

## A Pastoral Message from the Uniting Church WA Moderator for Synod 2025

We're nearly at the time for our Annual Synod. This year we have some major topics under consideration.

I was thinking about this when I watched something recently where John Maxwell invited his audience to cross their arms. And then when they'd crossed their arms, he invited them to do it the other way. And for most of us, it feels *really strange* if we do it differently from our usual practise. Maxwell said this was a great way of thinking about how we stick often with what we know, with what is familiar with what we like. In a sense, it's our biases.

I see this as a parable which helps us in the church think about what we have to do at the present time.

When I came into the role of Moderator, one of the things I said was that the Church was facing *ecclesiastical climate change*. And that means that we can't keep doing things the way we always have. So we've got a number of topics at the Synod, which may be quite challenging as we consider our strategic directions, the proceeds of sale of property and the deployment of ministers.

For many of us, we have a particular way of thinking about topics. And when we come to a way which challenges it, it's quite uncomfortable and it feels wrong. And yet we who follow Jesus are called to be people who are willing to have the discomfort.

When I came into the role of Moderator, I chose as my theme *Being with Jesus in Ministry*. This comes from a particular verse in Mark chapter 3 where it says, "Jesus appointed 12 to be with him", and then it gives a list of very different types of people. He called them to stay together as they went on the journey, on the way, with him.

Similarly, as I've visited places, I've often quoted from Philipians Chapter 2. Where, among other things, Paul says that "each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others". So one of the challenges we face at this Synod is to consider hard topics. Topics that are needed as we face the changes that are coming, and topics that will call from us a need to be reminded of caring for, and listening to, one another.

I ask that you pray for the Synod members as they discern what it is that needs to be determined, and for all of us as we play our part as followers of Jesus in the Uniting Church in WA.

Rev Dr Ian Tozer

Moderator, Uniting Church WA



**Being with Jesus**  
*in Ministry*