



#realunitingchurch

Report from South Moreton Presbytery



Context

The Presbytery is primarily urban with some rural areas. It encompasses the growing southern suburban sprawl of Brisbane, the whole of Logan, Redland and Gold Coast cities, and part of the Scenic Rim local government area based around Beaudesert. This area includes some of the fastest growing areas in Australia, including the Brisbane-Gold Coast

corridor, Brisbane-Beaudesert corridor and major infill development west towards Ipswich.

While in area the Presbytery is smaller than others in Queensland, it is the largest in population density and the number of congregations.

The area includes significant industrial, retail, service, tourist, government and health facilities surrounded by substantial residential suburbs. Its people come from many ethnic groups (Logan City is one of the most culturally diverse regions in Australia), all socio-economic sectors and all ages.

There are 42 congregations (11 migrant-ethnic, at least five significantly cross-cultural) and five faith communities.

Consistent with the Uniting Church in Australia national demographic profile, most congregations in the Presbytery comprise mainly middle to upper age groups. Newlife Uniting Church Robina (Gold Coast) is Australia's largest Uniting Church congregation with up to 1700 attending worship each week.

Recent data suggests the following with regard to our congregations:

- 11 growing, 12 stable, 19 declining
- Approximately 7000 members and adherents
- 4800 in worship each week
- 20 candidates undertaking Period of Discernment.

Focus since the last Synod

Regional discernment 2017-2021

Presbytery is aware of the considerable struggle faced by its congregations in enacting their genuine desire to participate effectively in God's mission in their communities. Congregations are increasingly weighed down by the obligations of compliance, week-by-week organisation, budgetary limitations, upkeep of property and just continuing to be the church in their area. Yet as congregations age and there are fewer people able and willing to undertake hands-on activity and leadership, this is a time of wonderful opportunity and challenge.

Presbytery has committed to work with its congregations, region by region, starting with the north-west area in 2017, to address the question of how congregations and Presbytery might work together to be more fully engaged in the mission of God. This is not a review process but an invitation for congregations to participate in a 'year of discernment,' engaging in facilitated conversations about strengths and opportunities to participate together in the mission of God. Timeline:

- a) Complete the discernment of the north-west region by December 2017.
- b) Implement the recommendations in conjunction with the congregations during 2018.
- c) Commence a similar discernment process in the north-east region by end 2017.
- d) It is the Presbytery's intention to continue this process in other regions over the next five years.

Church planting

Yarrabilba

The Queensland Government gazetted the Yarrabilba Priority Development Area (PDA) on 8 October 2010. It is located within Logan City, 20 km south of Logan Central and encompassing 2222 ha of mostly former commercial pine plantation along the southern and

western corridor of Brisbane's urban fringe. The area is bounded by the Plunkett Conservation Park, Waterford Tamborine Road and Plunkett Road. When fully developed, it will comprise 20,000 dwellings to house a population of 50,000.

Presbytery has identified this residential growth area as a priority focus for future ministry and mission. It is exploring innovative models for a church presence through partnerships with Logan Uniting Church (Springwood), Calvary Christian College, Wesley Mission Queensland and UnitingCare Queensland. The first step will be to engage a facilitator to liaise between the developers, Logan City Council and residents to discern the kind of ministry required to position the Uniting Church for effective missional engagement with this rapidly-emerging community.

Timeline:

- a) Advertising for the facilitator position to commence May 2017.
- b) An active Uniting Church presence in Yarrabilba by December 2018.

In addition the Newlife Robina church plant at Pacific Pines is now a congregation independent of its Newlife roots.

Burleigh Heads 'Village Church' is a faith community jointly established by Newlife and the Presbytery. See details under Highlights.

Highlights since the last Synod

Pacific Pines Uniting Church has been meeting for several years as a campus of Newlife in Jubilee School, Pacific Pines (northern Gold Coast). In February 2017, it 'graduated' to be recognised as a congregation in its own right, called Uniting North Gold Coast. Presbytery is underwriting this next stage. Planning is advanced to restructure the Uniting Church presence to better meet the challenges in this fast-growing region.

Timeline:

- a) It is proposed that Uniting North will merge with Coomera Uniting Church at Coomera from 1 July 2017.
- b) The newly combined congregation will be financially self-sufficient by December 2018.
- c) The linked congregations of Pimpama, Coomera and Nerang (known as the Living Rivers cluster) will be separate entities from 1 July 2017, with half-time placements at Nerang and Pimpama.

Burleigh Heads Faith Community (Village Church) was launched in February 2017. It is establishing a new faith community aimed at young people and families based at Burleigh Heads Uniting Church under the oversight of the Presbytery through Newlife. Presbytery is providing initial funding support.

Timeline:

- a) The Village Church will be financially self-sufficient by December 2018 and ready to be recognised as a congregation.
- b) Village Church will plant another faith community elsewhere on the Gold Coast by 2020.

Multicultural congregation development

As indicated above, South Moreton is the most culturally diverse of the Queensland presbyteries, comprising 11 congregations and faith communities of specific cultural origin plus several intentionally cross-cultural congregations. The placement of project officer: multicultural aims to provide oversight, support and training to these various cultural groups.

One of the most significant cross-cultural congregations is Logan Central Multicultural Uniting Church, which in 2017 is in a state of transition. Following a comprehensive consultation with the congregation in 2016, Presbytery is working to ensure resources and leadership are provided to this congregation to enable it to become a major regional church in Logan City. A property plan is being developed for the site to provide facilities for the anticipated growth.

Innovative mission and Fresh Expressions

Recognising the fluidity and complexity of the wider social context of the whole church, Presbytery is giving priority to resourcing congregations for mission planning and implementation. Presbytery acknowledges the need to discover ways of investing financial, people and innovation resources to underpin new initiatives. In a time where some of the models of church which have served us well are not working, and where there are huge opportunities for mission, the church must discover the best ways to support and encourage missional behaviour by strategically applying its people, property and money.

Messy Church has been a growing edge for congregations. Presbytery holds training events and Messy Meet-ups for congregations already doing Messy Church and those who want to find out more.

Seven congregations conduct regular Messy Church events (although two don't use that name) with another three planning to start in 2017. Other congregations do a variety of creative family ministries. Encouraging and equipping churches for innovative forms of worship and outreach remains a priority area resourced by the project officer: mission. Presbytery is a partner in running the annual Mission Shaped Ministry training course.

Youth and children

Twenty eight of our churches have some form of youth and children's ministry. Children's ministry breakfasts are held three times a year to encourage congregations to try new ways of connecting with and ministering to families, and to provide ministry resources. Youth group leaders are encouraged to attend Renovators leadership training (a joint initiative with south east Queensland presbyteries). There are 23 Sunday School/Kids' Life programs on Sunday, but others are exploring different ways of growing young disciples through art and children's groups. Mainly Music and other music groups have proved to be a good way to connect with new families in the local area.

Priority Directions

- To be Christ-centred, at prayer, and listening
 - Eucharist begins Presbytery meetings
 - Encouraging and promoting the Jacob's Well resources
 - Ministers' annual retreat.
- Discipleship
 - 20 candidates undertaking Period of Discernment
 - Promotion of 3DM
 - Renovators youth leadership program.

- Leadership
 - Courses in lay presidency at the sacraments
 - Enrolments in IIM training and Synod Leadership Course
 - Youth and children's leadership breakfasts
 - Messy Church training.
- Connecting with communities
 - Regional discernment
 - Yarrabilba, Burleigh Heads, Northern Gold Coast priorities
 - Mission Shaped Ministry course
 - Growing connections with UnitingCare.
- Youth, children and families
 - Growth in innovative mission and Fresh Expressions
 - Leadership in Easter Madness
 - Discoveries Children's Camp and Kids' Campout
 - Presbytery's hosting of a contemporary multicultural worship event on the 5th Sunday night of each month as part of Next Gen Arise
 - The commencement of a weekly Sunday night 'Gen 2' contemporary worship service at Logan Central Multicultural congregation.

Challenges/risks as we progress

The Presbytery reported to the previous Synod with regard to our congregations: 11 growing, 12 stable, 19 declining. We are of the view that this is still the case. For those congregations in decline, however, the situation is becoming increasingly serious.

- The Presbytery is examining carefully the financial capacity of congregations when they complete a profile seeking to call a ministry agent.
- An increasing number of congregations will not be able to afford a full-time agent.
- Mission and Service fund expectations are increasingly difficult to meet. The process for Mission and Service Fund payments is under restructure.
- The regional discernment program described above aims to systematically examine the Presbytery's resources and possibilities region by region.
- Newlife Robina continues to grow in membership and influence. A positive partnering relationship has developed between Newlife and the Presbytery. This has resulted in the church plant in the northern Gold Coast becoming a congregation and reinvigorating that region. In 2017 a church plant established as a faith community commenced in Burleigh Heads, complementing the existing congregation.
- South Moreton serves one of the fastest growing population areas in the Synod. Planting ministry in Yarrabilba will be a costly exercise (as are the other church plants) with no guarantees of success. We are called however to risk the way of Jesus.

For consideration

The Presbytery acknowledges with thanks the giftedness and dedication of Presbytery staff; Rev Beth Nicholls – project officer: mission, Pastor David Busch – project officer: multi-cultural, Bruce Mullan – mission resource committee support officer.

Presbytery also acknowledges the outstanding contribution which Heather Dansie made as the office administrator for eight years. Heather brought great organisational skill, clear thinking, calm efficiency, warm personality, generous spirit and infectious humour to this role

as it has changed and grown over the years. Presbytery is deeply grateful to Heather, and thankful for Michele Cochrane who has ably stepped into this role since late-2016. In November the Rev Dr David MacKay Rankin will complete his extended term as chairperson. He has offered strong leadership, wise judgement and given generously of his time.

The Rev Alan Robinson, Presbytery Minister, will retire at the end of December 2017. Alan has been for us a Presbytery Minister with a great heart, both pastoral and missional (and in countless other ways) for the work of the Kingdom. He has a passion for the Gospel and has been in this work a wonderful servant of his Lord and most gracious and thoughtful colleague. The Presbytery anticipates a major change in leadership for 2018.

Proposal

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

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