

Wimala Presbytery

REVIEW

February-May 2026

Introduction

This review was conducted on the initiative of Wimala Presbytery in partnership with the other geographic Presbytery of the Synod of South Australia, the Presbytery of Southern South Australia (POSSA). Specifically, the review has been commissioned by the Wimala Presbytery Standing Committee and will report to that body.

The Terms of Reference are attached as Appendix 1.

It is to be noted that this review includes matters such as the appropriateness of Position Descriptions and roles; it does not include performance appraisal of individuals within those roles.

The review does include evaluating the effectiveness of the Presbytery Standing Committee, Pastoral Relations Committee, and Property Committee including the governance experience, skills and gifts represented and required.

More fully from the Terms of Reference:

Objectives:

The Independent Review seeks to:

1. Review the Position Descriptions of the Chair of Presbytery, Chair of Pastoral Relations Committee, Presbytery Secretary, Regional Co-ordinators and Presbytery Mission and Property Officer, to identify where the responsibilities of the position are unclear and overlap.
2. Evaluate the effectiveness of the Presbytery Standing Committee, Pastoral Relations Committee and Property Committee including the governance experience, skills and gifts represented and required.
3. Consider the most appropriate paid staff / volunteer model for Presbytery operations within financial constraints to particularly but not exclusively meet our desire for a growth/renewal focus and practice within the Presbytery.
4. Consider the development and implementation of a Leadership Development Committee for the Presbytery for clearer leadership pathways.
5. Evaluate the capacity of the allocated budget to meet the needs of the Presbytery and consider potential wise use and stewardship of the monies kept in reserve.
6. Evaluate and make recommendations concerning the relationships between the presbyteries, the Presbytery and Synod, the Presbytery and congregations.

7. Assess the opportunities and limitations in the Presbytery carrying out its regulated functions and responsibilities.
8. Consider if the current referral of powers aids or limits the work of the Presbytery.
9. Consider opportunities for closer working relationships between presbyteries.

Out of scope:

- Evaluation of the performance of individuals in Presbytery roles. Their performance is reviewed separately.
- The funding and work hours of the Mission and Property Officer role. This role is established in conjunction with the Synod and funded by UC Invest.

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Background

Across the Uniting Church

This review is being conducted in the context of multiple other processes, notably the Assembly Act2 project, which includes a review of structures including Synods and Presbyteries¹. Other processes on foot include the recent NSW/ACT Presbytery Project and current implementation of the 3P model (dissolving the existing 12 Presbyteries and forming three new ones)², and the Queensland Presbytery Capacity Project as part of their “Renewal and Growth” strategy.³ Of course, South Australia undertook its own processes of moving from seven to one (2005), then one to three (2019) Presbyteries.

The processes and projects mentioned above have generated huge numbers of written resources. Without repeating these, and at the risk of over-simplifying, all Uniting Church Presbyteries are exercising their duties in a state of declining numbers and increasing burdens, both externally and arising from the declining trends themselves. For instance:

- Increased compliance with external requirements:
 - Safety of children and vulnerable persons
 - Work Health & Safety:
 - Procedures & policies
 - Maintenance of properties to a safe standard
 - Psychosocial well-being

¹ <https://act2uca.com/cgra/>

² <https://www.nswact.uca.org.au/about-us/transition-commission/>

³ <https://ucaqld.com.au/about/presbytery-capacity-project/>

- Dramatic decrease of numbers of ministers in placements, sometimes 90% in rural Presbyteries, with interacting impacts:
 - Having fewer ordained ministers in placement results in a lower workload of Presbytery oversight in general pastoral care and specific processes around vitality of ministry, JNCs, etc.
 - Having fewer ordained ministers in placement results in fewer available “wider church” volunteer hours for the same number of committees and congregational oversight processes, such as Life & Witness consultations.
 - Large increase in ratio of retired ministers to those in active placement, with a rate of retirement three times that of ordination nationally.
 - Dramatic decrease in the number of members of the Uniting Church – perhaps 75% since Union – with a corresponding decrease of the number of ministers in congregational placements, but without a corresponding decrease in the number of Congregations.
 - Large increase in Presbytery direct oversight of the life of permanently lay-led Congregations, when the Regulations have an in-built presumption of paid ministry oversight with direct Presbytery oversight only during “vacancies”.
 - While the number of lay-led Congregations has increased, the actual capacity for leadership within those Congregations is often decreasing as long-term leaders age without a cohort of younger leaders behind them.
 - The lack of growth of lay leadership within Congregations – significant in itself – also results in a progressive decline of leadership available beyond the Congregation.

In other words, the tasks required of Presbyteries are increasing while the human capacity to fulfil them declines. Decline in numbers has not resulted in a decline in workload or complexity of structures. One factor mitigating these drivers of increased work and decreased resources has been the move towards fewer Presbyteries than at Union, allowing for more effective and focussed work.

The Purpose of Presbyteries: A reminder

Presbyteries do not exist for themselves. Presbyteries are part of the vision of the Body of Christ, where all the parts of the body are healthy, connected and functioning. While “Body of Christ” imagery comes primarily from 1 Corinthians 12, describing individual giftedness functioning within the whole, the role of Presbyteries can be informed by the less-often quoted passage from Ephesians 4, with the language of “ligaments” and “equipping”.

“We must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knitted together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love.” (Ephesians 4:15b,16)

This is reflected in our foundational Uniting Church understanding of the Presbytery:

... to perform all the acts of oversight necessary to the life and mission of the church in the area for which is it responsible, except for those agencies which are directly responsible to the Synod or Assembly. It will in particular exercise oversight over the congregations within its bounds, encouraging them to strengthen one another’s faith, to bear one another’s burdens, and exhorting them to fulfil their high calling in Christ Jesus.

Basis of Union – Para 15c

The Presbytery shall have such oversight as is necessary to the life and mission of the Church in the area committed to it; it shall stimulate and encourage the Congregations within its bounds, providing them with opportunities for counsel in the strengthening and assistance of one another and in their participation in the wider work of the Church.

Constitution section 26

From these quotes, we see that the focus of responsibility for Presbyteries as described in the Constitution and Basis of Union is the life and mission of their Congregations. This is part of our Uniting Church vision of interconciliar relationships – Congregation, Presbytery, Synod, Assembly – which Andrew Dutney describes as “an egalitarian network of mutually accountable missionary communities”. (*Where Did the Joy Come From? Revisiting the Basis of Union*, 2001, page 29)

The simple elegance of the Basis of Union and Constitution is given concrete expression in Regulation 3.1.3 Responsibilities of the Presbytery (see appendix 3).

Given that Congregations are the key focus on Presbyteries, it is worth revisiting the Uniting Church’s definition of a Congregation:

The Congregation is the embodiment in one place of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, worshipping, witnessing and serving as a fellowship of the Spirit in Christ. Its members meet regularly to hear God's Word, to celebrate the sacraments, to build one another up in love, to share in the wider responsibilities of the Church, and to serve the world. The congregation will recognise the need for a diversity of agencies for the better ordering of its life in such matters as education, administration and finance.

Basis of Union 15 (a)

It is quite common in UCA conversations to quote the first and sometimes the second sentence of this clause. The third sentence tells us that Congregations have a need for support from a “diversity of agencies” in areas such as “education, administration and finance”, to which we would add mission as critical in our times. While the expression “worship, witness and service” is used eight times in the BoU, “witness” is never specifically seen as the work of Congregations.

The mention of “diversity of agencies” in the life of Congregations prompts the question of how Congregations can be supported most effectively by Synod resourcing, in interconciliar collaboration with their Presbyteries.

We are also reminded of the vision of the authors of the Basis of Union, that:

The Uniting Church will ... order its life in response to God's call to enter more fully into mission.

Basis of Union 13

South Australia “Establishment of Presbyteries” report November 2019

Key consideration in deciding to create two geographic Presbyteries with their soft boundary and numbers was their similar “capacity for financial and missional sustainability” (page 4.2). To be effective, these large geographic Presbyteries would need to have some form of “clusters”, with a range of terms seeking to express the nature and purpose of these clusters (eg regions, zones, interest groups, small networks, hubs) based on geographic or interest groups, mostly growing organically (page 4.1).

Three inter-related factors are thus critical for reflecting on the life of Wimala Presbytery:

- Financial sustainability.
- Missional sustainability.
- The effective of sub-structures within Wimala Presbytery in supporting the worship, witness and service of Congregations under the Presbytery's oversight.

Since 2019

There have been three ongoing challenges since the decision to create multiple Presbyteries in 2019 which have slowed Wimala's and POSSA's development:

1. That Generate was created first with a clear purpose is perceived to have given that Presbytery a "head-start", while the two geographic Presbyteries emerged later from the Transitional Presbytery. While both Wimala and POSSA value being geographic and diverse, it has been more difficult to establish a sense of identity and purpose.
2. The pandemic in 2020 and beyond has had a significant impact in both diverting time and energy into the essential task of supporting Congregations as well as reducing the capacity of the Presbytery to meet to work through developmental tasks.
3. It has taken much longer than anticipated to "unscramble the egg" of one-Synod/one-Presbytery in relation to roles and resources.

All three of these challenges are moving towards resolution.

Method

The current review of Wimala included a range of methods:

- One-to-one conversations with people within Wimala.
- One-to-one conversations with people in wider UCA in SA, including Synod, POSSA and Generate Presbytery.
- Wimala-initiated & facilitated meetings:
- Meetings with Committees.
- Review of documents, notably founding documents, Position Descriptions and Rules.

One-to-one conversations within Wimala (n=13):

- Wimala staff (lay & ordained) including Regional Coordinators and Secretary.
- Office-bearers (Presbytery chairperson, Presbytery secretary, PRC chairperson, and POD coordinator).
- Other committee members

Group conversations with committees

- Presbytery Standing Committee
- Several informal conversations with reference group (Presbytery chairperson and Secretary) and a wider leadership group (Presbytery chairperson, Secretary, PRC chairperson, Regional Coordinator).

Wimala-initiated & facilitated meetings (with notes supplied for the Review):

- Planning Day with Standing Committee and PRC members on 4 March, 2026
- Session in Presbytery meeting on 14 March, 2026.

Review of Wimala documents

- “Who we are”
- Wimala Position Descriptions:
 - Presbytery Chairperson
 - Presbytery Secretary
 - Presbytery Treasurer
 - PRC Chairperson
 - Regional Coordinator
- For reference: Presbytery Mission & Property Conversation Minister (Job Description & Person Specification) – 0.4 FTE (funded by UC Invest)
- Presbytery Rules and Terms of Reference:
 - Confidentiality Policy & Agreement
 - Faith Communities Rules
 - Financial Management Policy
 - Presbytery Membership Rules
 - Standing Committee Rules
 - PRC Terms of Reference
 - Property Team Rules & Terms of Reference
 - Non-Congregation Bodies Rules

Review of Synod documents

- Establishment of Presbyteries (2019)
- Presbytery Restructure Review Task Group Report (2022)

One-to-one conversations

Over the thirteen conversations, numerous common themes emerged which were also reflected in conversations with Presbytery Standing Committee and informal check-ins with Wimala leaders. These insights are summarised in the thematic summary (Appendix 2) and are reflected in the Affirmations, Challenges and Recommendations (below). Some of these theme areas included both strengths and challenges which are brought together around the thematic focuses rather than separately naming “positives and negatives”.

These clustered into eight areas:

1. Focus and strengths of Wimala
2. Current leadership of Wimala
3. Youth/young adults
4. Missional opportunities
5. Support of Fresh Expressions
6. Challenges
7. Inter-Presbytery relations
8. Relationships/communications within Wimala

Underlying these themes is the question of resourcing to increase oversight/enabling work (eg themes 2 & 3) and to initiate missional activity (eg theme 4).

Presbytery Standing Committee (PSC)

At our conversation, numerous themes were explored, many consistent with one-to-one conversations held previously and since. Key insights include:

- Wimala is well able to meet current budget and has reserves.
- Possibilities for enhancing staffing in oversight and missional initiatives is hampered by being unable to retain sales proceeds locally or through beneficial use of properties not occupied by a current congregation.
- Standing Committee is prepared to expend reserves but lacks confidence that this would be followed by sustainable funding.
- Wimala is highly rural-focussed, entailing great challenges of distance.
- Wimala in particular has unmanageable remote spaces, but has a strong commitment to manage and maintain a presence.
- Some degree of lack of clarity between sphere and scope of Synod and Presbytery staff in equipping and resourcing congregations:
 - Presbytery is closer to the ground, whereas
 - Synod has more capacity for specialisation (despite current roles in the Synod's Mission Resource Team having moved to 6 x 50% generalist arising from the move to three Presbyteries).
- Opportunity to develop staff roles across Wimala and POSSA in key areas of:
 - Leadership development
 - Young adult ministry
- Focus of Standing Committee work and Presbytery-Synod relationships has been very property-focussed to the detriment of, for instance, young adult and leadership development.
- The need to revisit the current funding and staffing arrangements across the Synod and Presbyteries of SA.

Wimala-initiated & facilitated meetings (with notes supplied for the Review):

Planning Day with Standing Committee and PRC members on 4 March, 2026

Responses were presented under four headings:

- Strengths of Wimala Presbytery
- Challenges of Wimala Presbytery
- Presbytery structure – across SA
- What we would look like if we were thriving?

Grouping items together, Standing Committee and PRC articulated a clear sense of **strengths**. These include:

- Healthy relationships and connections with congregations
- Support for rural and lay-led congregations
- “Fledgling” youth ministry

- Being flexible and adaptable
- Inclusion, expressed in cultural diversity, theological spectrum, disability awareness/inclusion, and rural/urban demographics.

Standing Committee and PRC articulated **challenges** for Wimala, grouped as:

- Geographical distances
- Insufficient time for leaders to be present across the Presbytery
- Lack of agency concerning access to Synod-held financial resources
- Risk of leadership burnout
- PRC: Difficulty getting beyond being reactive to proactive, as well as difficulty in finding members (especially lay).

In terms of **Presbytery structure**, various comments can be summarised as:

- Need for closer relationships and a shared vision across the Synod.

A **thriving Wimala** would have:

- Diversity and inclusion recognised and celebrated, with all included.
- Growing and flourishing congregations, with a sense of belonging to the Presbytery.
- Exciting and relevant innovative events.
- Enhanced decision-making, including a permission-giving culture.

Session in Presbytery meeting on 14 March, 2026.

The feedback from table groups was structured around three areas, similar to those of the one-to-one review conversations: **Strengths, Challenges, Prayerful Hopes**. Table group feedback was collected, but not grouped into themes.

Themes that emerged from table groups discussing **strengths** included:

- Inclusion and belonging:
 - Rural-urban
 - Cultural diversity
 - Theological diversity
- Collegiality
- Connection and communication, including:
 - “Words from Wimala”.
 - Healthy relations across Presbytery and with leaders
- Good support of lay leaders

Themes that emerged from table groups discussing **challenges** included:

- Lack of clarity around church-planting leadership responsibility: Synod-Presbytery

- Limited people resources, including need to increase time of Regional Coordinators
- Fewer ordained ministers, both whether available and finding resources to pay them.
- Need for more training of lay leaders
- Distance and geography

Table groups' **Prayerful Hopes** included:

- Leadership development
- Support for new projects
- Stronger young adult work
- Deeper connections between congregations
- Better media use

Position Descriptions and Presbytery Rules/Terms of Reference

Position Descriptions

The Presbytery Chairperson's PD (2023):

This PD represents accurately the duties of a Presbytery chairperson in the Regulations for oversight of the business of a Presbytery. Further, the PD expresses appropriately specific expectations within Wimala, such as:

- "visionary, strategic and pastoral oversight to congregations and ministry agents", and
- "working with others to clarify and articulate the vision, mission, values and culture of the Presbytery"

The "Background Experience and Skills" are appropriate to the role, as are the "Personal Qualities and Attributes", especially:

"Ability to offer effective leadership within a complex, diverse and participative culture."

While the PD doesn't include reference to the "Who are we" document and its threefold, "Gather. Connect. Go.", it can be assumed that this long-term PD will be read in relation to broader statements of purpose.

The PD leaves open the question of whether the role is voluntary or remunerated, and if remunerated to what fraction:

"The Chairperson may be appointed in an honorary basis but may be remunerated on a stipended basis (subject to Synod approval). Reasonable expenses incurred in the position may be reimbursed."

The current incumbent in the role was re-elected in October 2025, and serves 0.5 alongside a 0.5 congregational placement. A range of inputs suggest that 0.5 is appropriate. If more resourcing were available for core Presbytery functions, it would be more appropriately applied to the Regional Coordinator roles.

One area that would be helpful to clarify is lines of responsibility.

- The headline of the PD states that the chairperson is responsible to “Presbytery or its Standing Committee”. This appears to be unhelpful ambiguity. The Regulations (3.6.2) are silent on the Chairperson’s line of accountability. It would be preferable to either omit this from the PD or be clearer, conforming to the wording within the PD:

“This Presbytery Chairperson is responsible to the Presbytery usually through its Standing Committee (or its delegate).”

- It is unclear in the Chairperson’s PD the role expectation of team leadership is. While Chairperson’s responsibilities include:

“overseeing and developing staff of the Presbytery”

none of the other roles’ PDs acknowledge this, as all of them have the same wording:

“ ... is responsible to the Presbytery usually through its Standing Committee (or its delegate)”

While not wishing to appear to advocate for a hierarchical structure or culture, this lack of clarity around responsibility/accountability perhaps arises from a blurring between descriptions of governance accountability and workplace/management accountability for staff teams. This has not presented as an issue in the current context of healthy and harmonious team relationships, however it may make addressing future potential conflicts difficult.

The Secretary’s PD (currently 10 hours per week = 0.25 FTE):

The Secretary’s PD is presented in a format consistent with that of the Chairperson, with appropriate balance of generic regulated/organisational responsibilities and Wimala expectations.

The PD’s “Background Experience and Skills” as stated are valid, but lack specifics to support the “Key Responsibilities”, notably preparation of agendas, minutes and reports. For future appointments it would be helpful to align these.

As for the Chairperson, the Secretary's PD leaves open the question of whether the role is voluntary or remunerated, and if remunerated to what fraction:

The Secretary will be appointed on an honorary basis or, subject to the approval of Synod, on a full time or part-time remunerated basis. Reasonable expenses incurred in the position may be reimbursed.

The current incumbent in the role was initially 15 hours per week, which was reduced at her own request to 10 hours. It is open to Wimala Presbytery to discern whether this is sufficient and either identify someone to act as an assistant to the current incumbent, and subsequently to consider the appropriate fraction for future appointments. 5 hours per week is certainly sufficient to undertake a specific, defined role, for instance overseeing the Presbytery website.

The Treasurer's PD:

The current review did not focus on this area of the Presbytery's life. The PD is presented consistently with those of the Chairperson and Secretary. The PD appears to be accurate in all of "Key responsibilities", "Background experience and skills", "Personal qualities and attributes", and the listing of "Financial administrative oversight and functions".

Chairperson of PRC PD (0.2) - draft:

The PD as it stands is a reasonable set of tasks and responsibilities for 0.2 FTE, supporting the PRC and participating in Presbytery Standing Committee. The responsibilities of the PRC are well-defined in the Regulations which supports shaping the work of the PRC Chairperson.

A range of inputs suggest that 0.5 is appropriate. If more resourcing were available for core Presbytery functions, it would be more appropriately applied to the Regional Coordinator roles.

In the draft as provided, there were a number of points that needed to be clarified between the role of Presbytery Chairperson and PRC Chairperson. In practice, there does not appear to be confusion, but as the second document is based on the first, some duties have been carried over inappropriately, such as:

"oversee the liturgical duties of Ordinations, Inductions and conclusion of placement services."

Regional Coordinator role (3 x 0.2 FTE):

Wimala Presbytery discerned that rather than having one fulltime Presbytery Minister, it was more appropriate to the context and culture of Wimala to create multiple part-time Regional Coordinators roles.

This role is well-designed to provide pastoral oversight to congregations and ministry agents in all geographical areas of the Presbytery. It is appropriate that the role is identified as a member of PRC in this document and the PRC Terms of Reference.

It is to be noted that this review is not a performance appraisal of the current incumbents in the role: one of whom has one of the 0.2 roles while the other exercises two of 0.2 roles (0.4). However, there is consistent feedback from incumbents, committee members and congregation ministers & members, that 3 x 0.2 is not sufficient to fulfil the duties listed in the PD nor the on-the-ground needs and expectations of congregations. Occupants of the role are severely limited in their capacity to get beyond a combination of fulfilling minimum regulatory requirements (eg overseeing JNCs) or reacting to problems as they arise. Put simply:

- The PD is well-crafted and duties appropriate
- The resources available are insufficient for these roles to be fulfilled to the degree that anyone would wish within 0.2.

It is a strong recommendation of this review that resources be identified and deployed to increase these roles. An appropriate level would appear to be 0.5 each.

Overall comments on Wimala Presbytery PDs:

The PDs are well-crafted documents written to a professional standard, with notable commonality and specifics to each role.

The one area that I would recommend for the PDs as a set is to be clearer about lines of responsibility. The recurrent clause of responsibility does not adequately address responsibilities within a paid/stipended team:

“ ... is responsible to the Presbytery usually through its Standing Committee (or its delegate)”

In particular, the relationship of the Chairperson to the team “overseeing and developing staff of the Presbytery” needs to be reflected within the other PDs and the Chairperson’s own PD.

Presbytery Rules and Terms of Reference:

Overall, these documents represent necessary tools to establish Wimala and the other new Presbyteries in the period following the one Presbytery/Synod model for 15 years. The rules establish key practices (eg non-congregation bodies, confidentiality and financial management) and align with UCA Regulations. I note that some Rules appear appropriately to reflect generic documents across the Presbyteries, such as Financial Management and Confidentiality, the latter of which predates Wimala.

Standing Committee

This set of Rules is clear and in accordance with the Regulations. It appears to be one of the generic foundational documents for the new Presbyteries in 2019. It could be enhanced at this time to express more fully Wimala's specific needs:

- Incorporate a sense of purpose or vision, such as wording in the Presbytery Chairperson's PD: (operational verb, such as "supporting" or "enabling") " ... the Presbytery in its pursuit of the mission of Christ throughout its congregations by providing visionary, strategic and pastoral oversight to congregations and ministry agents within its bounds."
- Consider developing a description of elected membership including existing representational requirements as well as an additional skills matrix, noting the lack of guidance for the Clause WPR 1.01.03:

"The Standing Committee may co-opt additional members as required to ensure that the appropriate expertise is available to adequately resource Standing Committee for matters to be considered."

Pastoral Relations Committee

This set of Rules is clear and in accordance with the Regulations and is functional in its operational dimensions, including the role of the Executive.

It is commendable that there is a clear listing of "expertise and experience" in the description of membership.

The document could be enhanced by reference to the purpose of the Presbytery, consistent with that suggested for the Standing Committee: (operational verb, such as "supporting") " ... the Presbytery in its pursuit of the mission of Christ throughout its congregations by providing visionary, strategic and pastoral oversight to congregations and ministry agents within its bounds."

Presbytery Property Team

This set of Rules and Terms of Reference is clear and in accordance with the Regulations and is functional in its operational dimensions, notably its sense of agility.

It is helpful that the Rules & TOR include:

“appoint a member of the Property Team to the Synod Property Committee as an ex officio non-voting member”

Affirmations

There was a high degree of consistency across one-to-one conversations, committee and leadership conversations, planning day feedback and Presbytery meeting responses regarding affirmations. Wimala is experienced as living effectively under its vision “Who are we?”, in the power of the Spirit to:

- Gather
- Connect
- Go

“Gather”

Wimala Presbytery meetings are well-attended and valued, with strong affirmation of rural-urban locations and reporting from Congregations. Inclusion is geographic, theological and with the highest proportion of CALD Congregations among the Presbyteries.

“Connect”

Congregations and ministers feel connected with Presbytery and one another. Lay leaders especially feel supported by Regional Coordinators, within the restraints of human and financial resources.

Staff and volunteer office-bearers are a healthy team.

“Go”

Going in God’s mission is named as having multiple dimensions:

- As witnesses to God’s love through Jesus, enabled by the Holy Spirit
- Fostering discipleship
- In acts of outreach
- Practicing social justice – working for justice, peace, reconciliation and the renewal of creation

Outreach and practicing justice seem well-embedded. Empowering witness and fostering discipleship are beginning to grow.

Regional Coordinators

As discussed under the Regional Coordinator PDs, while not a performance appraisal of the incumbent, having three roles covering the whole Presbytery is an effective application of staffing resources.

Well-organised

Wimala is experienced as having good systems in place generally and exercising good stewardship of resources. This includes healthy reserves and good networks and practices of communication.

Staff

Ministry and lay staff are seen as harmonious, hard-working, achieving a huge amount with very few resources

Young adult ministry:

This is an emerging strength within Wimala with potential to grow strongly with adequate support.

Fresh Expression / missional initiatives

There is evidence of renewal in some congregations and an embrace more generally of small experiments. The recent Mission Resourcing Team workshop, followed by small grant funding and coaching is particularly affirmed.

Challenges

There was also a high degree of consistency across one-to-one conversations, committee and leadership conversations, planning day feedback and Presbytery meeting responses regarding challenges before Wimala.

Resourcing to exercise oversight responsibilities

While the Regional Coordinator model is well-supported, there is a challenge to grow this ministry from 3 x 0.2 to, say, 3 x 0.5. This challenge is primarily financial, but will also include filling roles and matching to other placements that a Coordinator might exercise.

Youth and Young Adult Ministry

While an existing strength of Wimala, there is a need to provide adequate staffing to enable this work to step up a level.

Leadership development and continuing education / professional development

This challenge has several faces:

- “Recruiting” and supporting more younger people into the Period of Discernment process and working to increase completions.
- Growing effective leaders in local congregations
- Providing continuing education / professional development opportunities for ministry agents to enhance their ministry practice.
- Equipping lay and ordained leaders to have confidence in:
 - Discipleship formation
 - Missional engagement

Geography and distance

While a challenge for each of the three SA Presbyteries, this is particularly significant for Wimala, including both:

- Appropriate use of technology
- Capacity for face-to-face presence where appropriate

Sense of lack of agency regarding financial resources

This is expressed regarding being to resource both Presbytery oversight functions and missional initiatives.

Conclusion

This review brings together affirmations, challenges and proposals to ensure that Wimala can fulfil its required purpose and, beyond that, to thrive:

From the Constitution (section 26):

The Presbytery shall have such oversight as is necessary to the life and mission of the Church in the area committed to it; it shall stimulate and encourage the Congregations within its bounds, providing them with opportunities for counsel in the strengthening and assistance of one another and in their participation in the wider work of the Church:

From the South Australia “Establishment of Presbyteries” report November 2019 (pages 4.1 & 4.2):

Three inter-related critical success factors for the two geographic Presbyteries:

- Financial sustainability.
- Missional sustainability.
- The effective of sub-structures within Wimala in supporting the worship, witness and service of Congregations under Wimala’s oversight.

This review concludes that the leadership of Wimala (staff, office-bearers, committee members) is highly dedicated and effective at fulfilling its oversight responsibilities for the Congregations under its care. However, this capacity is under threat due to several factors:

- Lack of financial sustainability for staffing beyond pastoral oversight, with diminished capacity for mission and leadership development. Particular challenges/opportunities for growth are limitations:
 - Growing Regional Coordinator capacity
 - Growing young adult capacity
- Insufficient development of leadership within Congregations themselves and for wider service.

In summary, three key areas in which Wimala can be strengthened to “Go” are:

- Increased oversight of Congregations and Ministers through expanding the Regional Coordinator roles,
- Increased financial resources for mission,
- Increased equipping of leaders, ministers and members for ministry and mission.

Recommendations

For Wimala

Section A: Staffing

That Wimala seek to release existing reserves and/or seek wider funding support to establish a long-term viable funding base for increased staff roles, notably:

1. Increase the current staffing of Regional Coordinator roles from 3 x 0.2 to 3 x 0.5.
2. Review the current level of hours for the Presbytery Secretary, with a view to considering appointing an assistant to restore support to 15 hours per week.
3. Seek to establish joint roles with POSSA in Young Adult Ministry and potentially leadership development (see below).
4. Review lines of accountability among the staff PDs with a view to clarifying governance and paid roles, notably clarifying the role of the Chairperson in oversight of staff.
5. Review the draft PD for PRC Chairperson to clarify the distinction between this and the Presbytery Chairperson role.

Section B: Committees

That Wimala:

1. Review the Presbytery Standing Committee Rules to include a more explicit reference to Wimala's vision to Gather, Connect and Go, and more generally providing visionary, strategic and pastoral oversight to congregations and ministry agents within its bounds.
2. Review the description of membership in the Presbytery Standing Committee Rules to include a list of desirable skills and knowledge.

Section C: Events, equipping, developing

That Wimala Presbytery, in collaboration with POSSA and Synod's Mission Resourcing Team:

1. Identify specific learning needs and develop a strategy to deliver appropriate events and programs, including
 - a. Continuing education / professional development for ministers
 - b. Leadership development for lay leaders
 - c. Capacity to lead missional initiatives
 - d. Capacity to form disciples
2. Develop an intentional strategy to engage young adults in the Period of Discernment.

Section D: Enhancing connections

That Wimala establish a number of networks within the Presbytery in order to provide mutual encouragement and learning across groups of Congregations and ministers. [Note: These networks could be linked to increasing the staffing levels of Regional Coordinators.]

For Wimala and other Presbyteries

Section E: Collaboration with POSSA

That Wimala:

1. Explore possibilities with POSSA for joint meetings of PSCs/PRCs to identify areas of collaboration to achieve outcomes that neither could achieve alone.
2. Explore possibilities with POSSA for sharing staff roles in two key inter-related areas:
 - a. Leadership development (including PoD)
 - b. Young adult ministry

This review does NOT recommend consideration of amalgamation with POSSA, although this was raised by a number of people in both presbyteries, because:

1. The “experiment” hasn’t run long enough, especially having been slowed by the challenges of COVID.
2. The geographic Presbyteries are numerically the right size and scope for relationships.
3. The current Presbyteries are still working through the transition of “1-to-3”.
4. The costs of restructuring over enhancing collaboration would undo any potential benefits.

For Wimala and Synod

Section F: Finance and Property

While noting the effectiveness of the Synod Property Committee at easing the burden of property oversight for Presbyteries, that Wimala and the Synod of SA (involving other Presbyteries as appropriate) jointly:

1. Address the urgent need to increase financial support for Presbyteries, including conducting the planned review of funding arrangements for Presbyteries as described in the Presbytery Restructure Review Task Group Report (2022)
2. Note that some Presbytery functions need to be resourced regardless of the number of members/congregations in a Presbytery (eg every Presbytery is required to have a PRC), thus consider a “floor” in Presbytery funding.

3. Work to give Presbyteries a greater sense of agency in sales proceeds and mission initiatives, especially where there is a demonstrable missional opportunity in the area from which the asset has been sold.