



15th July 2026

Subject: Northern Presbytery – Appointment and Confirmation of Presbytery Representatives

Dear Friends across the Northern Presbytery,

The first meeting of the Northern Presbytery Council will be held via Zoom on **Wednesday, 9 September**. Until then, an Interim Standing Committee will serve the Presbytery following its appointment by the Joint Standing Committee.

This inaugural meeting will:

- Formally constitute the Northern Presbytery in prayer.
- Confirm current membership.
- Elect the Standing Committee and other officers.
- Establish the next stage of work for the new three-presbytery model in northern NSW.

There is *plenty* to do.

In the Uniting Church, a Presbytery is the regional council, made up of ‘presbyters’ – an ancient term for church Elders, Ministers, Deacons and appointed leaders of various kinds. A UC presbytery includes all ordained ministers in placement, Pastors in ministry placements, and lay leaders of the congregations and other ministries, as guided by our Regulations, along with people coopted for their specific skills or leadership.

Congregational Representation

As we prepare to meet for the first time, each congregation has the opportunity to appoint a member to the presbytery. Most congregations already have a Presbytery Rep, who is on the roll of our existing five presbyteries. The Northern Presbytery expects that most of the members of the first meeting will be the existing presbytery representatives of the congregations. These congregations don’t need to do anything – just confirm your existing rep with your Presbytery Secretary.

However, some congregations may need to appoint a new representative, particularly where:

- Far North Coast Presbytery operated within the Regional Partnership structure, so congregations in that area did not have their own Presbytery members.
- Some congregations may already have an appointed representative who is unable to attend Presbytery meetings regularly. This could be a good opportunity to review your congregation’s participation in our regional oversight and sharing.
- Some current Presbytery members may feel that this is an appropriate time to step down and provide an opportunity for someone else to serve in this important role.
- Other congregations may find it difficult to identify a representative because of their size, limited capacity, or challenges associated with travel or technology.

An invitation and guide:

1. Electing a Presbytery Representative

Presbytery membership involves important commitments and responsibilities. Presbytery members represent the breadth of the Church's ministries and participate in discerning and making significant decisions.

For this reason, congregations are encouraged to consider whom they appoint. An important guideline is found in the Regulations concerning the election of a Church Council (Regulation 3.3.2), which states that:

the Congregation shall recognise and appoint confirmed members or members in-association **who are endowed with gifts fitting them for the responsibilities of the office.**

This can equally apply to Presbytery members. It means something like:

- A confirmed member who is committed to the fellowship, worship and mission of the congregation; who is regular in attendance and a constructive participant in its life.
- Someone who is a recognised Leader in the congregation, either a Church Council member, an Elder, even the Chairperson of CC or the congregation. They should know the issues facing the congregation, understand the mission plan, and be enthusiastic about the life of the wider community around them.
- A member who is reliable and engaged: who will prepare for meetings and report back to the congregation or Church Council afterwards; who can speak up clearly when needed, and listen carefully to others; willing to learn and adapt to church processes.
- An ability to work in the contemporary world: confidently use email, Zoom and online polling and voting apps; travel if necessary.
- Willingness to engage across the region and beyond: presbytery members may be elected to Synod or Assembly, and should be available for other committees and task groups from time to time.
- Next Generation: younger members who have a keen interest in where the church is going while appreciating where we have come from, are always welcome.
- Diversity: bringing the insights and experience of people from other cultures and traditions is invaluable in discerning new ways to be the church.

2. How do we elect a Presbytery Representative

It is the responsibility of each congregation to elect its Presbytery representative, and your Church Council should be able to assist with this process. Over the coming weeks, information such as this paper can be shared within the congregation, and suitable people can be approached and encouraged to consider nomination. A special congregational meeting can then be called to elect a representative.

The election process does not need to be complicated. It does not require a written ballot, nor does it require multiple nominations. What is important is that the congregation carefully considers who has the gifts, commitment, and capacity to serve effectively in this role.

3. What if electing a representative is too hard?

If your congregation cannot find a suitable and willing Presbytery representative, please do not be overly concerned. One of the reasons for moving to a three-Presbytery model is the recognition that volunteers are increasingly stretched, leadership responsibilities are growing, and it can be difficult for congregations to find people who have both the capacity and the confidence to take on additional roles.

The new Northern Presbytery will be exploring better ways of connecting, communicating, and working together across our region. We recognise that distance, time commitments, technology, and local circumstances can all present challenges to participation. It is better to acknowledge these realities honestly than to appoint someone who may struggle to fulfil the responsibilities of the role or meet the expectations of the congregation.

4. Timeline

The final membership roll must be provided to the Interim Standing Committee by **22nd August**. This gives congregations a good months' time to either confirm their existing representative or appoint a new representative before this date.

Please send the name and contact details of your Presbytery representative to Interim Standing Committee admin support, Leslie D'Mello LeslieD@nswact.uca.org.au by 22nd August.

All queries to: Dr. Jenny Barnes, Interim Standing Committee Chair, at JenB@nswact.uca.org.au

Thank you for your participation and support as we begin this new chapter together.

Kind regards

Dr. Jenny Barnes
Chairperson, Interim Standing committee