



**uniting
church**
in Australia,
Synod NSW & ACT

12 February 2018

By email to Presbytery Chairs and Secretaries

***Pathways* Implementation March-September 2018**

Are you ready for the *Pathways Project* to come to your Presbytery in the next few months? The *Pathways* process is an opportunity for the whole church to discern together and to consider how best to empower, resource and support the mission of God as it is lived out in congregations and presbyteries.

Pathways is a grass roots planning project, initiated by the Synod Standing Committee and endorsed by the Synod meeting. Rev. Kath Merrifield has been appointed to lead the project until Synod 2019, working alongside Ms Melanie Dicks (Head of Strategic Commissioning, Uniting). The Uniting Mission and Education Resourcing Team and the Church Engagement Team from Uniting will assist in facilitating engagement with Presbyteries and congregations.

Pathways is a process designed to take seriously the inter-conciliar nature of the Uniting Church and our call to be “a fellowship of reconciliation”. *Pathways* will enable us to plan together on the basis of open and transparent communication and consultation across the breadth and diversity of the UCA in this Synod.

In the next few weeks, the *Pathways* team will be in touch with you and your Presbytery to arrange how best to engage with people in congregations and faith communities across the Presbytery. The pilot process, conducted in 2017 with the Presbyteries of New England North West and Parramatta-Nepean, found that this was best done through workshops with groups of congregations either in zones or geographic clusters. The team has been asked to conduct these workshops between March and September. I know that this may seem difficult to fit in around the many other demands of Presbytery and congregational life but it is an opportunity to re-establish relationships across the many different parts of the church, to help us to share the joys and challenges we are facing and to develop practical ways to strengthen the church and grow in fruitful mission.

The long term aim of *Pathways* is to use the information gathered and the shared conversations to develop a long term operational plan for the Synod that will inform mission planning and development, and commit resources and services to supporting strategic mission priorities in congregations and presbyteries.

Further information and background about *Pathways* is attached. For more information about *Pathways* please contact either Kath (0409 650 118 or kathm@nswact.uca.org.au) or Melanie (0407 009 051 or mdicks@uniting.org) by email.

Please share this information with your Presbytery and Congregations.

In the enthusiastic spirit of Synod 2017, let's work together to create and share a process that will engage the whole Church, and provide focus and clarity for the work of being a fellowship of reconciliation through which Christ may work and bear witness.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jane Fry". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rev. Jane Fry
General Secretary
Uniting Church in Australia
Synod of NSW and the ACT



Pathways

Information Sheet

Pathways is a grass roots planning project, initiated by the Synod Standing Committee and affirmed by the Synod meeting. *Pathways* is a process designed to take seriously the interconciliar nature of the Uniting Church and our call to be “a fellowship of reconciliation”. The *Pathways* process will enable us to plan together on the basis of open and transparent communication and consultation across the breadth and diversity of the UCA in this Synod.

The Basis of Union commits the UCA to being “a fellowship of reconciliation, through which Christ may work and bear witness to himself” (Basis of Union, para.3), which includes acting for the common good to build a just and compassionate world. The Synod’s role is to inspire, empower and support the Uniting Church in all its varied expressions to embody that faith and live that calling.

There’s no doubt that we live in diverse, challenging, changing and complex times and that there is an urgent need to find new ways to engage with our communities, to tell our story and to plan for the future.

Throughout 2017, *Pathways* conducted a pilot process with two very different Presbyteries;

1. Parramatta Nepean (an urban Presbytery in western Sydney)
2. New England North West (a regional/rural Presbytery in northern New South Wales).

In October 2017, the Synod meeting identified the *Pathways* project as one of the opportunities to continue to encourage us all to share our stories and to find ways to work together to engage with our local communities. The Synod asked that *Pathways* be extended to all Presbyteries and to the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (NSW/ACT) in 2018 and to report to the next Synod meeting in April 2019.

Pathways sits alongside other Synod-wide, inter-related projects, in the context of identifying missional priorities and creating an integrated, future focussed, plan for the Uniting Church in this Synod.

These include:

- *Stepping Stones* is an operational review of current Synod resources and services essential for the Church to meet its purpose, mission and growth, now and in the future. The review aims to identify sustainable resources and services required to support the church in mission. It includes the operational areas of the Secretariat, Uniting Mission and Education and Uniting Resources. (For more information please contact Melanie (0407 009 051 or mdicks@uniting.org.)
- The *Mission and Property Review* is about supporting healthy congregations and healthy presbyteries. It supports a review of property by Presbyteries to ensure all properties are ‘fit for purpose.’ In some cases property may be released for sale in order to free up resources for future mission, develop capacity and ensure the financial sustainability of new initiatives. (For more information please contact David Cornford (DavidC@nswact.uca.org.au.)

- *Pulse* is a whole-of-church movement that recognises the importance of emerging generations within the life of the church. *Pulse* seeks to grow vital Christian communities where emerging generations thrive. The aim is to develop a sustainable, vibrant movement where communities are strengthened and effective leadership is developed. The *Pulse* approach asserts that the current decline within the Uniting Church is not the final word and that ministry with emerging generations is central to regeneration and renewal. (For more information please contact Bradon French (BradonF@nswact.uca.org.au).)
- *Saltbush* affirms the need of rural communities and congregations, the place of the church in those communities and the need to enable and support rural Ministry placements. *Saltbush* was affirmed by the 2017 Synod as an encouragement and support for those smaller Christian communities irrespective of location, age, ability or resources. (For more information please contact Mark Faulkner (MarkF@nswact.uca.org.au).)
- *Seeds of Growth* is a whole Church stewardship program that is replacing *Living is Giving* from 1 July 2018. The program invites every congregation to help support mission opportunities that breathe new life into our communities and bring God's love to the world. Resources (including an explainer video, *Seeds of Growth* Six Part Bible Study, Church Council Devotion and other printed material) will be available soon to download from www.nswact.uca.org.au. For more information about *Seeds Of Growth* contact Adrian Drayton (AdrianD@nswact.uca.org.au) or Lisa Sampson (LisaS@nswact.uca.org.au)

For all of these projects, the question of purpose is paramount - *Who are we called to be, and why do we do what we do?* As we reflect on these questions together, we commit ourselves to working together

You can see a video clip of how these projects interact at: <https://vimeo.com/234621223>

Some other helpful links include:

- For a copy of the *Pathways* report to the Synod: <http://bit.ly/SynodPathwaysReport>
- For a video clip of the *Pathways* pilot process: <https://vimeo.com/234621170>
- The *Pathways* website: <https://nswact.uca.org.au/pathways/>

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