

# Synod '24



## Proposal 4

### Future Synod Meetings & Moderator's Term

That the **Synod of SA** resolves to:

**AFFIRM** the decision of Synod Standing Committee that:

1. The next Synod meeting be held in June 2026.
2. The following Synod meeting be held in June 2028
3. The current Moderator's term be extended to June 2028.
4. The Synod hold a resourcing event in 2025.
5. Synod members be encouraged to attend the public sessions of the 18th Assembly in 2027.

**Proposers:** Rev Philip Gardner  
Rev Sue Page

### Rationale:

#### Report from Synod Business Committee to Synod Standing Committee on Future Synod Meetings 2025 - 2028

The question of the timing of future meetings of the Synod has been discussed since the presbytery restructure, with various views expressed – from keeping our annual(ish) rhythm to extending the time between meetings. Regulation 3.5.6 (a) mandates that each Synod 'hold an ordinary meeting at a frequency determined by the Synod and at least once every three years between ordinary meetings of the Assembly.' Reg. 3.5.6(c) states that 'the Synod or its Standing Committee shall fix the time and place for the commencement of the next ordinary meeting of the Synod.'

Our timing since November 2019 has been:

15 months (due to COVID)	Feb 2021
16 months (to realign to June meetings)	June 2022
12 months	June 2023
16 months (moving to October)	October 2024

Feedback from the last few meetings has shown a preference for either June or October to hold meetings. Many synods hold meetings every 18 months. Some synods are moving to 24 month cycles.

At the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly meeting, held recently, the decision was made to host the 18<sup>th</sup> Assembly in the SA Synod. This meeting will be in July 2027. We will have the joy of hosting the Installation of Rev Dr Paul Goh as the next President of the Assembly; and hosting the celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Uniting Church.

Synod Business Committee (SBC) proposes that we avoid holding a Synod meeting in 2027, as our event planning team will have enough to do planning the Assembly meeting.

It has been a reflection of many in the Synod office that there is not enough time between meetings in an annual cycle to achieve all the work produced by the meeting. It has also been the case that Synod Standing Committee has only just formed and 'got into the swing' of their work and then their term concludes.

The amount of time required to prepare for a meeting of the Synod in terms of gathering membership, report writing, logistics may be better spent doing the work of the Synod.

SBC proposes that our next meeting of the Synod be held in June 2026 – 20 months after this year's meeting. SBC also proposes that the meeting of the Synod after that be held in June 2028 – 24 months later. SSC may determine to extend the meeting to 4 days.

There will be several public gatherings as part of the 18<sup>th</sup> Assembly in July 2027, so we would suggest that could provide the place for our gathering in 2027. SBC suggests that we hold a one day resourcing event in 2025.

If matters arise that need determination by the Synod, a special meeting of the Synod can be called.

Changing the frequency of the meeting of the Synod will provide longer terms for Synod Standing Committee members.

Changing the frequency of the meeting of the Synod will impact the term of the current Moderator . The Synod will appoint the Moderator Nominating Committee at its meeting in October 2024 in order to bring candidates for discernment to the next meeting of the Synod in June 2026. The Moderator-elect will then become Moderator at the meeting after they are elected Moderator-elect - in June 2028. This extends the current Moderator's term by 2 years to a total of 5 years.

Regulation 3.6.3.1 (c) states that the Moderator of the Synod shall be elected for such period up to three years. In October 2017, there was a Presidential Ruling (33) that stated:

“Paragraph 34 of the Constitution provides the Synod with discretion to determine a Moderator’s term of appointment, whereas Regulation 3.6.3.1(c) purports to restrict that discretion. Regulation 3.6.3.1(c) is in my view inconsistent with paragraph 34 of the Constitution. Paragraph 62 of the Constitution provides:

*The Assembly may make Regulations not inconsistent with this Constitution prescribing all matters by which this Constitution are required or permitted to be prescribed or which are necessary or convenient to be prescribed for carrying out or giving effect to this Constitution or for the life of the Church.*

Regulation 3.6.3.1(c) is not consistent with paragraph 34 of the Constitution. I am of the opinion that the explicit power granted by paragraph 34 of the Constitution to the Synod to determine the term of the Moderator overrides the inconsistent provision in Regulation 3.6.1(c).”

President Stuart Macmillan

The implication of this Presidential Ruling is that the Synod may determine the length of term of the Moderator.

Proposed timeline of meetings:

2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
October Synod	One Day Resourcing Event	June Synod	July 18 <sup>th</sup> Assembly 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of UCA	June Synod
Moderator Nominating Committee formed		Nominate Moderator Elect		New Moderator Installed

*Please note: the Moderator left the Synod Business Committee and Synod Standing Committee meetings for the entirety of this discussion.*



The Uniting Church in Australia  
Synod of South Australia