

Stewardship of the common wealth for effective oversight and mission

Proposal

Affirming that:

- Presbytery is the council with responsibility for oversight of the shape and vitality of mission within its bounds,
- Synod has responsibilities for preserving, building and distributing the common wealth,
- We do not fully utilise our assets to fund our oversight and missional initiatives adequately,
- A solution to funding Presbyteries, includes sharing property and property generated income and other investments.

the Synod and Presbyteries will collaborate to:

- a) Continue the process of discovery to determine what property and financial assets exist under the oversight of the specific responsible bodies of Synod and Presbytery.
- b) Strengthen Presbyteries' ability to liberate funds for oversight and mission within their own bounds and the wider Synod.
- c) Increase transparency of and involvement of Presbyteries in decisions for missional growth initiatives using the growth fund.
- d) Establish and provide an appropriate and effective level of financial funding for each Presbytery.
- e) Establish a fund, for those Presbytery oversight responsibilities, and co-design a process for discernment and decision-making regarding the distribution of funds.
- f) Establish a fund, for those Synod oversight responsibilities, and co-design a process for discernment and decision-making regarding strategic realisation of capital and distribution of funds.

Scope

This proposal has implications for the whole church, especially for the councils of Synod and Presbytery. Significant implications, consistent with the Synod Resourcing Framework, have been identified and summarised below. Each of the resourcing domains and associated implications will inform and influence both the nature of the work that needs to be done and the collaborative, inter-conciliar relationships that will be required to liberate funds.

Resourcing Framework Domains	Implications and considerations for implementing this proposal
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The breadth and nature of Presbytery representation required to trust the process of discernment and decision-making. • A shared understanding of who has the authority to make decisions. • A shared understanding that funding oversight responsibilities and funding missional initiatives are two different but related and equally necessary things. • We must still find the people with call for mission across all Councils of the church.
Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because Presbyteries and the Synod differ widely in the value of property (including money) under their responsible oversight, we need: • A shared understanding of a theology of common wealth, and equity in practice, as expressed in key decision making documents and processes, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Principles for sharing ➤ Property Stewardship Policy ➤ Sales Proceeds Framework ➤ Placements • To learn lessons learned from the existing growth committee and associated distribution of funds. • To recognise that the liberation of funds will require discernment and regular evaluation of impact measures.
Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater transparency with respect to the cost drivers of oversight for both Presbytery and Synod Councils (for example replicating the Synod Services sustainable budget in other Council contexts). • A shared understanding of the quantum of available funds, funding needs and funding commitments (for example First People). • An acknowledgement that we have both short term needs and long-term aspirations to fund, across all Councils.
Property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A need to continue the process of identifying all forms of income generating assets for allocation to funding pools. • A shared position on releasing available funds, including a position on spending capital and sale of assets.

Rationale

This proposal has been developed in response to two key processes:

1. Presbytery Project

The Synod Standing Committee commissioned the Presbytery Project in 2022 in response to the decline in both human and financial resources impacting Presbyteries. The workgroup defined the problem as follows:

The Presbytery Project – forming a problem statement

The Problem Statement (our reality)

The Uniting Church acknowledges that Christ alone is supreme in his Church, and that he may speak to it through any of its councils. It is the task of every council to wait upon God's Word, and to obey God's will in the matters allocated to its oversight. Each council will recognise the limits of its own authority and give heed to other councils of the Church, so that the whole body of believers may be united by mutual submission in the service of the Gospel." Basis of Union, Paragraph 15

The Synod shall determine the basic requirements that must be met for the establishment or continuance of a Presbytery." Reg. 3.4.6 (b)

In accordance with section 3.4.6(b) of our Regulations:

The basic requirements of a Presbytery have yet to be clearly defined and enabling resources provided;

this absence has contributed to [a growing] inequity and disparity in how Presbyteries function and relate to other councils of the church;

impacting our capacity to respectfully, collaboratively and effectively enable growth in relationship, discipleship, number and impact.

To evoke a proactive response to this problem the following opportunity statement was also discerned:

The Presbytery Project – reframing the problem as an opportunity

The Opportunity Statement (our objective)

"We will [continue to] grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him, the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work." Ephesians 4:15-16

Overall Project Objective:

To co-design and activate [a] new, collaborative model[s] of Presbytery, which:

brings greater clarity to the unique role and responsibilities of the Council of Presbytery,

resolves resourcing challenges; and

strengthens the whole church, so that together we are more effective in our mission and ministry.

2. Stewardship Summits

The Synod Leadership Team subsequently initiated three Stewardship Summits, from March through July 2023, in response to common drivers for both the Presbytery Project and the Resourcing Framework. The Summits were a face-to-face collaboration between the Synod Leadership Team and leaders from all Presbyteries (including Presbytery Ministers, Presbytery Chairs, Property and Financial delegates) to explore the why, what and how of a unified way forward to resolving our resourcing challenges.

- Summit 1 (17th & 18th March)
 - The first of our three summits focused on establishing a collective understanding of **why** working together to resolve our resourcing challenges is critically important to health of the whole church. During this forum we explored and

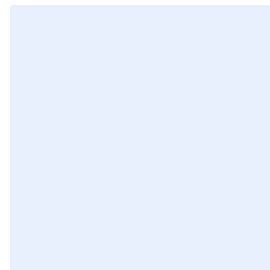
gained a deeper understanding of the resourcing and missional similarities, differences, priorities and challenges in each of our Presbyteries, expressed as Presbytery on a Page.

- Summit 2 (26th & 27th May)
 - The second summit focused on the predominant issue of resourcing Presbyteries for effective oversight. The Basis of Union leads us to understand that we are at our best as a church when all Councils are strong. Hence we explored and identified **what** might need to change if we are to resolve the current challenges facing several of our Presbyteries.

- Summit 3 (21st & 22nd July)
 - The last summit focused on discerning **how** we will move forward. We explored a theology of common wealth, our underpinning financial situation and listened to a case study presented by the Presbytery Minister from The Hunter Presbytery. This proposal brought to Synod was shaped collaboratively by all those who were present on the 21st and 22nd July.

Proposers

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