

a daring
HOPE
SYNOD 36



Report from
Multi Cross Cultural
Reference Group



Report

Context

Give us a description of your part of the church. Who are you and what are you called to do?

Multi-Cross-Cultural Reference Group (MCCRG) is a Reference Group of the Uniting Church in Queensland which consists of a small group of ministry agents and lay leaders who are called to encourage, inform and resource the Queensland Synod, its congregations, presbyteries and Synod agencies and to incorporate into their life and mission the UCA's commitment to 'being a multicultural church'.

Cultural diversity is increasingly an important feature of the church's life and the Australian community in which we witness and serve. MCCRG's mission is to assist congregations, presbyteries and Synod to seek and embrace the gift and challenge of fulfilling our stated calling to be a truly multicultural church.

Currently the Reference Group comprises seven members, five ordained and two lay members (including ex-officio) drawn from seven different cultural backgrounds. Details of current MCCRG membership can be found in **Attachment A**

Tell us what your key priorities since the last Synod have been.

Our three key focuses since the 35th Synod have been:

UCA Enabling: Helping to develop stronger links between CALD faith communities/ congregations and the Uniting Church (primarily through presbyteries), to enhance the mission of the church; Foster awareness of biblical, theological and ministry resources from different cultural perspectives, and encourage greater reflection of cultural diversity in congregational worship and study.

UCA Equipping: Build on the established Synod-wide young adults CALD leaders network and development program – Next Gen Arise (NGA); Information sharing on leadership and ministry training pathways that are available for all CALD community leaders, e.g. information from Trinity College Queensland and Plenty Leadership Program.

Events and worship gatherings in 2021:

NextGen Arise (NGA)'s first face-to-face Worship Gathering since the COVID-19 pandemic took place at Logan Central Multi-cultural Uniting Church on 30 May, 2021. Around 110 young adults, plus some older adult MCCRG members and some CALD community leaders participated. Participants welcomed revival into their hearts, into their families, churches, communities and the nations.

Some photos can be viewed from below links to the NGA's Facebook posts:

<https://www.facebook.com/1849186981978862/posts/3036835503213998/?d=n> (worship)

<https://www.facebook.com/1849186981978862/posts/3037587066472175/?d=n> (small groups)

Wildfire - Prayer and Worship Night at Kangaroo Point Uniting Church was held in June 2021 and Disciple Makers Workshop was held in TCQ in September. The NGA team is seeking ways to strengthen a connection with local congregations and to reflect on the perspectives and voices of their younger leaders in the life of the Church.

MCCRG delegates will continue to meet with Va (leader) and Simon (mentor) for networking and strategic planning purposes.

MCCRG hope to ensure the continuation and vitality of the NextGen Arise ministry, for NGA to continue to be a safe space where young people from CALD backgrounds build networks with each other; are resourced for leadership in their own communities; encouraged to find their passion; test and practice their leadership skills, and also discover their God-given callings.

UCA Connecting: Establish effective platforms of communication to connect people across cultural groups and encourage wider Uniting Church cross-cultural engagement; Create cross-cultural experiences of worship and fellowship which foster and showcase the leadership and gifts of young people and women in our CALD communities.

One of the annual events MCCRG organises is the Multi-Cross Cultural Pentecost Service, which was held at Logan Central Multicultural UC on Pentecost Sunday, 23 May 2021. This attracted around 90 people from different congregations and faith communities. General Secretary Rev Heather den Houting preached an inspirational sermon and led Holy Communion. Many ethnic group leaders led different parts of the service. It was a great afternoon celebrating the diversity of cultures and gifted people within the Queensland Synod, worshipping in different languages and fellowshiping over food (whilst following COVID restrictions). Most MCCRG members attended the service and supported by contributing food and assistance in pre-service preparations. The Zimbabwean community in West End UC participated in a Synod Pentecost Service for the first time and had meaningful engagement with the broader community in the Synod. *Some photos can be viewed from this link to the MCCRG Facebook post:

<https://www.facebook.com/590349721175912/posts/1661876194023254/?d=n>

Given the challenging contexts due to the pandemic and the developing Project Plenty Priorities of the Queensland Synod, MCCRG has shifted our key focusses in response.

Newly adapted focuses since mid-2021 have been:

1. Reflecting on MCCRG's calling and missional purposes to be in line with those of the Synod Leadership Team.
2. Strengthening 'Multi Cross Cultural' Networks amongst presbyteries and committees
3. Building collegial relationship with the Synod Leadership and Communications Teams
4. Recruiting the Next Generations leaders from CALD communities
5. Planning, coordinating and implementing Multi Cross Cultural annual services and events

Shared Life, Flourishing Communities

In what ways have you been approaching the challenge of making disciples of Jesus:

Tell us about how you are building a discipling culture

Through 1-on-1 conversations and small group meetings, MCCRG members sought to support CALD leaders and candidates through peer support, ministry mentoring and mutual prayer support. Mentoring conversations in the last year or so focused on identifying young leaders and providing opportunities for them to grow in ministry skills and experiences and giving encouragement and prayer support for them to shine for Jesus.

Tell us about how you are engaging children, youth, young adults and families

MCCRG members were encouraged to connect with CALD community leaders periodically to encourage and resource them to engage children, youth, young adults and families in their ministry, e.g. intergenerational congregational ministries and NextGen Arise which focuses on youth and young adults

Tell us how you are reimagining the identity and posture of the church, in your community, in a changing world

MCCRG completed our annual Charter Review in January 2021, clarified and identified our roles, structure and responsibilities.

MCCRG members also reflected on how the group and each member coped with the challenges of the COVID pandemic at the end of 2021 and agreed to engage a consultant to assist us to review and strategically plan for a possible post-pandemic world in 2023.

A strategic planning day was held on 10th February 2022, and written submissions were invited and included from members of the Reference Group who could not attend the planning day due to ministry needs. The Reference Group believe that these are necessary first steps to move forward with the divine calling within the church.

In what ways have you been drawn into Transforming your Community:

Tell us about how you have responded to the rising challenge of wellbeing and mental health support

ECCQ Health Workshops

Partnering with the Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland (ECCQ), MCCRG co-hosted a pilot *My Health For Life* workshop at Kangaroo Point Uniting Church on Saturday, 5 June 2021. Eleven leaders attended, and interests generated from other community leaders who could not attend on that day. The importance of keeping active and connections between physical well-being and mental health was emphasised. *Some photos can be viewed from this link to the MCCRG Facebook post:

<https://www.facebook.com/590349721175912/posts/1671188096425397/?d=n>

Tell us about your commitment to the Uniting Church's ongoing work of covenanting with First Peoples

MCCRG is committed to the ongoing work of covenanting with the First Peoples. One of the Reference Group's main focuses is gathering CALD communities' stories and testimonies and requests, and that their voices may be heard throughout the Synod. Hence, the Reference Group has always been on the lookout for opportunities to build relationships with the First Peoples' groups. Efforts included:

The Reference Group delegated Ps. Levon Kardashian to continue to have conversations with Trinity College Qld to explore opportunities for CALD students, candidates and ministry agents to join Walk on Country. Chairperson Rev. Louisa Yu has also been extending invitations to key leaders of the Synod Reconciliation Working Group and National Aboriginal Congress leaders who are based in Zillmere Uniting Church to plan collaborative or learning opportunities for CALD communities. E.g. MCCRГ Chairperson has approached Transforming Communities Working Group Lead at Transforming Community Launch to explore the opportunity of organising a Bush Tucker meal and fellowship for CALD communities. The MCCRГ hopes some fruitful connections can be established between First People Leaders and MCCRГ and learning opportunities can take place with COVID-19 restrictions ease.

Tell us about your how you are building a deeper understanding about what is possible as a church, called to care for all of God's creation

CLAD communities are concerned about climate change issues as many of their home countries are under threat of raised sea levels and increased damage from cyclones and adverse weather conditions. CALD learners need to be encouraged to get engaged in environmental issues. The Reference Group is paying close attention to the development of *Á Flourishing Creation: Qld Synod Action and Advocacy Plan to 2030* and is happy to offer our assistance on making related resources available to CALD communities, including written and AV recorded materials.

Tell us about any other ways you have sought to listen and respond to the needs of your community

Mostly through 1-on-1 catch-ups and small group meetings, MCCRГ sought to listen to concerns and needs of individual CALD group leader(s) and the communities they represent. On behalf of these communities, in general, the Reference Group makes collective responses and requests to Synod related boards and services, and reports to Synod Standing Committee.

Natural Disasters: As the disaster relief efforts unfolded following the volcano eruption and tsunami in Tonga in January 2022, pastoral care and prayer support have been provided to Ministry Agents who are from Tonga and the wider Pacific. Appeals for prayer support and donations to the Uniting World Tongan Tsunami Appeal is shared via MCCRГ Facebook page.

MCCRГ has also kept track on the devastation and the emotional toll on the Tongan communities and ministry agents and has monitored the need for continuing support and the potential need for a Pastoral Service.

In what ways have you been sought to reshape your part of the Synod, to be Fit for Purpose and wise stewards of all that God has given you:

Tell us about changes you have made (to systems, policies, technologies, governance) that has brought life and freedom into processes that had become stuck or burdensome.

Synod Board SharePoint site: MCCRГ meeting papers, minutes and associated papers both current and historical, were transferred to Synod Board SharePoint (a network drive on the Queensland Synod computer network) to ensure records are retained in a coordinated and consistent approach, and that the risk of confidential and sensitive information being circulated to the wrong email address are reduced. The advice and instruction to Reference Group members on the access and use of the Synod Board SharePoint site were communicated in February 2021; transfers were completed in April 2021; and SharePoint has gone live since May 2021.

CALD Networks Contact List: The Chairperson of the Reference Group has initiated the collating of a current CALD networks and leaders Contact List for effective communication, networking and event coordination purposes in April 2021. The Secretary, Jill Bow (who also assists with other Boards and Committees), worked with Reference Group members and Presbytery Admins to update and consolidate the contact details for all CALD congregations, leaders and MCCRГ ministry related contacts put into a new Excel spreadsheet. The process took place around June to July 2021.

The Reference Group has been working on clarifying its role and position within the Synod through its annual Charter Review (December 2020 to January 2021) and Governance Body Performance Review (August 2021). The latest strategic planning meeting (February 2022) was helpful to identify strategic focus areas for the Reference Group moving forward during and in the post-pandemic context.

Tell us about the pain points you identified in your operations that need to be addressed in the next season

Fluctuations of membership and current members being preoccupied with full-time and increased ministry needs due to pandemic and natural disasters has been limiting the reference group's consistency and membership longevity. Recruiting and interviewing potential new members have been an ongoing task for the Chairperson throughout the last 18 months. Building up commitment within the reference group is one of main key issues. The MCCRГ hopes to invite new members who have more availability and are committed to support the vision and mission of the MCCRГ.

Tell us about how you have stewarded your property and assets to best facilitate healthy and vital mission in your part of the Synod

Tell us about how you have sought to identify, develop and release leaders to participate in the ongoing work of the church

MCCRГ has identified several key leaders in their 20's and 30's, especially from the NextGen Arise networks. The Reference Group continues to invite them to join the reference group to plan and implement upcoming and contemporary programs and activities.

In what ways have you sought to collaborate with others across the Uniting Church as an expression of our commitment to doing Life Together:

Tell us about a part of the Uniting Church's history, DNA, story and culture that has come alive for you

MCCRГ has always been committed to the ONE CHURCH and 'Together On the Way' DNA of the Uniting Church. One of the key efforts after the 35th Synod was connecting with **Presbyteries:**

Rev. Louisa Yu and Rev. David Kim met with Presbytery-Synod-Interface (PSI) on 17 March 2021 and presented the work of the MCCRГ and NextGen Arise to the PSI members. A discussion and a survey were conducted during the meet-up. Some valued feedback on what kind of support the various presbyteries would appreciate the most from the MCCRГ were noted. Follow-up communications are on-going. E.g. some presbyteries expressed interest in inviting MCCRГ delegates to present at one of their presbytery meetings in future, and some warm contacts were made. A few presbyteries responded to the question about who their multicultural ministry champions are (a follow-up question for the appeal in MCCRГ's Report to the 35th Synod). David Kim also assisted Mary Burnett

Presbytery with their request made at the PSI meeting to support the Maroochydore Korean Fellowship merging with the hosting congregation.

In subsequent months, MCCRГ supported the Carpentaria Presbytery with board membership and Charter details as they establish a new sub-committee in their presbytery - Carpentaria Multi-Cross-Cultural Committee (MCCC). Louisa Yu and David Kim represented the MCCRГ and participated as Members-in-Association at their inauguration meeting on 26 June 2021, and Louisa joined their later meetings in July, August and October, and provided resources for a Multicultural Worship Service.

At presbytery level, MCCRГ members support presbyteries in Congregational Consultations for CALD congregations and in Vitality of Call reviews for leaders and candidates from CALD backgrounds. Pastoral support has also been provided to CALD ministry agents and candidates in response to referrals from Presbytery Ministers.

The MCCRГ members also connected with various bodies at National Assembly level, such as the Assembly Resourcing Unit and various National Conferences: Unga with the Tongan National Conference, Levon with the Niuean Nation Conference; Faye with the Samoan National Leaders Conference; David with the Korean National Conference; Louisa with the Chinese National Conference.

Tell us about ways in which you have both benefited from and contributed to other parts of the Church

MCCRГ-BCF-Presbytery Collaborations

MCCRГ task group met with BCF (Peter Armstrong and Paul Jones from TCQ) early 2021 and continued the conversations with Rev. Mark Cornford (MRP Pre Min) and Peter Armstrong (Chairperson of BCF) with regards to supporting presbytery training courses including CoE, SCM and Blue Card updates for CALD leaders and candidates. MCCRГ resolves to explore collaborative efforts in following initiatives:

- Resolution 1. Video Introduction for these trainings
- Resolution 2. Inter-Presbytery CoE, SCM training sessions for CALD leaders
- Resolution 3. MCCRГ to explore the possibility of organising an open session for POD inquirers
- Resolution 4. Collegial work with Trinity College to support CALD candidates
- MCCRГ welcomes Presbytery staff and volunteers to join effort in this exciting space for the Reference Group to carry out practical work within the life of QLD Synod.

MCCRГ Chairperson was invited to join the Methodist Conference Zimbabwe (MCZ)'s Australia-New Zealand Fellowship Business Conference (virtual) held at the end of October 2020 and again in 2021, and met key leaders of the Zimbabwean communities from Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Toowoomba, Adelaide, New Zealand and Zimbabwe. MCZ is seeking to have a national committee established in Australia. Reference Group member Peggy is their National Secretary and will continue to build connection and meaningful relationships between MCCRГ and the MCZ ANZ Fellowship.

Tell us about where you see relational tensions that need to be addressed over the next season

The Queensland Synod has transitioned from having one Multicultural Ministry agent in placement in South Moreton Presbytery to none. MCCRГ is seeking to establish a connection with Assembly's

Resourcing Unit and its Being a Multicultural Church Panel in order to strengthen Synod-wide collaboration with our Assembly counterparts. MCCRG also seeks to address the unmatched expectations of Synod and individual community leaders on the roles and responsibilities of Reference Group members. E.g. the boundaries and limitations of Reference Group members not being able to interfere with presbytery matters, and the limitation on availability because all Reference Group members are serving in full time ministry and are on Reference Group roles on a voluntary basis.

Threats and opportunities as we step into the future together

- Threat #1: Less CALD congregations to host 1st generation migrant groups; e.g. LOTE speaking churches. (LOTE - Language other than English)
- Threat #2: Candidates in Formation for Specific Ministries who hold a New Zealand passport need to meet certain income thresholds as per immigration regulations. Various presbyteries are working with BCF, TCQ and the Assembly to address this. MCCRG is providing spiritual guidance and pastoral support to CALD candidates as per requests made by relevant presbyteries.
- Threat #3: COVID-19 and community outbreaks continue to affect and hinder communities organising joint worship and events together to build relationships and to do meaningful ministries together. MCCRG members also prefer to meet face-to-face and Synod Centre is supportive in finding ways to facilitate this. *Remarks: CALD communities in general prefer gathering in worship and meet face-to-face because of cultural traditions and preferences, not simply because of technological issues).
- Threat #4: Marginalised and disengaged CALD community due to SSM issues and lack of consultation and understanding in Synod directions.
- Opportunity #1: Significant numbers of ministerial candidates from CALD backgrounds are in training, and more young leaders are emerging. MCCRG believes that English speaking multi-cultural congregations led by young and culturally diverse leaders are on the way if they are given the opportunities to grow and hone their skills.
- Opportunity #2: New ways of doing Church are explored and accepted due to COVID.
- Opportunity #3: Acceptance of UCA brand (social services like residential aged care and Blue Care) as reliable.
- Opportunity #4: Strong intergenerational DNA in CALD congregations can become good learning models for declining mainstream congregations.
- Opportunity #5: Increasing children ministry in CALD churches is an opportunity for leadership pathways.



Photos and artworks credit: Assembly Facebook post for Harmony Week 2022

Proposals to the 36th Synod

It is proposed that the 36th Synod receive this report.

Contact for report questions

Name **Rev Louisa Yu**

Position Chairperson, MCCRG

Email worldwide_intl@yahoo.com

Phone 0423 224 170