

Allan Hanson

Minute of Appreciation

As a result of the governance review of Synod supporting committees, the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) was formed in early 2018. Mr Allan Hanson was appointed the inaugural Chair of that Committee. He resigned from that role in January 2020.

From the very beginning as Chair, Allan demonstrated his deep passion and commitment to the mission of the church. As part of the church that oversees the implementation of church activities, the function of risk and assurance is critical. The foundational question that a chair of such committee must hold is: Will the mission of the church be circumvented by any risk to that mission and what strategies are in place to mitigate that risk?

In the light of Royal Commissions into historical activities of the church, such a question becomes even more potent. As such, Allan brought a passion, commitment and discipline to the church which was matched by the evolving capacity of the Synod office to measure and report on such risks. Together, Allan, the Committee and the Synod office developed a strong and robust view of their role and the committee saw a significant maturing of that function.

Allan oversaw the development of resources to support:

- The maturing risk appetite and assurance capacity of the Synod;
- The development of the National Insurance Plan cooperation agreement;
- The origins of a contemporary and appropriate risk register for the whole of Synod including the regular monitoring and mitigation of high-risk activities of the Synod;
- The development of appropriate legal resources within the Synod office to properly respond to the increase of litigation and redress against the church as a result of historical sexual abuse claims;
- The maturing of the church's safe church processes including the formalisation of policies around Blue Cards;
- The development of the Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod Schools Risk Management Framework; and
- The development and maturing of the response to Workplace Health and Safety obligations including clear information across the church of the responsibilities of a Person Undertaking a Business Undertaking (PCBU).

Allan was highly engaged in ensuring that the activities of the Committee were regularly reported to the Synod Standing Committee and the Finance, Investment and Property (FIP) Board. This important connection provided assurance to Synod governing bodies that no risk was left un-noticed, and Allan's constant call to the church was to address risks promptly and appropriately.

It is with thanks that we acknowledge the gifts and skills Allan brought to this role, and the Synod is deeply appreciative of his pioneering work in this space.



Rev David Baker

Moderator 2014 – 2020

David (Dave) began his first Moderatorial term in October 2014 and was re-elected for a second term in October 2017.

Dave brought to the Moderator's role a breadth of engagement across the many layers of our Church. His active congregational ministry, most specifically his time in regional and suburban south east Queensland where he developed his love and understanding of congregational life, great and small. That homely and wise style that Dave uses so well to communicate messages of great complexity with seeming ease, weaving in life stories with scriptural foundations was crafted in his congregational experiences.

Dave's role as Presbytery Minister – Bremer Brisbane saw him engaging the wider church, especially through his membership of the Synod Standing Committee where he gained insight and understanding of the bigger picture, and where he honed the belief that "we are all together in this" rather than "we are all in this together." In this role he was instrumental in the development of the Queensland Community Alliance as a vehicle for the Church and the community to work together on the life needs of people. This commitment to the Alliance carried over into his Moderator role and gave impetus to the strong belief that the Church must not stay only within its own borders.

As Moderator the unmistakable "Dave style" has come to the fore, especially as he has navigated us, the Church, through some challenging times within our Synod, across the National Uniting Church and as Christians in this country. His personal style, loved and admired by many, means that he engages in a generous and genuinely open way which is one of his greatest gifts to the Church and for which we thank God.

Dave has the courage to skilfully ask the difficult questions while seamlessly providing wisdom to move forward, often with a touch of humour. He has consulted widely, tending to think problems through "out loud" which can be disconcerting but once understood gives great insight into thought development and arrival at a position.

The Presbytery Ministers have contributed the following to this Minute of Appreciation when asked to describe Dave's contribution to the role and the life of the Church.

- Encouragement
- Listening
- Pastoral heart with special reference to his support for the Presbytery Ministers.
- Commitment to Presbytery-Synod collaboration.
- Astute and discerning.
- Widely read, in touch with current issues, not trapped in the "church bubble".
- His fund of stories and anecdotes, speaking of his deep experience in and love for the Church.
- Commitment to finding and supporting the next leaders—he is a "people visionary".
- Breadth of view of the Church—has affinity with the regional and rural Church.



- Draws us back to the gospel and our core purpose as Church.
- Humour, lightness and friendliness.
- Challenges the status quo—not afraid to speak his mind.

Dave has served on a large number of boards and committees not just as an ex-officio member but as an active and engaged member. Dave has always given 100 per cent of himself to each task, and has not been afraid to use the influence of the Moderator role to bring about change in particular areas of mission and ministry. To cite two examples.

- The Heads of Churches appointed Dave as the Institutions Representative on the Truth, Healing and Reconciliation Task Force dealing with Institutional Sexual Assault.
- Dave spearheaded and sponsored an improved governance structure for Religious Instruction in schools forming the Queensland Christian Religious Instruction Alliance of fourteen member denominations.

The Queensland Synod thanks Dave's family Joan, Nick, Alex and Theo for their care of and support of Dave in this time and energy consuming role for the fruitful benefit to the whole Church.

To you Dave, the Queensland Synod says a heartfelt thank you for being who you are, your unstinting devotion and commitment to the people of God, your loyalty, plain speaking, and your faith in Jesus Christ. We wish you every blessing as you move into your new ecumenical role. We know that you will serve there with passion and distinction as you have served us.



Geoff Batkin

Minute of Appreciation

Geoff has been at the helm of Wesley Mission Queensland (WMQ) for the past 23 years, leading by example, demonstrating passion, enthusiasm and an unwavering compassion for people in need.

Geoff's achievements in 23 years have been many; including diversifying Wesley Mission Queensland's core service areas, partnering with likeminded organisations and growing the business to where it is today: a leading community services organisation with 3000 employees, across 70 geographical locations, supporting more than 100,000 people every year.

Geoff began as the inaugural Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of WMQ in 1997 with an annual budget of \$24 million and 90 per cent of WMQ focussed on residential aged care. Over the last 23 years, Geoff has increased the annual budget ten-fold (\$240 million), and has grown and diversified the community services sector to now comprise more than half of the business, including a significant focus on mental health services, which now support people from Hervey Bay to the Gold Coast.

During Geoff's tenure he has been pivotal in supporting people on the margins of our society. He has partnered with local congregations, likeminded organisations and individuals, and governments to deliver much-needed services for people in need including supported accommodation communities for younger adults living with disabilities, the Logan Youth Foyer (supported housing for adolescents), and Queensland's only children's hospice—Hummingbird House—which now proudly stands at the Wheller Gardens site at Chermside and supports hundreds of families each year with children living with life-limiting conditions.

Geoff oversaw the construction of Wheller on the Park, Aldersgate and Rosemount Retirement Living communities, and a number of state-of-the-art residential aged care homes (Anam Cara, John Wesley Gardens, Parkview and Dovetree). WMQ now has 1000 aged care places and 600 people living in retirement living locations around Brisbane. Geoff was also fundamental in the redevelopment of the Ann Street site which enabled construction of the nine story Wesley House building, home to the Albert Street Church offices and a variety of commercial tenancies.

1 John 2:6 reads "whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus lived." Geoff Batkin AM has been a living example of Christ's love—demonstrating the values and qualities of the kingdom of God as an expression of his discipleship. His humility and kindness, his courage and compassion, his leadership and servanthood have been a wonderful gift to Wesley Mission Queensland, the Queensland Synod, and indeed the wider community.

On behalf of the Synod, we would like to congratulate Geoff on his services to the aged and community sectors, and wish him well in retirement.



Rev Gerda Olafsen

Minute of Appreciation

This year brings to an end Rev Gerda Olafsen's time of service on the Committee for Counselling.

Gerda has served on the Committee for Counselling for over 11 years since 2009 (23 May 2009 until 9 March 2020). This includes four terms as chairperson of the committee.

Her leadership, commitment, discernment, guidance and sheer stickability has been greatly appreciated. Gerda has a huge breadth of experience across numerous mission and ministry work and placements within the life of the church, and this experience has greatly assisted her work within the Committee for Counselling and has provided wise counsel and support for the committee members.

Her willingness to serve the church in this demanding role has been a gift across the life of the Synod. Gerda's leadership has provided significant support to multiple Moderators and General Secretaries and her sense of diligence and wisdom has been highly valued.

The Synod Committee for Counselling is deeply appreciative of Gerda's insight and wisdom. We will miss her and wish her well in her future endeavours.



Greg Adsett

Minute of Appreciation

Greg Adsett retired from the Presbyterian and Methodist Schools Association (PMSA) Board in March 2020 after serving his maximum nine year tenure. Mr Adsett was appointed as a representative of the Uniting Church to the PMSA Board in 2011 and elected Chair in August 2017. In his final message as Chair, Mr Adsett commented that the PMSA today is very different from his first year on the Board.

Organisationally and culturally, Greg contributed to the evolution of the PMSA Board, with the Board now more strategic in focus and vision, and more connected to the schools and the churches. Mr Adsett can be proud of his efforts to build and rebuild relationships with broad and diverse stakeholders of the PMSA, whether that's the Presbyterian or Uniting Churches, or directly with parents and past students of their schools. His guiding hand was instrumental in developing a new Constitution for PMSA. Greg has helped steer the PMSA through difficult times with clear, ethical and coherent processes

During his time on the PMSA Board, Greg also served as Chair of the Sunshine Coast Grammar School from 2013–2017 and lead the significant growth of this wonderful and comparatively new school.

Greg has also served on the Schools and Residential Colleges Commission and Synod Standing Committee.

Greg's quiet but strong leadership has been invaluable on each board he has served. Greg is a loyal and faithful servant of the Uniting Church.



Howard Morrison

Minute of Appreciation

Howard was a member of the Finance, Investment and Property (FIP) Board from 20 May 2016 to 22 July 2020.

Howard is a self-employed Asset Management Consultant. Howard has previously held a variety of senior engineering and managerial roles in the electricity industry which provided him with a strong understanding of risk management, financial management and real property management expertise. This breadth of skills was invaluable to the Board as it considered the many proposals from across the church which were presented for a decision from the Board. Howard's knowledge helped the Board to establish strong policies and procedures to ensure wise stewardship of the assets held by the Church.

Howard was always willing to ask the hard question, especially if it related to asset management/property management. He engaged with Synod office staff on many occasions and his experience will continue to influence asset and property management policy.

Howard has been an active member of the Karana Downs Uniting Church and is currently Church Council Secretary.

The Board is grateful to the time Howard has willingly given, and we are sure he will continue to use his skills as an active participant in the life of the church.

John Lister

Minute of Appreciation

John was chairperson of the Remuneration and Nomination Committee (RNC) from its creation at the 33rd Synod in October 2017 until his resignation on 30 June 2020. Prior to this John served on the Governance, Nomination and Remuneration Committee (GNRC) for three years from October 2014 until October 2017. John was also a member of the Finance Investment and Property Board (FIPB) for three years from October 2017 to October 2020, and has previously served on the Synod Standing Committee.

John has been an active participant in the Uniting Church over many years including various officeholder positions with Mudgeeraba Uniting Church, member of South Moreton Presbytery, and secretary and chair of the Mission Resource Committee of South Moreton Presbytery.

John's background in senior management positions within the electricity and telecommunications industries, and his previous governance and board chair experience, brought invaluable insights to the work of the RNC and the GNRC.

As the founding chair of the RNC, John contributed to many significant pieces of work including:

- foundational work on training plans for Synod governing body members as part of an ongoing program of work to improve governance
- recruitment and selection policy, procedure and tools for Synod governing bodies
- performance review process of Synod governing bodies
- overseeing significant pieces of work on long service leave and fringe benefits administration.

His experience was extremely useful as the RNC navigated many foundational pieces of work to embed consistent and contemporary practices into remuneration, nomination and governance aspects of the work of the Synod. John's congregational and presbytery experience provided valuable perspectives to RNC discussions, and his skilled chairing of the RNC ensured robust discernment.

John was also an active contributor to the FIPB during his term. His professional and management background was highly valued given the types of strategic and long-term decisions the FIPB was required to make. His passion for ensuring decisions had positive outcomes for the individual entity making the application, as well as for the wider church, was always front and centre. His positive nature and deep knowledge of the Uniting Church and its people helped the FIPB operate in a most positive manner.



John's passion and dedication to the work of the RNC, the FIPB and the church more broadly has been unwavering. The RNC and FIPB is grateful to the time and commitment John has given, and we wish him all the best in his retirement.



Ralph Collins

Minute of Appreciation

Ralph has been a member of the Finance, Investment and Property Board as well as the Property Trust since 2007 and Chair since 2010. He is also a director of Deaf Services Queensland. Ralph was formerly a board member of Brisbane Lifeline and Kings College (St Lucia). He has worked in the financial services sector for over 30 years and is currently balancing retirement with returning to work as an actuary in the superannuation industry.

Ralph has a passion for working within the church to best use its resources and has been involved in working with trustees and boards in the development of investment strategies.

Ralph has shown significant leadership skill over his long tenure. He has assisted the church navigate through the global financial crisis (GFC) and also the COVID-19 pandemic. He has encouraged Synod office staff in their work over the years and has been a valuable resource for organisation knowledge. Ralph is a mission focussed individual and this was evident in the way that meetings were conducted, and decisions made. Ralph injected humour into the meetings and while the subject matter was serious, the meetings were fun!

Ralph was previously a member, secretary and elder of the Trinity Grove Wilston Church prior to its recent closure.

The Board is grateful to the time Ralph has willingly given, and we are sure he will continue to use his skills as an active participant in the life of the church.



Rev Dr Clive Ayre

Minute of Appreciation

This year Rev Dr Clive Ayre concludes his term of service on the Synod Ecumenical Relationships Committee, serving as its secretary for much of that time.

Clive has made a significant contribution to ecumenical affairs spanning several decades including a period as General Secretary of the Queensland Ecumenical Council of Churches which preceded Queensland Churches Together. He has served the Uniting Church through Queensland Churches Together in a variety of ways, most recently as a member of its executive. He was a founding member of the Queensland Churches Environmental network.

As well as being an enthusiastic promoter of ecumenical ideals, Clive has been a meticulous and diligent secretary who has kept us focussed on the agenda at hand—always attentive to the detail, but never losing sight of the breadth of the ecumenical vision. He was a worthy recipient of the SERC Award at the last Synod.

The Synod Ecumenical Relationships Committee is deeply appreciative of Clive's insight and wisdom. We will miss him but wish him well in his future endeavours.



Pam Whebell

Synod Ecumenical Relationship Committee Award

People working quietly in the background often make some of the greatest contributions to the ecumenical enterprise. Pam Whebell is one of those quiet achievers. Many will remember Pam best working alongside Don in his various ministry capacities. However, the Synod Ecumenical Relationship Committee wishes to remember her many years of service working as the personal assistant to the Queensland Churches Together General Secretary.

At heart, the ecumenical spirit is one of joyful hospitality—a transformative hospitality which embraces wide diversity and builds community. Pam Whebell embodied such transformative hospitality.

Working alongside three QCT general secretaries, Pam offered a warm welcome and ready listening ear to all who came into contact with the QCT office. She had a special fondness for those from various local ecumenical groups and collaborations, and nothing delighted her more than the opportunity for a welcoming chat when folk came to the office to collect resources for the annual Christmas Bowl and Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

However, transformative hospitality is a way of life. Not just an office procedure. Pam lives out this spirit in all the spheres of her life. In honouring her, we recognise many thousands of quiet achievers just like her who have caught the vision of building a uniting church and continue to live out a transformative, community building hospitality each and every day.



Rev Ansie Liebenberg

Spirit of Synod Award

Rev Ansie Liebenberg has been the Minister at Warwick Killarney Freestone Cluster of the Uniting Church since January 2016.

Having come from the church in South Africa, Ansie has been intentional about “tuning in” to the culture, customs and practices of the Uniting Church in Australia. She has read and re-read the Regulation in order to understand the intention and application of those regulations.

During the first few months Ansie and Willie visited most of the people on the contact list and hosted many couples and families in their own home so that they could explore what they needed from the Uniting Church in the district and what the people would like to offer in terms of gifts, talents and capacities.

Ansie led the Church Council through a time of re-imagining and refreshment. New leaders are on board, and the Leaders and Elders who had served for many years were thanked and retired. The structure of meetings changed so that the committees of the Church Council could do their work and have their submissions ready for the monthly meeting.

Recognising that the future of the congregation at Warwick required a shift from traditional worship offered in the same old way, Ansie facilitated a conversation that has led to a family style service being added to the Sunday morning schedule and the more traditional one maintained. Lively worship, age appropriate and family centred has been achieved and new leaders trained.

The renovation of systems and people has included re-orienting the sandstone building from portrait to landscape for worship at Warwick.

A community garden was established outside the church and funding was gained from the Southern Downs Regional Council for the tanks and planter boxes. It has become a place where people wander and wonder in God’s garden.

Even the way that the buildings and grounds are maintained was re-shaped. Instead of individuals and families turning up for their rostered duties, the whole congregation was divided alphabetically in four. Each Saturday morning the alphabetical grouping gathered with coffee and treats provided by the Liebenbergs. In an atmosphere buzzing with energy the people of God shared the responsibility of caring for the spaces where people gather for worship and outreach.

Ansie fosters leadership amongst her teams. She has teams involved with Mainly Music, pastoral visitation and involvement in preparing worship. Ansie gathers them for training and fellowship.



For about three years Ansie also served on the School Council of Scots PGC College but after a time she realised that it was a tricky space to inhabit given that her husband was the chaplain at the school.

Ansie has served on the Standing Committee of the Presbytery and continues to be a corresponding member. She has served on JNCs and Consultations whenever she was asked.

Ansie and Willie take discipleship seriously. They have run an Alpha program for a couple of years now which has been transformative for the people who participated. I think it was more about the quality of the relationships that Ansie builds with the participants than the content of the program!

Ansie has worked with her husband, Rev Willie Liebenberg, to re-invigorate the congregation of Freestone. They met with the members of the congregation and discerned the best time to gather for worship in order to make it possible for the farming community (mostly dairy) to attend. As it was a season of drought, Ansie visited the farmers in the district to support and pray for those people and to deliver gifts of cash provided anonymously by someone from the Warwick congregation. The Freestone congregation decided to renovate the simple old church and they celebrated the re-dedication of the 155 year old building in February 2020 with media attention on ABC evening news.

When Ansie was invited to participate in the post-graduate leadership program sponsored by the Synod she grabbed the opportunity. Now she is actively engaged in the Plentiful Leadership program and applies her learnings with great creativity and insight.

When COVID-19 began to impact the way we meet and worship, Ansie and Willie began an morning devotional on Facebook which has been appreciated around the world!

The five years since Ansie arrived in the congregations of Warwick, Killarney and Freestone have not been easy for the family. Willie has not been on a full-time placement at the school (currently 0.8 but earlier only 0.7). Not being Australian citizens means that they do not qualify for Medicare and they start "behind" on all the measures for saving for their own home and superannuation.

During the time that they were considering taking up placements in Australia the deal was that you come on a temporary visa and after two years apply for permanent residency. The Australian Government changed the rules just about the time they committed to come to Australia. Applying for work visas has required an enormous amount of expense and work to gather, submit and re-submit the necessary documents and medical checks. The long drawn out process has strained everything, and the Synod has only recently secured a Labour Agreement.

Rev Ansie Liebenberg lives out and promotes the five priorities embraced by the 33rd Synod and is intentional and effective in her leadership. Her sense of call remains vital in spite of some difficult times.