



#realunitingchurch

## Report from **Chaplaincy Commission**

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### Context

Chaplaincy is one vital expression of the mission and ministry of the whole church as it engages with people and communities across Queensland. The community-centric nature of the ministry of chaplaincy has much to offer to the church's exploration of future directions and expressions of church.

The Chaplaincy Commission seeks to fulfil its mandate and responsibility for the oversight and development of chaplaincy within the Queensland Synod of the Uniting Church.

The focus of the commission in the last 18 months has been to reimagine, restructure and recruit in order to better facilitate and resource future growth, transition and innovation for the ministry of chaplaincy. Our planning and strategic thinking has intentionally aligned with the *Together on the way, enriching community* process of the Queensland Synod and particularly with the priority directions adopted at the 32nd Synod in Session.

# Priority Directions

## **To be Christ-centred, at prayer, and listening**

Chaplaincy is at its foundation a ministry of presence; a presence that seeks to re-present Christ, offers an active listening ear, both to the Spirit of God and to others and provides opportunity for appropriate prayer, ritual and reflection.

Within each context, chaplains are encouraged to work with organisations to ensure there are appropriate spaces for staff, clients and their families and visitors to draw aside and be still. They also seek to provide regular times of worship and prayer as well as special services and rituals to mark the significant events of life's journey.

The commission is working with our agencies to identify a space/symbol that might provide a quiet place of retreat and reflection for staff and visitors, and with the church, colleges, chaplains and agencies to resource organisational prayer.

Chaplains are encouraged to take time out for retreat and reflection to ensure healthy, sustainable and life-giving Christ-centred ministry.

## **Discipleship**

Chaplaincy provides unique opportunities for discipleship.

The nature of chaplaincy is in itself a profound reflection of discipleship as the chaplain lives out Christ's call to go out, reach out and demonstrate the welcoming embrace and love of God to all people. Chaplains are encouraged to connect and engage with various support networks including their congregation and presbytery to support them in their own growth and development. As chaplains live out their own discipleship they are presented, in every encounter, with an opportunity to engage with and encourage others in the way of Christ.

Some contexts lend themselves more easily to a structured approach to formation and growth such as within our schools and colleges. But there are many more circumstances in which chaplains provide context-appropriate 'discipleship' opportunities for others.

As the church continues to explore new and fresh ways of being the church in and for our communities the ministry of chaplaincy will most naturally provide a means by which 'community' discipleship can be nurtured.

## **Leadership**

In a society that is increasingly aware that there is more to life than work and the mindless accumulation of money and assets there has also been a growth in understanding of the benefit of caring for the whole person. This awareness has been accompanied by a growing appreciation of and desire for an engagement with chaplaincy in community and work spaces.

While in some instances the requirement will remain that of a supportive, pastoral presence there are many more contexts in which chaplains are required to be members of interdisciplinary teams alongside other professionals, provide oversight and management of

teams and are invited to provide strategic input and leadership for organisations. The opportunity and challenge to provide a prophetic voice within each of these spaces is an essential component of the ministry of chaplaincy and of Christian leadership.

The Chaplaincy Commission has been intentionally exploring avenues for extending the breadth of education for current and future chaplains to include studies in leadership, management and community development along with the theological and pastoral care requirements. There are also ongoing conversations around how chaplaincy is understood and integrated into formation programs and professional development structures.

The commission has and will continue to identify appropriate chaplains for inclusion in governance and leadership development opportunities.

### **Connecting with communities**

The nature of chaplaincy is community-centred.

Currently chaplains are serving in both paid and volunteer capacity within the following contexts.

- private and public health care
- residential, respite and community aged care
- police services
- defence
- schools, colleges and universities
- community services
- prison ministry
- sports
- industry.

Alongside these natural community connections with people and organisations chaplains are encouraged to build relationships with local ministers and congregations and, where appropriate, develop agency and congregation links.

The commission is also exploring ways to best work with, and resource, congregations and presbyteries in the identification and training of local community chaplains together with resourcing ministry agents in community development.

### **Youth, children and families**

The ministry of chaplaincy reaches across generations.

The theme for Chaplaincy Sunday 2016 was 'All people. All places' and focussed on chaplaincy as a ministry that occurs in multicultural contexts, among people from many different cultures, and by chaplains who come from a range of cultural backgrounds. All of this is a reflection of the call and commitment of the Uniting Church in Australia to be a truly multicultural church.

In the initial planning stages for Chaplaincy Sunday 2017 we looked to the Synod's priority directions. It was decided to focus on youth, children and families. Not surprisingly, the conversation quite quickly turned to how we might involve our school chaplains. While this

context of chaplaincy naturally lends itself to engagement with young people and, perhaps by extension, their families, it is crucial to understand that chaplains in all contexts offer pastoral care and support to the whole family including young people. The theme for Chaplaincy Sunday 2017: 'All ages. All stages' intentionally explored this understanding and sought to highlight the rich character of chaplaincy with young people and their families. From schools to hospitals, aged-care facilities and police stations, and from the workplace to the families of inmates, chaplains work with the whole family.

## Report

It was with a sense of regret that the Chaplaincy Commission accepted the resignation of the Rev Heather den Houting as chairperson of the commission following her election to the office of the general secretary at the last Synod in Session. The immediate appointment of a new chairperson was not forthcoming. This, together with changing structures and key personnel in a number of different contexts and low membership numbers generally impacted the work and progress of the commission particularly in the areas of growth and innovation.

The past 18 months has seen significant restructuring of the Chaplaincy Commission to better focus on and engage with the broader and future aspects of its responsibilities while maintaining a high level of support and oversight for current chaplains, contexts and placement processes.

This restructure has seen the focus for recruitment of new members on the basis of interest and/or expertise in the areas of theology, education, mission strategy and innovation, media and marketing, fundraising and finance.

### **Synod Chaplaincy Commission membership**

#### **Ex officio**

Moderator	Rev David Baker
General secretary (or delegate)	Rev David Fender
UnitingCare CEO representative	vacant
Executive officer	Rev Keren Seto

#### **Chairperson**

Rev Brian Hoole

#### **Members**

Bruce Moore  
Julie Mackay-Rankin  
Phil Smith  
Natalie Lewis  
Rev Dr Peter Hobson

As the commission welcomes new members it wishes to sincerely thank retiring chairperson and members Rev Heather den Houting, Colleen Geyer, Revs Heather Allison, Helen Dick, Jenny Tymms, Jenny Busch, John Saunders and Beatriz Skippen for their time and commitment over the term of their service.

The commission is seeking expressions of interest particularly from young adults and those with expertise in information technology and innovation. For further information please contact [Keren Seto](#).

### **Missional directions**

- Further recruitment to the Chaplaincy Commission
- Establish education pathways
- Leadership development and succession planning
- Consolidate marketing and communications plan
- Explore key areas and partnerships for future engagement
- Identify and implement new fundraising models.

### **Bright spots**

- Engagement with and learning from the variety of incredibly gifted, experienced and passionate chaplains who daily touch and influence multiple lives as they re-present Christ in all that they do.
- Collaboration with the Multi Cross Cultural Reference Group, chaplains and the Communications and Marketing team in the production of resources for Chaplaincy Sunday 2016, 'All people. All places' and 2017, 'All ages. All stages'.
- Chaplaincy Affirmation Days 26-28 October 2016 saw over 50 chaplains from across the state and various contexts gather for worship, celebration, encouragement, engagement and professional development. The theme was 'Grounded: Grounded in Christ, Grounded with relevant and appropriate information, knowledge and relationships, Grounded for fruitful ministry and life'.
- New areas of engagement in health, industry and school contexts including the Gold Coast Hospitals and Health Service, St Stephen's Hospital, Lady Cilento Children's Hospital, Wesley Linen Services and Shalom Christian College.
- Collaboration with Bremer Brisbane Presbytery around continued funding for the Active Faith university chaplaincy program.
- Building and strengthening relationships with presbyteries, agencies, schools, congregations, community groups and ecumenical partners to explore opportunities for collaboration, partnership and resourcing.
- Collaboration with the Communications and Marketing team in the creation and launch of Uniting Church chaplaincy promotion video.

## **Challenges/risks as we progress**

- A changing landscape both within society and within current models of chaplaincy.
- Level of knowledge, information, interest and engagement with different forms of ministry including chaplaincy.

- Identifying, clarifying and ensuring appropriate levels of education, formation, development and understanding for current and future chaplains.
- Connecting chaplains into supportive networks including with their presbytery.
- Sustainable funding.

## For consideration

- Addressing chaplaincy approaches in theological training for ordained and non-ordained ministries.
- Adding leadership and facilitation skills to chaplaincy training.

## Proposal

It is proposed that the 33rd Synod receive this report.

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