

2022 Synod Report Lay Leadership Development

Summary of Ministry Area

Lay Leadership Development includes areas of ministry for lay people that involve them exploring, training for, undertaking, and continuing to learn within leadership roles within the life of the church. Areas include:

- discernment
- Period of Discernment
- Lay Preacher training
- Lay Preacher continuing education
- Ethics training – for Lay Preachers and Lay Leaders
- Lay Presider training (initial and renewal)
- Understanding the Sacraments Training
- Disaster-readiness for Congregations (Facilitated, Rev Stephen Robinson, National Disaster Recovery Officer for the Assembly as the Presenter)
- Peer-Support Training, for support for ministerial agents during and after disasters (Facilitated, Rev Stephen Robinson, National Disaster Recovery Officer for the Assembly as the Presenter)
- Worship Leader training
- Elder and Church Council training
- Discipleship growth

Significant achievements

- Introduction of disaster-readiness training to the Synod – this is an important area of learning for congregations, faith communities, and Presbyteries, and works alongside the work done by VCCEC and others. Alongside this also sits the Peer-support Training, also introduced in 2021.
- Synod-wide Worship and Preaching training via Zoom and Uniting Learning (Assembly Learning Management System) with Presbytery collaboration) – introduced in 2021, this training offered on 4 levels of engagement was greatly appreciated by Presbyteries and attendees (almost 90 for Worship; almost 50 for Preaching)
- Mental health in difficult times resources – this collection of links, particularly COVID based but also useful in other times, has been widely shared in many areas

Effects of the pandemic

There have been both positive and negative impacts on this area of ministry due to the COVID pandemic.

Positive:

The forcing of people to learn Zoom just to attend church had a flow-on affect in this area of ministry. Where some were once reluctant to attend a workshop on Zoom, many could now see the benefits of learning from home.

Once this was established, with programs intentionally moved into the online environment, learning could be held on a weekly basis in shorter time slots, recorded for later viewing, and attended by anyone across the Synod. An added bonus was being able to include presenters from across the Synod, or from other Synods as in the case of disaster-readiness training, as well.

Negative:

Good internet access plays an important part in being able to deliver training online – both for presenters and participants. My own planning for online learning now includes 3 different sources of internet connection when working from home. And, while we live in a technological age, not everyone has access to good internet, or even a computer. Part of my work when facilitating online workshops also involves helping or teaching people the access the online environment due to the demographic I am often working with.

The constant changing of circumstances over the past two years has also had its effect with general fatigue affecting people's decision whether to attend a workshop or not, with numbers for workshops becoming hard to predict.

Going forward – some thoughts



An overall need to think more collaboratively

The Basis of Union reminds us that the UCA was formed on the idea that everyone, lay or ordained, is called to exercise their ministry. With increasing numbers of congregations and faith communities without ordained leadership, at least in ways of the past, how do we do this moving forward will require greater collaboration between lay and ordained, and perhaps a different understanding and appreciation of each other's gifts.



Transitioning with grace

There is no doubt the pandemic has changed us, including sometimes in ways of which people are unaware. How we continue to transition through this biggest social impact since World War 2 will require grace and awareness, with some new ways of looking at existing issues.



Significant training

There is a saying that "God equips those who are called". As we continue to place lay leaders into areas with greater responsibility, we must ensure they are competent to do what the church is asking them to do. By this I mean that current gifts and skills are recognised, and they are further adequately and suitably prepared and trained, with access to ongoing supervision and training. And this needs to be balanced with what is sustainable and culturally appropriate for each lay leader.

Mel Perkins

Lay Leadership Development Coordinator

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