

renewal

FAITH FOR A NEW SEASON ▪ SYNOD 37

Report from Presbytery of Central Queensland



Summary

Our key focus is raising up local leaders due to the reality that ministers/pastors seem reticent to move beyond the southeast corner, and college graduates are still few in number. We ask for your continued prayers for our regional and remote, and rural communities as they, inspired by the Holy Spirit continue to engage with their communities in bringing faith, hope and love and the knowledge that Christ's love is greater than any person can ever know and gives life—life in all its fullness, so that all are filled with the fullness of God. (John 10:10 and Ephesians 3:19).

Context

The Presbytery of Central Queensland extends from Proserpine in the north to Tannum Sands in the south, from Yeppoon in the east to Longreach in the west.

The Presbytery contains a diverse range of community contexts. We have coastal communities that retirees, sea-change families and itinerants call home. The diversity of community includes mining towns, and agricultural and grazing areas.

However, in the face of drought, natural disaster, pandemic, shrinking rural/remote communities and lack of infrastructure, our people have remained faithful to worship, witness and service. The Presbytery has embarked on a journey to renewal through Discipling and Transforming congregations and the communities they serve by making fit for purpose property, missional activities and the focused use of resources.

When Project Plenty was first introduced and we were asked to name areas of “plenty” in our presbytery, one of our ministers said, “we have plenty of challenges”. That is still true today. The path to renewal is not clear, but we continue the journey.

Priorities

Since the last Synod, the Presbytery of Central Queensland has been on a journey through rising hope, new beginnings and with our last Presbytery meeting focusing on our path to renewal. Presbytery meetings have intentionally focussed less on procedural matters and more on subjects that pursue renewal. The Presbytery has actively focused on raising up leaders from within local congregations, providing training opportunities and resourcing congregations to transform their local communities.

We have recently had seven people enter the Period of Discernment, three others attend the Recognised Lay Preacher online training offered by Moreton Rivers Presbytery and seven attend the Conference of National Lay Preachers at the Synod office August 4-6. Out of these commitments of the Presbytery we have seen more people become involved in leadership and explore the call of God on their lives within the church.

Plentiful focus

- The Presbytery of Central Queensland has made ministry out west and in small rural communities a priority through funding support, community engagement team ministry and working closely with other denominations.
- The Presbytery's connections with vulnerable families in the community through Uniting Care's Connect100 has seen the wellbeing and mental health concerns supported.
- The Presbytery office is located within the UnitingCare Queensland space in North Rockhampton and, in collaboration with the local Rockhampton congregations, has forged strong links and support networks by way of its close proximity and mutual focus.
- The Presbytery has undertaken a review and redesign of delegations to facilitate and improve the smooth functioning of the Presbytery. With the increased compliance load being placed on congregations, congregational treasurers have been meeting monthly with the Presbytery Treasurer and Secretary to help navigate the ever-changing landscape. The Presbytery has also endeavoured to connect congregations with Synod support services. This has been undertaken to ensure a safe place for all people in our worship, witness and service.
- We have seen several of our congregations partnering with their community. One example is Proserpine/Whitsunday Uniting Church, who having lost their building to Cyclone Debbie, have partnered with their community to discern God's future together. Through consultation and collaboration, the **Brick by Brick** campaign has been launched to help build a community centred building that sees disciples grown and the community served.
- Streaming of worship and bible study have allowed some of our remote congregations and individuals to connect and overcome some of their isolation.

Challenges

We continue to live with the reality of shrinking remote and rural communities both in population and services. This creates a real challenge in filling essential roles within congregations and the Presbytery. Further compliance requirements by Government continue to place great pressure on already over-committed volunteers. We continue to confront the reticence of ministry agents moving away from the south-east corner.

However, we own the fact that to increase the number of new ministers, we need to encourage and raise up people within our Presbytery. The Presbytery continues to work with other denominations to support ministry in rural and remote locations.

Sales of smaller properties throughout our presbytery will inevitably build and reinvigorate other spaces in order to increase connection with community.

Proposals to the 37th Synod

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

Greener Shoots - possibilities and opportunities

We have discovered that being open to possibilities and opportunities reveals the gifts, skills and graces that already exist among our people. There is the growing awareness that the 'we' is not the isolated congregation, but the coming together of the scattered communities of God's people throughout the Presbytery and beyond.

On the ground this is lay and ordained ministry working alongside each other and going beyond their local congregation where possible i.e., congregations releasing their minister to provide ministry to smaller rural congregations and committees of the wider church; visiting/zooming worship to rural folk through the use of available technology; willingness of continuing support to others through generous contributions to Combined Presbyteries Ministries Pool (CPMP) and special appeals.

In the local context we are exploring ways of how the church might participate in the patterns, rituals and celebrations of community life.

Contact for report questions

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