

Moderator Elect Paper

1. Introduction

Rev Dr Michelle Cook was elected Moderator Elect at 46th Meeting of the Synod 4-7 April 2024. The relevant Minute from the meeting reads:

7.1 APPOINTMENT OF MODERATOR-ELECT

24.04.07 (i) The Synod elects Rev Dr Michelle Cook as Moderator-Elect to be installed as Moderator at 47th Meeting of the Synod in April 2025. (Minutes of 46th Synod 2024, p10-11)

The passing of Rev Dr Michelle Cook in September 2024 has left us with a deep sadness that our future will not become what we hoped or planned. We will continue to grieve Michelle's loss as a friend, colleague and our Moderator Elect.

The Northern Synod currently does not have a Moderator Elect to Install at the Opening Service of Worship at the 47th Meeting of the Synod 3-6 April 2025. This paper points to the relevant UCA Regulations and Northern Synod By-Laws; and arrangements and a proposal to guide the Synod Standing Committee in discerning a way forward in the lead up to the 47th Synod meeting and for the ensuing 18months from the commencement of the 2025 Synod meeting.

2. Relevant UCA Regulations and Northern Synod By-Laws

Reg 3.6.3.1 Election of the Moderator

- (a) The Moderator shall be elected by the Synod in accordance with such rules and procedures for such term as the Synod may determine.
- (b) The Synod may elect a Moderator, and designate that person as Moderator-elect, at a meeting of the Synod prior to the one at which the person will take office.
- (c) When, by reason of death, illness, absence or other cause, the Moderator is unable to fulfil the duties of the office, the ex-Moderator or a person appointed by the Standing Committee shall act and shall have all the powers and authorities of a Moderator until such time as the Moderator resumes responsibilities or a new Moderator is elected.

Reg 3.6.3.2 Duties of the Moderator

The duties of the Moderator shall include:

- (a) giving general and pastoral leadership to the Ministers and people within the bounds;
- (b) assisting and encouraging the expression and fulfilment of the mission and witness of the Church;
- (c) counselling and advising, as may be necessary and helpful, to ensure that the life of the Church expresses the faith, policies, standards and procedures to which it is committed;
- (d) presiding over the meetings of the Synod, its Standing Committee and such other of its boards and committees as may be required by the by-laws of the Synod;
- (e) filling, in respect of appointments normally made by the Synod and, in consultation with the Standing Committee and other bodies concerned, such vacancies as may arise between meetings of the Synod and for the filling of which other provision has not been made;

- (f) giving an interpretation where necessary of any doubtful or disputed decision of the Synod, such interpretation to be authoritative until confirmed or varied by the next meeting of the Synod or of the Standing Committee;
- (g) speaking on public issues on behalf of the Synod;
- (h) representing the Church as may be desirable on public occasions and in inter-church councils;
- (i) administering the discipline of the Church as may be required by any Regulation, by-law or rule;
- (j) enquiring, when the Moderator considers it expedient so to do, into any grievance, complaint or other circumstance which, in the opinion of the Moderator, adversely affects the good name of the Church or the order and peace of its Congregations or the progress of the work of God and seeking a remedy for such situations; in so doing the Moderator shall consult with one or more past Moderators and the chairperson of any Presbytery concerned.

Northern Synod By-Laws

NS1.3.2 Moderator Search Process

- i. The Synod shall agree on the Rules (Mandate) for a Moderator Search Committee and appoint a Convenor for the said committee.
- ii. The Synod Standing Committee will appoint other members of the Moderator Search Committee.

NS1.3.3 Nominations

- i. Nominations for the position of Moderator by Members of the Synod, Congregations or Presbyteries shall be in writing, and signed by two members of Synod, the Church Council, or Presbytery Standing Committee, with the consent of the nominee, and shall be received by the Convenor of the Moderator Search Committee, one (1) month before the Synod Meeting and forwarded to Synod General Secretary. All nominations to be accompanied by nominee biographical information in Plain English of no more than one hundred words.
- ii. Nominations shall be declared closed at the opening of the Synod meeting and a ballot held at a time determined by the Synod.
- iii. No persons shall be declared elected unless they receive at least one half of the votes cast plus one (+1).

3. Proposed arrangements to guide the Synod Standing Committee in discerning a way forward for the 18 months from the commencement of the 2025 47th Synod meeting.

Rev Tony Goodluck will conclude his term as Moderator at the Opening Worship Service of the 47th Meeting of the Synod 3-6 April 2025. The Synod does not have time to convene a Moderator search process before the 47th Synod Meeting. The current Synod Standing Committee will be dissolved when the 47th Meeting of the Synod begins. Therefore, there will not be a Moderator “to fulfil the duties of the office” until the actual Synod meeting begins, when the current Synod Standing Committee will now longer have the authority to make an Acting Moderator appointment.

Reg 3.6.3.1(c) refers to the absence of the Moderator and does not refer to the absence of the Moderator Elect. Moderator Elect 47th Synod Meeting 2025 Northern Synod Standing Committee Paper 1 February 2025 General Secretary Rev Janet Staines

Given the situation outlined in the above paragraph, the proposal below provides a potential way forward for electing an Acting Moderator to assume office at the 47th Synod meeting.

In light of the duties of a Moderator as provided above, it is envisaged that the arrangements for the role and main responsibilities of the Acting Moderator from 3 April 2025 to the 48th Synod meeting would be:

- a) It is proposed that the Acting Moderator position be a part-time position. The 46th Synod Meeting 2024 agreed to Rev Dr Michelle Cook remaining in placement at Nungalinga College at 0.8FTE and fulfilling the Moderator role at 0.2FTE. A Memorandum of Understanding was made with Nungalinga College on 23rd September outlining the performance of duties at Nungalinga College and the NS Moderator. Therefore, it is proposed that the Acting Moderator perform their duties within a 0.2FTE placement.
- b) It is proposed that the Acting Moderator be appointed for 18months until the next Synod Meeting to offer guidance and stable leadership during a time of change.
- c) It is proposed that the Synod Standing Committee develop a Memorandum of Understanding with Congregations/Agencies/Employers impacted by the 0.2FTE of the Acting Moderator, outlining the expectations and use of time given to the Acting Moderator role. It is anticipated that this will be reviewed every 3-6 months.
- d) It is proposed that the Acting Moderator work closely with the Synod Standing Committee to fulfill the regulatory duties of the Moderator and appropriately delegate pastoral oversight to the PPNA Chair, NRCC Resource Worker and General Secretary, especially when travel or long-term pastoral care is required.
- e) It is proposed that the Acting Moderator work closely with the Synod Standing Committee over the next 18 months to develop a governance structure that is fit for purpose for the Northern Synod, delegating regulatory responsibilities and overseeing regulatory processes during the transition.
- f) It is proposed that the Acting Moderator would chair the 47th Synod Meeting 2025 and the Synod Standing Committee Meetings for 18months until the 48th Synod Meeting.
- g) It is proposed that the Acting Moderator carefully consider the demands of public events and inter-church councils to stay within the bounds of 0.2FTE and appropriately delegate representation to other experienced Ministry Agents or Members of Synod.
- h) It is proposed that the Acting Moderator will not be exempt from nominating for Moderator at the 48th Synod Meeting 2026.

4. Proposed process and timeline for Synod Standing Committee regarding appointing an Acting Moderator.

- a) Synod Standing Committee Meeting 21-22 February 2025
The Synod Standing Committee consider the General Secretary's proposal for an Acting Moderator and proposed process and timeline for Synod Standing Committee. A decision regarding the process and timeline needs to be made at this meeting.
- b) Communicate to 47th Synod Meeting Members

The General Secretary communicates to the 47th Synod Meeting Members that the Standing Committee is working on a response to the current situation, which requires the approval of the Assembly Standing Committee who will meet on 14-16 March. The process cannot be made public until after the Assembly Standing Committee meeting on the 14-16 March. Moderator Elect 47th Synod Meeting 2025 Northern Synod Standing Committee Paper 1 February 2025 General Secretary Rev Janet Staines

- c) Synod Standing Committee Meeting 6th or 7th March 2025 tbc

The Synod Standing Committee discerns the appointment of a person to be the Acting Moderator assuming approval from the Assembly Standing Committee in March.

- d) Communicate the process and appointment of the Acting Moderator to the 47th Synod Meeting Members

The General Secretary communicates the process and appointment proposed by the Synod Standing Committee and approved by the Assembly Standing Committee after the 14-16 March. Notification will be communicated to the Synod Members at least 14 days prior to the meeting.

- e) The Acting Moderator chairs the 47th Synod Meeting 2025

At the 47th Synod Meeting 2025 the new Acting Moderator will receive the Scarf of office and prayer at the Opening Service of Worship. The Acting Moderator will chair the 47th Synod Meeting. The Synod Standing Committee will monitor the time and expectations of the Acting Moderator over the ensuing 18 months and make adjustments to the arrangement as required and agreed upon with the Acting Moderator.

- f) Moderator Search Committee

A Convenor for the Moderator Search Committee will be appointed at the 47th Synod Meeting 2025 as per Northern Synod By-Laws.

5. Proposals.

It is proposed that the Standing Committee resolve:

- a) To approve the process and timeline for Synod Standing Committee to appoint an Acting Moderator, as outlined in sect.4 of the Moderator Elect 2025 paper by the Northern Synod General Secretary.
- b) To request the Assembly Standing Committee to grant an exemption from the Regulations to allow the Northern Synod Standing Committee to appoint an Acting Moderator to be installed at the 47th Synod Meeting to be held on 3-6 April 2025 and to serve until 48th Meeting.