

Report for
31st Queensland Synod
October 2014



Report from
North Queensland Presbytery

Context:

North Queensland Presbytery, serving the beautiful tropics and outback of northern Queensland, Cape York and the Gulf communities.

Responses to our Priority Directions since last Synod

Enabling a demonstrated commitment to the shared Call and Vision

Continued Presbytery gatherings and ministry retreats which foster a sense of working together on a common goal have always been a hallmark of the North Queensland Presbytery.

Some tentative steps have been made in linking Presbytery placements with Blue Care chaplaincy positions. While these have had a varying rate of success, we believe this is a path that should be explored more fully with a greater focus on relationship building.

Working towards our Priority Directions in the future

We will be exploring involving our prison, Blue Care and other chaplains within the locale of the Presbytery in order to provide support for them and to more fully understand how we as a Presbytery might best interact with the agencies of the church.

Responses to our Priority Directions since last Synod

Promoting a discipline of prayer and spirituality (individual and corporate)

The *Call* Conference was held in Townsville in order to equip, encourage and support the Uniting Church in North Queensland, along with other denominations in the Townsville region.

The Townsville churches gather weekly for intentional prayer.

Presbytery Prompts give people an opportunity to engage in prayerful dialogue with shared stories and news from across the Presbytery and Synod.

Working towards our Priority Directions in the future

The Presbytery is working towards the 2015 *Call* conference as well as encouraging the model of shared prayer in Townsville into other parts of the Presbytery.

Work into Worship is an initiative to allocate more space for significant worship and prayer at Presbytery gatherings. This was first modelled at the July 2014 Presbytery leadership team and will be introduced across all Presbytery gatherings. The idea is to foster a sense that all work of the Presbytery is actually an act of worship.

Responses to our Priority Directions since last Synod

Developing sustainable mission orientated organisation (way of being) for the Church in Queensland

The realisation that the amount of work required to be undertaken by the Presbytery Minister/chairperson has left the missional focus lagging. We are currently adopting a three-year trial of having a Presbytery Minister focussed on the vision, apostolic and pastoral concerns of the Presbytery and a Presbytery Minister Admin with specific focus on compliance and infrastructure.

The intentional placing of the Presbytery Minister in the northern part of the Presbytery (currently Atherton) and the Presbytery Minister Admin in the southern area (Townsville) has resulted in restructuring the Presbytery Office and website to give more flexibility in both resourcing the Presbytery and using technology to its full potential.

There also has been a greater reliance placed upon the three zone chairpersons to be conduits through whom the Presbytery ministers relate to the congregations within the zones.

Working towards our Priority Directions in the future

The three-year trial of leadership is to be reviewed after two years with an interim point of September 2015 to see if we need to tweak the model.

With the freeing-up of the workload for the Presbytery Minister, work is being done on overhauling our consultation review system; moving to more intentional yearly conversation, five-yearly consultations and developing a strategy and procedure for conflict consultations.

Responses to our Priority Directions since last Synod

Facilitating renewal of leadership for the mission of the Church

There is a more structured approach to how ministerial retreats are operated, alternating between a guided retreat and a more open-space style. The structured retreat gives opportunities for training while the open-space retreat encourages the development of interconnected relationships.

Lay leadership training; for example a Trinity College short course on Christian Apologetics held in Edmonton in June is helping to focus on the importance of lay education within the leadership of the Presbytery.

Working towards our Priority Directions in the future

Some thought has been given to expanding the ministry retreat model to other people in leadership within congregations across the Presbytery.

With the Presbytery Minister enabled to undertake more intentional pastoral care, more effort will be put into place concerning the length of placements for agents. This will result in either more support or suggestions for renewal of leadership in the placement.

Responses to our Priority Directions since last Synod

Engaging in opportunities for intentional, open community connections and partnerships

Connection with Youth with a Mission (YWAM): YWAM is based in Townsville and operates a medical ship from the port with a focus on our nearest international neighbour Papua New Guinea.

Neighbour to Neighbour Townsville: we are working cooperatively with Townsville City Council and Townsville churches to serve the community through an annual backyard blitz.

Stable on the Strand continues to draw the Townsville community together.

Aitkenvale partnership through UnitingWorld with Bairiki KPC in Kiribati: relationships have been built through sharing faith and enhancing education, particularly with their pre-school.

Most congregations across the Presbytery are involved in local community events such as the Burdekin's Craft Spectacular and Atherton's soup day. Another example is the way in which the Port Douglas congregation engages with the local community, particularly during the tourist season. Each Sunday markets are held in the town near the water; nestled among the stalls is St Mary's by the Sea, a favoured venue for weddings. Every Sunday the Uniting Church holds a service, with the numbers varying from 18 to 120 depending on the time of year. The congregation is diverse, both denominationally and geographically, with visitors from all around the world. It is estimated that over the years more than 60 nationalities have attended this church. The service is broadcast over loudspeakers while the markets are underway and people often turn up and stay for worship.

Working towards our Priority Directions in the future

Further trips to Bairiki with a focus on medical improvements for better health outcomes for people suffering with diabetes.

A more intentional relationship with Calvary Presbytery is being fostered and we hope that this will bring better outcomes for both our Presbyteries in terms of support and mutual understanding/reconciliation.

Discovering new ways in which congregations can become "inside-out" in engaging in community events across the region.

Possibilities are opening up in many communities to work towards cooperative ministry and mission with the North Queensland Diocese of the Anglican Church. Discussions will begin about possible joint agreements in Tully/Mission Beach, with further discussions to occur in the future.

Key achievements/initiatives

The reconfiguring of the Presbytery minister role into pastoral and administrative roles in order to keep ahead of compliance issues as well as to develop better relationships into the future.

Challenges/risks as we progress:

There is a risk in exploring future ministry models of driving wedges between already vulnerable people who cling to the past while admitting that things must change in the future. These negotiations must and will take time in order to ensure that we don't end up with ministry models not owned by the people.

Recommendations/strategic decisions for Synod:

Continuing the dialogue between Uniting, Anglican, Lutheran and Catholic denominations through the Living Churches in Rural Queensland process.

Engaging congregations with the *For the Sake of the Gospel* report and the *Anglican-Uniting Church Covenant of Association* reports could assist rural congregations in undertaking the same kinds of discussions that were made leading up to the formation of the Uniting Church in Australia. This could be developed as a series of Bible studies or discussion seeds.

Contact for report questions:

Name: Rev Garry Hardingham

email: presmin@ucanq.com.au

phone: 0409 276 940