

renewal

FAITH FOR A NEW SEASON ▪ SYNOD 37

Report from Presbytery of Bremer Brisbane



Summary

Bremer Brisbane Presbytery is in a transitional and exciting space as we look toward, and plan for the Church of 2030. As the Sustainability and Strategic Locations Project is worked through, we are pushing up against the challenge of change, yet we are more than confident that in Christ the best is yet to come. There are some amazing ministries being pursued that are making a great difference for the Kingdom of God. The next two years are critical for our Presbytery.

Context

The Presbytery's function is to perform all the acts of oversight necessary to the life and mission of the Church in the area for which it is responsible. It will, in particular, exercise oversight over the congregations within its bounds, encouraging them to strengthen one another's faith, to bear one another's burdens, and exhorting them to fulfil their high calling in Christ Jesus. To this end, we say our purpose is to *'engage, equip and encourage healthy Christian leaders and communities'*.

The Bremer Brisbane Presbytery (BBP) area extends from Toowong, south through Inala, Forest Lake to Boonah; north-west to Gatton and traces its way back along the rim of Wivenhoe and Karana Downs back toward Toowong. It includes Ipswich and its surrounds. (The Ipswich area and its surrounds are estimated to double in size in the next 30 years with Ripley - newer development area – to grow to 130,000 people by 2030).

The Presbytery is the home of many important public and private facilities within the state. Located within Bremer Brisbane are the Wesley, Ipswich and St Andrews Ipswich hospitals, the police academy at Darra, the Amberley RAAF base and seven correctional facilities. Additionally, there are five residential colleges in the University district.

There are 27 congregations and faith communities at the time of writing this report.

Priorities

Key priorities for the Presbytery will always include the oversight of ministry agents and congregations in their worship, witness and service. The largest priority in the last 12 months has been the planning and working through of the Sustainability and Strategic Locations (SSL) Project (criteria which include people, programs, resources, community, buildings and more) as per the last Synod report. This whole of Presbytery project looks at each congregation and, in consultation, helps assess their presence in the Presbytery. Three categories that a congregation may find themselves in are: Invest (those congregations that are both sustainable and strategic), Reinvigorate (strategically located congregations that are not yet sustainable), and Close (neither sustainable nor particularly a strategic location). This project is closely linked to the desire of the Presbytery to see 3 church plants by 2027. Of great importance is a plant at Ripley, a city of approximately 130,000 people by 2034. We have invested in staff (in partnership with UnitingCare) and see this as more than a Presbytery affair, but rather a church-wide investment in this fast-growing city. Additionally, the Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC) worked hard to ensure new 'policies' with regard to Ministry Agents was produced in the areas of Pastoral Care, Supervision, Continuing Education for Ministry, and Reviews.

Plentiful focus

Discipleship: The primary expression of disciple making is found within the congregational life of the Presbytery. When engaging with Church Councils in particular (and in the consultation process), the Presbytery has encouraged several programs to assist congregations. We are thankful to Moreton Rivers Presbytery for the day courses they have run and made available to the broader church. Congregations have also engaged with Alpha and Building a Discipleship Culture (from Crossway Baptist).

Bremer Brisbane Presbytery, in conjunction with Morton Rivers Presbytery (MRP), hold a retreat for Ministry Agents.

Bremer Brisbane is blessed to have YAYA (Youth and Young Adults) which oversee activities to help congregations and build community and disciples across the Presbytery. YAYA engage in Encounter (Youth Group gatherings), Easter Madness (led by MRP and supported financially and with human resources by BBP), Young Adult gatherings, and this year brought together a new holiday program for primary aged children at Oxley.

Planning is under way for training and equipping in 2024 for workshops on mission planning, discipleship, and community engagement.

Community Impact: Many congregations are involved in genuine community engagement, often through ministries such as playgroups, op shops, craft groups and cafes. These act as a doorway to relationships that help point people to Jesus and His coming Kingdom.

Three great examples of community connections are Indooroopilly UC, which continues to work hard in refugee support, Gatton UC which works hard to help seasonal workers from Pacific islands find community and supported living, and Community Life UC (formerly Forest Lake) who have a very large welfare ministry which helps many, many vulnerable people in their community.

Bremer Brisbane continued to support the Aunty Jean Christmas lunch.

Fit for purpose: The Sustainability and Strategic Locations Project is helping the Presbytery to become more fit for purpose by engaging with congregations and helping to identify priorities to engage with. A reality is that some properties are being evaluated for best use with some properties sold and others looking to be repurposed. As per our mission plan, financial planning to ensure ongoing sustainability was begun. However, this is an area of concern after a possible plan did not come to fruition. We are hoping the Synod Resourcing Review may help with this real issue.

Church Council members were offered opportunities to engage in Church Council workshops, led by Nigel Rogers. These were very well received, and it is our hope to continue these in 2024.

Connections and collaboration: There has been a greater level of connecting and collaborating within and beyond Bremer Brisbane Presbytery. This includes congregations sharing resources and ministry agents ensuring they are connecting and sharing their highs and lows.

Connect100. Uniting Care Queensland are having a great impact in our Presbytery. Not only are they supporting part of the Ripley plant by helping employ a chaplain, a number of congregations have benefited from the missional expertise of the Connect100 team.

Indooroopilly congregation has made a new and wonderful connection with Wesley Mission Queensland and the ORCA project.

Moreton Rivers Presbytery and Bremer Brisbane have collaborated on a bespoke leadership course for ministry agents.

Presbytery Ministers (PM) from each Presbytery attend and participate regularly in Presbytery Synod Interface (PSI) – the intentional building of relationships between PMs and Synod team benefits each of our Presbyteries, congregations and the Synod by sorting through a wide range of issues. We thank, and would like to continue to ask the Synod Standing Committee to strongly support this meeting.

Challenges

In Bremer Brisbane Presbytery, we have been talking a good deal about the church of 2030. To ensure we have vibrant, growing congregations the Presbytery continues to face the following (among other) challenges:

- Resourcing church planting and regeneration projects with experienced or potential church planters.
- Resourcing church planting financially
- Ensuring the Combined Presbyteries Mission Pool (CPMP) is reasonable for our congregation in a connected church like UCA QLD (e.g. are CPMP levels harming local mission as we give to the wider church?).
- Embracing a financial plan that allows the mission plan of the presbytery to be fulfilled.
- The ongoing and (seemingly) changing nature of compliance.
- The complexity of Presbytery, Synod and Assembly all having transformational work that may not quite align (e.g. ACT2, Plenty, SSL).

Greener Shoots - possibilities and opportunities

St Lucia – this congregation is in a regeneration space. A congregation with weekly worship of approximately 15 in 2021 has more than doubled in the last two years. Connection with the community has increased, people are being baptized, and finances (because finances are an issue!) have also increased. We have much to learn from this congregational regeneration. (Mandy Smith is the Pastor called to lead the regeneration).

Ripley – Ripley will be a city of approximately 135,000 people by 2035. With Connect100 as a partner, we are exploring what a church plant will look like there. We see this as a whole of Synod issue and are thankful for the support of other congregations and Presbyteries in this endeavour. We are very excited at the way God (and Russell Reynoldson) are beginning to bring this plant together. If you are interested in church planting please contact Russell.

Alpha - Oxley Uniting Church recently hosted an Alpha program over 10 weeks (Friday nights) - 21 guests with about seven being non-churched and non-Christian. Four of these seven are still involved in regular worship and small groups well after the end of the program. ALPHA is not new. Many churches, schools, prisons, and homes have explored the basics of the Christian faith with the aid of Alpha over the last 20

years or so. Some may not see this as a green shoot as it not so new, however God is working powerfully through this program which is invitational and relational – a great discipleship tool.

Proposals to the 37th Synod

It is proposed that the 37th Synod receive this report.

Contact for report questions

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