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HOPE
SYNOD 36



Report from
Presbytery of South Moreton



Report

Context

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

South Moreton encompasses traditional lands of the Turrbal-Jagera, Nunukul, Yugambah-Kombumerri and Mununjali people, and the local government areas of Brisbane City (south), all of Redland City, Logan City and Gold Coast City, and part of the Scenic Rim and the Tweed.

The demographic trajectory is defined by rapid population growth, particularly in Gold Coast City (to double in size by 2050, especially in the northern corridor around Pimpama, Coomera and Oxenford), parts of Redland City, and the rural edges of Logan City south of Park Ridge to Jimboomba and Flagstone. The Presbytery's task is to foster encourage, support and oversee the mission and ministry of the Uniting Church in this region.

We have 32 Congregations and Faith Communities meeting in 41 locations; an active ministry list of 52 agents in Congregations and 11 in chaplaincies and agencies; 7 candidates in formation; and 4 Period of Discernment participants.

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

- Provide encouragement and support to Congregations and ministry agents through the continuing impacts of Covid.
- Review the resourcing needs and opportunities for missional development in the Presbytery.
- Continue to develop the church's presence in the emerging urban centre of Flagstone through continued development of the Flagstone Community Centre.
- Support the development of collaborative approaches to mission and ministry, either through guiding/resourcing local Congregation amalgamations, or fostering networks (e.g. Op Shops, and Gold Coast City ministry and mission network).
- Support for Congregations facing the challenge of transition.
- Develop training for Church Councils.
- Build culture of hope, care and connection across the Presbytery amid the challenges we're facing.

The loss of the Presbytery's two full-time resourcing roles (mission/families, and multicultural) from March 2021 due to budget cuts diminished our work in these aspects of our life and mission. These roles have not been replaced while Presbytery has sought to identify its strategic resourcing priorities, a process that only now is reaching some conclusion. In addition, some critical Congregation matters have required significant and sustained attention by Presbytery leadership, and we have had three Acting Chairpersons since mid-2020 (particular acknowledgement and appreciation is due to Lisa Fuchs who gave 13 months of excellent leadership, concluding March 2022). These factors have impacted the Presbytery's strategic and resourcing capacities, yet missional energy, commitment and confidence remain high across most of our Congregations.

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

- Some Congregations have developed discipleship pathways or disciplines for their people (e.g., Newlife's Catalyst 'year of discipleship' program).
- Steve Drinkall spoke to Presbytery about Kingdom Access Places, a way of refocusing and reframing church involvement in terms of discipleship and mission.
- Presbytery promotes learning opportunities on discipleship.
- Support given to our Period of Discernment participants, applicants for ordination, candidates and lay preachers.

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

- It's been exciting to see significant growth and new developments in these ministries in places like Nerang (new Family at 4 service) and Elanora (new DWELL youth hub), in addition to those Congregations already investing substantially in this (Newlife, Real Life Christian Church, Southside UC, Brisbane Taiwanese UC). This ministry area is a priority portfolio in the new Redland City UC.
- Messy Church, Mainly Music, young adults groups, day camps and school holiday programs continue in numerous Congregations.
- Ministry in schools continues through chaplaincies at the Moreton Bay Colleges and local support for State school chaplaincies. Real Life has just created appointed two children and youth Pastors who will serve in both the Congregation and Calvary Christian College.

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

- Banora Point UC is undergoing a journey of Congregation regeneration, reimagining its entire life and witness in its changing community context. To support them, Presbytery produced 3 videos with UCA mission leaders describing what Congregation regeneration involves.
- Presbytery is working with several Congregations which recognise they are on the threshold of critical, even urgent, need to intentionally review their life and mission to fruitfully engage with their communities.
- Recent and imminent church amalgamations have involved substantial reimagining of the identity and posture of churches in regional areas – Southside UC (from 4 Congregations, January 2020); Redland City (5 Congregations, from January 2022) and Burleigh Heads (Faith Community and Congregation, from July 2022). Amalgamations may be missionally driven but inevitably are organisationally complex and pastorally challenging. They are long-term, even generational, ventures. Presbytery has supported each of these in different ways and is holding a workshop on church amalgamations with Phil McCredden in late April.
- The growing interest in church-run Op Shops as front lines of community engagement led the Presbytery to convene the first UCA Op Shops seminar in February 2022. Interest was strong, the event was great, the response was very positive. As a result, an ongoing Qld-wide UCA Op Shop network has been established and a second seminar will run mid-2022. Alongside the obvious business, retail and governance aspects, Op Shops can become a primary place

of pastoral and discipleship engagement with the volunteers, and an interface with community needs and opportunities wherein a Congregation may reimagine its mission and service.

- The Presbytery's initiative at Flagstone is a fresh imagining of the church serving the unmet needs of an emerging community through the Flagstone Community Centre, run by our Community Development Officer, Susan Hawke. This is a long-term venture, building partnerships with UCA, developers, community leaders and government stakeholders, embodying the holistic care of Christ for all people, out of which will emerge opportunities for witness, discipleship and worship. Since mid-2021, major consultancy work has been undertaken to secure financial viability through the next development phases.

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

- Presbytery has sought to care for the mental health and wellbeing of its ministry agents through monthly Healthy Ministry Breakfasts (despite Covid impacts) and offering retreat days with self-guided spiritual retreat resources (we did not hold a gathered retreat in 2020 or 2021 due to Covid).
- We have promoted Lifeline's Psychological First Aid courses, and Care Essentials training in the Presbytery.
- We sense a growing intentionality in our Congregations to make connections with people who have been isolated due to Covid, and not take for granted the opportunity for fellowship and pastoral care in craft groups, social gatherings, etc.

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

- There has been some engagement with Aunty Jean Phillips and Dr Anne Pattel-Gray (World Vision), but nothing specific has emerged from these discussions.
- Some Congregations are making attempts to either research their local First People's history, or engage in NAIDOC, Reconciliation Week and Day of Mourning events.
- We recognise that the area from Logan City through to Ipswich has Qld's largest First People's population, but there is no organised UCA presence among them (indeed, no effective, viable Christian church presence). There is work for us to do.

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

- Presbytery has promoted Fair Trade products, several Congregations have invited Fair Trade advocates to lead worship, and at least two of our Congregations have held Fair Trade community fairs. Fair Trade promotes sustainable agricultural practices and justice for human labour and enterprise.
- Congregations are taking up the Synod's offer to assist with solar panel purchase.
- Congregations commemorate harvest days, mark the Season of Creation (September each year), and participate in climate justice awareness activities. The leadership and ideas offered through Plenty will give more traction and focus to this.

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

- In the wake of the recent flooding in SEQ, several Congregations offered emergency relief - food, shelter, replacement of household goods - to affected people in their community. Some ministry agents offered to be part of local chaplaincy response.
- Southside UC has focused on the needs of isolated women from non-English speaking backgrounds in the community, offering friendship and hospitality, as their first new mission initiative which began in 2021.
- Mudgeeraba UC has engaged in an intentional process of listening to their community as they set new mission directions ahead of calling a new ministry agent.
- See comments about Op Shops and Flagstone above.

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

- The admin tasks in the Presbytery Office have been realigned to provide sharper focus on critical areas, including events, communications, and admin support for PRC.
- We have sought to build into our Presbytery meetings a stronger culture of sharing, learning, inspiration and engagement in the substantial work and challenges of the Presbytery, with less time on routine business. Regrettably, Covid has created disruptions and driven us to online meetings more than we would prefer.

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

- We need to clarify how the Presbytery evaluates and guides its strategic mission directions and priorities.
- We need to be clearer about the governance responsibilities of the Presbytery and how they are fulfilled.
- Having moved to a Presbytery server, we need to convert our paper archive to digital, and reorganise our digital filing systems.

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

- Presbytery recently engaged a long-term lease of a disused church site for a community school.
- When a manse that needed significant repairs was to be sold, the Presbytery offered (and was permitted) to take responsibility for the repairs, thus enhancing the property's value either for sale or for continued use as a manse or for lease. This has enabled the property to be retained in a superior condition.

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

- Several Congregations intentionally create pathways for emerging leaders. Presbytery's 'core competency' training creates opportunities to engage these people with the UCA's vision, mission, and ministry code of ethics. These people may move into Pastor positions or apply to candidate for ordination.

- Presbytery has promoted the Plentiful Leadership mentor program and encouraged specific people to apply.
- We have approached specific people to apply to be members of Assembly or Synod, or to nominate for a Presbytery role.
- We have been actively considering how to draw on the gifts and experiences of ministry agents and leaders in the Presbytery to be teachers, facilitators and leaders in resourcing the wider Presbytery in key areas - e.g., church planting, discipleship, community engagement. There is a realisation we have a lot of untapped capacity in the Presbytery which could make a significant difference to the flourishing of many of our churches and ministry contexts.

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

- Even though it is a Presbytery initiative, the developing UCA presence at Flagstone has always been conceived as a whole of UCA undertaking. We are discovering some of the constraints which apply to our service agencies, but we have benefitted enormously from the support of the Synod's Business Development Unit, Strategic Resources and the FIP Board. We are about to move into an exciting new phase of this project where we will seek the support of the wider UCA through its people and Congregations. Our vision is for a church presence there that truly reflects the heart, passion, mission, vision and generosity of the whole Uniting Church.
- We are very grateful for the support shown to the Presbytery by UnitingCare Qld's Connect-100 scheme. One Connect-100 initiative is already in place and making a big contribution at Elanora UC. We are keen to progress plans for other Connect-100 connections at Logan Central and Flagstone.
- Similarly, we are grateful for the commitment which Trinity College Qld has to respond to the training needs of the church, to engage people in our churches with relevant learning opportunities, and to work with Presbyteries in identifying courses and running them.
- The collaboration and trust evident in the shared spaces of the Combined Presbyteries Mission Pool, the Presbytery Synod Interface and, if agreed by this Synod, the Mission Coordination and Collaboration Committee, augurs well for greater cohesion and mutuality between Presbyteries, agencies and Synod.
- Presbytery acknowledges it needs to do more work in building closer links with our schools and colleges.

Threats and opportunities as we step into the future together

This report should note that, on 26 March 2022, a special session of Presbytery decided to dissolve the Congregation of Sunnybank UC. The grounds stated were that it was incapable and unwilling to fulfil the responsibilities of a Congregation, specifically in relation to following the requirements for calling a minister, meeting to transact the business that belongs to the Congregation, and maintaining necessary and appropriate relationships with the Presbytery and Synod. The concerns related to unauthorised ministry arrangements put in place in July 2021 which the Church Council and Congregation would not discuss with the PRC. The authorisation, oversight and accountability of

ministry is key to the integrity and coherence of the church and the health and wellbeing of our church communities. At the time of writing, the Presbytery is exploring options and considering requests relating to a new UCA presence on the site.

Threats:

- Focus on organisational mechanics rather than relational dynamics.
- Either panic or fear about our survival, or complacency and inertia that as long as we're okay, it's all okay.
- Feeling limited by what we aren't and what we don't have, instead of empowered by what we are and what we do have.
- Hoarding for ourselves rather than generosity to bless others.

Opportunities:

- The strength and generosity of larger Congregations to resource and contribute to the wider church.
- The conversations that continue to sharpen our understandings of, and commitments to, the Plenty priorities.
- The growing collaborative spirit across the church.
- Confidence that we can adapt as circumstances require (Covid).
- To learn again what it is to be church, and who it is who calls us into being. Take the focus off ourselves and on to God being at work in the world with compassion, justice, healing and hope.

Proposals to the 36th Synod

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

Contact for report questions

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