

a daring
HOPE
SYNOD 36



Key Selection Criteria

MODERATOR-ELECT

Candidate 2: Rev Linda Hanson



Sense of call

After I was approached to consider accepting nomination for Moderator Elect, I felt a prompting of the Holy Spirit at our Ministers Retreat to seriously consider this. So, I began answering the question, “Could I do this?”

The call then shifted when I realised that, yes I could do the role, but I was asking the wrong question. The real question was I being called – should I be offering my name to the church for their discernment? With this renewed discernment, a sense of peace fell over me as it quickly became clear that yes I should allow my name to go forward. After seeking the discernment of wider church colleagues and my family who confirmed this, I accepted nomination from The Downs and Moreton Rivers Presbyteries.

I feel at peace as although Bruce, Peter and I share a similar role, the same congregation and presbytery, we are all offering something different to the church – it is now up to the Synod to discern who to lead them in their next season.

Since my RE teacher, taught me “If I was a butterfly” I felt God drawing me to the church. Baptised in Mareeba, my faith formation occurred at St David’s Uniting Church Coopers Plains. Serving God in regional and rural Queensland on Mission Team, began a life of ministry spanning across Townsville, Darwin, Sunshine Coast, Gympie and Brisbane. Just as God has prepared me for every season of ministry, God is preparing me now for what is next.

Key Selection Criteria

(a) The nominee shall be a member of the Uniting Church and will have an appreciation of the reformed and evangelical theological heritage of the Uniting Church and its ongoing significance to the faith of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church. In addition, the nominee will be aware of the theological diversity within the Uniting Church and will have the capacity to reflect theologically upon current issues in church and society in the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

My time in theological college deepened my Christological understanding of the church, highlighting for me Christ as the Word of God lived out through our worship, witness and service. Christ’s life, death, resurrection and ascension informs my engagement with current issues, as it is the reconciling love of Jesus that we want to share in worship and community service. Just as our forebearers embraced “word and action,” we too share the gospel in both word and deed. At UnitingCare my role is one of translation and theological reflection at the intersection of church and world. The church has much to offer to the world as we bring Christ’s message of hope and peace, especially in these uncertain times post Covid.

Through my time in the regions and in SE Queensland I have listened and engaged with the breadth of theological and cultural diversity in the Uniting Church. Worshipping at Newlife Brisbane I share their mission of “more people more like Jesus.” At Faith Works we created an inclusive, inviting and relevant space for all people to be connected to Jesus and one another. The good news is for all people - regardless of race, gender, sexuality, culture, age or class. It is this missional hermeneutic that all are welcome so they may be reconciled to God and each other and experience God’s saving

love that I bring with me as I translate this theological reflection into a variety of contexts: congregation, chaplaincy, Presbytery, schools and Agency. We may be a diverse church, but what unifies us is our purpose for all peoples to have “life in all its fullness”.

(b) The nominee will give evidence of a lifestyle commensurate with the responsibilities and demands of a key leadership role. Such evidence will include a nominee’s awareness of his/her own gifts, abilities and limitations, his/her capacity to maintain healthy relationships, and an ongoing commitment to his/her own physical and spiritual wellbeing.

It is with passion, grit, enthusiasm and love of all people that I serve God inside the church and in the wider community, approaching all my work with dedication and professionalism. I am able to give myself fully in whatever role God has given me, as I know “I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:13) Whether it is leading and caring for a congregation through the pain of being torn apart by an Assembly decision whilst caring a for a newborn, or leading a fresh expression whilst simultaneously leading a traditional congregation through regeneration and chairing the Board of Christian Formation and PRC.

In the exercise of my ministry, I thrive when working with high level complexity and managing multiple demanding ministries, work-loads and tasks, whilst creating sustainable and life-giving wellbeing for myself and my family. I have grown in my self-awareness and management skills to deal with competing priorities and this gifting is serving me well in my current role as Associate Director of Mission with UnitingCare whilst serving the Moreton Rivers Presbytery as chair.

Journaling and bible reading on my deck is an important part of my time with God, as are the random conversations we share throughout the day. When I am caring for myself I am able to be “present” with those I serve and share the transforming love of Jesus, alongside handling the responsibilities and demands of my current roles.

(c) The nominee will have a good understanding of the Uniting Church, including its community service institutions and the need for those community service agencies and the councils of the church to work together. The nominee will also have a good understanding of Australian society, including those emerging issues and trends that need to be addressed in the light of the gospel. Demonstrated team building and networking capabilities will have to be evidenced.

Working together with fellow members while serving on the various councils of the church – congregations, presbyteries, Boards, Synods and Assembly, I have a very comprehensive understanding of the Uniting Church, its governance and culture and how each part relates to each other. “Inter-conciliar” serves us well because as Christ’s people, we are servant leaders, serving each other and the needs of those in our midst.

Serving at UnitingCare as a hospital chaplain, as a member of the Senior Leadership Team, and working closely with multiple parts of UnitingCare including executive leadership, key senior leaders, middle managers and front-line staff, has given me deep insight into the work of our agencies and how they are outworking the mission of the church. We are better together and by partnering with local congregations and presbyteries I have seen the real difference it has made in the lives of people.

Through living out our values I have created a supportive, collaborative team culture in both

Moreton Rivers Presbytery and in UnitingCare, to ensure alignment as we achieve our purpose and work closely with congregations and other presbyteries to further the work of the Holy Spirit.

(d) The nominee will have demonstrated the capacity to exercise pastoral care and discipline, and the ability to moderate, and will be respected generally by the members of the church.

As chair, inside and outside the church, I have moderated meetings through complex decisions and understand the complexities in various governance environments. I ensure space is created for robust and meaningful conversation so all participate in the decision-making process, whether meetings are online or face to face. Alongside chairing, I foster connection amongst team members, so members leave feeling energised about the mission they are serving.

Congregants, staff and community members will attest to my pastoral care and leadership in times of joy, sadness, frustration and pain. Whether walking families through the loss of an unborn child or a community through suicide, I have pointed them towards the peace of God which “surpasses all understanding”. I am able to hold the fine line between pastoral care and accountability and not shied away from “difficult” conversations and handling complaints, so ministers can live out their call-in ways that are life giving to the church and local community. As Moderator I will not be able to change the history of institutional abuse experienced by a survivor, but I can make a difference to their future, apologising for the church’s part in their abuse and seeking reconciliation.

(e) The nominee will be a good communicator and, as the public “face” of the church, will need to be articulate and competent in working with the media.

I am an effective communicator, networking with local and national media, to ensure the good news stories of the church are shared with the general public. I adapt my clear and authentic communication style appropriately for the different audiences whether it be presenting to executives in a UnitingCare Board meeting, presenting a paper at the Uniting Church Leadership and Theology Symposium, delivering the commencement speech at a school graduation, speaking at the local School Chaplaincy week event or sharing a reflection at the local ecumenical community Christmas Carols. It is such a privilege to contextualise the message of hope and peace that Jesus brings, in spaces where these terms maybe unfamiliar. Through the use of story, I share the mission of the church with the staff of UnitingCare, so they feel aligned with the mission and leave orientation keen to take up the baton and continue the legacy they have been given.

(f) The nominee will show a commitment to ecumenical engagement and a capacity to work with ethnic groups in both church and community.

I have served the community, working ecumenically through fraternal, school chaplaincy and conversations on Domestic and Family Violence. Working with our Sudanese Faith Community I saw first hand the struggles communities experience, to find a home in the Uniting Church. At Faith Works I made connections with the Muslim community, inviting local community leaders to our first Iftar dinner.

My first synod meeting which was in the Northern Synod, where the NRCC report was spoken in “language” and song, was formative for me and was a beautiful example of how we can listen and bring the best out of each other in our meetings. Repudiating the doctrine of discovery at Assembly, walking with community on Mornington Island through church renovation, supporting our First

Nations Prison Chaplains and holding space with First Nations staff at UnitingCare have been key parts in my journey of what Reconciliation Australia calls, “historical acceptance.” It is a privilege to minister in a church that holds stewardship for the environment and care for *all* people (First and Second Nations) at its heart.

Personal Statement

Self-Understanding

I am foremost a child of God and heir to the kingdom. “Jesus loves me this as I know” is as profound now as when I first heard it many years ago and shapes my world view. I am an encouraging and enthusiastic person. Confident in the love Jesus has for me, I share my positive outlook with others. I value congruence and I strive for my actions to match my beliefs. This can be seen in my Mission Integration work where I support staff to see what they do is aligned with their own personal mission and the mission of the Church. I value and enjoy authentic conversation and connection whether it be one on one or in large groups.

Theologically

I see the world through the lens of the Triune God reconciling the world to Godself through Jesus Christ’s life, death resurrection and ascension. I am sent by the Holy Spirit to share this good news that the kingdom of God is already here through the redemptive work of God. As God’s likeness I am called to bear the image of the redemptive God who wants to be in relationship with us. As a leader my role is contextualize the gospel for this time and place.

Leadership

As a missional leader, serving the mission of God, I believe in putting the needs of others first for the benefit of the whole community. This involves humility, trust, being present and putting time into developing and empowering the people I serve and providing them with autonomy and clarity to succeed in what they are called to do, so they too can serve the mission of God.

I am a great believer in culture and purpose and am passionate about congregations, presbyteries, synods and agencies knowing their purpose (the “Missio Dei” – the Mission of God) and living this out through their culture and strategy. Culture is key and it was culture shift that led to new growth at my previous congregation at Faith Works.

Education

Bachelor of Arts, Post Graduate Diploma in Education, UQ 1992, 1994

Bachelor of Theology, BCT 2004

Certificate IV Pastoral Care, Lifeline Community Care 2013

Graduate Certificate in Ministry Studies, ACD (Christian Leadership) 2017
Governance Foundations for Not-For-Profit Directors, AICD 2018
Graduate Australian Institute Company Directors Course (GAICD) 2021
Graduate Certificate in Divinity, TCQ (Missional Leadership) 2022

Vocational Experience

Current:

Associate Director of Mission – Mission Integration and Wellbeing, UnitingCare
Chairperson, Presbytery of Moreton Rivers

Previous:

Member Board of Christian Formation and Acting Chair, Qld Synod
Member Synod Standing Committee and Council of Synod, Qld Synod
PRC chair, Moreton Rivers Presbytery
Zone Convenor, Mary Burnett Presbytery
Synod Youth Task Force Convenor and member MACS, Northern Synod
Congregational minister Gympie, Cooroy/Pomona and Faith Works (Coorparoo and Norman Park)
Hospital Chaplain, Buderim Private Hospital
High School Teacher, Qld and NT (still registered)
P&C President, Coorparoo SS
Advocate, Voices for Justice, Canberra
Touch Football Coach and Referee

Hope for the Synod

Together we can continue our legacy of sharing the transforming love of Christ in the local community through congregations, fresh expressions, faith communities, church plants, schools, colleges and agencies. The primary responsibility of Synod is the promotion and encouragement of the Mission of the Church, so it is no surprise that the key tenet of Project Plenty is discipleship. As a missional leader I am excited about the future of the church as we embrace making disciples and align our resources around discipleship. “Fit for Purpose” and “Life Together” are about enabling discipleship. “Transforming Communities” is the fruit of sharing the good news. Just as I advocated for the word “growth” in our Synod mission priorities in 2016, so I point the church to that truth today, as we seek to grow the church, so more people may know the good news of Jesus and the reconciling love of God and grow in the fruits of the Spirit. As it was in 1977, our call is to be an innovative missional movement confessing “the Lord in fresh words and deeds” and together we can make this hope a reality.

Family

In this placement I would be accompanied by my husband of 26 years and three children aged 19, 15 and 12. As a family we value gathering around the table to share life and food together. We all find spending time around water life giving – whether it be swimming in the pool, walking by the river or body surfing at the beach.