schultz (0.2)	1 November 2025
Wimala Presbytery		
Synod Placements/Appointments		
ACHA, Chaplain Ashford	Rev Mark Dickens	1 April 2026
ACHA Chaplain (0.6) Flinders Private Hospital	Rachael Litchfield (MOP)	1 September 2024
Graduate Disability Advocacy Officer (0.4 FTE)	Anna Wilson (MOP)	1 July 2025
Helping Hand Chaplain	Nathan McDuff (MOP) (0.475)	1 April 2025
Helping Hand Whyalla Chaplain (0.4)	Graham Burgan (MOP)	1 January 2025

Synod Placements/Appointments			
Resthaven, Westbourne Park (0.2)		Stan Kolodziej (MOP)	1 December 2025
Resthaven Relieving Chaplain (0.4)		Rev Oliver Ponsonby (Deacon)	1 March 2025
Synod Staff Chaplain (0.1)		Rev Beth Seaman	1 January 2026
UCLT Director of Pastoral Theology & Ministry Practice		Rev Dr Cathy Lambert	1 January 2026
Uniting Communities Minister of Public Theology, Uniting Communities (0.5)		Rev Dr Tim Hein	1 December 2025
Intentional Interim Ministry			
Chair PRC (IIM) (0.4)		Rev Beth Seaman	1 July 2025
Henley Fulham, 0.5FTE, Supply IIM,		Rev Leanne Davis	1 August 2026
New Approved Placements			
POSSA Pool Ministry Chair (0.2)			
Wellbeing Chaplain 0.1FTE based at Brooklyn Park Campus			
Leave of Absence (Designation of Ministers Regs 2.6.1)			
Rev Phillip Marshall from October 2024			
Active Service			
(S)	Rev Christine Gilbert	Pastoral Supervision, Spiritual Director [Reg. 2.6.1 (b) iv]	
(G)	Rev Dianna Muir	NALHN (Spiritual Care Manager at NALHN) 2 January 2020 [Reg.2.6.1 (b) iii]	
(S)	Rev Oliver Ponsonby	Lutheran Care 1 July 2025 [Reg. 2.6.1 (b) ii]	
Transfer to and from other Synods			
Rev Jenny Ducker from the Synod of NSW/ACT - under Synod of SA for Pastoral Care from 1 August 2025 and retiring 31 December 2026.			
Rev Tony Goodluck Northern Synod from 1 October 2025.			
Rev Joanne Smalbil (retired) from Synod of NSW/ACT to the Synod of SA from 11 November 2025.			
Rev Vicki Aitken from Northern Synod to the Synod of SA from 1 February 2026			
Rev Emily Hayes from Northern Synod to the Synod of SA from 1 March 2026			
Minister Retiring/Retired 2024/2026 (to be recognised by Synod)			
Permanently after the age of 55 Regulation 2.6.1 (d) (i) (1)			
Rev Dean Davidson	31/12/24	Rev Dr Sean Gilbert	25/03/26
Rev Dr John Kyoung-Soo Oh	12/04/25	Rev Craig De Vos	31/12/25
Rev Dieter Engler	10/08/25	Rev Trevor Faggotter	31/03/26
Rev Dr Andrew Dutney	31/07/25		
Rev Malcolm Rawlings	23/09/25		
Permanently after the age of 55 Regulation 2.6.1 (d) (i) (2)			
Rev David Prior	13/04/25	Rev Steve Thompson	15/12/25