



#realunitingchurch

Report from Mary Burnett Presbytery



Celebrating 40 years of the Uniting Church in Australia at Alexandra Park

Context

Extending from Beerwah in the south to Eidsvold and Burnett Heads in the north and west to Kingaroy, Mary Burnett Presbytery is a combination of urban centres and small rural communities, from beach-side high-rises to hinterland acreages and large properties. Within its bounds are great holiday destinations like the Sunshine Coast, the iconic Fraser Island and the Blackall Ranges. It features the Coloured Sands, the home of Bundaberg rum and ginger beer, the Burnett and Mary River catchments, the Glasshouse Mountains, and as its geographical centre—Gympie, the gold city—the community which saved Queensland's financial crisis through the discovery of gold.

It is home to 44 worshipping communities. This doesn't include services held by our diligent chaplains and ministers in hospitals and in our agencies.

The Presbytery wants to be focussed on the mission Jesus call us to, of making disciples. Being diverse geographically, we are also diverse in the ways this mission is expressed locally through our congregations, agencies, chaplaincies and faith communities.

Priority Directions

Our governance

- We have intentionally moved away from the Presbytery Minister being both Presbytery Minister and Presbytery chairperson. These roles are now split.
- We recently approved the formation of a mission/strategy task group.
- We commissioned a report on the appointment of an office administrative person.
- We published our delegation document which confirms who or which group is responsible for the plethora of tasks assigned to Presbytery under the Regulations. (Our thanks to Bremer Brisbane for their assistance)

Enhancing mission

- Financial assistance to Gympie Indoor Skate Park, an initiative of a young couple from Gympie church; several first-time commitments made.
- Spearheaded thorough research and conversations around the future of Alex Park.
- Montville Art Gallery.
- Taken over the pastoral connections with the Dostana group.

Ministry highlights

- Service of closure for Rev Bob Harriman after five years as Presbytery Minister.
- 40th anniversary celebrations at Alex Park.
- Commissioning of Bruce Ames (Buderim), Gil Young Park (Korean congregation at Maroochydore), Steven Fincham (prison chaplaincy) and Allan Mulcahy (Cooroy–Pomona).
- Commissioning of Pastor Jim Hohnke in Maryborough.
- Induction of Rev Stuart Bosch in Bundaberg.
- Induction of Rev Ron Watson in Cooroy–Pomona.
- Induction of Rev Chris Crause as Presbytery Minister.

New Presbytery Minister: some personal reflections!

As the new Presbytery Minister, I'm progressing well in achieving the goals I set for my ministry in the first year. Meeting every ministry agent over coffee, attending worship in every congregation and spending time with each congregation and/or their leadership afterwards is on my agenda to achieve before Christmas. I'm certainly on track to achieve that.

Since I've started, workshops at our zone meetings and my own preaching opportunities leading worship in a dozen congregations have focussed on Priority 1 (including non-attenders) and Priority 2 (faith-sharing).

The church plant at Bells Faith Community (0.5, plus 0.5 chaplaincy at Unity College) is growing, with discussions about making it a full-time church plant on the agenda (Priority 3 – church planting).

I've taken up the daunting but very exciting task of understanding the possible future scenarios for Alex Park. A lot of good ground work was done in the last year. The Presbytery has just created a mission and strategy group to further brainstorm these and wider issues (Priority 7 – renewed resource use/sharing). We want to be more strategic and less reactive when it comes to future rationalisation/amalgamation/planting in the Presbytery (Priority 3 – church planting). The intention is to take on board the McCrindle, NCLS and Spirited Consulting results in our planning and discernment about our future. What does this mean for us in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd stages of congregational life?

Ministry agents

We congratulate Leonie Gaffel, Phil Smith and Catherine Solomon from this Presbytery who have completed the Grad Cert in Leadership through Adelaide College of Divinity and Trinity College Queensland. (Priority 4 – developing leaders).

We will be farewelling some of our long-serving ministerial agents at the end of the year. We thank God for their contribution in this Presbytery.

Challenges/risks as we progress

We've identified that one of the major challenges for Mary Burnett is to move from a reactive style of operating to one we see as proactive. Often the reactive mode is the only option left by the time an issue comes to Standing Committee or Pastoral Relations Committee. The creation of a strategy and mission group is a step forward in addressing this concern.

For example, we believe that we need to have conversations about which congregations need to talk to one another about collaboration (or possibly even more) before we get to a point of someone asking for a ministry position to be reduced or terminated. We need to think strategically about what might serve God's work better in a context with diminishing resources, the depopulation of rural areas and the growing frailty of members.

Key areas include the depopulation of rural areas, better use of resources (people and things), a major new hospital without a Uniting Church chaplaincy presence, Alex Park becoming more than a "place with great potential", building bridges between congregations and agencies, and a ministry to retired ministers and spouses.

How can we keep faith with appropriate regulatory frameworks like fire safety, Safe Ministry with Children etc. for small, rural congregations who simply cannot afford the costs to comply?

How will we respond as a church to issues like same-sex marriage and safe schools? This represents a huge potential challenge.

For consideration

There is a positivity and vitality in Mary Burnett Presbytery that makes us excited about the future.

Proposal

It is proposed that the 33rd Synod receive this report.

Contact for report questions:

Name: Rev Chris Crause
Position: Presbytery Minister
Email: crause@bigpond.net.au Phone: 0407 902 625