

# Major Strategic Review



## **Church culture – an insight**

Thank you to everyone who participated in the online survey in February and March. More than 1000 responses were received from people across the Church.

The survey results have given us some deep insights into our life together as a Church across the Synod. It has highlighted some of the unique strengths of the Church and the desire for the Church to express care, justice and compassion in its life and mission. The results also show areas that need attention. People are concerned about bureaucracy, confusion and hierarchy and are calling for greater accountability and leadership development.

Read a report on some of the key findings from the culture survey on the MSR Listening Post website.

## **Vision - Who we are and what we are called to do**

Thank you to everyone who has helped us explore a vision for the Synod. We have asked via questionnaires, workshops and within general discussions about people's vision for the Church. We have used your answers to shape a recommended vision statement.

The MSR team, with contributions from people from the Centre for Theology and Ministry and from across the Church, have also drafted a series of mission principles to underpin and guide the development of the Review's plans and recommendations.

In June, the Synod Standing Committee will consider the draft vision and mission principles. If approved, the MSR will use these to direct our planning and discussions as we work towards our final report to the Synod Standing Committee in December.

## **Discussions – ongoing across the Church**

The MSR is looking at the broad and complex nature of the whole church. We've engaged in discussions with councils, agencies and institutions across the Synod to help us on some big picture issues. We are now returning to some groups to discuss areas of particular relevance to them as they relate to the vision for the Synod.

### **Lay Preachers, Chaplains and Ministers**

We are taking the opportunity to join different ministry groups to listen to their ideas for their vocation and how they want to be supported in their role within the Church. Thanks to the Synod Lay Preachers' Association and members for their thoughtful engagement at their conference in March. We also appreciated the opportunity to meet with some chaplains at the recent Chaplains Connection Day hosted by the Commission for Mission in April.

Read about some of the topics raised with the MSR by lay preachers and chaplains on the MSR Listening Post website.

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Independently run research has also been planned with ministers to invite discussion on issues specific to their vocation and life-long calling to ministry within the Uniting Church (Victoria and Tasmania).

We are looking for and planning other opportunities to listen and participate in discussion with other ministry groups over the coming months.

## **Congregations and Presbyteries**

We will be engaging with presbyteries and representative congregations to consider the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of each as councils of the church – to inform the best support needed to enhance mission and leadership within our Synod. Out of our conversations we hope to share consolidated learnings and discuss future opportunities later this year.

## **Synod based ministries and operations**

Over the coming months the MSR team will be working directly with the synod based ministries and operations teams to understand their roles and functions as they sit within the wider Church. The information on the mission and operation of the Centre for Theology and Ministry, Commission for Mission, UCA Funds Management, synod support services and how they relate and support each council of the Church is needed before considering any future strategic proposals that respond to the vision.

## **Agencies**

The MSR continues to consider the missional and operational aspects of the community outreach and agency services of the Church, including the agencies within the UnitingCare VicTas (UCVT) network. A dedicated MSR team has been engaging with boards and CEOs across the network since October 2014. Much valuable information has been collated that will assist the Standing Committee when they discuss future options for agencies, client care and the involvement of the wider Uniting Church.

Any decision by the Synod Standing Committee will provide a strategic focus for further consultation and detailed planning. We plan to provide an update to the agency network and support areas shortly after any strategic decisions are made.

## **Governance**

Governance is one of the themes affirmed by the September 2014 Synod meeting that the MSR is charged to explore. The challenges of wise stewardship and effective decision-making have also been raised during our broader consultations.

We have engaged a specialist governance consultancy, Board Matters, to assist us to explore options for improved governance frameworks. Board Matters have previously advised the Queensland Synod on similar matters.

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It became clear that some of the potential options would require changes to the Uniting Church's constitution, regulations or would be more effective if implemented nationally. To consider these issues in detail, we led a two-day national governance discussion in late April with other Synods and the Assembly to discuss areas of possible improvements relating to complexity, effectiveness and accountability.

## A New Season

Jesus,  
raised from death,  
present on earth,  
bless us as we continue  
on this adventure.  
Open our eyes,  
ears  
and imagination to what you hold in store for us  
and our church  
and your world.  
Amen

We would love to hear from anyone who has completed the studies or followed the devotional for A New Season. What was your experience – have you talked with someone about how your worshipping community might be Christ's church in new and fresh ways? Has it invited different perspectives on your neighbourhood and communities?

### **Contact us – we'd love to hear from you!**

visit: [www.listeningpost.victas.uca.org.au/msr](http://www.listeningpost.victas.uca.org.au/msr)

email: [msr@victas.uca.org.au](mailto:msr@victas.uca.org.au)

join: [www.facebook.com/groups/msr.ucavictas](http://www.facebook.com/groups/msr.ucavictas)

write to us: Major Strategic Review, Secretariat, 130 Little Collins Street, Melbourne VIC 3000