

Our new *Generate* Presbytery

¹⁷ Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in preaching and teaching; ¹⁸ for the scripture says, “*You shall not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain,*” and, “*The labourer deserves to be paid.*”

¹⁹ Never accept any accusation against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. ²⁰ As for those who **persist in sin**, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest also may stand in fear.

²¹ In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels, I warn you to keep these instructions without prejudice, doing nothing on the basis of partiality. ²² Do not ordain anyone hastily, and do not participate in **the sins** of others; keep yourself pure. (1Timothy 5:17–22; *see Deut. 25:4*)

The genuine honouring of—and the integrity shown by—the leadership of the Christian church matters. And yet the only sort of people the Lord has available to serve his purposes are forgiven sinners, who are still troubled often by the sin that ‘clings so closely’ (Hebrews 12:1), and insidiously indwells the redeemed believer (Romans 7:23-24). Christians can be, and often are deceived. The young leader Timothy, was exhorted by the Apostle Paul to:

¹⁶ Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; continue in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers (1Timothy 4:16).

The **teaching**, and the **accountability structure**, of a church matters. In the Baptist church, the accountability structure rests with the *elders* and *congregation*. In the Roman Catholic church, the authority flows from the top down—from the *Pope*, to *Cardinals*, down through *Archbishops*, *Bishops*, to the *Priests* and *Deacons*.

In the Uniting Church it is primarily **The Presbytery** that has oversight of ministry workers and congregations. However, our government is not a hierarchy. It is ‘*a series of inter-related Councils*’. For the purpose of mission, **The Congregation** is primary. It has an **elders** and leaders council. **The Synod** of SA is our regional council, for administration, finance etc. Then, there is the tri-annual national **Assembly** responsible for doctrine. It is to indwell the wider membership as one *inter-related council*. This Assembly is not a Pope. It is not infallible, and it can err. ‘Christ alone is supreme’. The church is to be open to ‘constant reform under His Word’. Our preached message is to be ‘*controlled by the Biblical witnesses*’ (OT and NT), not by secular culture. We are to be reminded ‘**again and again... of the need for a constant appeal to Holy Scripture**’ (Para. 10 *Basis of Union*).

In the UCA system **The Congregation** is arguably, the most dynamic component, for it is the embodiment in one place of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. **The Presbytery** is responsible for encouraging the life and mission of the church, including the ordaining of ministers. For this reason—when many people think that the Assembly has erred in changing a received doctrine from 1977, without biblical warrant—it is a timely blessing to be part of the *Generate* Presbytery. *Generate* Presbytery is an enthusiastic new *non-geographic* Presbytery. It holds to Christ’s teaching of marriage as between one man and one woman. But this Presbytery will not be defined by that stance alone. It is praying, hoping and working towards a revitalisation of the church.

Prayer: We pray ‘*God, through the gift of the Spirit, will constantly correct that which is erroneous in our life, and bring us into deeper unity with other Churches*’. In Jesus name. Amen. **Trevor**