

renewal

FAITH FOR A NEW SEASON ▪ SYNOD 37

Report from Presbytery of Moreton Rivers



Summary

2022-2023 has been a season of innovation and change for Moreton Rivers Presbytery (MRP). There is a recognition that the Church and Presbytery face significant challenges in the future with our declining, aging congregations. However, there is a willingness within MRP to embrace this reality with faith and hope and to discern where God is leading us. The heart of MRP is to change and innovate so that we can best serve God's mission of reconciling love to the world, forming and maturing disciples who share in the ongoing ministry of Jesus Christ in everyday life. The Presbytery's strategic vision 'The Rivers Flow' is the reference point for determining what we will invest in now and into the future. A core focus of MRP's strategy is the health and vitality of congregations, the enhancement of ministry and leadership capacity and the ongoing development of systems and processes that deliver excellence across the work of the Presbytery. During the past 18 months there have been a range of encouraging signs throughout the life of many congregations and within the work of the Presbytery, including:

1. Seeing numerous churches focusing intentionally on discipling, missional engagement, and growth
2. A positive, innovative culture within the work of the Presbytery which models a heart for discipleship, healthy ministry practices, church growth and innovation
3. MRP Committees seeking to focus on being proactive in achieving strategic outcomes rather than always being reactive

Context

Moreton Rivers Presbytery belongs to the story of God's mission to reconcile and renew humanity, as it is expressed through the Uniting Church in Australia—a people who are defined by their responding to God in offering themselves as an instrument of reconciliation and renewal through which Christ may work and bear witness to himself.

The particular role of the Presbytery is to exhort, encourage, counsel and strengthen its congregations, ministry agents and faith communities, and thereby advance the mission of God through the life of the Church in the area for which it is responsible.

Priorities

Key Priorities for 2022-2023 in delivering strategic vision have been:

1. 'Reimagine Process' for Congregations that are in danger of becoming unsustainable in the next 3-5 years. Seven (7) Church Councils are currently participating in four (4) workshops focused on 'Re-Imagining' their future over a period of 12 months.
2. Discipleship Workshops for Congregations and Church Councils:
 - a. Discipleship Day for Congregation members run for Presbyteries and Synod with over 80 people attending face to face and another 30 online
 - b. Discipleship pathways training run at a gathering of Church Council Chairpersons
 - c. Discipleship training run with individual congregations
 - d. Here 2 Stay workshop

3. Youth and Children's Ministry events promoting discipleship and leadership development:
 - a. Day Camp
 - b. Easter Madness
 - c. Youth Combine
 - d. Ba De YA
 - e. Leaders Training
 - f. Young Adult events
4. Training Church Councils in Spiritual Leadership – overseeing mission focus and discipleship pathways
5. Intergenerational consultations with congregations and the promotion of intergenerational resources, seminars and workshops. Providing MRP representation at conferences such as Amplify, Intergenerate, The Hub and Leaders 2 Go.

Plentiful focus

The Presbytery has sought to express the Plenty pillars in a range of ways including:

- A discipleship culture has been foundational for the development of discipleship pathways, mission planning and the Reimagining process.
- The Health and Vitality Consultations have sought to promote transformative connections with local communities that enhance God's peace (wholeness and fullness of life), justice and care for others and the environment. Congregations are enacting covenanting plans and participating in the Voice campaign ecumenically and through Qld Community Alliance. The Health and Vitality process is also seeking to help congregations honestly evaluate their engagement in mission and discipleship. The Reimagining process is assisting congregations to reimagine their future towards discipleship and missional engagement.
- The Standing Committee is undertaking a review of the Presbytery staffing to ensure that it is fit for purpose in order to deliver fully on the strategic vision of the Presbytery.

Challenges

The church is faced with a range of challenges which find expression in MRP through the following ways:

1. Building capacity in our lay and ordained leaders to minister in a post-christendom church.
2. There is a growing struggle to find lay leaders who can commit to undertaking roles within the Presbytery and local congregations, especially in relation to governance.
3. Some congregations struggle to recognise the long-term implications for their future if they are not willing to adapt to the new realities for church growth in 21st century Queensland.
4. It is inevitable that some congregations will close as they discern that they are unable to adapt to the missional realities of today. This creates challenges for pastoral care as well as the stewarding of property.
5. Ministry is increasingly complicated which poses a challenge to Ministers, especially in relation to their need for skill development in leadership and missional engagement.
6. Congregational decline impacts on the finances of the Presbytery at a time when the Presbytery is being asked to do more than it ever has.

7. Increasingly, responsibility for issues within the life of the church are being passed to the Presbytery as the Council that has 'oversight' of congregations, faith communities and ministry agents. However, Presbytery resources are not being increased commensurately with the work.
8. The landscape is changing faster than our capacity to adapt.

Proposals to the 37th Synod

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

Greener Shoots - possibilities and opportunities

Where Church Councils and Congregations are able to renew their focus on the mission of God we are seeing excitement, life and growth. Some of these congregations are small and some are large but the common element is a willingness to adapt and risk for the sake of God's mission.

Contact for report questions

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