

Report for
31st Queensland Synod
October 2014



Report from
Calvary Presbytery

Context:

Calvary Presbytery is a Presbytery of the Queensland Synod and a Regional Council of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress. It oversees the Congress's work in its Queensland congregations, fellowships, community life and in the Synod of Queensland.

Responses to our Priority Directions since last Synod

Enabling a demonstrated commitment to the shared Call and Vision

Through Calvary Presbytery, the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress expresses its ministry to Indigenous Australian people through holistic evangelism. This means a commitment to bringing the gospel to our people, actively witnessing to our faith, working to achieve justice, recognition and unity, and pastorally caring for people in the spirit of Christ's love, building up community life and people's well-being.

Calvary has oversight of the following congregations that it continues to support and encourage:

Mapoon

Napranum

Aurukun

Mornington Island

Gordonvale

Townsville

Zillmere (Brisbane)

Babinda fellowship has withdrawn from the Presbytery

Working towards our Priority Directions in the future

The future is about continuing to maintain and strengthen the existing ministry centres and to address issues of property development and maintenance, and longer-term sustainability of ministries in the communities.

Responses to our Priority Directions since last Synod

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

Deepening prayer life and spirituality remains a clear focus for Congress people. This occurs through regular worship and prayer groups in most centres as well as encouraging individual prayer and meditation.

People continue to reflect and seek to understand God's calling in the light of their own Indigenous spirituality. This is about discerning the Gospel imperatives and what it means to be church today within Indigenous community life. This is especially about the search for meaning and relevance in the light of a colonial history where European society and culture (including the church) has often been harsh, destructive and dominating of Indigenous peoples. The Bible has come cloaked in European tradition and thought. The challenge for Indigenous Christians is to discover an authentic Indigenous Christian spirituality. Calvary members are actively engaged in this journey.

Working towards our Priority Directions in the future

The future is about strengthening Indigenous Christian spirituality through an understanding of post-colonial theological underpinnings and meanings. It is about continuing to celebrate the presence of God in the lives of people as it is understood through their own cultural eyes and understood in everyday community life.

Responses to our Priority Directions since last Synod

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

In Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, ministry is as much focussed on the issues of community as it is on developing congregational life. Church members and leaders are involved in a wide range of issues and organisations, from justice groups, women's and men's groups, youth work, local Councils, overcoming domestic violence, economic development, native title, preservation of cultural heritage, to land and sea management. For Congress people, this is understood as an expression of holistic evangelism.

An important interface between church and Indigenous people in the wider community happens through chaplaincy work in schools, hospitals, aged care residences, rehabilitation services and prisons. This has been a feature of the ministry work in Townsville and Gordonvale.

Working towards our Priority Directions in the future

Sustaining the cost of ministry in the Congress communities is a key issue for the future. As a matter of priority, the Presbytery and Synod will need to work together in long-term planning around resource issues.

Responses to our Priority Directions since last Synod

Facilitating renewal of leadership for the mission of the Church

Calvary is actively encouraging the training of local Indigenous ministry leaders. At present there are nine people training in Ministry and Theology courses at Certificate III and Certificate IV levels. Local elders take a key responsibility in leading congregations and work in close partnership with the appointed ministry agents.

Calvary Presbytery (through Yalga-binbi Institute for Community Development) has provided cultural awareness training to Trinity College students who are candidates.

Working towards our Priority Directions in the future

The current Indigenous leadership training will continue and new students will be recruited. Some of those who successfully complete Certificate IV will go on to Diploma level studies. The training will be provided through a newly established national Registered Training Organisation of the Assembly and UAICC.

The relationship with Trinity College Queensland will continue. There is potential to expand Calvary Presbytery's delivery of cultural awareness training to a wider range of church groups throughout the Synod (and community).

Responses to our Priority Directions since last Synod

Engaging in opportunities for intentional, open community connections and partnerships

In small remote Indigenous communities, the success of Congress ministry is crucially related to the church's ability to establish close working relationships with community organisations, leaders and government departments and agencies. Holistic evangelism cannot be done in isolation from other key people in a community. But then this is also true for most congregational settings.

Partner relationships have been established between one or two of our congregations and mainstream congregations and colleges. This has been helpful financially, but more importantly in establishing meaningful and enriching relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

Calvary has a partnership with BlueCare in the provision of chaplaincy services to aged care residences and the drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre in Townsville. Partnerships for chaplaincies also exist between the Shalom Christian College and prison ministries (Uniting Care).

The Presbytery has a key partnership with the National body of Congress and the RTO being developed for training Indigenous Ministry leaders.

Working towards our Priority Directions in the future

Calvary Presbytery would wish to foster new partnerships and close relationships between other congregations and presbyteries in the Synod. We believe that this would help to further the process of covenanting and reconciliation. It could be used as a platform for resource sharing in situations where the presbytery has difficulty to find human, financial and other material resources.

Key achievements/initiatives

Continued encouragement and support of local congregations.

Challenges/risks as we progress:

Lack of resources to enable essential full-time ministry.

Recommendations/strategic decisions for Synod:

Calvary Presbytery and the Synod collaborate in the development of a strategic plan for Calvary Presbytery over the next ten years.

Issues to be addressed:

Development of Strategic Plan

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