



Report from

Multi-Cross Cultural Reference Group



This report has been updated as at 16 October 2020

Report

The Multi-Cross Cultural Reference Group (MCCRG) has gone through some major changes in membership and leadership. As a result, one key focus of the MCCRG is to expand its membership and to maintain stable and sustainable leadership. It is currently in a stabilising stage and is actively looking for members who are passionate and able to contribute to the vision of ‘being a multicultural church’.

The MCCRG is focusing more on connecting with presbyteries, congregations and faith communities, to intentionally build relationships and bridges. Particularly with those who are not connected with Next Gen Arise (NGA) or MCCRG initiatives or are still navigating through the impact of the Assembly resolutions on Same Gender Marriage and of the COVID-19 pandemic.

About our Reference Group

Cultural diversity is a rapidly growing feature of the church’s life and the Australian community in which we witness and serve.

The MCCRG is a governing body of the Queensland Synod that seeks to encourage, inform and guide congregations, presbyteries and Synod agencies as they incorporate into their life and mission. The Uniting Church in Australia’s commitment to ‘being a multicultural church’ (The 4th Assembly, the 11th Assembly and the 13th Assembly, 1989–2012).

Focus since the last Synod

The three key focuses of the MCCRG are:

- 1. Enabling**
 - Help develop stronger links between culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) faith communities, congregations and the Uniting Church (primarily through presbyteries and the MCCRG), 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.
- 2. Equipping**
 - Build on the established Synod-wide next generation CALD leaders’ network and development program—Next Gen Arise (NGA).
- 3. Connecting**
 - Create cross-cultural experiences of worship and fellowship, which among other things, foster and showcase the leadership and gifts of young people and women in our CALD communities.
 - Establish effective platforms of communication to connect people across cultural groups and encourage wider Uniting Church cross-cultural engagement.

Highlights:

The key focus of the MCCRГ included:

1. Focus group 1

Help develop stronger links between CALD faith communities/congregations and the Uniting Church to enhance the mission of the church.

- The main action plan is:
 - Establishing data on CALD churches and leaders in Queensland including national conferences (combine effort with focus group 3 as they started working on such data for effective communication and promotion of events).
 - Gathering Uniting Church in Australia worship and sacrament related resources in languages other than English e.g. baptism, holy communion, weddings, funerals, *Basis of Union*, Uniting Church in Australia constitutions, regulations and other Uniting Church comments on current issues.
 - Building an online based community amongst CALD leaders by possibly building up a mobile app for easier communication.
- Tentative solutions being explored include:
 - Offer a MCCRГ delegate to participate in each presbytery's consultation team for CALD congregations.
 - Explore the possibility of developing a mobile phone-based application for CALD leaders and congregations which can create an easier platform for people to share their thoughts, concerns and prayers.

2. Focus group 2

Build on the established Synod-wide next generation CALD leadership network and development program—Next Gen Arise (NGA).

- Va Tuilovoni was formally employed as the Project Worker of NGA (0.2 FTE) in June 2019. Va worked closely with and under the supervision of Simon Gomersall, Lecturer in Historical and Contemporary Mission and Director of Activate (Gap Year Program) at Trinity College Queensland. Funding for the position ceased from 30 June 2020 as budget became unavailable. Va and the core team of NGA are committed to continuing the ministry of NGA on a voluntary basis.
- NGA mission: The mission is to develop disciple makers who can inspire a movement of young people from all nations to passionately follow Jesus, selflessly build each other up, faithfully take places of leadership in the church and beyond, and fearlessly change the world.
- NGA vision: NGA exists to see the next generation from all nations empowered to be disciple makers.
- Other information: The NGA team is seeking ways to strengthen the connection with local congregations and reflect the perspectives and voices of their younger leaders in the life of the NGA.
- Many events and worship gatherings were shifted to online platforms during COVID-19.
- MCCRГ delegates will continue to meet with Va and Simon for networking and strategic planning purposes. The MCCRГ hope for the NGA space to continue as somewhere

young people can 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 discover their God-given callings.

3. Focus group 3

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

- The MCCRГ organised a Multicultural Pentecost Service in June 2019 and an online service in May 2020. The services included worship in different languages, fellowship and feasting (the last two aspects were absent in May 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions).
- The MCCRГ connected with various bodies on National Assembly levels including national conferences and the Assembly Resourcing Unit when they came to Queensland for visits.
- The MCCRГ participated at local multicultural community events e.g. the annual Luminous Lantern Parade and Mosaic Festival.
- The MCCRГ engaged with The Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland (ECCQ) in planning how church communities can participate and benefit from their My Health for Life Program.
- The MCCRГ responded to the request from the Synod to participate in the Queensland Government's Multicultural Month Initiative by generating inspirational stories featuring eight members in the Queensland Synod who are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The stories explored what it means to be one Church and how multicultural church enriches our faith, our worship and our witness in Queensland.
- The MCCRГ supported the Queensland Synod in responding to the COVID-19 restrictions on physical gatherings by producing an online MCCRГ Pentecost Sunday Service. Segments of the liturgy in multiple languages were produced by various Uniting Church CALD community groups for the wider church community to use in their Pentecost Service on 31 May 2020.
- The MCCRГ Facebook page was maintained as a platform of communication to connect people across cultural groups and to encourage wider cross-cultural engagement in the Uniting Church. The number of followers and editors continue to increase and the MCCRГ is happy to continue to promote MCCRГ and Synod related news and multicultural events on this platform.

Please see the [attached](#) presentation for further supporting information and highlights.

Project Plenty

MCCRГ members participated in the multicultural Project Plenty consultation in 2019 which facilitated wider engagement with existing and emerging leaders from CALD communities. Other participants included leaders from Pacific Islander, Zimbabwean, Ibero-Latino, Taiwanese and South Sudanese communities.



MCCRG members later heard the Project Plenty: What We Heard report during the regular bi-monthly meeting in April 2020 and contributed feedback to the Project Plenty team. MCCRG members and the wider CALD community network were also invited to a virtual MCCRG Project Plenty workshop, co-hosted by the MCCRG and the Project Plenty Team on 10 July 2020. The workshop included a presentation of the draft *Shared life. Flourishing Communities.* report, and feedback from MCCRG members and CALD church community leaders.

Challenges/risks as we progress

The MCCRG has gone through some major changes in membership and leadership. A key focus is to expand its membership and to maintain stable and sustainable leadership. The MCCRG is in a stabilising stage and is actively looking for members who are passionate and able to contribute to the vision of being a multicultural church.

Being time poor (as most of the MCCRG members are in full-time placements) and having only seven elected members on the team has been a challenge that has limited the service and contribution to the Synod priority direction of being a multicultural church. The approach for the MCCRG in 2020 was to “do less but do it well” and to put the best effort in supporting the Queensland Synod in responding to the challenges and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

For consideration

The MCCRG would like to invite the various presbyteries to nominate at least one multicultural ministry representative from the presbytery to join the network.

Proposals to the 35th Synod

It is proposed that the 35th Synod receive this report.

Contact for report questions

Name	Rev Louisa Yu
Position	Chairperson – Multi-Cross Cultural Reference Group
Email	lyu@wmq.org.au
Phone	0417 740 972