

## Record of Service – Rev Dr Craig de Vos

My early years were spent at Salisbury Lutheran Church. About the age of 11, when my parents' relationship began deteriorating and my mother stopped attending services, my father (who only became a Lutheran because of her) decided to take my brother and me to Kent Town Methodist because of its connection to PAC, where we were now going to school. Through my parents' divorce we remained at Wesley Kent Town, with my father heavily involved but with little that was of interest to a teenager. While confirmed in 1980 at the age of 16, my faith awakening only began after a hiking accident the following year, and it was greatly fostered at Queen's College (a residential college at the Melbourne University). I threw myself into the life of the Queen's Christian group and, with others from Queen's, I also spent three summers with the Scripture Union 'beach mission' (CSSM) at Sorrento.

Following my graduation in late 1986, I returned to Adelaide and began working as a veterinarian. After marrying, I started attending Spicer Uniting (where my wife attended), and I became the youth leader, was elected chair of the congregation, and began preaching occasionally. Finding an appointment in a veterinary practice that allowed sufficient time for my church involvements proved quite difficult, but I was feeling increasingly drawn to ministry. In early 1988, then, I made the difficult decision to look for less demanding work (teaching animal husbandry at TAFE, and working at the RSPCA shelter), while beginning some theological study through the ACD as a private student. I also began the selection process through Mt Lofty Presbytery. That process was not smooth. At the parish level, my father fought to undermine my application, which the selection conference initially rejected. Championed by Rev Dr Geoff Scott, that decision was overturned on appeal, and I commenced as a candidate for Minister of the Word in 1989.

My time at college was both fulfilling and frustrating, and I had some experiences that left me feeling quite vulnerable and angry at the processes. So, I made the decision to pursue further study in New Testament and to defer ordination. At the College's insistence, I went through the exit process, became a Certificated Candidate, and then completed my Honours and PhD as a private student. Fortunately, I managed to secure a full scholarship to undertake the latter. Freed from financial worry for that period, and free of church processes and politics, I thrived. Opportunities to tutor and lecture, especially offered by St Barnabas College, reinforced the correctness of my decision to pursue this path and I looked forward to finding an academic position somewhere. After many knockbacks, I was finally appointed as a lecturer at Trinity College Theological School, which was the Anglo-Catholic college that formed part of the United Faculty of Theology (Melbourne College of Divinity). I commenced there at the start of 1999.

Once again, I thrived in my teaching, writing, and publishing. I was also thrilled to help create a better process for reporting on candidates' progress—one that was open, transparent, and collaborative, unlike what I had experienced. But through my pastoral care of students, and my work in the ministry formation programme, I began to sense a renewed call to ordained ministry. There were some discussions between the Warden of Trinity and the General Secretary of the VIC Synod of the UCA to

see if my position could be recognised by the UCA, but to no avail. So, I began discussions with Yarra Valley Presbytery about reactivating my candidacy. For the best part of the next year, I seemed to go through the same hoops I had last time, although without having to go to Selection Conference. The Presbytery agreed to ordain me, but it meant moving to half time at Trinity College and seeking a half time ministry placement. In April 2002, I was ordained by Yarra Valley Presbytery at St Andrews Fairfield, and then in July I commenced as the minister of Mentone Uniting. I was also asked to become a member of the Ministry Committee for Nepean Presbytery. But holding down a half-time teaching appointment that was more than half time, along with a half-time congregational appointment where I was expected to preach and lead worship every week, took its toll. Struggling with my mental health, and with a marriage breakdown, I left my position at Trinity College in July 2007 but continued at Mentone while I sought to find a full-time placement. Despite having conversations with several high-profile congregations in the Victorian Synod, I decided that I wanted to return to Adelaide. My experiences with the placements process in South Australian, however, were extremely discouraging and even quite damaging. At one point I was told that I had nothing to offer! Having been advised that my chances might improve if I was located in South Australia, and thus that the Synod might feel a greater sense of responsibility, I finished at Mentone at the end of 2008 and began preparing to return without anything to go to. In the meantime, I undertook a supply ministry at the Wheeler's Hill and Wanda Street congregations.

Just before I left Melbourne in May 2009, I was approached by a representative of the search committee for North Adelaide Baptist Church. Being a liberal Baptist church, with a traditional (even Anglo-Baptist) worship tradition, they had been looking unsuccessfully for about three years. After several conversations with that committee, and with nothing on offer from Placements Committee bar a supply position in the country, I agreed to accept the position of minister at NABC at least until something else came up. Nothing did. After a few years I stopped looking. In the end, I became the second longest serving minister in NABC's history, concluding my ministry there on 28 December 2025. During my time, I assisted them in becoming an independent church (separate from the increasingly fundamentalist Baptist Churches of SA), gifting their entire property to the National Trust, and more fully embracing their liberal-progressive theological identity and becoming a welcoming/affirming congregation.

**Rev Dr Craig de Vos**

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