



Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

MINUTES

of the

SEVENTEENTH MEETING OF THE

SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

Held at Box Hill, Victoria
18 – 21 November 2023



Moderator: Rev David Fotheringham

General Secretary: Rev Dr Mark Lawrence

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THE UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF SYNOD HELD IN MELBOURNE 18 – 21 NOVEMBER 2023

All activities, except for the opening service, were held at Box Hill Town Hall, 1022 Whitehorse Road, Box Hill.

23.1 SATURDAY 18 NOVEMBER 2023

23.1.1 OPENING SERVICE

The Synod opened at 10:00am with a Service of Worship at the Salvation Army Hall, 1010 Whitehorse Road, Box Hill.

The worship began with a Welcome to Country by Wurundjeri Elder Bill Nicholson of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation.

The worship was led by the Moderator, with Brooke Prentis, Aboriginal Christian Leader, international speaker, writer, educator, and poet, preaching. The theme of the Synod meeting and the opening service was 'We belong to the day' (1 Thessalonians 5:8).

23.1.2 COMMENCEMENT OF THE MEETING

The Moderator occupied the chair at 12:00pm and welcomed members.

23.1.2.1 WELCOME

The Moderator welcomed Rev Sharon Hollis, President of the National Assembly, and Colleen Geyer, General Secretary of the National Assembly.

The Moderator welcomed Brooke Prentis, who preached at the opening worship and would provide a theological reflection for each day of the meeting.

The Moderator welcomed Andrew Johnson, Act2 Project Lead, who joined the meeting as a visitor for 18-19 November.

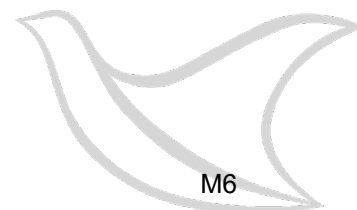
The Moderator reminded members that the meeting was a safe space and requested members to read the safe space statement on the meeting app. The Moderator introduced the Safe Meeting Contacts, Rev Lavingi Tupou and Rev Sandy Brodine.

The Moderator introduced the meeting chaplains, Rev Deacon Wendy Elson, Rev Ray Gormann, and Rev Gospel Ralte.

The General Secretary, Rev Dr Mark Lawrence, indicated that the Synod Roll would be confirmed at 3:30pm on Sunday 19 November 2023 and reminded members to advise any changes in the roll to the Associate General Secretary, Isabel Thomas Dobson, as soon as possible.

23.1.2.2 OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNOUNCEMENT

Kathryn D'Alessandro, Synod Meeting Project Manager, presented the OH&S announcements and reminded members to review the *Emergency and Evacuation Information* document on the meeting app.



23.1.3 OPENING BUSINESS

23.1.3.1 THEOLOGICAL ORIENTATION

Rev Assoc Prof Geoff Thompson, Coordinator of Theological Studies at Pilgrim Theological College, presented a theological orientation for the Synod meeting on inter-related Councils and discerning the will of God.

23.1.4 SYNOD MEETING PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT (C1.4)

The Associate General Secretary, Isabel Thomas Dobson, assumed the General Secretary's chair.

The Moderator introduced the General Secretary, Rev Dr Mark Lawrence and Rev Sue Clarkson, Convenor of the Business Committee, which is now a sub-committee of the Synod Meeting Planning Committee (SMPC). Sue spoke to a written report on behalf of the Moderator, who is Chairperson of the SMPC.

Sue expressed appreciation on behalf of the SMPC for the generous commitment of time and resources by those who provide support for the Synod meeting in various volunteer roles, including the provision of audio/visual and hospitality support.

Sue also thanked SMPC members and Kathryn D'Alessandro, Sarah Manase, Charis Fraser, Debra Penaluna, Mandy Ratnam and Lynda Nel for their efforts in the planning and support of the Synod meeting.

23.1.5 SYNOD 2023 PROCEDURES

Rev Sue Clarkson, Convenor, Business Committee, introduced proposals 19, 15, 3, 4, noting that 19 is a revision of proposal 1, and 15 is a revision of proposal 2, and spoke to them collectively.

23.1.5.1 Synod 2023 Procedures (Proposal 19 – revision of Proposal 1)

The Synod resolved by consensus:

- a) That any proposal which may include financial commitment, not at present included in the Synod Ministries and Operations Budget or other appropriate budget of the Synod, be subject to comment by the Chairperson (or nominee) of the Property & Operations Committee after consultation with the Chairperson (or nominee) of the Ministry & Mission Committee;
- b) To note that the closure time for nominations will be:
 - i. 2pm Sunday 19 November for Synod Standing Committee and 17th Assembly member nominations; andwas
 - ii. 12pm Wednesday 15 November 2023 for all other roles;
- c) That the closing time for receiving proposals at this Synod meeting be 3:30pm Sunday 19 November 2023; and
- d) That the business of the Synod be dealt with in accordance with the following timetable unless the Synod specifically determines otherwise:

Saturday 18 November 2023

Session Time	Session Title
10am – 11am	Session 1 - Opening Worship
11am – 12pm	Morning Tea

12pm – 1pm	Session 2 –Theological Orientation, Synod Meeting Planning Committee, Standing Committee, Moderator Reports
1pm – 2pm	Lunch
2pm – 3:30pm	Session 3 – Bible Study; Reports of the General Secretary, UAICC Tas, UAICC Vic, Walking Together in Covenant Committee
3:30pm – 4pm	Afternoon Tea
4pm – 7pm	Session 4 – Introduction to Working Group #1, Working Group #1, Moderator-elect Nominating Committee Report, Moderator-elect nominee presentation, Theological Reflector
7pm – 8:30pm	Welcome Dinner

Sunday 19 November 2023

Session Time	Session Title
9am – 11am	Session 5 – Devotions, Bible Study, Proposals, Ballot 1 (Moderator-elect) opens
11am – 11:30am	Morning Tea
11:30am – 1pm	Session 6 – Electives sessions
1pm – 2pm	Lunch
2pm – 3pm	Session 7 – Ballot 1 closes, Tributes Service
3pm – 3:30pm	Afternoon tea
3:30pm – 5:30pm	Session 8 – Ballot 1 (Moderator-elect) announcement, Introduction to Working Group #2, Working Group #2, Ballot 2 (SSC majority ballot, Property Trusts members and Placements Committee Chairperson) opens
5:30pm – 7pm	Dinner
7pm – 8:30pm	Session 9 – Ballot 2 closes, Assembly Report, Proposals, Theological Reflector

Monday 20 November 2023

Session Time	Session Title
9am – 11am	Session 10 – Devotions, Bible Study, Proposals, Ballot 2 announced, Introduction to Working Group #3, Ballot 3 (Standing Committee majority and Assembly members majority) opens
11am – 11:30am	Morning Tea
11:30am – 1pm	Session 11 – Working Group #3
1pm – 2pm	Lunch
2pm – 3:15pm	Session 12 – Ballot 3 closes, Proposals, Ballot 4 (Standing Committee preferential and Assembly members preferential ballot – if required) opens
3:15pm – 3:45pm	Afternoon Tea
3:45pm – 5:30pm	Session 13 - Choose Your Own Report 1 & 2
5:30pm – 7pm	Dinner
7pm – 8:30pm	Session 14 – Ballot 4 closes, Proposals, Theological Reflector

Tuesday 21 November 2023

Session Time	Session Title
9am – 11am	Session 15 – Devotions, Bible Study, SMO/M&M/P&O Q&A session, Uniting Vic.Tas/Uniting AgeWell/U Ethical Q&A session

11am – 11:30am	Morning Tea
11:30am – 1pm	Session 16 – Announcement of Standing Committee and Assembly members (Ballot 3 & Ballot 4)
1pm – 2pm	Lunch
2pm – 4pm	Session 17 – One-minute Speeches, Closing Business, Closing Eucharist and Commissioning

23.1.5.2 Appointments and Associations (Proposal 15 – revision of Proposal 2)

The Synod resolved by consensus:

a) To appoint the following people for the whole of the 2023 Synod Meeting:

Minute Secretary:	Charis Fraser
Returning Officer:	Rod Mummery
Deputy Returning Officer:	Rev Deac Gavin Blakemore
Facilitation Group Convenor:	Rev Rachel Kronberger
Facilitation Group members:	Rev Deac Sandy Boyce Rev Jay Robinson Andrew Boatman Helen Geard Rev Robin Yang Rev Dr Margaret Mayman

b) To associate the following people for the whole of the 2023 Synod Meeting:

Brooke Prentis (Theological Reflector)
Charis Fraser (Minute Secretary)
Rod Mummery (Returning Officer)
Jack Oates Pryor (Youthful Participant)
Peihan Bu (Youthful Participant)

c) To associate the following people for specific sessions of the 2023 Synod meeting:

Rev Sue Withers	For the business of the Moderator Nominating Committee;
Dr Mark Zirnsak	For the business of the Ministry & Mission Committee-sponsored Justice and International Mission Cluster proposals;
Tim Molineux	For the business of the Ministry & Mission Committee-sponsored Justice and International Mission Cluster proposals;

Ramila Chanisheff	For the business of the Ministry & Mission Committee sponsored Justice and International Mission Cluster proposal – Ethical Procurement and Investment;
Andrew Johnson	For the business of the Act2 discussion and Working Group;
Rev Hamish Christie-Johnson	For the Tributes Service;
Rev Greg Crowe	For the business of the UAICC Victoria report;
Jenny Batten	For the business of the Working Groups.

23.1.5.3 Confirmation of Minutes of the 2023 meeting of the Synod (Proposal 3)

The Synod resolved by consensus:

That the Moderator, General Secretary, Associate General Secretary and Business Convenor be authorised to confirm the minutes of the 2023 meeting of Synod.

23.1.5.4 Reception of Reports (Proposal 4)

The Synod resolved by consensus:

To receive all reports from Synod reporting entities provided to the 2023 Synod meeting.

23.1.6 SYNOD STANDING COMMITTEE (REPORT C1)

The General Secretary, Rev Dr Mark Lawrence, spoke to a written report.

The General Secretary thanked Rev David Fotheringham for his leadership and guidance of the Synod Standing Committee as Moderator, and Kathryn D'Alessandro for her administrative support and assistance to the Committee.

23.1.6.1 Synod Standing Committee By-Laws (Proposal 14 – revision of Proposal 5)

Rev Dr Mark Lawrence and Rev Denise Liersch introduced this proposal on behalf of the Synod Standing Committee.

The Synod resolved by consensus:

To approve the revisions to the Synod Standing Committee By-Laws, as outlined in the Appendices attached to this proposal rationale, to take effect from the conclusion of the November 2023 Synod Meeting.

The General Secretary resumed the General Secretary's chair.

23.1.7 MODERATOR'S REPORT

The ex-Moderator, Rev Denise Liersch, assumed the Moderator's chair.

The Moderator, Rev David Fotheringham, presented a verbal report which was received with acclamation.

The Moderator offered his deep appreciation for all of those with whom he works, including the General Secretary, the Synod Standing Committee, his Executive Assistant, Deb Penaluna and the staff of the Secretariat, the Moderator's chaplains, his family, and all the people he finds himself working and sharing with – including those at the Synod meeting.

The ex-Moderator, Rev Denise Liersch, led the Synod in prayer for David.

The Moderator resumed the Moderator's chair.

23.1.8 BIBLE STUDY

The Moderator introduced the Bible Study leader for the meeting, Rev Associate Professor Robyn Whitaker, Senior Lecturer in New Testament, Pilgrim Theological College, who led a Bible Study on the theme of *"Belonging to the Day"* (*Leviticus 26:1, 11-13 and 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11*).

23.1.9 GENERAL SECRETARY (REPORT E1.1)

The Associate General Secretary, Isabel Thomas Dobson, assumed the General Secretary's chair.

The General Secretary, Rev Dr Mark Lawrence, spoke to a written report.

The General Secretary expressed appreciation to the Synod Ministry and Operations staff and Senior Leadership Team, Board Chairs and Executive Leaders of the Synod Institutions, for their commitment, flexibility, and innovation in serving the wider Church. He also thanked Rev David Fotheringham, Isabel Thomas Dobson, Kathryn D'Alessandro, Clare Boyd-Macrae (who retired in April 2023), Charis Fraser, and the Office of the General Secretary team for their support and dedication.

The General Secretary resumed the General Secretary's chair.

23.1.10 UNITING ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDER CHRISTIAN CONGRESS (TASMANIA) (REPORT F1)

The Moderator introduced Alison Overeem, Centre Manager, and Ayla Williams, Community and Cultural Resource Officer, UAICC Tasmania Leprena, who spoke to a written report.

23.1.11 UNITING ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDER CHRISTIAN CONGRESS (VICTORIA) (REPORT F2)

The Moderator introduced Rev Will Pickett, and Rev Greg Crowe, from the UAICC Victoria Oversight Committee, who spoke to a written report.

23.1.12 WALKING TOGETHER IN COVENANT COMMITTEE (REPORT G1)

Rev Denise Liersch, ex-Moderator, assumed the Moderator's chair.

Rev David Fotheringham, and Alison Overeem, Co-Chairpersons, Walking Together in Covenant Committee, spoke to a written report and invited feedback from table groups.

The Moderator resumed the Moderator's chair.

23.1.13 INTRODUCTION TO WORKING GROUP 1 – ACT2 PROJECT (REPORTS I1, I2)

The Moderator introduced Rev Sharon Hollis, President of the National Assembly, and Andrew Johnson, Project Lead, Act2 Project, who introduced the Act2 Report for Working Group discussion and feedback.

Rev Rachel Kronberger, Facilitation Group Convenor, introduced the Working Group processes to the Synod members.

23.1.14 WORKING GROUP 1 – ACT2 PROJECT

The Synod met in Working Groups to discuss and provide feedback on the Act2 report.

23.1.15 MODERATOR-ELECT NOMINATING COMMITTEE (REPORT D5)

Rev Salesi Faupula left the meeting prior to this matter commencing.

The Moderator welcomed Rev Sue Withers, Convenor, Moderator-elect Nominating Committee, who is a former Moderator (a practice within the Synod for the Convenor of the Committee). Sue spoke to a written report.

23.1.15.1 Moderator-elect Ballot Threshold (Proposal 12)

The Associate General Secretary, Isabel Thomas Dobson, assumed the General Secretary's chair.

The General Secretary, Rev Dr Mark Lawrence, and Rev Denise Liersch introduced the proposal on behalf of the Synod Standing Committee.

The Synod resolved by consensus:

That the threshold for the majority ballot for the Moderator-elect continue to be 66%, in accordance with Synod resolution 98.5.2.2.

The General Secretary resumed the General Secretary's chair.

23.1.16 MODERATOR-ELECT NOMINEE PRESENTATION

Rev Salesi Faupula returned to the meeting.

The Moderator welcomed Rev Salesi Faupula to the stage for his address.

Salesi addressed the Synod.

The Moderator led the Synod in prayer for Salesi, his family and for the Synod members' discernment, and reminded members that the Ballot for Moderator-elect would open at 11:00am Sunday 19 November 2023.

23.1.17 THEOLOGICAL REFLECTOR AND CLOSE OF DAY

The Moderator welcomed Brooke Prentis who shared a theological reflection.

The Moderator closed the day with prayer and invited the Synod members to a 'welcome meal'.

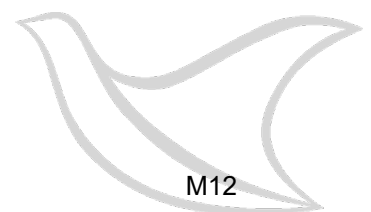
23.2 SUNDAY 19 NOVEMBER 2023

23.2.1 DEVOTIONS

The Moderator welcomed members to the meeting's second day. He gave an Acknowledgement of Country and introduced his chaplains, Rev Jinseon Park, and Rev Semisi Tauali'i, who led the daily devotions.

23.2.2 BIBLE STUDY

The Moderator welcomed back Rev Associate Professor Robyn Whitaker who led a Bible study on the theme of "*Past expectations / The Day of the Lord and taking the long view*" (*Isaiah 13:6-13 and Matthew 25:31-46*).



23.2.3 PROPOSALS

23.2.3.1 Ethical Procurement and Investment (Proposal 7)

Dr Paul Chandler, Chairperson, Ministry & Mission Committee, and Rev Duncan Macleod, Executive Officer, eLM, introduced this proposal. Dr Mark Zirnsak, Senior Social Justice Advocate, eLM, spoke to the proposal.

The Moderator welcomed guest speaker, Ramila Chanisheff, President of the Australian Uyghur Tangritagh Women's Association, who gave a presentation on Uyghur forced labour.

The Synod resolved by consensus:

In alignment with the vocation of the Church to be “an instrument through which Christ may work and bear witness to himself” (Basis of Union, para. 3):

- a) To lament that all parts of the Synod cannot avoid business transactions where the goods and services supplied will have involved serious human rights abuses, excessive environmental damage or other severe criminal activity in their production;
- b) To call on Synod Ministries & Operations, congregations, presbyteries, U Ethical, Uniting Vic.Tas, Uniting AgeWell and Uniting Church members:
 - i. to seek to deal with businesses that uphold ethical standards, including transparency in their ownership;
 - ii. to not invest in and to avoid purchases from businesses involved in on-going serious human rights abuses, excessive environmental damage and non-trivial criminal activity where there is a viable alternative supplier;
 - iii. to not invest in and to avoid purchases from businesses that have been proven to have been involved in serious human rights abuses, excessive environmental damage and non-trivial criminal activity in the last five years, unless there is strong verification that the business has corrected its past practice and conducted meaningful remediation of its past wrong-doing; and
 - iv. to not have dealings with any business that has been established through criminal activity, or purchased with proceeds of crime, in the previous 20 years.

23.2.4 INTRODUCTION TO BALLOT 1 (MODERATOR-ELECT)

Rod Mummery, Returning Officer, introduced the ballot for Moderator-elect and explained the electronic ballot process.

Rod reminded members that the threshold required for the ballot is 66% and confirmed the ballot for Moderator-elect would close at 2:00pm on Sunday, 19 November 2023.

The Moderator led the Synod in prayer for the Moderator-elect nominee, and for the Synod as it entered a period of focused discernment.

The electronic ballot was opened.

23.2.5 ELECTIVE SESSIONS

The Synod members participated in a number of Elective sessions. Topics included:

- The Church and Reconciliation beyond the Referendum (Brooke Prentis);
- Reducing the influence of corporations selling harmful products in our democracy (by Dr Mark Zirnsak, eLM);

- A snakes and ladders board game designed for conversations re discrimination and participation, which can be linked to a range of issues in the disability inclusion area (by Rev Dr Deac Andy Calder, eLM);
- Congregations and Uniting partnering to enliven a community and confront injustice (by Uniting); and
- Experience the real-life challenges of people living in a remote village (by Mardi Lumsden, UnitingWorld).

23.2.6 CLOSE OF BALLOT 1 (MODERATOR-ELECT)

The Moderator declared the ballot for Moderator-elect closed at 2:00pm.

23.2.7 RECOGNITION OF TRIBUTES AND THANKSGIVING FOR MINISTRY

The Moderator offered an Acknowledgement of Country and led a service of worship, including thanksgiving for the life and witness of those ministers who died since the 2022 Synod meeting, and paying tribute to those celebrating milestone anniversaries of ordination, as listed below. Rev Hamish Christie-Johnson gave a response on behalf of all those recognised in the service.

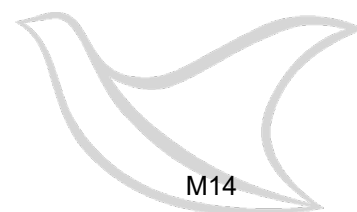
The Synod gave thanks to God for the life and witness of ministers, including past Moderators, who:

- a) Have died since the 2022 Synod meeting and to record their names as follows:

Rev Lance Armstrong	Rev Robert Ower
Rev Stanley Kevin Bannon	Deaconess Margaret Parry
Rev Dr Ian Breward	Rev Dale M Pascall
Rev Graham Kenneth Brown	Rev Robert (Bob) Patterson
Rev Richard Collard	Rev Gerrit Peterschlingmann
Mr Donald Hall (Moderator of the Synod of Tasmania in 1995-1997)	Rev Deacon Beverley Pratt
Rev Denis Hawkey	Rev Leonie Purcival
Rev Robert Imms	Rev Ruth Raggatt
Rev R Graeme James	Rev George Straun Robertson
Rev Dr Coralie Jenkin	Rev Anthonie (Ton) Gerritt Rainer van Doorn
Rev Richard Alan Johnston	Rev Ian Smith (Moderator of the Synod of Victoria in 1980)
Rev (Clive) Drew Lelean	Deaconess Dorothy Underwood
Rev Bernard Long	Rev Loni Vaitohi
Rev Dr Francis Macnab	Deaconess Mary Elizabeth (Beth) Walpole
Rev Allan McLaren	Rev Robert Wheeler
Rev Ernest Terry Ninnis	
Rev Denis Oakley	

- b) Have retired since the 2022 Synod meeting to 31 December 2023:

Rev Sylvia Akau'ola-Tongotongo	Rev Denise Naish
Rev Devanandan Anandarajan	Rev Neil Peters
Rev Charles Bakhtar	Rev Dr Kerry Pierce



Rev Geoffrey Barker
Rev Paul Y Blacker
Rev Dr Jennifer Byrnes
Rev Rosemary Carter
Rev Stan Clarke
Rev Deacon Steve Crump
Rev Richard Franklin
Rev Peter Gador-Whyte
Rev Rob Gotch
Rev Deacon Deborah Kottek
Rev Alistair Macrae
Rev Brian Morgan
Rev Dharendra Narayan

Rev Stephen Ratcliffe
Rev Judy Rigby
Rev Julieanne Ross
Rev Dr Robyn Schaefer
Rev Ross Stanford
Rev Ian Stewart
Rev Barbara Strickland
Rev David Thompson
Rev Bruce Watson
Rev Lingky Hartono Widodo
Rev Fiona Winn
Rev David Withers

c) Have celebrated 50 years since ordination, January 2023 to June 2024:

Rev Greg Beck	Rev Leigh Pope
Rev Dr Barry Brown	Rev Ian Porter
Rev Graham Hall	Rev Robert Ridley
Rev Alan Horsburgh	Rev Robert Stevenson
Rev Dr Peter Horsfield	Rev Rosalind Terry
Rev Lynnette Johnson	Rev Denis Tomlins
Rev Robert Kirwood	Rev Ronald Townsend
Rev Robert McClelland	Rev Malcolm White

d) Have celebrated 60 years since ordination, January 2023 to June 2024:

Rev Brace Bateman	Rev Brian Howe
Rev Owen Blake	Rev Rodney Jepsen
Rev Hamish Christie-Johnston	Rev Peter Petherbridge
Rev John Donnell	Rev Stuart Reid
Rev Bevin Fist	Rev Allan Searle
Rev Stanley Ford	Rev Trevor Williams
Rev Kerrie Graham	Rev Richard Wootton
Rev Dr Denham Grierson	

e) Have celebrated 65 years since ordination, January 2023 to June 2024:

Rev Warren Clarnette	Rev William Pugh
Rev George Grimmett	Rev Lloyd Shirley
Rev Drew Lelean (dec)	Rev Dr Ronald Sutherland
Rev Graham McAnalley	Deaconess Lynette Walker
Rev Ian Parton	Rev Robert Wheeler (dec)

Rev William Perry

Rev Dr Norman Young

- f) Have celebrated 70 years since ordination, January 2023 to June 2024:
 - Rev Richard Collard (dec)
 - Rev Cyril Germon
 - Rev Alfred Webber
- g) Have celebrated 75 years since ordination, January 2023 to June 2024:
 - Rev Howard Secomb
- h) Have celebrated 80 years since ordination or commissioning, January 2023 to June 2024:
 - Rev William Morgan
- i) Have been ordained since the 2022 Synod meeting:
 - Rev Cath James
 - Rev James Tang
 - Rev Chris Waddell
- j) The following minister has been received from another denomination since the 2022 Synod meeting:
 - Rev Heeyoung Lim

23.2.8 CLOSE OF SYNOD ROLL

The Associate General Secretary, Isabel Thomas Dobson, announced the closure of the 2023 Synod Roll.

23.2.9 ANNOUNCEMENT OF MODERATOR-ELECT

The Moderator announced Rev Salesi Faupula as the Moderator-elect.

The Moderator-elect, Rev Salesi Faupula, addressed the Synod.

The Moderator led the Synod in prayer for the Moderator-elect.

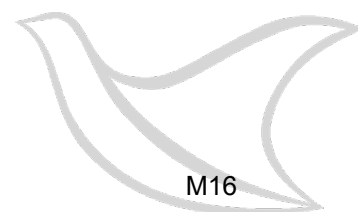
23.2.10 INTRODUCTION TO WORKING GROUP 2 – FAITHFUL FUTURES PART 1 (REPORT D4)

Rev Denise Liersch assumed the Moderator's chair.

Rev David Fotheringham, Convenor of the Faithful Futures Project, introduced the other members of the Faithful Futures Project Steering Group, Rev Linley Liersch, Presbytery Minister (Presbytery of Port Phillip West), Deb Bye, Presbytery Secretary (Presbytery of Gippsland) and Professor Tom Spurling, Presbytery Chair (Presbytery of Port Phillip East).

Rev David Fotheringham and Rev Linley Liersch gave a verbal presentation on the Faithful Futures Project and an introduction to the Working Group material.

The Moderator resumed the Moderator's chair.



23.2.11 INTRODUCTION TO BALLOT 2 (PLACEMENTS COMMITTEE CHAIR, MEMBERS OF PROPERTY TRUSTS – VICTORIA AND TASMANIA)

Rod Mummery, Returning Officer, introduced and explained the process for the ballot for the Placements Committee Chair, and Members of Property Trusts – Victoria and Tasmania.

Rod reminded members of the ballot threshold, and confirmed the ballot for Placements Committee Chair, and Members of Property Trusts – Victoria and Tasmania, would close at 7:00pm on Sunday, 19 November 2023.

The electronic ballot was opened.

23.2.12 WORKING GROUP 2 – FAITHFUL FUTURES PART 1

The Synod met in Working Groups to discuss the Faithful Futures Project.

23.2.13 CLOSE OF BALLOT 2 (PLACEMENTS COMMITTEE CHAIR, MEMBERS OF PROPERTY TRUSTS – VICTORIA AND TASMANIA)

The Moderator declared the ballot for Placements Committee Chair, and Members of Property Trusts – Victoria and Tasmania, closed at 7:00pm.

23.2.14 ASSEMBLY REPORT

The Moderator welcomed Rev Sharon Hollis, President of the National Assembly and Colleen Geyer, General Secretary of the National Assembly, who presented a verbal report.

The Moderator led the Synod in prayer for Sharon and Colleen and the Assembly.

23.2.14.1 FEEDBACK FROM FACILITATION GROUP – ACT2

Rev Rachel Kronberger, Facilitation Group Convenor, provided members with feedback from the Act2 Working Groups.

23.2.15 ANNOUNCEMENT OF BALLOT 2 (PLACEMENTS COMMITTEE CHAIR, MEMBERS OF PROPERTY TRUSTS – VICTORIA AND TASMANIA)

The Moderator announced the results of Ballot 2 for Chairperson of the Placements Committee, and Members of Property Trusts – Victoria and Tasmania.

Placements Committee Chairperson:

Rev Gareth Darlow

Members of Property Trusts – Victoria and Tasmania:

Maryjane Crabtree

Helen Geard

David Rowe

Kenneth Tabart

Robert Hodges

23.2.16 THEOLOGICAL REFLECTOR AND CLOSE OF DAY

The Moderator welcomed Brooke Prentis who shared a theological reflection and offered a closing blessing.

23.3 MONDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2023

23.3.1 DEVOTIONS

The Moderator welcomed members to the third day of the meeting. He gave an Acknowledgement of Country and introduced his chaplains, Rev Jinseon Park, and Rev Semisi Tauali'i, who led the devotions.

23.3.2 BIBLE STUDY

The Moderator welcomed back Rev Associate Professor Robyn Whitaker who led a Bible study on the theme of *"Diagnosing our present day with the book of Revelation"* (Revelation 17:1-6; 18:1-10).

23.3.3 INTRODUCTION TO WORKING GROUP 3 – FAITHFUL FUTURES PROJECT & PROPOSAL 8

Rev Rachel Kronberger, Facilitation Group Convenor, introduced Working Group 3, on the Faithful Futures Project and Proposal 8: Reducing the harm of prohibited drugs: towards a health-based approach.

23.3.4 INTRODUCTION TO BALLOT 3 (ASSEMBLY MEMBER MAJORITY)

Rod Mummery, Returning Officer, introduced and explained the process for the ballot for election for Assembly member majority support.

Rod reminded members of the ballot threshold and confirmed the ballot for Assembly member majority support would close at 2:15pm.

The electronic ballot was opened.

23.3.5 WORKING GROUP 3 – FAITHFUL FUTURES PROJECT

The Synod met in Working Groups to discuss the Faithful Futures Project, and Proposal 8: Reducing the harm of prohibited drugs: towards a health-based approach.

23.3.6 CLOSE OF BALLOT 3 (ASSEMBLY MEMBER MAJORITY)

The Moderator declared the ballot for election of Assembly member majority support closed at 2:15pm, on Monday, 20 November 2023.

23.3.7 PROPOSALS

23.3.7.1 Minute of Appreciation for Rev Jay Robinson (Proposal 16)

The Moderator invited Rev Fee Morrison and Rev Robin Yang to present the Minute of Appreciation for Rev Jay Robinson as Chairperson of the Synod Placements Committee.

The Synod resolved by acclamation:

To record its appreciation to Rev Jay Robinson for her leadership as Chairperson of the Placements Committee from 1 January 2022 to 31 October 2023 and as Deputy Chair from 26 November 2019 to 31 December 2021 and to give thanks to God for Jay's faithful contribution to the Placements Committee.

Jay brought to the Placements Committee her boundless energy, enthusiasm and warmth, her wonderful smile and pastoral heart, her considerable gifts and abilities, and a generosity of spirit. Her warm nature welcomed members and guests alike to meetings in ways that ensured both deep sharing and structured processes were comfortable and engaging. Her listening ear and her knowledge of the necessary procedures and policies required of this important Committee were an asset. As was her wide experience of the

Church across many contexts – particularly in congregational ministry, as a supervisor and pastoral support, member of the Presbytery PRC and the Council for Chaplaincies in Tertiary Institutions and Convenor of the Synod Nominations Committee. Jay's networks across the Church are significant.

Over the last four years, Jay has loyally offered leadership and discerned alongside members of the Placements Committee as they serve the Church through their considered and prayerful deliberations to assist congregations, Presbyteries, the Synod and its Agencies fulfil ministry vacancies and opportunities.

Jay provided support to the Placements Committee as they continued to operate during and after the COVID pandemic. She has contributed significantly and positively through all the challenges of meeting online – with such success that the Committee continues to meet via zoom every other month.

Jay's love for the Church, her passion for ministry and her prayerful approach shine through in her leadership, hard work and thoughtful approach to the Church's future ministry needs and directions. Jay has encouraged and challenged the Placements Committee to consider its processes and procedures in the light of changing ministerial placement needs. She has continued to resource meetings and processes above and beyond that which is required and assisted the Placements Committee to discern how best to serve the Church in the current day. Jay's leadership has provided opportunity for her to combine her ability to think both inside and outside the box. She brings an understanding of processes alongside the pastoral needs of the Church and its ministers and an awareness of the current circumstances the Church is operating within. The combination of these strengths is both an asset and a significant balancing act.

Jay's grace, her thoughtfulness, her ability to lead and provide direction whilst also listening to all members of the Committee have been significant gifts. She will be missed, and we are grateful for all she had offered to the whole Church through this role.

We wish Jay God's blessings as she takes on her new placement in the Presbytery of Port Phillip East: Presbytery Minister – Team Leader.

Rev Jay Robinson responded.

The Moderator thanked Fee, Robin, and Jay, and led the Synod in prayer.

23.3.8 ANNOUNCEMENT OF BALLOT 3 (ASSEMBLY MEMBER MAJORITY)

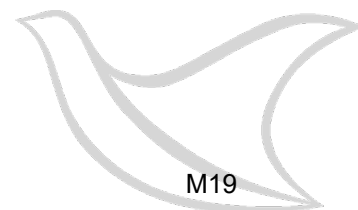
The Moderator announced the results of Ballot 3, election of Assembly 2024 Members (Lay and Ordained). All nominees received majority support.

23.3.8.1 Process for appointing members of youthful age (under 30) to the 17th Assembly (Proposal 21)

Rev Sue Clarkson, Business Convenor, introduced and spoke to this proposal.

The Synod resolved by consensus:

- a) To note that whilst a total of six (6) people of youthful age (under 30 years) need to be appointed as members of the 17th Assembly from within the bounds of the Synod, in order to fulfil the Assembly requirement of 10% of members being of youthful age:
 - i. no presbytery appointed a 17th Assembly member of youthful age; and
 - ii. only one nomination in this age grouping was received, after two extensions of nomination deadlines during the 2023 Synod meeting.



- b) To note that Michael Clark, a 17th Assembly member nominee of youthful age, received the required support in the Synod's majority ballot for 17th Assembly members, and is therefore appointed as a member of the 17th Assembly.
- c) To authorise the Standing Committee to fill the remaining five (5) vacancies for 17th Assembly members of youthful age (under 30).

23.3.9 INTRODUCTION TO BALLOT 4 (SYNOD STANDING COMMITTEE MAJORITY, ASSEMBLY MEMBERS PREFERENTIAL)

Rod Mummery, Returning Officer, introduced the ballots for Synod Standing Committee majority, and Assembly members preferential, and explained the ballot process.

Rod reminded members of the ballot threshold and confirmed the ballot for Synod Standing Committee majority, and Assembly members preferential, would close at 8:00pm on Monday, 20 November 2023.

The electronic ballot was opened.

23.3.10 CHOOSE YOUR OWN REPORT SESSIONS

Rev Sue Clarkson, Business Convenor, introduced the Choose Your Own Report sessions.

Synod members engaged with selected Synod reports of their choice, which included:

Session 1

- eLM – Justice & International Mission – Responding to climate change without engaging in human rights abuses and criminal activity;
- Uniting AgeWell;
- U Ethical;
- eLM – Funds & Bequests – Mission & Educational;
- Uniting Vic.Tas;
- Culture of Safety;
- eLM – Chaplaincy Development.

Session 2

- eLM – The future of camping;
- eLM – Pilgrim Theological College & Theological and Ministerial Education Committee;
- Uniting AgeWell;
- Uniting Vic.Tas;
- eLM – Justice & International Mission – The challenge of exploitation in the on-demand gig economy;
- eLM – Placements Committee.

23.3.11 ADOPTION OF THE SYNOD ROLL

The Associate General Secretary, Isabel Thomas Dobson, proposed that the Synod roll be adopted.

The Synod resolved by consensus:

That the Roll of Synod as finalised at 3:30pm on Sunday 19 November 2023 be adopted.

23.3.12 PROPOSALS

23.3.12.1 Reducing the harm of prohibited drugs towards a health-based approach (Proposal 23 – revision of Proposal 8)

Adrian Webber, General Manager – Alcohol and Other Drugs, Mental Health and Carer Services was associated for the business of this proposal.

Rev Alistair Macrae, Deputy Board Chairperson, Uniting Vic.Tas, and Dr Paul Chandler, Chairperson, Ministry & Mission Committee, and Adrian Webber, General Manager – Alcohol and Other Drugs, Mental Health and Carer Services, Uniting Vic.Tas, introduced this proposal.

Rev Dr Margaret Mayman, Facilitation Group member, spoke to the proposal.

The Synod resolved by consensus:

Recognising that substance abuse may cause enormous harm to individuals, families and communities and that the Church discourages use of illicit drugs:

- a) To call upon the Victorian and Tasmanian Governments to foster an open dialogue with the community on the most effective strategies to reduce the harm of illicit drugs.
- b) To affirm that alcohol and other drug-related policy in Victoria and Tasmania should reflect the following principles:
 - i. Dependency on illicit drugs is the result of complex interplay between psychosocial, developmental and environmental factors requiring a health and social response;
 - ii. The fundamental objective of drug policy should be to keep people safe and reduce the harm of use and provide pathways to wellness;
 - iii. While law enforcement actions to disrupt large scale supply of illicit drugs remain essential, drug possession for personal use should not be a crime and individual drug users should not be subjected to the criminal justice system for personal use;
 - iv. Policies should not stigmatise, marginalise or punish drug users;
 - v. Drug policy and treatment should reflect the best available evidence and resources should be allocated towards measures that are most effective.
- c) To support and advocate:
 - i. for greater funding in demand reduction and harm reduction strategies, including specialist alcohol and other drug treatment and harm reduction services, to support people who use drugs and to address harm to families and communities associated with illicit drug use, and
 - ii. for the decriminalisation of possession and personal use of small amounts of illicit drugs.
- d) To write to the Premiers, Opposition Leaders, Attorneys General, Ministers for Health as well as Shadow Attorneys General and Shadow Ministers for Health in Victoria and Tasmania; to inform them of this resolution.

The Moderator led the Synod in prayer.

23.3.12.2 Secure Work (Proposal 22 – revision of Proposal 9)

Dr Paul Chandler, Chairperson, Ministry & Mission Committee, and Rev Duncan Macleod, Executive Officer, eLM, introduced this proposal. Dr Mark Zirnsak, Senior Social Justice Advocate, eLM, spoke to the proposal.

Andrew Boatman, Facilitation Group member, spoke to the proposal.

The Synod resolved by consensus:

In affirmation of the Uniting Church as Employer Principles and its theological underpinnings (Synod resolution 01.6.4.4), that provide a guide for the way all employed people should be treated:

- a) To confess with lament that we have not always lived up to the Uniting Church as Employer Principles, often despite our best endeavours;
- b) To call on all parts of the Synod, including its institutions and councils of the Church, to embrace and implement the Uniting Church as Employer Principles in their employment practices where they do not already do so;
- c) To publicly support all reasonable additional measures in law and practice that seek to create gender equity and eliminate sexual harassment in the workplace;
- d) To publicly support all reasonable measures in law and practice that ensure that people doing the same work at the same level for the same employer are paid the same and are given equivalent conditions;
- e) To call on the Commonwealth and State Governments to:
 - i. ensure the on-demand gig economy is not used by unethical employers to classify employees as independent contractors; and
 - ii. amend the existing law to establish collective bargaining rights for all people engaged in work through the gig economy;
- f) To call on the Commonwealth Government to establish a national industrial commission (or a Fair Work Commission jurisdiction) to:
 - i. regulate all work contracts regardless of the work status of those workers and regardless of how those workers were engaged including arrangements for the engagement of on-demand gig workers;
 - ii. hear and determine complaints concerning the unfair termination of work contracts for all workers, including those working in the gig economy; and
 - iii. issue orders to ensure supply chain accountability where workers, including on-demand gig workers, are engaged by subcontractors;
- g) To call on the Commonwealth Government to introduce, for people on temporary visas who have a meritorious claim of workplace exploitation, a short-term visa with work rights to enable them to stay in Australia while pursuing their claim; and
- h) To write to the Prime Minister, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Shadow Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the Australian Greens, the Victorian Premier, Victorian Minister for Industrial Relations, Victorian Minister for Employment, the Victorian Leader of the Opposition, the Tasmanian Premier, the Tasmanian Leader of the Opposition, and the Tasmanian Leader of the Greens to inform them of the above resolution.

The Moderator's chaplain, Rev Semisi Tauali'i, led the Synod in prayer.

23.3.13 CLOSE OF BALLOT 4 (SYNOD STANDING COMMITTEE MAJORITY, ASSEMBLY MEMBERS PREFERENTIAL)

The Moderator declared the ballot for Synod Standing Committee majority and Assembly members preferential closed at 8:00pm on Monday, 20 November 2023.

23.3.14 THEOLOGICAL REFLECTOR AND CLOSE OF DAY

The Moderator welcomed Brooke Prentis who shared a theological reflection.

The Moderator thanked Brooke for her theological reflections throughout the Synod meeting and offered a closing blessing.

23.4 TUESDAY 21 NOVEMBER 2023

23.4.1 DEVOTIONS

The Moderator welcomed members to the fourth day of the meeting. He gave an Acknowledgement of Country and introduced Alison Overeem, who led the devotions.

The Moderator led the Synod in prayer for the UAICC Tasmania and the UAICC Victoria.

23.4.2 BIBLE STUDY

The Moderator welcomed Rev Associate Professor Robyn Whitaker who led a Bible study on the theme of *“Hope for the future: borders, but open gates”* (Revelation 21:1-4, 22-27; 22:1-5)

The Moderator thanked Robyn for leading the Bible studies throughout the Synod meeting.

23.4.3 ANNOUNCEMENT OF BALLOT 4 (SYNOD STANDING COMMITTEE MAJORITY, ASSEMBLY MEMBERS PREFERENTIAL)

The Moderator announced the results of Ballot 4 (Synod Standing Committee majority, and Assembly members preferential). All nominees for Synod Standing Committee received majority support.

The Moderator advised that the results for the 17th Assembly member appointments would be distributed by email to Synod members over the coming days.

23.4.4 INTRODUCTION TO BALLOT 5 (SYNOD STANDING COMMITTEE PREFERENTIAL)

Rod Mummery, Returning Officer, introduced the ballot for Synod Standing Committee preferential and explained the ballot process.

Rod reminded members of the ballot threshold and confirmed the ballot for Synod Standing Committee preferential would close at 11:30am on Tuesday, 21 November 2023.

The electronic ballot was opened.

23.4.5 Q&A – SYNOD MINISTRIES AND OPERATIONS, MINISTRY AND MISSION COMMITTEE, AND PROPERTY AND OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

Isabel Thomas Dobson assumed the General Secretary's chair.

The Moderator invited representatives of Synod Ministries and Operations (SMO), Ministry and Mission Committee (M&M) and Property and Operations Committee (P&O) to provide their presentations in the following order:

- SMO – Rev Dr Mark Lawrence (General Secretary), joined by Sam Nicholas, Executive Officer, Mission Resourcing Unit and Rev Duncan Macleod, Executive Officer, equipping Leadership for Mission Unit,
- M&M – Dr Paul Chandler (Committee Chairperson), and
- P&O – Rev Stan Clarke (Committee Chairperson).

The Moderator invited reflection, discussion, and questions from the members.

The General Secretary resumed the General Secretary's chair.

23.4.6 Q&A – U ETHICAL, UNITING AGEWELL, AND UNITING VIC.TAS

The Moderator invited representatives of U Ethical, Uniting AgeWell and Uniting Vic.Tas to provide their presentations in the following order:

- U Ethical – Lindsay Mann (Board Chairperson) and Mathew Browning (CEO),
- Uniting AgeWell – Raelene Thompson (Board Chairperson) and Andrew Kinnersly (CEO), and
- Uniting Vic.Tas – Jude Munro AO (Board Chairperson) and Amy Padgham (Acting CEO).

The Moderator invited reflection, discussion and questions from the members.

The Moderator led the Synod in prayer.

23.4.7 PROPOSALS

23.4.7.1 Minute of Appreciation for Rev Ikani Vaitohi (Proposal 17)

The Moderator invited Isabel Thomas Dobson, Associate General Secretary, and Dr Paul Chandler, to present the Minute of Appreciation for Rev Ikani Vaitohi as Chairperson of the Synod Ministry and Mission Committee.

The Synod resolved by acclamation:

To give thanks to God for the Rev Ikani Vaitohi and his creative, inclusive, and inspiring leadership as Chairperson of the Synod's Ministry and Mission Committee (M&M) from June 2021 to June 2023.

The Rev Ikani Vaitohi was elected a member of M&M in August 2019. When Rev Graeme Harrison retired as inaugural Chairperson, Ikani was elected as Chairperson, beginning in that role in June 2021.

Ikani's keen commitment to and engagement with the Committee's areas of responsibility was clear to all Committee members. His enthusiasm, creativity, and commitment to encourage the Committee to assist the Church to engage with the Gospel, the community and to recognise how the Church itself must embrace a different future brought energy and focus to the M&M meetings.

This was particularly important and challenging as COVID required the Committee to meet remotely by videoconference.

Ikani's leadership of M&M and the extra associated meetings was in addition to his responsibilities as minister at the Belmont UC Congregation, and later, the Yarraville UC Congregation. The Church expresses its gratitude to those Congregations for their support of Ikani and for enabling his gifts to be shared with the wider Church.

A challenging period of ill health meant that Ikani reluctantly took leave of absence from M&M in November 2022 and then resigned in June 2023. Ikani's contribution to M&M, though shorter than he or the Committee hoped, has been significant, and for that we give thanks to God for all that he offered as the Committee Chairperson during this period.

Rev Ikani Vaitohi responded.

The Moderator thanked Isabel, Paul and Ikani, and led the Synod in prayer for Ikani.

23.4.8 CLOSE OF BALLOT 5 (SYNOD STANDING COMMITTEE PREFERENTIAL)

The Moderator declared the ballot for election of Synod Standing Committee members 2023-2026 closed at 11:30am on Tuesday, 21 November 2023.

23.4.9 FEEDBACK FROM WORKING GROUPS 2 & 3 – FAITHFUL FUTURES

Rev Rachel Kronberger, Facilitation Group Convenor, introduced Facilitation Group members Andrew Boatman, Rev Dr Margaret Mayman, Helen Geard, Rev Deac Sandy Boyce and Rev Jay Robinson, and thanked them for the work undertaken during the Synod meeting.

Rev Rachel Kronberger provided members with feedback from the Faithful Futures Project Working Groups discussion.

23.4.10 PROPOSALS

23.4.10.1 Zero Emissions (Proposal 20 – Revision of Proposal 10)

Rev Jay Robinson, Facilitation Group member, and Dr Paul Chandler, Chairperson, Ministry & Mission Committee, introduced and spoke to this proposal.

The Synod resolved by formal majority:

- a) As part of its response to climate change, to encourage all parts of the Synod, its institutions and other councils of the Church, to aim to reach zero emissions by 2040 at the latest, covering their Scope 1 (emissions directly generated e.g., gas) and Scope 2 (indirect emissions from electricity use) emissions.

The Synod resolved by consensus:

- b) To express its gratitude for the support from governments for parts of the Synod and its institutions to reduce their emissions, acknowledging that the Synod would be far less able to reduce its emissions without government funding.

The Synod resolved by formal majority:

- c) To establish a Synod Emissions Reduction Fund (SERF/Fund):

- i. with an initial funding of \$100,000 from the Synod;
- ii. to be administered by the Synod Climate Action Taskforce (Taskforce); and
- iii. request the Taskforce to report back to the next ordinary Synod meeting on the progress made and what further steps need to be taken, including financial resources required.

- d) To request that equipping Leadership for Mission develop Terms of Reference for the SERF, for consideration and approval by the Ministry & Mission and Property & Operations Committees, which shall include provisions that:

- i. explore and scope the financial requirements needed to prioritise reaching zero emissions by 2040, at the latest;

- ii. describe how the funds will be directed for use within congregations and presbyteries to assist in the reduction of emissions in their operations and activities;
- iii. all parts of the Uniting Church in Victoria and Tasmania, including its members, institutions and councils of the Church be invited to make voluntary financial contributions to the Fund as they are able;
- iv. the Taskforce may encourage and assist congregations and presbyteries in making grant applications;
- v. the Taskforce shall prioritise support for applications that will have the most significant contribution to reducing emissions within the bounds of the Synod to reach as close to zero emissions by 2040 as possible; and
- vi. the Taskforce shall consider any other ethical issues related to the application of the Fund and other Synod resolutions and policies, such as suppliers being implicated in serious criminal activity, human rights abuses, or excessive environmental destruction.

The Synod resolved by consensus:

- e) To request the General Secretary to ensure that the Synod's Scope 1 and 2 emissions, including emissions from its institutions, presbyteries and congregations, are measured at least every five years and report to the Synod on progress in relation to emissions reduction.

The Moderator led the Synod in prayer.

23.4.10.2 Future Leaders Task Group (Proposal 6)

The Associate General Secretary, Isabel Thomas Dobson, assumed the General Secretary's chair.

Rev Dr Mark Lawrence and Jacob Westley introduced this proposal on behalf of the Synod Standing Committee.

The Synod resolved by consensus:

To request the 2023 Synod meeting to extend the reporting date on the Future Leaders Task Group's work to the next ordinary Synod meeting;

- a) noting that consideration of succession planning for future leaders within the Church may be affected by the outcomes of the Faithful Futures Project and Act2 Project processes.

23.4.10.3 Synod 2025 Meeting Date (Proposal 11)

Rev Dr Mark Lawrence and Rev Denise Liersch introduced this proposal on behalf of the Synod Standing Committee.

The Synod resolved by consensus:

That the next ordinary Synod meeting be held between July 2025 and September 2025 (inclusive), with the timing to be confirmed by the Synod Standing Committee, upon a recommendation from the Synod Meeting Planning Committee.

23.4.10.4 Minute of Appreciation for Isabel Thomas Dobson (Proposal 18)

The Moderator invited Rev Dr Mark Lawrence and Lorraine Threlfall, to present the Minute of Appreciation for Isabel Thomas Dobson as Associate General Secretary.

The Synod resolved by acclamation:

To record its deep appreciation and give thanks to God for the ministry of Isabel Thomas Dobson in the role of Associate General Secretary (from October 2013 to February 2024) and many other roles across the life of the Church.

Isabel Thomas Dobson's (Isabel) faithful and positive contribution to many parts of the Church has been profound, long lasting, and a wonderful expression of discipleship and commitment to Christ's mission in the world. All of the qualities that Isabel has brought to the Synod through her role as Associate General Secretary, and before that, as Moderator, including faithful and encouraging leadership; discerning observation; pastoral sensitivity; frank conversations; collaborator; history bearer; whole of Church perspectives; wise counsellor, shared discipleship; and so much more, have made a wonderful and deep contribution to the Synod and the wider Church.

As well ministering as Associate General Secretary, over the period of her serving in this role Isabel has served on, and resourced, a number of Synod and Assembly committees, forums, networks, etc. Isabel has provided significant leadership, often 'behind the scenes', to allow others to undertake their ministry and to share in God's mission in the world. These wider commitments include serving on the: Assembly Standing Committee – and a range of its task groups and related commitments; Victorian Council of Churches, and its Standing Committee; and membership of the World Methodist Council – and of a number of its committees.

Isabel has brought her background as an historian and educator into the Associate General Secretary role. Through both her awareness of events and themes that have shaped the Uniting Church's character, and her capacity to help others understand principles for the Church's approach to ministry and mission, Isabel has provided pastoral guidance and leadership for councils, ministers, and members of the Church to more faithfully live out their call to discipleship and following Christ's way of love and compassion. In all this, Isabel has consistently and realistically identified issues for councils, ministers, and members of the Church. Isabel has always done this in respectful ways, and sometimes in appropriately challenging ways – and has provided and collaborated with others to address these concerns and enhance the Church's commitment and capacity to share in ministry and mission.

Isabel's availability to respond to matters raised by a wide spectrum of people within the life of the Church is legendary. People are consistently appreciative of Isabel's wisdom and faithfulness as she engages with them in working through a range of matters. Sometimes these matters have been very complex and challenging, and sometimes people have just needed a reminder about a particular regulation, policy, and/or process to follow to address the matter. Isabel's calm and pastoral response to each enquiry is greatly appreciated. Isabel has consistently reminded the Church about good and due process. In the fullest sense of being pastoral, Isabel has been present for people and where appropriate, challenged assumptions and/or processes and invited those with whom she is engaging to always reflect on their agency and capacity to contribute positively to the Church's call and mission.

Many ministers, members, and councils of the Church have experienced Isabel's ongoing care, support, and wisdom when going through challenges or significant periods of change in their personal lives, congregation, or presbytery. With a breadth of knowledge and experience at hand, Isabel was always responsive to issues that were being addressed and available for advice to work through particular matters. Isabel consistently followed up with these people, supporting the congregation/presbytery whilst it was working through such challenges and changes. Isabel's pastoral care and 'being with' the congregation/presbytery in challenging and changing times was always appreciated.

As Associate General Secretary, Isabel has been a key contributor in 'interpreting' the Church to many Synod Ministries and Operations (SMO) staff, and 'interpreting' SMO to many members, committees, and councils of the Church. This contribution has been

deeply influential in building trust and appreciation across these parts of the Church and enhancing the Church's capacity as a whole to share in the call to be part of Christ's body in the world.

In a Minute of Appreciation that honours Isabel's ministry over the past decade, it is appropriate to highlight her deeply, deeply significant role in providing Church-wide leadership and support during the COVID-19 pandemic. As the Synod's Crisis Management Team Convenor, Isabel worked tirelessly to support the Synod committees and staff, presbyteries, and congregations, in responding to an unprecedented set of circumstances. Isabel's thoughtful, calm, and appropriately firm leadership was deeply appreciated throughout the 'COVID-years'. Her leadership and example encouraged others to have confidence that the Church could continue to undertake worship, witness, and service through this challenging period, and to do so in agile and responsive ways – even in the ever-changing and fluid environment that was daily confronting the Church and wider community.

Isabel's ministry of Associate General Secretary and the gifts and graces outlined above, emerge from a life-long commitment to discipleship founded upon a deep love and appreciation for the biblical narrative and faithfulness shaped by her formative years, and a deep commitment to Christian practices throughout her life. Isabel's spirituality and theological astuteness is profoundly apparent as she has undertaken the responsibilities of Associate General Secretary. Across the spectrum of these responsibilities from administrative tasks, to addressing significant concerns in life of the Church, through to strategic missional direction setting; Isabel's formation through biblical and theological reflection, and a personal commitment to spirituality and living out her personal and communal commitment to discipleship is ever-present. This is a model for Christian life and commitment that has positively impacted on many, many people within SMO, Synod committees, and across the councils and membership of the Church.

There is so much to thank Isabel and God for, for her gifts and graces, and for the nature and scope of the ministry and leadership that Isabel has offered to this Synod and the wider Church over many years of being called to ministry placements within the Church, and also for her commitment to the Uniting Church and ecumenical partners as a lay person throughout her life. The Church is exceedingly grateful for all that Isabel has offered in each of her placements and other commitments, and particularly, for her wise and faithful ministry as Associate General Secretary.

The Synod prays that as Isabel moves into retirement from active ministry, she will enjoy an enriching period of joy, hope, rest, and continuing service in ways that nourish her commitment to God's mission in the world through the way of Christ.

Isabel Thomas Dobson responded.

The Moderator thanked Mark, Lorraine and Isabel, and led the Synod in prayer for Isabel.

The General Secretary resumed the General Secretary's chair.

23.4.11 ANNOUNCEMENT OF BALLOT 5 (SYNOD STANDING COMMITTEE PREFERENTIAL)

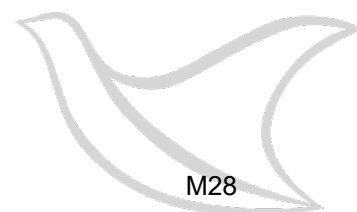
The Moderator announced the results of Ballot 5, election of Synod Standing Committee members 2023-2026.

Synod Standing Committee members elected:

Dr Paul Chandler

Fiona Ensor

Cathie Halliwell



Rev Anneke Oppewal

Cameron Shields

Rev Lucas Taylor

23.4.12 ONE-MINUTE SPEECHES

Rev Sue Clarkson, Business Convenor, outlined the process for one-minute speeches.

A number of Synod members gave one-minute speeches.

23.4.13 CLOSING BUSINESS

23.4.13.1 Minute of Appreciation for the Synod Organising Team

Christina Rowntree presented a Minute of Appreciation thanking all those people who had contributed to the successful organisation and running of the Synod Meeting.

Resolved by acclamation.

23.4.13.2 Closing Worship and Commissioning

Synod members joined in the closing worship and Eucharist, led by the Moderator, Rev David Fotheringham. During the service, those elected to Synod leadership roles during the Synod meeting were commissioned.

The meeting closed at 3:45pm.

