



General Secretary
Rev Heather den Houting

Wednesday, 17 May 2023

Hello and welcome to the next chapter of our governance- fit for purpose journey!

The church changes even if God does not

The nature of God does not change. However, the structures of the church do.

Over the millennia of Christianity as an organised religion, we have seen multiple models of how to best organise ourselves to give life to the mission and discipleship we have been called to by Jesus as the people of God.

It's important for us to regularly consider whether we are doing this well.

Attached to this letter is a document which is unashamedly a resource to promote discussion around the governance of our church in the Queensland Synod. Some people will love this paper and some people's eyes are glazing over already. Please persist.

This extraordinary resource can be used to guide our discussions and decision making around how we govern for the next decade at least.

The report is being released knowing that community expectations about the way we do things has changed. There is a high level of accountability to others to make sure we are looking after our people, the people we serve and the opportunities we are given to practice our discipleship in our communities. We need to respond to these expectations in an intentional way.

You also need to know that this paper is not recommending changes to the Act, Constitution or Regulations of the church. If you are interested in these areas, you might participate in the Assembly's ACT2 project. You can find more about that here: <https://www.act2uca.com/>

If you are interested in the manner that we govern the activities of the church, including whether we should make activities institutions of the church, whether we should incorporate activities, and the strength, purpose and capacity of our governing bodies, then please respond to the invitation to be part of this discussion.

A brief guide to the paper

Guiding principles for the discussion

The brief that was given to Elizabeth Jameson, the author of this report, was to ensure that any governance model examined needed to be evaluated against the following principles:

- I. Staying true to our purpose and values
- II. Empowering our people
- III. Adapting for context



- IV. Being accountable to ourselves and our stakeholders
 - V. Connecting the parts of the 'body' into a cohesive whole.
- During the research, Elizabeth recommended two additional criteria:
- VI. Respecting the Immutable Polity and Government of the Church; and
 - VII. Protecting and enhancing the assets and resources available for delivery of mission.

An invitation to you to participate in the conversation

Please read the Executive Summary to discover the seven observations and the 7 recommendations that arise from the report. It's your chance to make some responses to the material that has been collated and to point us in the direction of any gaps you may have noticed.

Some questions that may help you fully engage with the paper are:

1. What do you think of the models that are suggested in Chapter 6. Can you suggest any others?
2. Read Chapter 7. What activities of the church should be incorporated? What should never be incorporated? Are the points in recommendation 3 sufficient for us to continue these conversations?
3. Read Chapter 8 and recommendation 6. What principles should be included in the guidelines we could develop around this? What might a model Trust Deed look like?

What do you think?

We would love your feedback. This paper will be circulated across the Synod now so that it is available to all. Please forward this link to others to access if you think they might be interested.

If you have some first thoughts let me know before **14 July 2023**. This feedback will be incorporated in a report to the Synod Standing Committee so that they may consider how to present the paper to the Synod in October 2023.

Please respond by email to me directly at generalsecretary@ucaqld.com.au

Please be assured that the discussion does not end there. This is a large body of work and will take time to unpack. However, it is designed to help us in framing our future together.
With many thanks and with God's grace as we journey together in making our church fit for purpose.
Kind regards
Heather

In grace and peace,

Rev Heather den Houting
General Secretary