

Report for
31st Queensland Synod
October 2014



Report from
Multi-cross Cultural Committee

Context:

To be a culturally and linguistically diverse Uniting Church sharing in Christ's mission. We seek to achieve this through supporting, promoting, encouraging and resourcing multi-cross cultural ministry within the wider church in Queensland.

Our goals:

- a. to celebrate and build awareness of the multi-cross cultural nature of the Uniting Church across the Queensland Synod, agencies, ecumenical partners, non-government organisations and government
- b. to provide opportunities and resources for multi-cross cultural leadership among culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) congregations and faith communities
- c. to build and develop skills for cultural relationships:
 - enabling the sharing of stories and ideas, identifying issues and partnered solutions by CALD communities and multi-cross cultural churches
 - assisting and facilitating the planting of new congregations/faith communities
 - gathering information to assist the Synod and the committee's work in advocacy, networking and communication across CALD communities.
- d. to resource second and later generations:
 - to explore and enhance the diverse gifts and skills of second and later generations in CALD communities for mission
 - to equip and provide opportunities for second generation and later generations to make their unique contributions to leadership in the Uniting Church.

Our strategies:

1. to strategically participate in the life of the church as a voice to advocate, support and advise the Synod, presbyteries and congregations on multi-cross cultural ministry matters
2. to resource councils of the Synod, presbyteries and congregations in building relationships and to participate and provide input to the shared call and vision of the *Together on the way, enriching community* process
3. to support those who are gathering CALD communities together around shared languages and cultures
4. to assist in building relationships with Indigenous, refugee, inter-faith and ecumenical partners
5. to facilitate leadership development with the first and second generation and later generation communities.

Further reflections:

The committee gives notice in this report that following a process of review and reflection the shared understanding is that the Multi-Cross Cultural Committee needs to recommit to finding new and creative opportunities for CALD communities to fully participate in the life and decision-making processes of the church.

The rationale behind such a move is that multi-cross cultural ministry is a growing, vibrant, functional and 'recognised body' which has the capacity to implement its goals and strategies to better serve the church and diverse cultures within the Queensland Synod and wider ecumenical and secular communities.

The Multi-Cross Cultural Committee has the capability and worth to be that 'recognised body'.

It is also the understanding of the committee that the Queensland Synod needs to support and reconsider committing itself in due course to creating a paid position or full-time placement to further advance this much-needed work with a wider scope into the future.

Responses to our Priority Directions since last Synod

Enabling a demonstrated commitment to the shared Call and Vision

Congregation information and education

A number of seminars were held to enable members and ministry leaders from CALD communities to have clarity about our shared call and vision. The *Together on the way, enriching community* vision was explained.

The committee took a proactive role in encouraging and resourcing individuals to participate in various learning events, especially through Pilgrim Learning Community. We now have a significant number of people from various communities who have attained certificates in Old Testament and New Testament studies, Christology, theology and the lay preachers' course. The accessibility and format of these units have further enhanced the capacity of CALD communities to engage in mission.

The committee has identified the following areas as key domains for further work:

- to develop resources about CALD communities within the Uniting Church in Australia
- to develop resources aimed at improving cultural awareness and relationships within the wider church
- to provide workshops on how the wider church and CALD communities can be equal partners in decision-making and mission
- to continue to provide Trinity Theological College students with intensive courses on CALD communities
- to develop processes to assist new CALD communities to become part of the church
- to develop resources to assist local congregations to become culturally aware and supportive of their CALD members
- to develop orientation and induction processes for new employees that includes cultural awareness
- to meet with Presbytery Ministers to discuss how CALD communities can confidently and fully participate
- to continue to develop and mentor young CALD leaders
- to provide translations of key church documents. *How to Read the Bible* (a resource from the Assembly Doctrine Working Group) is now available in four languages with the possibility of further translations. Other documents will be available (post 31st Synod) on our website including: the *Basis of Union*, the *Manual for meetings*, and worship and discipleship resources
- *Empowering women's leadership* aims at enabling and resourcing women in leadership roles within their cultural communities, congregations, wider church and secular community
- involvement and support of Pasifika Women's Alliance Inc., Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland, Diabetes Queensland and Brisbane Prostate Cancer Support Group in promoting and resourcing health awareness.

Working towards our Priority Directions in the future

A Synod-wide anniversary

As a multicultural church we hold a shared call and vision. In 1985 the Uniting Church made the historical statement that '*We are a multicultural church*' and as such would seek to provide opportunities for a fuller participation in the worship and mission of the church.

In 2015 the church will revisit that declaration and celebrate the 30th anniversary.

The committee believes that how congregations, presbyteries and the Synod and its agencies might celebrate this pivotal occasion should be a primary and significant focus for the Queensland Synod in 2015.

Responses to our Priority Directions since last Synod

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

- *The prayer language of cultures* video resource was created by the committee in 2013 and now needs to be edited for wider distribution. The video provides a multi-cultural perspective on prayer. It is envisaged that this prayer resource will be available post 31st Synod.
- A video of the *Service of Lament* concerning the treatment of asylum seekers organised in Pitt Street Uniting Church by the Synod of NSW ACT, UnitingCare and UnitingJustice is available at www.givehope.org.au
- It was noted that Pastor Moses Leth returned home safely after spending time in Sudan over the December 2013 to January 2014 period. A prayer service for families affected by the South Sudan unrest was held on 22 February 2014 at St David's Uniting Church, Coopers Plains.
- The committee supported the Redlands Multicultural Choirs Festival organised by Rev Viliami Mila and the Redland Bay/Victoria Point Churches. This event was a great success and brought together the prayer and spiritual life of diverse communities in the Redlands and from around Brisbane including our Uniting Church multicultural faith communities.

Working towards our Priority Directions in the future

It is the hope of the committee that regular combined worship services be held across CALD communities in Queensland beginning in 2015. This will foster fellowship and goodwill among people of all generations. Prayer and worship resources generated by these gatherings would be of benefit to all.

The aim is to begin with a worship gathering of the second and third generations with further planning to create prayer resources.

Responses to our Priority Directions since last Synod

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

One of the committee's key strategies was to resource CALD communities and equip leaders to participate with confidence in the processes of the Uniting Church. A national effort has been made through the Assembly Multicultural and Cross-cultural National Reference Committee to consider the translation of essential documents that guide and govern the way the councils of the church meet. It was identified that the *Manual for meetings* needs to be considered in the following light:

- availability: is it available to CALD communities in a form that is accessible to cultural groups?
- usefulness: is it useful to communities with cultural ways of doing things?
- accessibility: including language
- training/equipping: are people being empowered/disempowered and is there a way of better valuing CALD wisdom and meeting processes?

Working towards our Priority Directions in the future

- The mentoring process for second generation and women CALD leaders is a key area the committee is looking to resource and develop.

- In light of the significant number of CALD lay preachers from multicultural communities the committee is exploring how these lay preachers might be made available for congregations beyond their own ethnic community. This will further enrich the multicultural nature of the church.
- Empowering women's leadership is a high priority for future work.
- Workshops and events on women's health, leadership forums and opportunities for lay preachers have been facilitated.
- We are supporting the network of emerging young leaders by looking at training second and third generation young people who have not been engaged with the life of the church.
- The current mapping process of CALD communities and heavily mixed congregations/faith communities will identify and develop a Multi-Cross Cultural Committee network and foster fellowship and the possible resourcing of training and mentoring in areas such as the Period of Discernment.

Responses to our Priority Directions since last Synod

Facilitating renewal of leadership for the mission of the Church

Our key focus for ongoing work is in regard to the second and later generations of children, youth and young adults. Some initiatives include:

- the need for cross-cultural youth gatherings especially among CALD communities in the form of organised youth rallies
- supporting emerging young leaders e.g. Tongan youth (Tongan National Conference), Samoan youth supporting community projects at Inala, Fijian youth at Annerley supporting and helping primary and high school students with homework
- improving communication and relationship skills between the different communities of the church
- exploring differing methods of communicating information to church communities
- the development of a Multi-Cross Cultural Committee page on the Synod website
- the translation of key documents
- regular visits to meetings of presbyteries and congregations by committee members
- providing committee reports to Standing Committee and at presbytery and congregation visits.

Working towards our Priority Directions in the future

A key area of work for the committee will be in regard to the process of discernment.

It is important that the whole church is involved in the process of discernment, including insights from CALD communities on what discernment means in their cultural context and framework.

It is hoped that a multi-cross cultural resource can be developed for use in the process of discernment at Presbytery, Synod and Assembly gatherings.

Responses to our Priority Directions since last Synod

Engaging in opportunities for intentional, open community connections and partnerships

The committee requests the Synod business committee to provide an opportunity at the 32nd Synod to facilitate a multi-cross cultural theology forum in which the Synod would engage with the biblical and theological frameworks of CALD communities. The aim is:

- to give priority to the support and development of leadership gifts among youth and young adults
- to develop and include programs for second generation youth and young adults, run alongside other programs at national conferences.

Health management

Another dimension of the committee's work is in the area of health awareness and management in CALD communities.

Through its support of the Pasifika Women's Alliance Inc. and local government health agencies working in the area of public health the committee has broadened the reach of its ministry.

Workshops and forums have been held at Annerley Uniting Church about cancer awareness and at Inala about diabetes. A diabetes workshop is planned for Chermside/Kedron Uniting Church in August 2014.

Working towards our Priority Directions in the future

Health issues awareness and management programs:

- a key focus of the Multi-Cross Cultural Committee agenda
 - will support and encourage physical well-being and healthy lifestyles among CALD peoples
 - will support and encourage life-changing experiences relative to the church's teaching, prayer, worship and the proclamation of the Word (theology of the Church)
 - planning for a men's health awareness program is in progress
 - the committee needs to address these issues with youth and young adults.
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Key achievements/initiatives

- Men's Health Awareness Workshop November 2014
- encourage health awareness and better management in CALD communities
- advance building skills and embracing women leadership in church, ethnic and wider community groups
- encourage progress and embrace emerging youth and young adult leadership and skills
- encourage involvement of CALD leadership in specially organised committee meetings (2014)
- encourage constant dialogue with the Assembly Multicultural and Cross-cultural Ministry, Doctrine and Worship working groups and UnitingWorld.

Challenges/risks as we progress:

Securing the support of CALD, Synod, presbytery and congregational leadership to:

- address transport and financial issues which may result in reduced participation in organised programs
- facilitate accredited CALD lay preachers to venture out to other ethnic communities and the wider church
- facilitate CALD congregations/faith communities across Queensland to hold regular worship services beginning 2015
- provide information regarding CALD women's leadership across all areas of church and community

- provide information regarding the contributions of youth and young adults to ethnic communities and the wider church
- promote health awareness issues and preventative programs especially to CALD communities.

Recommendations/strategic decisions for Synod:

1. That the 31st Synod accept and commit to a Synod-wide 2015 Event: 30th anniversary of “We are a Multicultural Church”
2. Requests the General Secretary to provide an opportunity for the Multicultural and Cross Cultural Ministry to present theological papers on ministry within the context of a multi-cross cultural theology forum during the 32nd Synod in session.

Issues to be addressed:

That the Qld Synod continues in its commitment to providing opportunities for a fuller participation of CALD leadership in all spheres of the missions and ministries of the Uniting Church.

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