

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A 'PRESBYTERY REPRESENTATIVE'?

The Presbytery, in the polity of the Uniting Church, is the body which has 'oversight' in the life and mission of the Church in a given region: a similar role to a 'bishop' in the early church (and in other denominations) – but in our case, exercised by a group of people, drawn from the congregations in the region.

The regulations say that the role of Presbytery is to:

- (a) exercise (shared) oversight of the life and mission of the Church in its region; and
- (b) stimulate and encourage the congregations in its region, 'providing them with opportunities for counsel in the strengthening and assistance of one another and in their participation in the wider aspects of the work of the Church'.

In practice, this involves attending meetings of Presbytery, receiving correspondence from time to time, and being a 'channel' for communication *from* the Presbytery to the congregation on matters that affect it.

Presbytery is made up of the ministry agents (lay and ordained) of the various congregations in the region, and lay members elected by those congregations. (According to the regulations, you should be a 'confirmed member' of the congregation: that is, someone who has made a formal mature commitment as an adult both to Jesus Christ and to the life and mission of the congregation.)

Although members of Presbytery are 'representatives' of congregations (in the sense that they are drawn from congregations across the region), they are not there to 'represent' the congregation or its interests. If you feel called – and are elected – to be a member of Presbytery, you are there to exercise the shared responsibility *of* the regional Church *for* the life and mission of the regional Church – not to 'lobby' for, or protect, or voice, the interests of your congregation.

Qualifications for Presbytery membership therefore include a mature commitment to Jesus Christ and His Church; an ability to work within the consensus decision-making process to seek to discern the leading of God for God's Church; and a willingness to work together with others for the common good.

Meetings of the Macquarie Darling Presbytery are held every two months, usually in Dubbo or Wellington, and will typically require a day of your time (plus some preparatory reading of documents, if you are conscientious about such things!).

The meetings include worship; guests speakers on matters of interest; and a full business agenda. The atmosphere is friendly, and there are great opportunities to hear about how different congregations are engaging in mission, facing challenges and supporting one another.

This is a meaningful opportunity to be involved in the leadership of the church at a regional level. Please prayerfully consider whether you would like to put yourself forward for election.