Theological Education Working Group
of the Board of *Uniting Mission and Education*
within the Synod of NSW and the ACT

A PROPOSAL

for an *Educational Resourcing Network*
to go to the 2013 SYNOD MEETING

***PROPOSAL*[1]**

It is proposed that the Synod note that the Board of *Uniting Mission and Education* has accepted a vision and purpose statement for the educational ministry of the church, and as a result has determined to create an ***Educational Resourcing Network*** across the Synod of NSW and the ACT.

In noting this initiative, the Synod affirms:

a. That the focus of the Network be on *equipping and developing fully engaged disciples* amongst the people, congregations, presbyteries, and agencies of the Synod.

b. That the primary task of the Network be the provision of resources for theological reflection and ways of growing practical and spiritual ministry capacity across the Synod.

c. That the ***Educational Resourcing Network*** comprise:
the **Theological Education Faculty** (UTC Faculty members teaching within the School of Theology, Charles Sturt University)
and the **Candidates Formation Faculty** (as drawn from UTC Faculty and associated personnel under the oversight of the Committee of Ministerial Formation)
as well as a newly-formed **Discipleship Resourcing Faculty** (incorporating UME Resourcing Team, Presbytery Resource Ministers, UTC Faculty and others, lay and ordained, as designated)

d. That the Hub for the Network be established at the *Centre for Ministry* at North Parramatta.

e. That the UME Board, in association with its working groups (UTC Council and the Theological Education Working Group) review and refocus the job descriptions of UTC Faculty and UME Resourcing Team members in the light of the vision and purpose statement for educational ministry, and invite Presbyteries, *UnitingCare* and other relevant agencies to collaborate constructively in the ***Educational Resourcing Network***.

> In support of the above *Proposal*, the following *Rationale* offers a creative way forward for equipping people across the Synod to build our capacity for theological reflection and to live out our faith in real and gutsy ways. The proposal is not solely about 'ministerial training', nor is it limited to 'academic education', whether full-time or part-time. The goal of the proposal is to reach out more broadly to enable **all** to be *disciples fully engaged in the world.*

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[1] This proposal comes from the work of the Theological Education Working Group and was adopted by the UME Board, meeting on 14 March 2013.

RATIONALE

1. THE VISION AND PURPOSE OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Since the 2011 Synod, there has been a deliberate and intentional process of consultation, exploration, visioning, and planning, in relation to the educational needs of the church. At the Elanora Heights retreat in June 2012, a group of forty people, active in ministry within the Uniting Church, with a particular commitment to educational ministry, worked hard to produce a range of outcomes for the future directions of the Synod. Out of the experience and wisdom of these people, and through the process of prayerful consultation, this statement of vision and purpose arose:

'Called to equip and develop lively and diverse followers of Jesus Christ fully engaged in the world, we seek to draw from scripture, experience, tradition, and context, in order to create opportunities for all people, according to their gifts, culture and spiritual vocation, to deepen their discipleship within collaborative communities of learning, through critical engagement, creative exploration, and faithful participation in a variety of flexible and transformative ways.'

This statement was made with an awareness of the series of statements on central and important issues, which stretch back to the foundation of the Uniting Church. Together, these statements articulate the missional nature of the church[2], its commitment to justice[3], its ethos of affirming the role of scholarly interpreters, seeking contemporary critical articulations of faith, and being open to fresh insights[4], its strong covenant relationship with the indigenous peoples of Australia[5], its desire to reflect the multi/cross-cultural nature of contemporary society[6], and the imperative of offering contextual witness in a wide diversity of locations[7]. Each of these factors underlie and are embedded within this proposal for an educational resourcing network.

2. MISSION, DISCIPLESHIP, AND THEOLOGY

The *Basis of Union* clearly articulates that the church's fundamental reason for being is missional: "the Church preaches Christ, the risen crucified One, and confesses him as Lord" (para. 3). It is in and through Christ and the Spirit that the church participates in the mission of God.[8] If we are not fulfilling this calling, then it is questionable if we are actually being church. What is central and foundational to our corporate life is giving expression to the lordship of Christ and so participating in God's mission through the discipleship of each person across the church.

Such participation in God's mission across all parts of the church gives expression to our distinctive polity, as the Uniting Church. To draw back from this would be a fundamental failure of the Church's calling. **If the Synod fails to resource the wider church for its**

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[2] *Basis of Union* para 3 (1977, revised 1992) and *Towards a Theology Relating to Mission* (Uniting Theology and Discipleship, 2010)

[3] *Statement to the Nation* (Inaugural Assembly, June 1977) and *Dignity in Humanity* (Uniting Justice, 2006)

[4] *Basis of Union* paras 3, 5, 11 (1977, revised 1992)

[5] *Covenanting Statement* (Seventh Assembly, 1994) and *Revised Preamble*, UCA *Constitution* (Twelfth Assembly, 2009)

[6] *The Uniting Church is a Multicultural Church* (Fourth Assembly, May 1985) and *A Church for all God's People* (Eleventh Assembly, 2006)

[7] *Basis of Union* paras 5, 11, 18 (1977, revised 1992)

[8] "God in Christ has given to all people in the Church the Holy Spirit as a pledge and foretaste of that coming reconciliation and renewal which is the end in view for the whole creation", *Basis of Union* para 3 (1977, revised 1992)

missional task, then the church will have very limited capacity to deliver on this calling. If the church as a whole is not being encouraged to develop new ways of witness and service, then we are falling short of the reason for being church.

The nature of this mission is critical to address and implement. Faithful participation in God's mission requires that we are attuned to the context in which faith is lived. It requires connection with the traditions and experiences of faith, as known by believers in the past and in the present. It requires a critical appreciation of the interaction between 'tradition' and 'context'. In this regard, solid theological resources are essential. At every point, however, the theological awareness of the church must be shaped in interaction with the context, the imperative of resourcing discipleship, and an openness towards becoming a new expression of church as befits the times, as "a pilgrim people, always on the way".[9]

Such a church will ensure that resources for theological reflection and spiritual formation are available for all, as well as developing resources to equip everybody with greater practical ministry capacity (in matters such as understanding communities, developing pastoral skills, growing capacity, exercising effective leadership, sustaining life-giving spiritual practices, engaging change, establishing and nurturing new initiatives, etc).

Changes in society have been impacting the church in recent decades; the rate of this impact has intensified in recent years. There is a widespread sense that 'business as usual' is no longer viable. A new perspective is required. This proposal arises out of a critical re-evaluation of the nature of contemporary society and a creative envisioning of how the church might be faithful in this context. We are concerned to identify a way in which the church can be faithful to its calling, sharing the Gospel in relational ways, in order to *equip and develop … fully engaged disciples*, participating in the mission of God in the contemporary world.

So, the statement about the vision and purpose of educational ministry identifies a Calling which has been discerned by the Board of UME and adopted by the Synod Standing Committee during 2012. The statement articulates this calling as*, to equip and develop … fully engaged disciples* throughout the faith communities (presbyteries, congregations, and agencies) across the Synod.

The challenge at hand is to develop a strategy for this calling, in order to resource and support *fully engaged disciples*[10] across the Synod. The strategy will require consistent and persistent work with presbyteries, congregations, and related Synod agencies as appropriate. It will need to be undertaken with a fine awareness of the present context of multiple transformations within society, reduced financial capacity within the Synod, and significant levels of uncertainty across the church.

This proposal emerges from the work that has been undertaken by a UME Working Group on *theological education, ministry and discipleship formation* over the past year. In recent meetings, the working group has incorporated members of the UME Resourcing Team and of the UTC Faculty to enable a full consideration of the issues to be undertaken. The proposal seeks a new way forward that will move the church into mission in significant ways.

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[9] *Basis of Union* para 3 (1977, revised 1992)

[10] Where the phrase *fully engaged disciples* is used, it is intended to function as a shortened reference back to the initial 'vision and purpose statement', created in June 2012, adopted by the Board of *Uniting Mission and Education* and the Synod Standing Committee, and incorporated into the opening paragraphs of this *Rationale*.

3. AN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCING NETWORK

The *Proposal* indicates that the UME seeks *to move towards an integrated offering of educational offerings across the Synod, encompassing a number of styles and levels of learning.*

The proposal is that the whole structure be known as the ***Educational Resourcing Network.***

Central to this development is the creation of a central HUB for learning within the Uniting Church. It will be important to have a central focus for the implementation and co-ordination of the overall Network. A HUB will also enable the ongoing provision of a community where learning and thinking can interact, where "research and development" can engage with practical expressions of ministry, mission and discipleship.

From this HUB will spread forth a number of NETWORKS which will offer educational offerings for discipleship, formation, candidature in specified ministries, leadership in local congregations and communities, pastoral roles and chaplaincies in church-related organisations, and other ministries. The Network will include a number of personnel who are currently working hard to sustain their wide-ranging commitments to education and mission, theological education and discipleship formation. These include:

3.1. <u>UME Resourcing Team</u>: currently 5 UCA placements, linked with a further 7 individuals in fulltime or part-time positions, under the auspices of UME, with a range of responsibilities relating to education, mission, leadership and discipleship

3.2. <u>UTC Faculty</u>: currently 7 UCA placements (6.5 teaching positions plus Dean of Candidates), with primary responsibilities in theological education of candidates for specified ministries and lay people, and the formation of candidates

3.3. <u>Presbytery Ministers</u>, or <u>Zone Ministers</u> with specific presbytery functions, in placements where some or all of their role requires a Resource Ministry approach (including oversight, support, equipping and resourcing);

3.4. *UnitingCare*: the <u>Pastoral Education Co-ordinator</u> may also be seen as exercising a similar role as the Presbytery Ministers, and the Network would benefit from their incorporation into the structure in ways which are appropriate for *UnitingCare* and beneficial for the church

Further, a number of existing positions across the spread of the Synod will be invited to become members of the ***Educational Resourcing Network***, including:

3.5. <u>Resource Ministers</u> in placements in a congregation or in a cluster of congregations (with particular responsibilities in discipleship training)

3.6. <u>Specified Ministers generally</u>, especially newly trained ministers (many of whom may go to Resource Minister or Zone Minister placements in any case)

3.7. <u>Graduates in higher theological degrees</u> in UCA placements or with involvement in UCA-related organisations (with particular skills in the delivery of educational resources)

3.8. Other designated people in UCA church placements or working in other organisations and activities with strong UCA connections (Pastoral Counselling Institute, Barnabas Ministries, Alan Walker College, Multicultural Workshops, etc)

What will be needed across these parts of the church is an openness to the vision embedded in this proposal, and a willingness to adapt and change in order for that vision to become a reality. This will especially be the case within the UTC Faculty, most significantly, as well as within the UME Resourcing Team and Presbyteries, as they consider their responsibilities for providing resources and oversight to the congregations and ministers in their midst. Along with changes in the number of personnel in such positions, a reorientation of responsibilities will also need to be undertaken.

The proposal that is offered is intended to be cost-neutral; that is, it envisages the goodwill and co-operation of the existing entities. Whilst there is a view that these existing positions ought to be able to continue as per the present arrangement, the financial realities indicate that this is most unlikely to be possible. The Synod cannot simply proceed with 'business as usual' in any of the areas for which it is responsible. Our finances will not allow this. This financial imperative sits clearly in the midst of this discussion.

However, it is not the single or primary driving force. What impels this discussion is the clear sense that **there is a need for a new way of resourcing the church**, in order for the church to be able to be on mission as *disciples fully engaged in the world* with a keen sense of God's calling in the contemporary context. Being thus engaged in the changing contemporary context will require faithful disciples to live in new ways; the church will be impelled to seek new expressions and to engage in mission in innovative ways. To provide appropriate educational resourcing which undergirds and supports this will require a new structure. This is at the heart of this proposal.

4. SOME IMPORTANT FOUNDATIONS

The process of beginning to meet the challenge of *equipping and developing disciples fully engaged in the world* is already underway. Important steps have already been taken.

For many years, the educational opportunities across the Synod were provided by a theological college (*UTC*), a lay education centre (*ELM*), and a continuing education school (*SCE*)[11]. Each entity received funding from the annual Synod Distribution. In addition, income was generated through fees levied on students enrolled in the courses offered. Over time (and particularly since the decision of the 2006 Synod to accredit UTC degrees through Charles Sturt University) the proportion of UTC income from fees has risen significantly. The current income through CHARLES STURT UNIVERSITY of over $500,000 per annum provides the Uniting Church with a substantial foundation for undertaking theological-educational activities of relevance to, and benefit within, the church. A proposed revised agreement will provided over $675,000 per annum. This is a significant foundation on which to build the proposed network.

A proposal for a PRACTICAL MINISTRY TRAINING COURSE has been developed by Peter Kaldor (*Leadership Institute*), working in close co-operation with some members of the UTC Faculty. This course approaches discipleship, mission, leadership and spiritual formation through an experiential (action/reflection) process of learning. It will commence with the offering of two modules during 2013; it is planned to expand the course, to offer four core modules (in discipleship, mission, leadership and practical spiritual formation—each grounded in biblical and theological understandings), with up to another dozen elective

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[11] The *School of Continuing Education* had been the lead UCA body nationally for training Intentional Interim Ministers and, more recently, Resource Ministers. A substantial number of ministers have been thus trained. With the closure of the *SCE*, this role has moved to the VicTas Synod.

modules becoming available over time.[12] It is envisaged that this course might provide both a valuable offering in its own right, and a model for possible future developments in this area.

Within the university framework, the core curriculum for the CSU BACHELOR OF THEOLOGY has been redesigned in order to reflect more closely the needs of the church, and the CSU MASTER OF MINISTRY is being reoriented towards the areas of mission and leadership, with subjects in 2013 being offered in conjunction with Peter Kaldor, and new subjects being created. The process is being overseen by William Emilsen (*UTC*). These and other CSU degrees offered through UTC are recognized as leaders in the fields of public theology and ministry and the practice of cross-cultural ministry and theology. Within CSU as a whole, there are significant advances in the offering of flexible learning patterns for enrolled students.

A fledgling RESOURCE NETWORK has been established by Bronwyn Murphy (*UME*). This network will draw together existing personnel who are employed by UME (the Resourcing Team) alongside people in placement in resourcing ministry positions in Presbyteries across the Synod. The first meeting of this Resource Network is taking place over three days in late April—early May 2013. All Presbytery Ministers (whether in a designated 'resource ministry' role, or not) are invited to participate in this initial gathering.

Work has begun on the setting of realistic BENCHMARKS which indicate what is to be expected of a ministerial candidate at the point of ordination, and further what is to be expected five years on, and then another five years later. This sort of benchmarking provides the impetus for assessing a candidate's progress through the initial formation stages, and then guides the direction of continuing education.

Discussions have begun with Adelaide College of Divinity and Alan Walker College for the provision of appropriate TRAINING FOR PASTORS AND LAY MINISTRIES across the Presbyteries, using resources that are already in place and operating successfully.

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[12] Peter Kaldor has provided a paper outlining *A proposal for equipping people to exercise creative ministry and live out their faith in practical, innovative ways,* in which the structure, content, target groups and development process for this course are outlined.

5. INTERSECTING AND OVERLAPPING *FACULTIES*

In considering the existing reality and the structures which are currently in place, it is noteworthy that there are two bodies currently designated as FACULTY[13]. Each of these bodies has a specific set of responsibilities:

5.1. A <u>FACULTY for the Formation of Candidates</u> for specified ministries. This body comprises the members of the UTC Faculty in a UCA placement or appointed through the church. It is small in number. This group of people exercises a range of responsibilities which are required in the training of specified ministers, in accordance with UCA Regulations 3.7.4.3(c)(1) and 3.7.4.5. It works in close co-operation with the *Committee of Ministerial Formation*, with representatives from presbyteries integrally involved. The overarching body for this activity is the *Ministerial Education Commission* of the national Assembly (soon to be reorganised and renamed), which establishes guidelines for formation as well as accreditation for such through a 5 yearly visitation. We will identify this group as the **Candidates Formation Faculty** (CFF).

5.2. A <u>FACULTY for the provision of Theological Education</u> for university-enrolled students. This large, dispersed body comprises fulltime UTC Faculty as well as Adjunct Faculty appointed through UTC, with colleagues (fulltime and part-time) at St Marks National Theological Centre (Canberra) and associated campuses (Brisbane, Adelaide). This larger group forms the *School of Theology* within Charles Sturt University (CSU) and offers courses accredited by the Federal Government. The Uniting Church is one contributor to this faculty, but it is ecumenical in character, with members from the Anglican Church as well as some individuals from other denominations. We will identify this group as the **Theological Education Faculty** (TEF). UTC members of this faculty are involved in a range of church activities in addition to their university commitments.

These two faculties have overlapping personnel; the responsibilities are oriented towards different accrediting bodies. Each set of responsibilities offers constructive and necessary contributions towards the calling, as articulated in summary form: *to equip and develop 'fully engaged disciples' throughout the faith communities across the Synod.*

5.3. In order to focus this calling, this proposal suggests that the Synod identify, establish, and support a third group, akin to the above two Faculties, which will be oriented towards this primary task: *'equipping and developing 'fully engaged disciples'*. This orientation will draw on the personnel of the two above-mentioned faculty groups, as well as many other people currently engaged in the structures and activities of the UCA within this Synod. We will identify this <u>FACULTY for the Resourcing of Disciples</u> as the **Discipleship Resourcing Faculty** (DRF).

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[13] The term *Faculty* is used in this paper in relation to three groups, as outlined in the body of this section. One use of the term has a specific technical meaning within the higher education setting; this relates to a *Theological Education Faculty*. The term is used with a different, but still precise, definition and function in the *UCA Regulations*; this relates to a *Candidates Formation Faculty*. A third use of the term is in relation to a proposed *Discipleship Resourcing Faculty*. Whilst the term is used in a different way in each instance, overall the term *Faculty* has the general connotation of a body which is cohesive, with appropriate level of skills, oriented and committed to the purpose statement regarding *fully engaged disciples*. Such a group will be large enough to accomplish the responsibilities set for it, undertaking regular professional development, and committed to building *collaborative communities of learning*.

6. THE KEY DEFINING FEATURE: A *NETWORK*

The key feature of the proposed ***Educational Resourcing Network*** will be that it is a **Network** (not a 'Body') which will explicitly ***not*** be confined to one geographic location. Its participants will live, work, and worship in scattered and diverse situation—physically, culturally, linguistically. Thus a central characteristic of this network will be *multiple regional centres* across the Synod, each of which offers a gathering point for local learners.

The ***Educational Resourcing Network*** will be a Network which gathers in various 'virtual' ways – through internet, skype, phone, videoconferencing, as well as through occasional 'in-person' gatherings. The key feature of this widespread Network will be ***flexible diversity***. This needs to be seen as a reshaping which is radical in nature and broad in extent. The well-known and familiar pattern of theological education and candidates formation which currently exists (and has been evolving constantly in recent years) will need significant transformation to meet this current proposal. This will be both challenging, but also (we believe) enlivening and hope-generating.

The proposal that is offered is intended to be cost-neutral; that is, it envisages the goodwill and co-operation of the existing entities. It will not require additional funding; indeed, it has already been noted that it is most likely that it will need to be implemented on the basis of reduced funding. The proposal aims to encourage and assist the range of personnel involved to (re)orient their ministry activities to contribute in significant ways to this third proposed Faculty group.

It is highly likely, in the light of the financial figures as now known, that the number of fulltime personnel currently a part of the UTC Faculty will be decreased. It may also be that funding for UME Resourcing positions will be decreased from the present. Both of these entities, as already noted, are vital to the good health of the proposed ***Educational Resourcing Network***; an institutional grounding ensures ongoing income, quality assurance, professional development, and specific expertise. Beyond this, the proposal envisages a growing cohort of specified ministers, candidates, and lay leaders, who are committed to new ways of ministry in this changing context, who will become a part of the wider network, working in association with the smaller Faculty and Resourcing Team. In every case, a reorientation of responsibilities will be required to ensure that the envisaged network will be able to function effectively.

It is to be noted that the proposed ***Educational Resourcing Network*** will not be limited by the constraints of the current situation. Indeed, the proposed Network will be expected to cast its net widely to ensure that education opportunities are readily accessible. This will mean attending to the scope of ministry activity encompassed. Education will need to be applicable to specified ministries as well as lay forms of ministries. It will need to offer opportunities across the wide range of cultural and linguistic groups represented within the Uniting Church, so that translated material and culturally-relevant material will need to be produced. It will also need to provide a geographic spread of educational offerings through an identifiable presence in designated regional hubs and the fostering of regional *collaborative communities of learning*.

7. CHANGES ENVISAGED IN RESPONSIBILITIES AND JOB DESCRIPTIONS

The UME Resourcing Team and the UTC Faculty (fulltime members) would form a central *hub* for the network, from which could radiate a number of interlinked and overlapping *communities of learning* within the overall *network*. Each *community of learning* would have its own designated area of focus. This would require a significant reorientation in the job descriptions of each of these personnel. The reshaping of each of these existing teams is a task that will be undertaken by the UME Board on the advice of the relevant working groups.

The **UME Resourcing Team** would need to undergo a refocussing of overall priorities. Each member of the team would have an emphasis on resourcing designated presbyteries through regular links with local leaders (a designated *collaborative community of learning*). Job descriptions could reflect a mixture of train-the-trainers activities, fostering the designated 'collaborative communities of learning, adapting material for specific contexts, and so on.

The **UTC Faculty** may well be smaller in size, in the future, than in the current situation. There would need to be significant changes in individual job descriptions, in order to ensure that *equipping and developing fully engaged disciples* received adequate attention—at least equal to, if not greater than, the focus on formation of candidates and academic theological teaching. The importance of having the full array of theological resources at the service of the church for *equipping and developing fully engaged disciples* cannot be understated.[14] Likewise, we cannot underestimate the importance of giving priority to the needs of disciples across the Synod, participating in the mission of God, engaging their discipleship in a wide range of ways.[15]

The Uniting Church component of the **Theological Education Faculty** would be reoriented to enable the academic work of the people in these positions to be a greater resource to the wider Uniting Church. Indeed, within the tertiary sector there has been significant movement towards greater flexibility and the development of new ways of delivering education to meet the specific needs of particular communities of learning. TEF members will therefore build upon present work to develop further models of best practice, such as liturgies, practical biblical and theological studies, and resources to enable the Church to wrestle with current ethical, moral and political issues. *Practical missiology will become a stronger focus in the academic work of this faculty*.

Faculty job descriptions would thus move to encompass a mixture of research, class teaching, distance teaching, oversight of a team of sessional lecturers, supervision of research students, oversight of the development of courses, and participation in designated *collaborative community of learning*. (A re-organisation of responsibilities concerning the teaching undertaken by Faculty members may need to be considered by the Faculty as a result of this.) Specific *communities of learning* which will be of benefit for the church might include multi/cross-cultural communities, rural/regional communities, indigenous communities, *UnitingCare* institutions, new urban developments, and so forth.

The formation of candidates for specified ministries has already undergone significant developments in recent years. This proposal envisages that there will need to be further

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[14] UTC Faculty has provided a paper outlining *The Benefits of a Theological College* which outlines the range of key factors in this regard. UTC Council has a responsibility to develop a strategic plan that reflects the priorities of the UME Board and the Synod, and to develop position descriptions accordingly.

[15] UTC Faculty has also provided a paper outlining *Steps Forward: UTC reorientation in light of the Elanora Heights discussion*. This may offer a starting point for more substantial negotiations regarding the further changes and developments which will need to flow from the adoption of this current proposal.

reorientation in the process, in order to produce candidates with the capacity to become part of the **Discipleship Resourcing Faculty** within the ***Educational Resourcing Network***. This may in turn require changes to subject priorities and an intentional process of including within the Candidates Formation Faculty, those able to equip candidates with practical ministry skills, change management, adult education skills or resource ministry tools and approaches.

The reorientation of the groups making up the TEF (UC component), the CFF and the DRF would become a matter of high priority. It may also entail changes in the numbers of personnel within each of these groups. (Here the overall funding situation will undoubtedly prove to be determinative.) Each person at the *hub* would have specific responsibilities to liaise and support other members of the DRF who are working in the same area of focus. Thus, there would develop a number of specialised *collaborative communities of learning* within the overarching DRF network. The particular focus of each individual should be formed in relation to the *areas of focus* identified below.

Central to the *hub* will be the provision of resources. This needs to be understood in terms of personnel: a team, set apart for a ministry which focusses on resourcing the wider church. The existing configuration of personnel has much to recommend it; a theological college with experienced educators and a range of practitioners in UME staff and across the presbyteries provide a strong foundation for educational resourcing. But the practicalities of the immediate situation combine with the emerging vision of this *network*, to offer an opportunity for a reshaping and reconstruction in light of this overall vision.

The provision of resources also need to be understood in terms of tangible resources: books, studies, dvds, study packages, foreign-language resources, internet connections, which are housed and stewarded in the *Camden Theological Library* (CTL) at the *Centre for Ministry* (CfM). The CTL is already a primary resource for the educational ministries of the church, with a rapidly-expanding set of resources (with significant recent additions in the area of Korean and some other non-English resources). It will continue to be a vital component of any proposed network of learning. As the CTL is already well established at the CfM and there are facilities for basing personnel there (in a range of offices), it would be eminently sensible for the *Centre for Ministry* to provide the geographical location for the *hub*. This locating in one place of educators and resources will allow for collaboration, consistency of direction and vision, common professional development and energizing of the team.

Responsibility for fostering and enriching the wider *collaborative communities of learning* would rest with the hub personnel. The Network will require clear structures and systems for developing direction and implementing co-ordinated action. The *Educational Resource Network* will thus require a re-orientation of roles, to develop a *Network Co-ordinator(s)* and some *Sector Co-ordinators*. The regionally-based Resource Ministers and the *UnitingCare* Director of Mission and Pastoral Education Co-ordinator would provide a second rung of support and be the 'on-the-ground' people, in dispersed locations, to draw in other members of the DRF network and to share the offerings of the DRF network across their region.

The aim would be for each of these groups to develop *collaborative communities of learning* (as noted in examples above) which operate *in a variety of flexible and transformative ways* across the Synod. This would mean an intentional drawing in of individuals with skills and experience in specific educational activities, as well as recruiting and encouraging the participation of people in the congregations and organisations across the Synod.

The focus on *fully engaged disciples* would see a range of learning options, at levels from TAFE certificates through university degrees, with expanded opportunities in practical

ministry, leadership capacity development, and spiritual disciplines, as well as biblical, theological and pastoral subjects. There will be a continuing emphasis on the integration of learning and practice, particularly learning from the experiences of those engaged in developing new initiatives.[16]

8. AREAS OF FOCUS

In considering the areas of focus, which may enable the *Educational Resourcing Network* to best achieve the goal of developing and equipping *disciples fully engaged in the world*, we can be guided by the language contained in the opening statement as to the vision and purpose for educational ministry. Thus the proposal is that the *Educational Resourcing Network* would work in three particular focus areas:

Critical Engagement: This focus area *seeks to draw from scripture, experience, tradition, and context*, and might include educational programs and events providing the biblical and theological basis required for specific roles within the Church (eg. Lay Preachers, Pastors Pathway B, ordination candidates). It could include seminars or courses, which would enable disciples to explore their faith in structured ways or to engage in contemporary ethical issues; it might involve providing theological input to Presbyteries discussing Lay Presidency or Faith Communities within UC Schools.

Creative Exploration: This focus area, which encompasses ideas of *mission*, *innovation* and *leadership development*, is important in developing disciples who are *fully engaged in the world*. Vehicles for work in this focus area might include leadership development programs; training in mission planning or asset based community development; work with strengthening Presbyteries in their capacity to conduct congregational life and witness or vitality of call consultations; encouraging and extending UCA involvement in the *Sydney Alliance* and related regional alliances as they emerge. Resourcing in community engagement strategies like "Messy Church" or Playgroups might be seen as falling in this focus area, as would programs like the "Mission Shaped Ministry" course.

Faithful Participation: This focus area incorporates both an exploration of the *spirituality* and *spiritual practices* required to deepen discipleship, along with the focus on *godly character* which enables us to form best practice communities characterised by open and ethical behaviour. Courses such as *Living our Values*, *Safe Church* training and *SMAT/Code of Ethics* training are examples of programs grounded in this focus area. It might also include training in supervision or spiritual direction, development of conflict resolution resources, or training in the use of the *Manual for Meetings*.

At their best, programs or courses of study will encompass elements of each of these focus areas. For example, a program of study for Lay Preachers should involve a strong focus on *critical engagement* but would also highlight the importance and scope for *creatively exploring* the myriad ways in which both worship and preaching might be imagined for different settings and contexts within 21st century Australia. Likewise, such a course would need to draw in a focus on *faithful participation* in considering the ethics of preaching, the ways in people with differing roles within the church may offer worship leadership, etc. [17]

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[16] Gerard Moore has provided a table of current personnel and 'contributions to mission' envisaged for each of the three faculty.

[17] Peter Kaldor has developed a series of **Case Studies** which are intended for use in table group discussion at the Synod when this proposal is considered.