

Report for
31st Queensland Synod
October 2014



Report from
Central Queensland Presbytery



Context:

The Presbytery of Central Queensland extends from the coast to Winton and from Miriam Vale to Proserpine. Lots of land and not many congregations; but these are facing significant social change because of mining, climate events, and the challenges to primary production.

Responses to Priority Direction A since last Synod

Enabling a demonstrated commitment to the shared Call and Vision

The Presbytery has a large proportion of its congregations without ministers in settlement. Those ministers that are in the Presbytery have been willing to further extend their ministry to help other congregations.

The Presbytery is attempting to find ways of further supporting congregations without ministers—mainly those off the coast—by seeking funding for strategic projects. These are in place for Winton, Longreach and the Gregory congregation cluster which consists of Clermont, Capella and Moranbah.

Each Presbytery meeting begins by sharing stories, providing the opportunity to hear about the successes and needs of other places. *Together on the way, enriching community* provides a framework for this process, and helps build an understanding that while we are together, each place offers its own response.

Working towards this Priority Direction in the future

The sharing process will continue, as will the effort to reach out beyond established boundaries to continue to declare and celebrate Christ's presence in each place.

Responses to Priority Direction B since last Synod

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

Presbytery meetings begin with worship each day, and finish with a service of Holy Communion on the Sunday. They include a time of intentional Bible study during which there is both input and discussion.

The ministers gather for an annual three-day retreat which includes a significant amount of time allocated for prayer and reflection.

Each Presbytery meeting takes time to consider pastoral concerns around the Presbytery.

Working towards this Priority Direction in the future

As above.

Responses to Priority Direction C since last Synod

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

The Presbytery organised a *Spirited Generosity* workshop led by Carolyn Kitto. This was a major part of the March Presbytery meeting and more representatives were invited from all congregations. The Presbytery has resourced each congregation with the material needed to run the program in its location.

Four members of Presbytery attended the *A Clear Call* conference in Adelaide.

Working towards this Priority Direction in the future

The Presbytery is following up on the progress of *Spirited Generosity* in the congregations. There is also consideration being given to assistance for rural congregations most affected by current issues. There is the need to provide good leadership in these places; without it, the emphasis tends to be on survival rather than mission.

Responses to Priority Direction D since last Synod

Facilitating renewal of leadership for the mission of the Church

As noted above, four members were assisted to attend the *A Clear Call* conference. A number of lay preachers and lay presiders have been accredited since the last Synod. Assistance with course costs is given to lay preachers in training.

Responses to Priority Direction E since last Synod

Engaging in opportunities for intentional, open community connections and partnerships

Most congregations are seeking appropriate ways of making connections with the community. Some are going wide—but the challenge is to find ways to go deep, and to address matters of faith and belief in an effective way that enables the church to see ongoing resourcing for its mission in the world.

Working towards this Priority Direction in the future

Questions surrounding this are a part of the congregation consultation process.

Key achievements/initiatives

Spirited Generosity workshop as noted above.

Issues to be addressed:

- The impact of mining continues to be of mixed value to the towns and cities in the Presbytery. The negative impact is not confined to rural areas but is perhaps most felt there.
- Many rural areas are still impacted by drought, while some are still recovering from flood. These natural events make it impossible to discern what a regular “income” might be, so financial strain is put upon everyone.
- Both of the above factors require decisions to be made about how, or if, rural congregations are supported. Many cannot in themselves support a full-time minister, and a part-time placement is not attractive to most ministers. If the Uniting Church is to remain an ongoing presence in the life of rural Queensland, assistance will be required. Frontier Services provides a supported ministry to isolated areas but rural towns often do not benefit from this.
- It is getting harder to find ministers willing to leave the south of the state or the coast. Almost 30 per cent of the placements in Central Queensland need ministers. Only one minister has moved out of the Presbytery this year, but because of retirements and other circumstances we are left with vacancies. Some of the reasons given for ministers not considering Central Queensland are of concern not just for the Presbytery, but for members of Joint Nominating Committees who find it difficult not to be discouraged.

Challenges/risks as we progress:

Without a stronger presence of ordained leaders, the ability of the Presbytery and the congregations to fulfil their responsibilities is put under pressure.

Recommendations/strategic decisions for Synod:

- That the Synod receives the report.
- That the Synod requests Trinity Theological College to investigate possibilities which might encourage students to experience ministry in a rural context.

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