

## WHAT ARE PRESBYTERIES?

A Presbytery is:

- ✓ the district council, one of the four interrelated councils of the Uniting Church; (i.e.the congregation, presbytery, synod and assembly) The Synod forms and dissolves each presbytery and arranges its first meeting. That means congregations can't pick and choose which presbytery they will belong to! (see the Regulations)
- ✓ the council that enables congregations to participate in the decision-making processes of the wider Church, to make proposals to Synod, and through that council, to the national Assembly;
- ✓ responsible for the (*episcopal*) oversight of the congregations and Ministers and ministry agents in its area, and will exercise this corporately not individually (*eg by bishops*); responsible to stimulate and encourage the congregations , provide opportunities for strengthening and assistance of one another, and for their participation in the wider work, ministry and mission of the whole Church;
- ✓ charged with knowing the congregations and to love them, and enable them to bear one another's burdens by maintaining contact with all members, not just the Ministers and lay leaders.
- ✓ the body, together with the Synod and the Uniting College for Leadership and Theology, that is responsible for the oversight of and selection of candidates for the Ministry, the decision that each is ready for ordination, and also the actual ordination of Ministers, once they have been given a Placement; as well as for inducting them into each placement within the presbytery;
- ✓ responsible for the pastoral care of Congregations in its bounds, of the Ministers placed within its bounds;

### **The benefits of having more than one Presbytery are that**

- the smaller number of congregations in each presbytery enables the pastoral care group to know all the congregations and Ministers, and to be able to understand the strengths and dilemmas of each, as decisions are made that affect those congregations;
- this enables the congregations to have a voice, to bring their concerns to the attention of the whole meeting of the Presbytery, and through that council, to the Synod;
- the geographical nature of the presbytery brings together a variety of types of congregations (small, large, old and newer, different cultures, perspectives, theologies) to embody the unity and diversity of the Uniting Church, where we all can listen to each other, respect each other across a range of viewpoints, and learn from each other as together we seek to hear the voice of the Spirit guiding us to embody God's mission in the world;

for example we could have three geographical presbyteries

- ✓ city, western rural and eastern rural OR
- ✓ central city, northern city and western rural, and southern city and eastern rural giving mutual support; OR

- ✓ we could have two geographic presbyteries --- northern city with western rural, and southern city with eastern rural

There are a number of possible patterns.

- every congregation and each Ministry agent is a member the Presbytery, gains information about the wider Church, and can be a conduit for two-way information. to better inform decisions;
- because the Presbytery AND the Congregation are both represented in the membership of Synod, this enables the interrelated councils to work together more effectively.

## WHAT IS A SYNOD?

A Synod is

- ✓ formed by the Assembly as the regional council of the Church, determines its name, fixes its bounds, prescribes its responsibilities, and its relationships with other councils of the Church and arranges its first meeting;
- ✓ it consists of such Ministers, leaders, and other members as are appointed, the majority appointed by the presbyteries, congregations and agencies, as determined by the Assembly, up to a maximum of 500 members;
- ✓ responsible for general oversight, direction and administration of the Church's worship, witness and service within its region and other powers as given to it by Assembly;
- ✓ responsible for all the Church property within the region (through the Property Trust, according to the state law within which the Synod exists);
- ✓ responsible for the management of the Mission and Service Fund and such other funds as established or bequeathed to the Church, to resource the work of the Church within its area.
- ✓ responsible to see that the Regulations of the Uniting Church in Australia are implemented correctly (including all the Discipline Regulations), for the discipline of Ministers, and for implementing nationally agreed policies and procedures related to child health and safety, and of the health and safety laws of state and nationally;
- ✓ resources the presbyteries for their work, for the ministry and mission within each presbytery, using the Mission and Service Fund income (eg a proportion could be allocated to each presbytery, as part of the Synod budget).

In the Synod of South Australia, presbytery/ies and Synod have worked together in the **placement processes of Ministers and other ministry agents** in congregations, agencies and ecumenical placements.

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