



## WA Presbytery Meeting – 16 March 2024 Chairperson Report

### Speaking Truth with Love

When discerning the theme for this Presbytery meeting, reflecting on where the Presbytery is currently at and the challenges that we, and I, are dealing with, my thoughts kept returning to the importance of truth telling, to ourselves, to others, and to God.

Ephesians 4: 15-16 reminds us of the importance of truth, and the importance of telling the truth with love.

The Listening Journeys, being undertaken by Thrive Mission Committee and the Pastoral Relations Committee, is being undertaken by several faithful and hard-working volunteers and ably supported by our Presbytery Minister (Mission) Rev Rob Douglas. The Presbytery is hearing from congregations and faith communities about their challenges, needs and hopes for the future. Different ways of potentially operating, relieving administrative and property burdens, how to better undertake outward focussed mission and create disciples is all being explored. For many being honest where their worshipping community is at, where they are truly at, and how they may need to change, requires a level of truth telling that requires courage and the exploration of futures that challenge comfort. Some congregations are relishing the potential changes, others are more reticent to honestly face what may need to happen.

At this Presbytery we will face the challenge of having to decide when some worshipping communities may have to change, telling the truth with love. But we seek to do this as one body of Christ.

CEDAL are nearing the end of what has been a significant period of reform to how we deliver education and formation programs in the WA Presbytery. I thank CEDAL and those volunteers, and Rev Dr Cathie Lambert and Rev David Kriel, for wrestling with honesty and vision for how we can change the way we deliver education to meet changed needs and circumstances.

The newly established Presbytery Property Committee commenced on January 1 and the sheer level of work already being undertaken and progressed has reinforced how helpful it has been to separate the extensive workload of delivering missional and property oversight within our Presbytery.

The Rural Network has not been able to meet as often as usual due to the Convenor being unavailable for family reasons, but the group continues to interact on-line. The UnitingGen Network continues to meet and at this Presbytery we will seek to look at how we can better operate inter-generationally and I thank Ps Julie Ridden for her dedication to her role. The

Multicultural Network, as understood in Presbytery Rules, has not met and a review of the operations of the Multicultural Network has been undertaken.

A challenge for us is to look honestly at our relationship with Congress. Can we honestly say that we have done all we can to fulfil our end of the covenant? Have we listened to the voices of Congress? Are we being truthful about our willingness to walk beside and be guided by our brothers and sisters who make up the Aboriginal and Islander Uniting Church Christian Congress?

The work of seeking ecumenical partnership opportunities with the Anglican Church continues, albeit slowly. We now have an agreement in relationship to the establishment of the relocated Theological Library to Wollaston and will next pursue an MOU stipulating the terms under which Uniting Church members can access the library. Likewise, the examination of the Covenant that has led to the establishment of St Peter and Emmaus congregation has required both denominations to truthfully assess the differences between our faith traditions which requires us to honestly assess whether our differences are inconsequential or insurmountable.

We are joyfully able to report that after much searching and praying we now have increased stability with our Presbytery staffing profile. Ned Radov, our new Presbytery Support Administrator, is proving to be an absolute gem, ably adding to existing staff member Mahshid Zadeh in building our administrative capacity. New solutions to our database and IT platforms are being explored and updated with the hope that our records will soon be completely up to date and consistently stored across the Presbytery. We are farewelling Rev David Kriel who assisted in our PTH transition and welcomed Rev Dr Cathie Lambert into an ongoing role with CEDAL and welcomed Rev Andy Broadbent into a new CEDAL role. After being made a priority placement, Rev Claire Pickering accepted the call to become our new Presbytery Minister (Pastoral) and we are fortunate that Rev Lorraine Stokes has accepted the role of Presbytery Officer. Much thanks must go to Rev Chris Crause and Rev Lorraine Stokes for being prepared to fill these roles in supply and as such provide critical stability to the Presbytery while we progress our important work. We note the impending retirement of Rev Rob Douglas from the role of Presbytery Minister (Mission) and the ongoing vacancy of the Rural Resource Ministry role. Please pray that we might find the right people for these important roles soon.

Since the last Presbytery we have witnessed the joy of the ordinations and inductions of Rev Samuel Annan and Rev Ana Lae'aetua and the inductions of Rev Toby Keva and Rev Ivan Clark. We have also noted the closure of service for two of our Ministers into retirement Rev Alan Jeffrey and Rev Ruth Vertigan.

As always, my enormous thanks to the wonderful Presbytery staff, the incredible Chairs of our Committees and the many people who are volunteering so many hours for our Church. But a particular thanks to our Secretary and Treasurer Rev Bev Fabb and Janine McDonald for their ongoing work, love and support.

Finally, it is a fact that the role of Presbytery Chair brings with it a requirement to listen and to respond to matters of concern that come from individuals and worship communities

troubled by matters of poor process, breakdown in communication, or sometimes just people behaving badly. With love, can we tell the truth when processes break down or people are not demonstrating humility or even honesty? How do we tackle these almost inevitable fallibilities that occur within our community of believers, flawed sinners all. How do we tell the truth with love?

Grace and Peace

Alison Xamon

Chair of Presbytery