

# Synod '24



## Mission & Leadership Development (MLD) Report

### Uniting College for Leadership and Theology (UCLT)

The mandate of the Mission & Leadership Development Board is 'To support the development of healthy missional churches, life-long disciples and effective leaders to bear witness to the good news of Jesus to the world.' The work of the MLD Board is distributed across several subcommittees, as outlined below, and it has established a Centre for Aboriginal Spirituality as an act of covenanting. The MLD Board also has oversight of two large activities of the Synod of SA, namely, Mission Resourcing and Uniting College for Leadership & Theology. This report provides an overview and update of the broad range of activities and responsibilities of the MLD ministry centre specific to the Uniting College for Leadership and Theology (UCLT).

#### 1. Introduction

The MLD Board was established by the November 2016 meeting of the Presbytery and Synod. Its current membership is as follows; Professor Ian Olver (Chairperson), Synod appointed members: Rev Anne Hewitt, and Rev Steph Tai, Ex-officio members: Rev Philip Gardner (General Secretary), Rev Peter Morel (Moderator), Rev Professor Vicky Balabanski (EO/Principal UCLT) and Rev Jennifer Hughes (EO Mission Resourcing). Co-opted member on the MLDB is Mr Richard Idzikowski and Resourcing member Mrs Marie-Ann Ellis (Finance and Administration Officer MLD). Secretary to the MLDB is Ms Lois Manolakos.

The Board currently oversees two sub-committees to manage the range of work within the MLD Ministry Centre: These sub-committees are:

1. Formation Education & Discipleship (FED) – reported in this report, and
2. Public Theology & Mission (PTM) – reported in the Mission Resourcing report.

The MLDB has presently appointed a group to undertake a Governance and Strategy Review to understand the current requirements of the MLD Board and Ministry Centre. The members of the group are Rev Philip Gardner (General Secretary and Chair), Rev Jennifer Hughes (EO MR), Rev Professor Vicky Balabanski (EO UCLT) and Rev Steph Tai (MLDB member). This group is reviewing the strategic implications of the Missional Review (2023) and MLDB's structure and governance, with a view to presenting its findings to the November 2024 meeting of MLDB.

## 1.1 UCLT Executive Summary

Uniting College has entered a new period of stability with regard to faculty appointments and growth in relation to the student numbers. The stability reflects the fact that we now have a full complement of staff and faculty, which enables the regular business of the College to flourish. The growth in student numbers reflects some new initiatives and the encouragement of Presbyteries for their members to choose to study through UCLT.

The MLDB has presently appointed a group to undertake a Governance and Strategy Review to understand the current requirements of the MLD Board and Ministry Centre. The members of the group are Rev Philip Gardner (General Secretary and Chair), Rev Jennifer Hughes (EO MR), Rev Professor Vicky Balabanski (EO UCLT) and Rev Steph Tai (MLDB member). This group is reviewing the strategic implications of the Missional Review (2023) and MLDB's structure and governance, with a view to presenting its findings to the November 2024 meeting of MLDB.

### 1.1.1 New initiatives

The Higher Education undergraduate awards that are available through UCLT include an Undergraduate Certificate (4 units),<sup>1</sup> an Undergraduate Diploma (8 units), an Advanced Diploma (16 units), a Bachelor of Ministry (24 units) and a Bachelor of Theology. These awards are nested and lead seamlessly into one another. This has enabled the following initiatives:

- i) **Arrow Leadership.** UCLT and Arrow Leadership have an MoU which enables students who wish to study the Arrow Emerging Leaders program to do so for credit through the University of Divinity (4 units). This enables young emerging leaders to gain a significant component of a Bachelor of Ministry or related award through UCLT. There is considerable interest in this study pathway, and the first cohort of students has commenced.
- ii) **BMin Social Work Pathway.** During 2023, in consultation with the UD and Flinders University, UCLT developed a particular iteration of the BMin that on successful completion will enable graduates to enter directly into a two-year Master of Social Work (SW) at Flinders University. The units required to enter a Master of SW are the equivalent of at least one year of full-time studies in the social and behavioral sciences. UCLT has developed new units to cover these requirements, including Sociology for Mission and Ministry (AP2740Z); Community Ministry: Theology, History, Contemporary Praxis (CT3747Z); Justice and Community Development (DM3746Z); Ministry in Liminal Spaces (DM3747Z) and Ecotheology (DP3747Z). Two UD Counselling units are also part of the requirements.
- iii) The reasons for the development of a BMin (SW pathway) are:

---

<sup>1</sup> This award is currently being reviewed by the Federal Government, and we anticipate it will be reaccredited in late 2024/early 2025.

- Offering an educational pathway that would be attractive to those who work in denominational organisations/agencies that are involved in the fields of social welfare. Graduates of the BMin (SW pathway) who proceed to a Master of SW would enable a great number of theologically educated employees in these organizations/agencies.
  - The desire to offer an educational pathway that would be attractive to school leavers, as it would offer a clear employment pathway into secular employment for those not or not yet responding to a call to ministry.
  - The need for Social Workers who are also theologically trained and competent.
  - The current need identified by the Government for more appropriately trained workers in the Allied Health sector.
  - The possibility of enabling a bi-vocational pathway. Fewer congregations are able to support a full-time minister, and the benefit to congregations of having bi-vocationally trained ministers is clear.
  - For rural ministry in the future, theologically trained Social Workers would be financially supported by the Agencies or other employers. They would also be competent to encourage faith communities in those places.
- iv) **Community Ministry Pathway.** Three new units have a particularly diaconal focus and have been approved as the nationally recognised Deacon training units across all the UCA Synods. They are also of interest to any students who wish to develop in the area of Community Ministry. At graduate level the three units together form a Graduate Certificate of Theology. At undergraduate level, they can be taken as a part of the BMin or BMin (Social Work Pathway). They commenced in Semester 1 2024 and have been very well received. The lecturer/coordinator is Rev Scott Litchfield, overseen by Dr Rosemary Dewerse. There are currently discussions underway with the Principal of UTC to offer one of these units in person in Semester 2 2025.
- v) **Graduate Certificate in Leadership.** The University of Divinity made the decision to restructure the way in which Indigenous Studies and Professional Practice awards are offered, on the advice of their Finance and Risk advisory group. This has meant the closure of the School of Indigenous Studies and the School of Professional Practice. UCLT has indicated our willingness to take on the Graduate Certificate in Leadership (and possibly other associated HD awards in the future, namely the Grad. Dip and Masters). We have been working towards a course restructure which does not require us to do all the teaching of these awards, in order to establish a sustainable and attractive structure for graduate Leadership education within the UD.
- vi) On the basis of the major Missional Review (2023), the MLDB has adopted a Strategic Framework (see the MLD Report Mission Resourcing). There are five key areas articulated in the framework, and College Faculty have each nominated their interest and commitment

to contribute to thought leadership in one of those areas. As the implementation of the framework unfolds, this resourcing work will represent .1 (half a day a week) of each faculty member's work (or in the case of Rosemary Dewerse, .2). This will contribute to resourcing the expressed needs and missional opportunities of the Synod, as well as to further integration between the College and Mission Resourcing. We look forward to further developments in this space.

## 2. Selection, Candidates and Formation

### 2.1 Synod Selection Panel

The membership of the Synod Selection Panel for 2023/24 is as follows:

Lynne Aird (Chairperson)

Vicky Balabanski (Principal UCLT)

Jesse Size (Deacon)

Jörg Strobel (Psychiatrist)

Generate Presbytery - Naomi Duke (2023), Martyn Smith (2024)

Presbytery of Southern SA - Lawrie Linggood / Peter McDonald

Wimala Presbytery - Bob Hutchinson (2023), Rebecca Purling (2024)

The Synod Selection Panel members are appointed by the Mission and Leadership Development Board (as per Regulation 3.7.4.3 (c) (iii) (3)). (The MLDB is the MEB in South Australia). The panel consists of lay people and ministers (both Deacons and Ministers of the Word) and are appointed by the MLD Board along with presbytery representatives. The Panel meets with applicants who have applied to their presbyteries to candidate for ordained ministry in the Uniting Church. Applicants must have completed a Period of Discernment (PoD) and be approved and recommended to the Selection Panel by their presbytery.

The Selection Panel receives reports from the presbyteries together with a psychological assessment and a medical report. The interview seeks to "have regard" to specified matters in evaluating the application of each applicant including their spiritual maturity and motivation, their capacities and assessed potential for leadership, the assessed potential to fulfil the requirements of the course of studies (where applicable), the most appropriate vocational direction and the character and personality of the applicant.

Selection Panels have a maximum of two applicants per panel (day) to allow for a focussed attention with each person and time for reflection and discernment, generally meeting in February, May, August and November each year. Presbyteries are encouraged to advise the Selection Panel well in advance if they have a possible application to candidate for ministry so that the applicant's place at the panel can be secured. Since the last Synod, the following Selection Panels have taken place:

Date	Number of Applicants	Presbytery
August 2023	2	Generate, Wimala
November 2023	0	
February 2024	0	
May 2024	0	
5 July 2024	2	Generate, PoSSA
19 July 2024	2	Generate, Wimala

**Rev Lynne Aird, Synod Selection Panel Chair**

## 2.2 Candidates and Formation

The number of Candidates for Ministry in SA in Phase 2 is now 14 (with one on extended leave). Two are preparing for Ministry of Deacon, and the rest for Ministry of the Word. Five are women, nine are men. Two are from CALD backgrounds (Indian, African). With the exception of the candidate on leave, all are involved in ministry contexts alongside their studies. Two ordinations (Tim Littleford, Robert Cartridge) will change the numbers again shortly. There are two more Selection Panels scheduled before the end of 2024 with currently three applicants, and so there may be further new candidates.

### 2.2.1 Leadership Formation

Leadership Formation Days (LFDs) continue to be held on the first Monday of the month eight times per year. The candidates are expected to attend, and other categories of ministry agents are also invited: Ministry of Pastor, Period of Discernment, Admission of Ministers from other denominations, as well as some support people and ministry agents who have time to attend and support the learning community.

Leadership Formation Days have been shaped to reflect a three-year cycle (the normal duration of formation for ordination). They are benchmarked to 14 Attributes set by Assembly. The program will in the future be the responsibility of Rev. Dr Tim Hein, as Director of Leadership and Formation. In 2024 they have included a mix of outside speakers, as well as speakers from the College and the Synod. Each LFD includes a time of worship, often led by the candidates. The LFD at the start of Semester 2 was a two-day retreat held at the Monastery on Cross Road, led by Rev Dr Sean Gilbert. There are other occasional opportunities for formation recognised by the College, such as the Sing a New Song conference and the day on Peer Support and Resilience by Rev Dr Stephen Robinson.

### 2.2.2 Formation Panels (FP)

The oversight of the formation of candidates continues to be done by Formation Panels. The Formation Panels meet three times per year with candidates in Phase 2 and every second FP day with ministers in Phase 3. The make-up of the FPs comprises four experienced ministry agents, either from the candidates' Presbytery (Generate candidates) or from the three Presbyteries (Wimala and PoSSA candidates). The academic advice is given by the Principal in consultation with the Registrar and Academic Dean. The membership of the FPs has seen some change in the past year, with some members who have been involved since the advent of FPs in 2009 stepping down and new members being appointed. Two key milestones are the Mid-Course Review and the Transition Interview, both of which are longer interviews attended by representatives from all the Presbyteries, as well as the Principal. In 2024 we have had four Mid-course and two Transition Interviews.

### 3. UCLT Faculty and Staff

#### 3.1 Staff Changes

At the time of writing, the UCLT team is:

Position		Name	FTE
Executive Officer/Principal UCLT	UCLT	Rev Prof Vicky Balabanski	1.0
Academic Dean and Missional Research & Resourcing Coordinator	UCLT	Dr Rosemary Dewerse	1.0
Administration Officer, Student Services	UCLT	Mrs Sue Arthur	0.9
Administration & Finance Manager	MLD	Mrs Marie-Ann Ellis	0.4
Director of Biblical Studies	UCLT	Rev Prof Bart Bruehler	1.0
Director of Leadership & Formation	UCLT	Rev Dr Tim Hein	0.5
Director of Pastoral Theology & Ministry Practice	UCLT	Rev Dr Sean Gilbert	1.0
Director of Theology & Church History	UCLT	Dr Toar Hutagalung	1.0
Executive Assistant to the EO/Principal UCLT & EO MR	MLD	Ms Lois Manolakos	0.75
Head Librarian	ATL	Mrs Anna Witty	0.7
Librarian	ATL	Ms Alexandra Roger	0.5
Registrar	UCLT	Mrs Lynda Leitner	0.8
Theologian in Residence	UCLT	Rev Dr Aunty Denise Champion	0.4
VET Coordinator until 1/8/24, then 0.3 FTE VET and 0.5FTE Mission Activator	UCLT	Rev Nick Patselis	0.3

#### 3.2 Faculty Reports

##### 3.2.1 Executive Officer/Principal, Uniting College for Leadership and Theology

I have been in the role of Principal of UCLT for two years now, and in 2024 was also appointed as EO/Principal UCLT alongside Rev. Jennifer Hughes (EO MR). I now report directly to the General Secretary, Rev Philip Gardner, as well as to the SSC.

I am bringing certain emphases to the role of Principal of UCLT, which include:

- i) Seeking to discern opportunities for new initiatives, including collaboration with other University of Divinity (UD) Colleges, with other UCA Colleges, with Presbyteries and with University partners. Some of the fruit of this is set out in the new initiatives (above). Other initiatives are currently in the planning phase. My goal is to notice where the Holy Spirit might be opening new doors to expand the reach and the effectiveness of UCLT for the Church and beyond.
- ii) Professional development of faculty and staff has a bearing on student support and wellbeing. This includes encouraging attendance at relevant PD gatherings locally and interstate, as well as scheduling PD mornings on such matters as student mental health, on excellent assessment and on becoming AI savvy. All the faculty attended and presented at the recent ANZATS conference (Australia and New Zealand Association of Theological Studies), which we hosted at UCLT. This conference was noted for its excellent hospitality and inclusive themes. Our faculty also prioritised attendance at the National Theological Educators' conference in Darwin in June, where we had the opportunity to learn more about the work of Nungalinga College and meet with UCA colleagues from around Australia. Most of the faculty presented at the Festival of Learning early in 2024, and many presented at the Preamble conference that was hosted from Sydney, but which had Adelaide as a significant hub where six papers were presented. As a team we will offer a Volunteer Day at the Red Dove Café; this will not only be a useful contribution, but a fun day of team building. My aim is to encourage faculty and staff to develop their areas of interest, expertise and curiosity, for the benefit of all.
- iii) The prayer and worshipping life of the UCLT/MR community. With most of the candidates in ministry placements, the weekly chapel service could be sparsely attended. But there is a commitment to weekly chapel services by the College and Mission Resourcing community, and these are led on Wednesdays at 1pm by faculty, by the MR team and also occasionally by the EOs from Synod Office. Each weekday morning at 8.45, some are gathering for a short time of morning prayer, when we make use of the app Pray as you Go, offer some extempore prayer and conclude with the Lord's Prayer. It's a good way to begin (or continue) the working day and recall in whose presence we are doing that work.

In my role as Principal, I am part of the University of Divinity Executive. We meet monthly for high level oversight of the University, which, as a Collegiate University, must be beneficial for the twelve associated Colleges. There have had to be some major structural changes to the UD in the past months: the School of Indigenous Studies and the School of Professional Practice have been closed. The structure of 'schools' within the collegiate system has not proven to be sustainable. We are currently in the process of locating the programs of these schools within the Colleges to ensure long-term viability. UCLT is looking to take on the graduate awards in the field of Leadership, which is in keeping with our strategic and missional foci.



Other academic leadership roles that I have include membership on the UD Promotions Committee, and on the Search Committee for the new Vice Chancellor of the UD. I am also on the international committee for the Society of New Testament Studies (SNTS), which met in Melbourne in July 2024, but which regularly meets in Europe, Britain or North America. I am the General Editor of the Earth Bible series with Bloomsbury T & T Clark, together with Prof. Gerald West of South Africa. I am also editing a special issue of the Journal for the Study of New Testament on creation, together with British scholar Hilary Marlow.

I continue to supervise some PhD candidates through Flinders University. I am also continuing to do some level of teaching -- in Semester 1 I co-taught Ecotheology with Dr Toar Hutagalung.

My publications over the past year include:

- 'Religion as Formation in Ecological Virtues', in Religion Matters Vol. II, eds. Paul Babie and Rick Sarre (Singapore: Springer Nature) 2024.
- 'Poetry and the Word. Reflections on "Poems as Signs of Life. Mourning for a life between sickness and poetry"' in Resonances - Word, Image, Music, Festschrift for Gerd Theissen, eds., Annette Merz, Helmut Schwier and Petra von Gemünden (Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2023).
- 'The Matthean theme of withdrawing from confrontation (ἀναχωρέω) in dialogue with the values of First Peoples in Australia', in Habitats of the Basileia, Festschrift for Elaine Wainwright, eds. Robert J. Myles, Caroline Blyth, Emily Colgan, Sheffield Phoenix Press), 2023.
- 'Creation in John', in T&T Clark Handbook of the Doctrine of Creation, ed. Jason Goroncy (Bloomsbury, T & T Clark), 2023.
- 'Revisiting the "Voice of Earth", Earth Bible Principle #3', in Journal of Ethics in Antiquity and Christianity, JEAC 5 (2023) (open access) DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25784/jeac.v5i1.1204>

I am glad to be in this role of EO/Principal UCLT at this time in the church's life and look forward with hope to the future and gratitude to the colleagues I have around me for their support, their expertise and their faithfulness.

**Rev Prof Vicky Balabanski, Executive Officer/Principal UCLT**

### 3.2.2 Academic Dean, Research and Doctoral Coordinator, Mission Research and Resourcing

As Academic Dean, key tasks in this last year have included:

- line managing the two Student Services staff – the College Registrar and Student Services Officer – as well as the Head Librarian and a new Librarian who was interviewed and joined us in February 2024. Alongside their usual key responsibilities these staff have led some very significant events, including the Library Booksale, providing all hospitality/catering for the Australia NZ Association of Theological Studies (ANZATS) conference, and event managing orientations and supporting visiting speakers.
- chairing the Academic Committee that ensures all academic reporting requirements are met with the University of Divinity (e.g. finalising grades, approving units)
- providing, with the Registrar, reporting on the College statistics to the Principal and MLDB for decision-making
- conducting academic quality reviews of all unit designs to be delivered each semester and ensuring moderation of unit assessment each semester
- mentoring and moderating adjunct faculty who have appropriate experience but not the necessary academic qualifications (as per the University expectations)
- co-designing the Community Ministry pathway and Arrow Leadership units and overseeing their approval through the University system
- attending bi-monthly meetings of the University of Divinity Academic Board, Research Strategy Committee and Research Grants Committee, fortnightly meetings of the Academic Deans, conducting college unit reviews and assisting with policy revision
- acting as one of the University's Deputy Chair of Examiners – approving Masters thesis proposals and moderating thesis examination reports
- conducting three investigations into Academic Integrity

Research coordination has, this year, included:

- Supervising theses.
  - Four Masters students completed their theses at the end of 2023 and one in June 2024. I supervised two of students who achieved High Distinctions – one exploring locational challenges for doing Second Generation Asian Australian Theology, and another researching racism in the UCA.
  - We have had four DMin students completing their degrees, three of which I currently primary supervise, and one I co-supervised who has now successfully graduated. The DMin was an ACD award; the UD offers Doctor of Professional Practice.
  - We have three current Masters thesis students, two studying Research Methods toward beginning a thesis in 2025, one PhD candidate waiting to begin, and two more potential PhD candidates in active conversation. I also personally co-supervise a PhD candidate with Whitley.

- Co-teaching on the University's Level 10 Doctor of Professional Practice, which I helped to design. In Term 2, 2024 I led the design, teaching and assessing of the Research Methodologies unit. We have a cohort of 9 active candidates. The DPP units are taught intensively across eight (8) weeks and involve face-to-face (in Melbourne) or online intensives alongside fortnightly online tutorials. In Term 3 I am supervising a student for an elective unit.
- Co-leading the hosting of the ANZATS conference in July 2024, for which my suggestion was that we showcase Adelaide scholarship, including Aunty Denise's work, the Earth Bible project and local songwriters. Seventy-five (75) people attended and all the feedback, including on UCLT's hosting, has been extremely positive. UCLT's Theologian-in-Residence, five (5) faculty, an adjunct and four (4) graduates contributed keynote addresses and/or papers. Sean Weetra (SA UAICC Chair) led a Kurna Walking on Country. Kurna leader Jack Buckskin, Rev Lynne Aird, Rev Dr Sean Gilbert and four (4) UCLT faculty (myself, Toar, Jennifer and Bart) led the Welcome to Country, opening service liturgy, homily, and music, respectively.
- Co-ordinating the logistics for the Adelaide Hub of the Preamble conference, which I presented one paper in, led a collaboration on another paper and encouraged a third. South Australia in fact provided seven (7) of the fourteen (14) paper sessions at that conference.

**Note:**

- We now have four University Scholars, and one Honorary Researcher approved with the University.
- Four (4) ex-ACD PhD students remain current with Flinders University, but these are overseen by Flinders University. Three (3) have successfully completed PhD and Masters study in the last year.

**Mission Research and Resourcing**

- July-Nov 2024 I undertook Regenerative Development training as a means for church renewal. In December 2023 an article I co-wrote arguing for Regenerative Development as a means for church renewal and detailing its application in a local church in Aotearoa was published in *Ecclesial Futures* <https://ecclesialfutures.org/article/view/17944> . I also delivered a paper to the July 2024 Preamble Conference arguing for Regenerative Practice as a way to realise several aspects of the Preamble and Covenanting. I am hoping to be able to partner with some local churches in South Australia to pilot this approach. I will be keynoting at the ARPTE conference in November 2024 on Regenerative Practice.
- I am writing a volume for ATF Press' *A Forum for Theology in the World*, due February 2024. Working title: "Unlearning: Rediscovering God and what it means to be human on colonised lands."
- I am booked to speak on practices for decolonising to the Effective Living Centre in October.
- Joined and attended Wimala Presbytery.

- 0.2FTE of my role is given to thought leadership and academic work in the area of Covenanting.
  - February-June 2024 Uncle Ken Sumner and I co-taught a Theology unit: “Kungan Kaldowinyeri: Listening to Creation.” My role was to design and conduct assessment and organise logistics for a four-day immersion trip to the Kurangk/Coorong; Uncle Ken provided much of the immersion content and liaison with Raukkan and elders. We would like to build this unit in as a regular delivery. I initiated a co-written paper with Uncle Ken and five students on the theological shifts emerging and impact of truth-telling that we presented to the Preamble conference. This has been accepted for publication in *Uniting Church Studies*.
  - I spent four days in May in Port Augusta with Aunty Denise to write and finalise her two keynotes for the ANZATS conference, in addition to meeting weekly online or face-to-face with Aunty Denise to prepare her next publishing projects. A book chapter co-written by Aunty Denise and myself was published in August in *Religion Matters Vol 2* edited by Paul Babie and Rick Sarre (Singapore: Springer, 2024).
  - I have been meeting regularly with Uncle Ken who has been mentoring me, and to begin documenting his thinking, support his preparation for leading the opening Assembly Bible study, and take his guidance on how I might better support Covenanting initiatives.
  - I have met with Sean Weetra and Rhanee Lester (more briefly) for conversation and supported Candance Champion with the successful nomination of Aunty Denise for SA NAIDOC Scholar of the Year 2024.
  - I am editing a volume and writing the introduction for ATF’s *A Forum for Theology in the World* series that will include Aunty Denise’s keynotes for ANZATS, a chapter from Labhoaise Upton’s PhD thesis, which studied Christologies up the Dingo Songline, and Cyrus Kung’s Masters thesis examining locational challenges for doing Second Generation Asian Australian theology.
  - Two co-written articles profiling the work of Māori leaders in trauma counselling and therapy have been written and submitted in August 2024 to *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy* for publication in 2025.

**Dr Rosemary Dewerse, Academic Dean, Research & Doctoral Coordinator, Mission Research & Resourcing**

### 3.2.3 Director of Biblical Studies

I am delighted to provide you with my first Synod Report. I took up my position here at UCLT in January of 2024 after moving (with my partner and two younger children) from America. I am grateful for all the ways that various branches of the Uniting Church in SA assisted me and my family in this move. After arriving, I had to quickly get oriented and prepared for my new role and responsibilities. However, due to the requirements of my visa and the contract system at my previous institution, I needed to continue with most of the responsibilities of my former position as well, including teaching online and attending meetings virtually. This has made for a busy 2024 for me. Additionally, I was collecting documentation and completing various tasks related to our longer-term (482) visa. Praise the Lord that this was officially granted to us in July, paving the way for us to stay in Australia. During the first half of the year, I applied and was approved for the rank of full professor within the University of Divinity. It has been a very full year thus far, but I do feel now that I am settling in and growing more familiar with Australia, the Uniting Church, and my duties at UCLT.

#### Term 1 Teaching and Directing Responsibilities

- Taught BN 1741/8741 - Interpreting the New Testament
- Taught BN 3011/9011 - Pauline Letters
- I filled in for and then arranged for a new Adjunct lecturer for the Hebrew 1 course when our scheduled lecturer needed to step away for health reasons.

#### Term 2 Teaching and Directing Responsibilities

- Teaching BA 3006/8006 - The Pentateuch
- Teaching BN 2742/9742 - Synoptic Studies
- Teaching BS 3740/9740 - Biblical Hermeneutics for Mission and Ministry
- I made arrangements for our new adjunct to continue teaching in Hebrew 2 and assisted him in the unit and course set up.

#### Related Activities

- I was officially inducted into my role with the Uniting Church and prepared an address on "A Disabled and Anointed Jesus".
- I have been recording weekly "Theology Thursday" segments to be broadcast on Life FM here in Adelaide.
- I led a discussion on intercultural church mission and Luke's Gospel at the invitation of Paul Goh.

- I completed the University of Divinity's supervision training and am currently supervising a minor thesis.
- I have taken up preaching quarterly at Westbourne Park Uniting Church.
- I attended POSSA and Generate presbytery meetings to get to know the broader church better.
- I attended the meeting of Uniting Church colleges staff at Nungalinga College in Darwin.

### Scholarly Activities

- I am co-editor for the Rhetoric of Religious Antiquity Exploring Commentary series. I am happy to say that we have just completed our full set of authors for the series in the past month.
- A chapter that I had written was put out this year: "The Possibility, Patterns, and Purposes of Vivid Description in the Narrative of Luke-Acts." Pages 153–80 in *Vivid Rhetoric in the New Testament: Visual Persuasion and Ekphrasis in Early Christian Literature*.
- I wrote a contribution entitled "Being Begun Anew" for *New Times*.
- I published a major review essay: "Review Essay: Rhetoric and the New Testament" in *Religious Studies Review* 50 (2024): 319-326
- I completed work on three journal articles: "Jesus Christ and the Trajectories of Purity," "The Presence, Nature, Cause, and Result of Jesus's Anger in Mark 1:40-45," and "What is Jesus Feeling in Mark 1,41?". I expect all of these to be published in late 2024 or early 2025.
- I gave a paper entitled "Lumping vs. Splitting: Reframing Johannine Dualism" at the ANZATS Conference (July 2, 2024; hosted by UCLT)
- I attended the Society for New Testament Studies Meeting in Melbourne (July 23-26, 2024).

This has been a whirlwind of a year for myself and my family—so many changes and so many new things to adapt to along the way. I do believe that this has settled down a bit, though I still find myself discovering new things each day. I believe that God opened the door for us to come to Adelaide and UCLT, and I am enjoying working with my new students and colleagues. With our visas approved, I am looking forward to more fruitful ministry (and more learning!) in the future here.

**Rev. Prof. Bart Bruehler, Director of Biblical Studies**

### 3.2.4 Director of Leadership and Formation

This new role (.5 FTE) encompasses teaching and academic oversight in the area of Leadership, both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. As indicated above, we are in the process of reshaping the

UD School of Professional Practice iteration of graduate awards in Leadership, which requires significant collaboration across the various UD College.

Tim is very familiar with Arrow Leadership, and will work collaboratively with Cath Tallack, the Arrow lecturer, to ensure these new Arrow units are working well for the students and meeting the University's requirements.

Tim is returning from outside study leave at the start of September and will be teaching a new unit entitled 'Church Revitalization and Renewal' in the mid-semester break. He will also be teaching the Heritage, Theology and Polity intensive in November.

On his return, Tim will be taking an active role in the planning and development of the Leadership Formation Days set out above.

Tim continues to be in placement (.5 FTE) at Malvern Uniting Church alongside his placement at UCLT. We benefit significantly from this crossover of roles and are delighted to welcome Tim back in this new era.

**(Vicky on behalf of) Rev Dr Tim Hein, Director of Leadership and Formation**

### 3.2.5 Director of Pastoral Theology & Ministry Practice

I teach in the areas of theological reflection and ministry formation. Since writing the last Synod Report I have taught units to do with Church, Ministry and Sacraments, Supervised Theological Field Education, Reflective Ministry Practice, The Practice of Christian Ministry and God the Trinity. I continue to supervise graduate students and have graded numerous Masters' theses which I experience to be a genuine privilege. Last year I was given Senior Lecturer status with the University of Divinity (UD).

Given Vicky's increased work load I have made myself available to be her representative at Synod Placements Committee and the Admission of Ministers from other Denominations Committee. I have also filled in at the Synod Selection Panel and candidates' formation panels. I am actively involved in Leadership Formation Days, offering input and leading for an overnight spiritual retreat in early August.

In October last year I spent five days at UD (Box Hill, Melbourne) as an audit student in a Professional Supervision cohort of about 15 graduate students, many who were ministers or pastors. It was an enriching and enlightening time. The hope being that I would be able to form a cohort of South Australians, for whom I would offer the facilitation of their practicum learning. Alas, that hasn't turned out the way we hoped it would. I still believe that graduate supervision training is a vital aspect of ongoing education for those wanting to practice with clear and reputable frameworks and therefore provide professional and pastoral oversight across the church.

In November I was elected President of the Association for Reflective Practice in Theological Education which was formally ANZATFE (Australian & New Zealand Association of Theological Field Education). Our name change *is* significant. We are seeking to broaden our reach and emphasis within fast-changing educational and training environments. To that end we are holding our biennial conference at Uniting College in mid-November. Planning is well under way with our theme in mind: *Reflective Practice: Context and Content*. Practitioners of all varieties would be most welcome. See [arpte.org](http://arpte.org)

Other conference, speaking and writing involvements include (dot points to be brief):

- XIV Dietrich Bonhoeffer Congress in January by Zoom
- In mid-February I led the Vic/Tas Candidates and Faculty annual 3-day retreat at a former monastery near Warburton, east of Melbourne. It was a graced time of sharing and learning.
- Festival of Learning in late February by Zoom. I presented a paper concerning the Pedagogy of Conscious Relinquishment.
- Uniting Educators Conference in June, Darwin at Nungalinga. This was a highlight of my year with so much to learn from the garma, 'two ways' methodology of teaching and learning.
- ANZATS Conference in July at UCLT – our first hosting of such a major gathering! I repeated my Festival of Learning paper with some modifications and gave a homily at the opening service. I have submitted the paper to the US Journal, *Reflective Practice: Formation and Supervision in Ministry*.
- The Uniting Church Preamble Conference in July where I gave a paper on the Triune God confessed in the first Acknowledgement of the Preamble. I have been asked to submit that expanded paper for publication in *Uniting Church Studies*.

I remain ever grateful to God and the Synod for my placement at Uniting College. It is a privilege to work with my colleagues and journey with students in such an intentional and graced learning environment.

**Rev Dr Sean Gilbert, Director of Pastoral Theology & Ministry Practice**



### 3.2.6 Director of Theology and Church History

**2023:**

#### Teaching

On 17 July 2023, I arrived in Adelaide from Jakarta, Indonesia, on a temporary 6-month visa and started to prepare my first semester of teaching on Semester 2. I taught a new unit entitled Doctrines of Salvation as well as Christian History B (Reformation to the present) during that semester. This first semester of work was challenging, not just due to the profoundly different educational system here from the one I was familiar with in the USA and the climate transition from Indonesia, but also the fact that I had left my wife in Jakarta due to the visa restrictions. Even so, I was surrounded by wonderful colleagues at the Uniting College. I also found joy in the class for two reasons: students who were able to pronounce my name well and even said some of my native language (Bahasa Indonesia) and brilliant and creative works of the students. One of them created a cross sculpture describing a postcolonial theology of salvation, which is on display in the foyer of the College.

In addition to the regular teaching, I undertook the following work:

#### Presentations

- 11 October: “The Fringe of Jesus’ Cloak: Evoking a Liminal Identity,” a joint event by ChurchtogetherSA and UCLT at the college.
- 26 October: “A Theological Vision for Missional Renewal: Decolonising the Gospel and Christianity” for a Learning Plenary Forum for the Awaken Adelaide Learning Plenary organised by the newly-elected UCA President, Rev. Dr. Paul Goh at UCLT. I also regularly attended the Awaken Adelaide program.
- 8 November: A UD Professional Development session entitled “ARK Showcase: Designing Better Meta Units for Student Learning” co-presented at the Teaching Conference at University of Divinity. Together with Rohan Edmeades and Adrian Jackson, we ran the project during the second semester.

In December, my working visa along with my wife’s visa were finally approved, and she joined me early in 2024.

**2024:**

#### Teaching

In Semester 1, I taught Beginning with Jesus, and co-taught Eco-theology with Rev. Prof. Vicky Balabanski. In addition to that, I also supervised a distance learning unit of Beginning with Jesus for three students at a correctional centre. I was again surprised by the outstanding process and results of the students in class.

In March, I received a Letter of Commendation from the Dean of Academic Programs of University of Divinity, Prof. Albert Haddad for the Christian History B unit. The score was 3.88 out of 4, which means—quoting from the letter— “a significant majority of students in the unit were satisfied or highly satisfied with the learning experience in the unit, an outstanding result.”

This second semester, I am teaching Introduction to Mission and co-teaching God the Trinity with Rev. Dr. Sean Gilbert. The latter perhaps is going to be the largest class that I have taught so far for UCLT with seventeen (17) students in total. Besides that, I am teaching another distance learning unit of Christian History A for seven students a correctional centre.

### Presentations

- 20 February: “A Fringe of Identity: Re-narrating a Risky Solidarity,” at Festival of Learning organised by the Australian Lutheran College.
- 23 February: Along with my colleagues Vicky and Prof. Bart Bruehler, I was invited to speak about the Uniting College in the PoSSA Presbytery meeting. In an informal but deep conversation in a small group, I spoke about Jesus and decolonisation.
- 3 April: “Menebus Yesus yang Diskultur: Dekolonisasi Teologi” [Redeeming the Discultured Jesus: Decolonising Theology]. The Keynote Speech (online) for Regional Meeting for the Association of Indonesian Theologians which was held in Makassar, South Sulawesi, Indonesia.
- 6 April: “Locating Decolonial Notion in Ecotheology and the Task of Decolonizing Colonial Legacy of Ecotheology.” International Webinar on Theology and Ecology organised by a Lutheran Seminary in Indonesia (HKBP).
- 4 May: “After Wakefield: Retracing the Marriage of Religious Freedom and Economy with Settler Colonialism” for the South Australian Church History Network at Church of the Trinity.
- 1 July: “A Decolonial Ecotheology: An Asian Contrapuntal Reading of Eco-justice,” ANZATS Conference at UCLT. I was also involved in managing the IT and audio-visual problems during the conference.
- 9 July: “In One Breath: Partaking in the Communion of the Spirit and Creation” for the Preamble Conference at UCLT. Planned to be published in Uniting Church Studies.

### Publications

- In April, I published my first book entitled *Toward an Embodied Decolonial Pneumatology: Dishoming Space* with Lexington Books. My book was endorsed by Prof. Dr. Peter C. Phan, Ignacio Ellacuría Professor of Catholic Social Thought at Georgetown University; Dr. Kwok Pui-lan, Dean’s Professor of Systematic Theology at Candler School of Theology, at Emory University; and Dr. Ira D. Mangililo, Artha Wacana Christian University, Indonesia.

- In June, I also published an article for a Book Forum at the *Uniting Church Studies*, titled “Visceral Longing for Redemption: A Reflection on *After Whiteness*.”
- Forthcoming in 2025: “The Sanctifying Breath: Reimagining the Decolonial Spirit.” In *Constructive Christian Theology from a Postcolonial Perspective*, edited by Dr. Eleazar S. Fernandez, published by Lexington Books.
- Forthcoming in 2026: A secret project for Asian Theological Institute (US based), which will be edited by Dr. Tat-Siong Benny Liew.

I was also part of the Peer-Blind Reviewer for *Indonesian Journal of Theology*.

In addition to scholarly work, I have accepted various preaching and speaking engagements:

#### **Ministries (2023-2024)**

- November 2023: Enfield Uniting Church
- April 2024: Woodville Uniting Church
- August 2024: Unley Uniting Church
- September 2024: Port Adelaide Uniting Church and Bridgewater Uniting Church.
- I actively participate in Indonesian Christian Fellowship in Adelaide.
- I will be leading a Bible Study at the Annual Synod Meeting (October 2024).

#### **Dr. Toar Hutagalung, Director of Theology & Church History**

### **3.2.7 Rev Dr Aunty Denise Champion, Theologian in Residence**

Here is a snapshot of some of the work that Rev. Dr Aunty Denise Champion undertakes as part of her role as Theologian in Residence (.4 FTE):

- She lectured into several classes, including Ecotheology
- She led a community event in Port Augusta in preparation for The Voice Referendum, and contributed to a number of events and resources around that time, including [No voice ... No choice \(youtube.com\)](#)
- She was interviewed by the ABC
- She was awarded South Australian NAIDOC Scholar of the Year, 2024
- She had published: Denise Champion and Rosemary Dewerse, “Big Boss or Dark Emu: Indigenous Wisdom for the Academy” in Paul Babie and Rick Sarre (Eds.) *Religion Matters* (Singapore: Springer, 2024), 97-108.

- She delivered two keynote addresses at the ANZATS Conference 2024. These are about to be published as: Denise Champion, “Reimagining God and the church in Australia through an Adnyamathanha lens,” in Rosemary Dewerse (Ed.) Location-Shaped Theologies (Adelaide: ATF Press, August 2024).
- She conceptualized, planned and commenced the Adnyamathanha translation project with two foci: recording a range of Muda in language, and translating some key identified biblical texts into language.

**(Rosemary Dewerse, on behalf of) Rev Dr Aunty Denise Champion, Theologian in Residence**

### 3.2.8 Head Librarian, Adelaide Theological Library

After a long association with the Flinders University Library, the Adelaide Theological Library (ATL) joined the University of Divinity (UD) Library Hub at the end of December 2022.

Now one of thirteen Libraries Australia wide, the UD Hub arrangement offers significant resource benefits to the Uniting College of Theology and Leadership (UCTL) staff, students and ATL Community Borrowers. Resources include,

- over 61,500 hard copy books in the ATL library
- access to over 383,900 hard copy books Australia wide via the UD Hub
- an online eBook collection of over 440,000 books
- access to thirty six (36) databases supporting scholarly research

Library patronage between June 2023 - 31 July 2024 continued to be positive with

- 450 Patron visits or contacts
- 2,150 Book loans
- 44 Community Borrowers

#### Highlights for the June 2023 to July 2024 period.

- Cataloguing of the Science and Faith Collection of the SA Chapter of ISCAST (Institute for the Study of Christianity in an Age of Science and Technology). The ATL now houses over 90 books for the SA Chapter.
- The library hosted a Research Gathering on 13 November 2023 with over 40 attendees. Speakers were from the Australian Lutheran College, St Barnabas College and the UCLT.
- Commencement of Alexandra Roger, 0.5 Librarian January 2024. Alex works with Anna Witty, the .7 Head Librarian. Alex has an important role in supporting Lecturers with FLEX, a system that compiles and shares copyright-compliant course material to students.

- ATL Book sale 3 - 6 June 2024 raising \$2,404. Considering most books were priced at \$1, \$2 and with a small amount at \$5, this was an excellent outcome.
- In July 2024 Library Staff attended the UD Librarians Day, a forum offering professional development and planning for all UD Librarians.

Mrs Anna Witty, Head Librarian

### 3.2.9 Registrar

#### UCLT Statistics for 2024

This report has been prepared after the Semester 2 census date. The figures provided are the totals for 2024 as of the beginning of September. These are contrasted with the totals for 2023.

Courses	Student Headcount		Unit enrolment		EFTSL	
	2024	2023	2024	2023	2024	2023
Postgraduate	23	19	44	--	13.912	3.841
Undergraduate	50	33	129	--	31.75	13.25
Audit	10 @ \$500 each	--	13	--	--	--
VET	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>25.43</b>	<b>17.091</b>

EFTSL = Equivalent Full Time Student Load

-- = Not supplied

#### 2024 figures include:

- 3 postgraduate students from Dayspring.
- 14 units that were studied through other Colleges/School in the UD – 5 undergraduate, 9 postgraduate research.
- Students from other colleges studying our units.

#### New initiatives in 2024:

- a unit in Ecotheology
- the undergraduate Arrow Leadership pathway initiative (with 7 students enrolled, studying 2 units each)
- the Undergraduate Certificate in Divinity being made available also in paper form (enabling students who are incarcerated to continue studying beyond VET level)

- Community Ministry pathway, now recognised as a national training pathway for Deacons in the UCA.

We anticipate that two new Indigenous units set to start in 2025 may interest further groups, and by marketing the Social Work pathway within the BMin we hope to attract more people to study with us also.

**Noticeable in 2024:**

- an increase of enrolments in the Bachelor degrees. In Semester 1 2023 we began the year with 9 enrolled in the BMin and 5 in the BTh – all continuing on from previous years. In Semester 2 2024 we have 16 enrolled in the BMin and 8 enrolled in the BTh – 7 and 3 new enrolments, respectively. 4 of the new BMin enrolments are in the Arrow pathway.
- 14 student enrolments in the Undergraduate Certificate in Divinity compared to ~4 in 2023. This course was introduced by the government to encourage study during COVID times. We are waiting with bated breath to hear if it will continue beyond 2024; the University has asked us to enrol no more new students in this course for now.
- 14 people in Phase 2 and 3 of the UCA ordination pathway make up 19% of our student body of those studying for credit (17% overall).

**Vocational Education Training (VET)**

There were no enrolments into Cert III and Cert IV VET programs in 2023 and 2024. In April 2024 the decision was made by the MLDB to cease delivery of the Cert III for credit.

Students will be able to enrol in an internal UCLT award using the expired Cert III hardcopy materials.

Cert IV was reaccredited with TEQSA at the end of 2023. Eva Burrows, our RTO, is currently rewriting this material, which we expect to be available in 2025.

**(Dr Rosemary Dewerse, Academic Dean on behalf of) Mrs Lynda Leitner, Registrar**

### 3.2.10 Vocational Education and Training (VET) Coordinator

We have continued our partnership with Eva Burrows College (The Salvation Army), the accrediting body for our VET-level courses. Their support has been invaluable in our course development. Last year, we completed and launched our Certificate III in Christian Life and Ministry, which has been implemented with students, including those in the penitentiary system.

Throughout 2023 the Certificate III and IV in Christian Life and Ministry underwent the reaccrediting process with the Australia Skills Quality Authority (ASQA). This process was completed in late November and enabled us to see what the new courses would look like for 2024 and beyond.

These new versions of the courses were fundamentally different from the previous Certificate III and IV. As a result, instead of rewriting the Certificate III, we decided to discontinue offering the accredited Certificate III and repurpose the expired 2023 Certificate III units as a non-accredited course. This allowed us to save time on creating a new course while continuing to address the existing needs.

In my own training I completed the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment and a Graduate Certificate in Leadership. I have also greatly enjoyed providing leadership training and preaching at various churches.

**Rev Nick Patselis, VET Coordinator**

## 4. MLD Sub-Committees - UCLT

As set out above, the MLDB continues to have two subcommittees to oversee aspects of its work. The subcommittee that serves at the South Australian MEB is Formation, Education & Discipleship (FED).

### 4.1 Formation, Education & Discipleship (FED) Subcommittee

#### Membership:

	Position
Rev Rebecca Purling	Chair, Formation, Education and Discipleship (FED) Sub-Committee
Rev Prof Vicky Balabanski	Executive Officer/Principal, Uniting College for Leadership & Theology
Rev Jennifer Hughes	Executive Officer, Mission Resourcing
Rev Do Young Kim	CALD
Mr Max Howland	Lay Preachers
Rev Wendy Prior	Chaplaincy
Mrs Elissa Inglis	Ministry Candidate
Mr Kingson Selvaraj	Rural

The Formation Education and Discipleship Sub-committee is a subcommittee of the Mission & Leadership Development Board. After commencing 2018 with a significant agenda, we are now finding a rhythm for our meetings and hearing about the ministry areas we cover. Those areas include:

- regional and congregational education/resourcing programs and events,
- pastoral care training and resourcing,
- chaplaincy training and resourcing,
- Fellowships and Mission Support,
- formation and discipleship for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and multicultural congregations,
- the Synod's role in discernment and formation processes for prospective candidates, and
- oversight of the Lay Preachers Committee.

Since the last Synod meeting the subcommittee has continued to oversee the work being done in formation and education across the life of the Synod, including:

- Intergen team
- CALD Ministries
- Second Gen Ministry



- Faith Communities
- Joint Presbyteries & Synod Lay Preachers' Committee (LPC)
- Adult Fellowships and Mission Support
- UCFAMS
- First Peoples Ministry Pathway

Some aspects also pertain to the formation and education of candidates for ordained ministries:

- Correspondence with the Assembly Standards for Ministry Committee
- Synod Selection and Formation Panel reports
- Composition of the Selection Panel

Following on from the review of Missional Needs and Opportunities, the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the FED committee will be evaluated in the process of the Strategic and Governance Review.

#### **Report from the FED Chair**

The Formation Education and Discipleship Sub-committee continues to support the work of UCLT and the Mission Resourcing team. We receive reports from the Synod Selection Panel, mid-course reviews for candidates and readiness for ordination reports. Other ministry areas that report to us include the Intergen Team, CALD and Second Gen ministries, and UCFAMS.

At each meeting we hear from the Lay Preacher's committee. Our membership includes representatives from the three Presbyteries, and we report regularly to the MLDB. S

Together with the MLDB we look after the responsibilities of a Ministerial Education Board, reporting regularly to the national Standards for Ministry Committee.

**Rev Rebecca Purling, Formation, Education & Discipleship Subcommittee Chair**

## 5. Other associated Committees or Groups

### 5.1 Centre for Aboriginal Spirituality

#### The Centre for Aboriginal Spirituality

The Centre for Aboriginal Spirituality was established in 2018 as a covenanting activity of the MLD Board. It was a response to the initiative of leaders of the UAICC in South Australia who have a vision for a dedicated resource that honours and nourishes Aboriginal Christian spirituality and theology for the sake of that reconciliation and renewal which is the end in view for the whole creation.

The Covenant (1994) includes the admission from the church:

“My people did not hear you when you shared your understanding and your Dreaming. In our zeal to share with you the Good News of Jesus Christ, we were closed to your spirituality and your wisdom.”

In the light of this, the Purpose of the Centre is:

“To hear Aboriginal people, share their understanding and Dreaming and to be open to Aboriginal spirituality and wisdom.”

This includes hearing the stories of Aboriginal spirituality since colonisation in 1788 and ‘encouraging the expression of Christian theology from the perspective of Aboriginal and Islander culture’ (Regulation 3.2.2 (d)).

Aunty Denise Champion has now been in placement as Aboriginal Theologian in Residence within the UCLT faculty since May 2021. The concept of setting an Aboriginal theologian to be supported while they focus on their theological vision and work, with access to the support of the UCLT faculty and the resources of the College is an expression of the Centre’s purpose. Aunty Denise is based in Port Augusta but joins us in Adelaide at UCLT, Yarthu Apinhi, often for the first week of every month. Her participation in the life of the College, formally and informally, has greatly benefited the College community’s engagement in covenanting, and transforming its sense of what it means to know God and follow Jesus on Aboriginal land. Her role was reviewed in 2023, and that review highlighted the level of respect in which she is held, and the strong desire of those consulted to enable her work to continue for another two years. This was then the decision of the MLDB and SSC.

## 5.2 Joint Presbyteries & Synod Lay Preachers Committee

### Accredited Lay Preachers

The Joint Presbyteries & Synod Lay Preachers' Committee (LPC) has a dual role: to take care of the formal administrative responsibilities, as per the relevant Regulations, and to provide pastoral and continuing education support for Lay Preachers in SA.

### Lay Preachers in the Synod of SA

There are several roles and responsibilities that fall within the remit of the *Joint Presbyteries & Synod Lay Preachers' Committee* (commonly known as Lay Preachers' Committee / LPC). Some fulfill *formal administrative* responsibilities, per the relevant Regulations; some are *pastoral*; some are *educational*.

### Administrative matters

LPC acts on behalf of the three Presbyteries in SA to take care of those administrative matters assigned to Presbyteries by the Regulations.

- We keep the list of Accredited Lay Preachers (including a note concerning status re the Screening and Authority Clearance).
- LPC receives and processes applications to be received as Candidates and applications for accreditation.
- LPC also keeps itself informed about developments and changes in education and formation for Lay Preachers, though responsibility for delivering that service to candidates' rests with Uniting College.

### Pastoral support

Support and encouragement are offered to Lay Preachers through:

- Newsletter emailed twice per year
- The recognition by Synod of **Lay Preachers' Sunday** on the first Sunday in August each year; in connection with this occasion, worship and preaching notes are prepared and loaded onto the Synod website, Lay Preachers page.
- Recognition each year of people who reach major anniversaries.
- Subsidies for resources purchase and conference / seminar attendance.

Officially the remit of Lay Preachers' Committee extends only to Accredited Lay Preachers, but one of the things we note with the *Lay Preachers' Sunday* liturgy is the very large number of lay people to be found leading worship on any given Sunday who do not hold formal accreditation – but without whom the Church's provision of local worship would simply collapse. *The UCA relies absolutely on its lay people* to lead worship and proclaim God's grace in Christ, and a way needs to be found for the wider

Church to recognise that service, and for LPC to offer support beyond our formal role. There is scope for development of support ministry in this area.

### Professional Development (Continuing education)

Lay Preachers' Committee does not normally provide or conduct continuing education sessions itself but does actively advertise and support programmes offered by other bodies. Accordingly, we promoted the visit early in 2024 of Rev Dr Sunny Chen (organised by CMLA), and the *Festival of Learning* on-line conference organised jointly by Uniting College and Australian Lutheran College, as well as more recent CMLA initiatives.

A major event for Lay Preachers across Australia in 2023 was the **National Conference of Lay Preachers**, held from the 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> of August at the Queensland Synod complex that houses Trinity College as well. Some 50+ people attended, including seven from SA (3 of whom provided leadership). There was an exciting and comprehensive set of seminars prepared by a wide range of presenters – and that's apart from the pastoral and friendship aspects that always come out to such events.

Finally, some *Statistical data* to end with:

In August 2024, the numbers stand at:

Capacity	Numbers
Active and available to preach (some limited to their local area only)	117
Inactive (temporarily)	2
Candidates	4

Several of our long-serving Lay Preachers have retired in the last 6 months or so.

Two of our Lay Preachers were ordained as MoW in the last 12 months.

We thank God for the work of our Lay Preachers and for their commitment to serve God through this ministry.

**Max Howland, Joint Presbyteries & Synod Lay Preachers Committee Convener**

### 5.3 SUMMARY

The work set out in this report is multi-faceted and far-reaching. Various aspects are currently under review to ensure that our structures are well suited for the current challenges and those on the horizon. We give thanks to God for the many people, groups and networks reflected in this report and pray that the work of supporting ‘the development of healthy missional churches, life-long disciples and effective leaders to bear witness to the good news of Jesus to the world’ will flourish.

**Rev Prof Vicky Balabanski**

**Executive Officer/Principal, Uniting College for Leadership & Theology**

30 August 2024



The Uniting Church in Australia  
Synod of South Australia