

Presbytery of Western Australia

<i>Chairperson</i>	Rev Lorraine Stokes
<i>Immediate Past Chairperson</i>	Rev Steve Francis
<i>Secretary</i>	Rev Dr Ian Tozer
<i>Treasurer</i>	Vacant
<i>Members elected by Presbytery</i>	Kalo Fotu
	Dr Elaine Ledgerwood
	Rev Nalin Perera
	Travis Windsor
<i>Co-option</i>	Vacant

The particular purpose of presbyteries is to exercise “... oversight over the congregations within [their] bounds, encouraging them to strengthen one another’s faith, to bear one another’s burdens, and exhorting them to fulfil their high calling in Christ Jesus.” [Paragraph 15(c) of The Basis of Union (1992 edition)].

A Presbytery shall “... stimulate and encourage the Congregations ... providing them with opportunities for counsel in the strengthening and assistance of one another and their participation in the wider aspects of the Church.” [Uniting Church in Australia Constitution, 26]

Together, members exercise this oversight and fulfil Presbytery responsibilities by:

- hearing from bodies established to serve the Presbytery’s purposes,
- appointing people to continue delegated work, and
- sharing aspects of the worship, witness and service in faith communities and congregations, looking to the future.

It is in this spirit that the Presbytery seeks to meet, so that members serve each other’s needs and work more closely together, discerning how they, as members of the one body, can encourage, strengthen and support each other as a pilgrim people sharing in the one ministry of Christ.

I. THE SEPARATION OF THE SYNOD AND PRESBYTERY

Following decisions made at the Synod meeting in 2016, at which new by-laws were to take effect with the rising of the Presbytery

in November 2016 and following actions of the Presbytery at the November meeting, the decision to separate the Synod and Presbytery of Western Australia (WA) was implemented on 4 November 2016.

At that Presbytery meeting, Rev Lorraine Stokes was elected as Chairperson-elect, to take office at the 2017 Annual Meeting on 20 May 2017 and Rev Dr Ian Tozer was elected Secretary of the Presbytery with immediate effect. A Presbytery Standing Committee was also elected. Members were Rev Steve Francis (chairperson), Lorraine Stokes (chairperson-elect), Rev Dr Ian Tozer (Secretary), Kalo Fotu, Dr Elaine Ledgerwood, Rev Nalin Perera, and Travis Windsor. The position of Treasurer was not filled. Following the Annual Meeting of Presbytery in May 2017, Rev Lorraine Stokes became chair, Rev Steve Francis, ex-chairperson and the membership remained the same. There is still no elected Treasurer.

The Presbytery is required by Regulations [Reg 3.5.5 (a)] and its Rules (P2.2.2) to meet twice a year. At this time, no change has been proposed. The November meeting will be held on 4 November.

2. PRESBYTERY STANDING COMMITTEE

As was reported to the Annual Meeting of the Presbytery on 20 May, “The Presbytery Standing Committee (PSC) acts for the Presbytery between meetings, exercising Presbytery responsibilities and overseeing Presbytery bodies.

When Presbyteries meet regularly, it is possible for them to exercise oversight and make decisions at their own meetings. Then Standing Committees only need be a reference for office-bearers and to deal with urgent matters. However, when meetings are held twice a year, most Presbytery responsibilities need to be delegated.”

3. RULES

Changes to Presbytery Rules were approved on 4 November 2016. These were largely confined to the essentials for the separation to take effect. All committees of the Presbytery were invited to review their Rules. This resulted in awareness of many points where the separation had not been fully completed and new Rules for most Presbytery bodies were approved at the Annual Meeting on 20 May 2017. It was noted that further work was required in relation to Regions, Property and Liturgy. Since then, it has become evident that further changes are required.

It has become clear that clarifying the implications of the separation of the two bodies requires further work. This is, in part, because the connections between the work of various bodies will be facilitated with greater communication and seeking synergies. This may involve further changes. No proposals have yet emerged.

Following the May meeting, the matter of quorum was raised with the Presbytery Standing Committee. It was resolved that the quorum for Presbytery bodies would be a simple majority.

4. MAJOR ISSUES

4.1 First Third ministry

Since the last Synod, it has been agreed that a new model for what is currently termed “First Third” ministry will be brought to the November 2017 meeting of Presbytery. Rev Brenton Prigge, the South West First Third Specialist, leaves to take up a placement in Queensland at the end of October 2017.

4.2 Theological Education

The Assembly has now adopted new ‘Standards for Theological Education for Phase II candidates for Deacon and Minister of the

Word.’ These have required considerable re-thinking by the Presbytery Standing Committee, particularly following the decision of the General Council in 2016, prior to the separation of Synod and Presbytery, not to proceed with an appointment to the position of lecturer in Systematic Theology.

Other major decisions have included the decision to give the required twelve months’ notice of withdrawal from the Perth College of Divinity, a decision which was endorsed at the Special Meeting of Presbytery held on 19 August 2017. At this meeting, a proposal was passed which affirmed the new directions in theological education in WA noting that they implement the strategic directions of the Presbytery and enable our adherence to the National Assembly Standards for ordinand courses.

4.3 Minutes of Presbytery Meetings

The Rules say that the Presbytery Standing Committee itself will confirm the minutes of the meeting.

4.4 Regions

The matter of a review of regions remains before the Presbytery. Some work done in 2014 has been offered as a start. However, this assumes the joint Presbytery/Synod structure and its bodies, such as the Pastoral Relations and Placements Commission, does not take account of the separation.

5. CONCLUSION

As the chairperson, Rev Lorraine Stokes, said at the Annual Meeting in May 2017, it is going to take a while to learn again what it means for the Presbytery to be separate from the Synod.

This will require grace on all sides as we face very significant demographic and membership challenges across the Uniting Church and structures that are more extensive than is the norm for Presbyteries across the Uniting Church in Australia.

Rev Dr Ian Tozer

Secretary

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