

## General Proposal 9

# Development and resourcing of youth, children and families ministry

### That the Synod

1. Notes with concern the significant decline in staff and resources supporting youth, children and families ministry within Synod, presbyteries and congregations over recent years; and
2. Requests that youth, children and families ministry be an urgent priority area for resourcing and development as part of the implementation of Project Plenty across the Synod.
3. Commits to developing a whole of Synod youth, children and family ministry strategy in partnership with presbyteries, congregations and schools, and bringing that strategy to the 36<sup>th</sup> Synod for its consideration.

### The scope of a proposal

This proposal draws attention to the whole-of-church crisis and responsibility in youth, children and families ministry. It acknowledges that specific development of youth, children and families ministry and intentional action in this area must find their place in the current development of Project Plenty. It is proposed that this Synod identifies and determines priorities and timelines for early and substantial attention towards resourcing, developing policy and formal initiatives within the ministry to youth, children and families within presbyteries and congregations.

### Rationale

It is widely accepted that we are an aging church. This century there has been a steady decline in the number of congregations undertaking youth, children and family ministry. Since the closure of the Synod Youth and Children's Ministry Unit in 2008 with the exception of a short term appointment, there has been no person(s) appointed to oversee youth, children and family ministry in the Synod nor an intentional strategy for youth, children and family ministry. Concurrently, there has been a dramatic decrease over the past 10 years of lay and ordained ministry agents directly and specifically employed in youth, children and family ministry by Synod, presbyteries and congregations. As of 2021 in Synod or presbytery roles in Queensland there will be no children or family ministry agent(s) and only one presbytery ministry agent employed to do youth and young adult's ministry.

The window of opportunity is fast closing to develop and re-grow a viable youth, children and families ministry and Synod wide strategy. The Queensland Synod's recently developed Project Plenty steering resolutions will "encourage and empower young people to nurture their faith, serve God and practice leadership in church and world." However, there is limited direct address in this document



as to how and when intentional strategies for ministry for youth, children and families will happen. However, children and young people do not come to church by themselves, usually it is their family or a family member who brings them and encourages their faith.

We anticipate the 35<sup>th</sup> Synod's reluctance to direct certain specific actions on this proposal because it would be seen to cut across the work of Project Plenty. However, we see this proposal as a specific development within Project Plenty and maintain that urgent, specific work is needed in this space, and that it is appropriate for Synod in Session to give clear voice to that resolve. The kinds of things which we see as required include:

- Developing an updated, workable and accountable Synod youth, children and families strategy and related policies that can be translated to the ministry of presbyteries and congregations within two years;
- Promote youth, children and families ministry as a viable ministry path through formal study for emerging ordained and lay people of the Uniting Church in Queensland;
- Support presbyteries in the targeted development of lay persons and congregational leaders through ongoing training and resourcing to implement effective youth, children and families ministry; and
- Ongoing support of initiatives that promote youth, children and family ministries and urge Synod and presbyteries to extend this support to include the employment of project officers to target this particular and vital ministry field within the next 12 months.

Without a formalised strategy, policy and intentional determination to promote, support and encourage youth, children and family ministry with Synod, presbyteries and congregations, and open employment and career opportunities, the window for the ministry will close and we will truly be an aged church without hope of a younger engaged future.

## Proposers

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