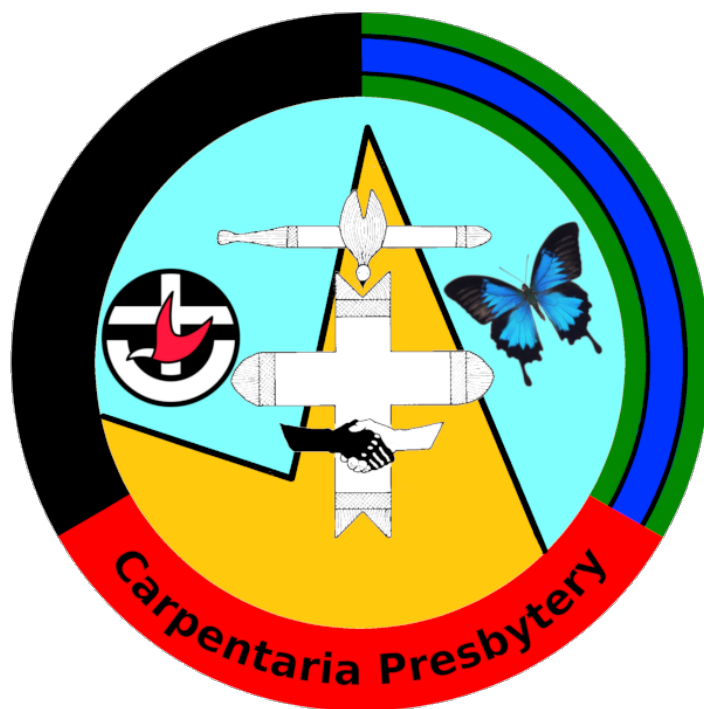


a daring
HOPE
SYNOD 36



Report from
Presbytery of Carpentaria



Report

Context

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

Our Presbytery extends from Thursday Island in the north, west to the Northern Territory border, south to Bowen on the coast, and south to the western communities such as Boulia serviced by the Carpentaria Remote Bush Chaplaincy based in Cloncurry.

The Presbytery contains a wide variety of cultural groups, the key ones being Indigenous, Korean and South-sea Islander communities mainly centred around seasonal workers.

However, the two defining natures of Carpentaria Presbytery are remoteness and weather. The distances are vast. For example, a trip from Cairns to Mount Isa is over 12 hours each way. A trip to Weipa from Townsville is similar. During the wet season, often travel, even between Townsville and Cairns, is fraught. Each year the Cape Development Road can be expected to be closed between December and May.

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

Education and lay training have been a primary focus as the ministry of our congregations grows. This includes an opportunity for formal training in ministry and leadership as well as safe ministry with children, code of ethics and compliance.

Commitment to supporting congregations has been a significant focus over the last eighteen months as congregations come out of the Covid pandemic a bit battered and bruised. Work is being done in helping congregations regain their footing while seeking new or innovative directions for further growth and stability.

Pursuit of financial sustainability through property development. With a clear focus on ensuring that the funding required to support rural and remote congregations across the Presbytery, the Presbytery is focusing on how to better utilise its small but significant property assets to maximise a financial return. The two main projects, at the moment, are the Childcare centre in Weipa and the property development on Thursday Island.

Shared Life, Flourishing Communities

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

- Discipling has always been a major focus of the congregations in the Carpentaria Presbytery. Post-Covid, numerous congregations are utilising the new relationships formed in the physical and digital world to reposition themselves and reengage in discipling programs.

- The Presbytery holds an annual Northern Madness which attracts children, youth and young adults from across the Presbytery. Larger centres like Townsville are rediscovering how youth and young adults' ministry can be supported and encouraged.
- The Uniting Church has a high profile within most communities across North Queensland, as often the Uniting Church is the only reformed church within the community.

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

- The Presbytery is working in partnership with Uniting Care in establishing connect-100 ministries, mainly focused on Indigenous community development. The Cairns Southern Corridor project launched in March 2022, and the Townsville project is under active investigation, with numerous conversations already underway.
- There is an ongoing project for the connection of solar panels on as many Carpentaria Properties as possible. Understandably, remoteness and numerous "off-grid" communities present a challenge to this project. But things are progressing.

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

- In many ways, the Carpentaria Presbytery is a post-denominational church. Many of the new leadership people within congregations have little or no appreciation of the structure or function of the Uniting Church. This frustration and constant need to educate new church councils in the fundamentals of the Uniting Church is often a cause for contention. However, with diligence and systematic training, we are getting there.
- With the assistance of the property office of the Synod, the Presbytery is re-imagining how to best utilise its current properties and how and where to develop new properties. Partnerships with Uniting Care has been a fruitful source of conversation and forward planning.
- Carpentaria Presbytery currently has four people undertaking PODs, with a few more expected to start in the coming year. The Presbytery is committed to raising a new cohort of indigenous leaders, but this is a slow and somewhat fraught process in which the Presbytery is, nevertheless, progressing in.

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

- The relationship between the UCA and the Anglican church, in particular, is strong and the recent formation of a collaborating congregation in Cloncurry is a sign of increasing cooperation.
- We believe that the Carpentaria Presbytery is a significant contributor to the life, vitality, and diversity of the Uniting Church.

Threats and opportunities as we step into the future together

The constant threats to the life of the church in an increasingly secular society are not seen as an existential threat to the mission and direction of the Presbytery and its congregations.

There is a quiet determination to be a discipling Presbytery, with many people putting up their hands to volunteer for ministry opportunities.

The risk we face is the inability of the church, as a whole, to move swiftly enough to catch the changes within our communities.

We believe it is important that systems are developed that allow fast responses in a constantly changing world without compromising the importance of due diligence and good governance.

Proposals to the 36th Synod

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

Contact for report questions

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