

SYNOD REPORT, CONTINUING EDUCATION and LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The role of Continuing Education and Leadership Development Coordinator resources and supports ministry agents in Phases 3 and 4, so that they may most fruitfully fulfil their commitment to ongoing formation and professional development.

This role continues to offer an **Orientation to Ministry Program (OMP)** for Phase 3 ministers in their first three years of ordained ministry. OMP comprises 4-6 days per annum focusing on building and sustaining effective ministry, and includes areas such as: theological reflection on vocation; key skills for leading (small) groups; negotiating conflict; deepening pastoral practices; reflecting on the task of proclamation; engaging in peer learning with experienced ministers; giving and receiving feedback.

Ongoing resourcing of Phase 3 and Phase 4 ministers occurs in a variety of contexts:

- *an active social media community* where resources, books and articles are shared and discussed, and where upcoming educational opportunities are promoted;
- *regular email updates* outlining upcoming courses, conferences and other events pertaining to ministry, church and mission;
- *one-to-one coaching* when individuals seek assistance in exploring their (next) Continuing Education focus.
- A key ongoing resource to which the Continuing Education role has made significant contribution, alongside Pilgrim Theological College New Testament Coordinator, is the *By the Well (weekly) Lectionary Podcast*. This project began 3 months before Covid disruption, and, while at times difficult to sustain under strict stage 4 lockdowns, did not miss an episode. Reviews are highly favourable, and anecdotal feedback indicates the resource is highly valued by both lay and ordained preachers (particularly those in rural areas), and by others for personal devotional use. In 2022 we have expanded the team so that there is a wider variety of voices contributing.

Fundamentals of Transitional Ministry, parts 1 and 2.

In collaboration with Rev Dr Rob McFarlane (NSW/ACT Synod), the Continuing Education Coordinator delivers both parts of the Fundamentals of Transitional ministry courses (which together comprise Intentional Interim Ministry accreditation). Ongoing work in this area includes updating the FTM material for the Australian/UCA context.

Promoting **Peer Learning Groups** remains a key focus for Ministry Agent Continuing Education. However, effective, widespread adoption of a Peer Learning Groups requires coordinated and strategic support/collaboration at the Assembly and Presbytery levels.

Since the last Synod report, the Continuing Education Coordinator has attended ministry retreats; co-delivered workshops on Mentoring; Intercultural ministry, coordinated Lectionary/preaching conferences (all virtual). In 2022 this role also brought the Synod Chaplaincy Project to completion, and has made contributions to the Phase 2 processes.

The challenges of the pandemic to church community life are well known. While the wonders of technology (zoom, teams, youtube etc) were/are remarkable in bringing us

together, often from far afield, such gatherings are no substitute for in person collegiality. In the context of Continuing Education - an area of one's ministry that often focuses on the horizon; the bigger picture of vocational direction – the stresses of lockdown and uncertainty meant ministry agents understandably had to focus solely on the day-to- day demands of life. Others relished the immediacy of online learning opportunities while stuck at home and engaged in courses with new enthusiasm.

Future focus: collegial, in person gathering of ministry agents; a strategic, collaborative approach at the Assembly, Synod and Presbytery levels to ensure ministry agents engage with their Continuing education opportunities/responsibilities.

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