



#realunitingchurch

Report from

Presbytery of Central Queensland



Context

From the coastal regions of the Keppel Coast and Tannum Sands through the industrial area of Gladstone to the beef capital Rockhampton, north to the sugarcane of Mackay and Proserpine and west through the mining, farming and grazing areas of Gregory and Emerald, and further through the sparkling gem fields to the central west and its sheep and cattle grazing, we weave a rich and colourful tapestry. The Presbytery of Central Queensland is productive and diverse.

In our last report to Synod, the focus was squarely upon the negative impact of the mining downturn and associated practices, the severe drought and other significant climatic events. While the impact of the mining recession is ever present, the decline has slowed.

The impact of a sudden and unexpected severe weather event within a Presbytery of our size is enormous. On the back of Cyclone Marcia in 2015, Cyclone Debbie made her presence felt in April this year. The effects were concentrated on Proserpine, Mackay, Sarina and to a lesser extent the Rockhampton region. Cyclone damage to properties within this area is almost complete. After many months of watching the sky with anticipation, parts of the central west finally received some much-needed rain, enough to revive hope. But it is still difficult for everyone.

Priority Directions

Leadership

Lay leadership

In 2016 Rev Prof James Haire led a lay preacher workshop on the Gospel of Luke. James will in the near future lead a workshop on the Gospel of John.

A worship workshop was held in February 2017. Topics included: Elements and structure of worship, Fresh expressions of alternative worship by the emerging church, Open discussions, Cuppa with Jesus, Worship service streaming, Prayer in worship.

On 29 January 2017 a service was held at South Rockhampton Uniting Church to recognise 60 years of lay preaching by Alan Demack. Alan continues to lead worship faithfully in the Parish of Rockhampton South.



Messy Church goes to the beach

small congregations. There have been resources for lay people within congregations to lead worship. These have been helpful. Early next year the Presbytery is planning workshops on funerals and grief as well as mission resourcing.

Discipleship

- Growing disciples through:
- Messy Church
- Cuppa with Jesus
- Walk to Emmaus
- Chrysalis Flights
- Mentoring the younger generation to encourage the building up of young leaders
- Resourcing. During meetings of the Presbytery our remote area ministry facilitator shares resources concerning rural ministry or ministry in

Youth, children and families

Country Madness 2017

Held in April 2017 at Seaforth near Mackay, the goals of our youth task group were to build relationships between young people of the Uniting Church across a wider area and to encourage our young people to engage more deeply with God.

Connecting with communities

Remote area ministry

The Presbytery responded to concerns raised in recent years in its meetings and in Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC) over the viability and sustainability of ministry and congregations in the rural areas within its oversight. An earlier meeting held in Emerald in January 2015 favoured investigating the concept of resource ministry. Thus, the remote area ministry facilitator position began in March 2016.

Disaster recovery chaplain

Rev Malcolm Bottrill has been appointed and has commenced work. He is travelling around the various communities affected by Cyclone Debbie and is providing reports on his progress to date. His role may be extended if applications for funding from Assembly and Synod are successful.

Report



Drought in the west has eased, although more rain is required. From this rain, some 'herbage' aka 'weeds' grew for a while. Some of this was edible for sheep and/or cattle. Some landowners could buy in animals for fattening or bring home some of the stock they had on agistment. Those animals have since had to be cleared again. Sixty six per cent of Queensland is still in drought and Longreach is in the centre of that. Assistance has been received, sometimes to the detriment of local businesses.

Major issues are expected around September/October when the household allowances start being withdrawn. They are paid by Centrelink and the terms under which they were introduced were for a set period. That is what has been putting food on the table for many people. When it ends, there is no chance for extension although the drought continues. What happens then is unknown, as the donations have all but dried up.

Cyclone recovery has been consistent although some repairs are still to be carried out. Some repairs on the Capricorn Coast from Cyclone Marcia are nearing completion whilst work because of Cyclone Debbie is still to be actioned.



Cyclone?
What Cyclone?

What we do see is the resilience that is in our communities. People struggle and some longer than others but when the body of Christ, in whatever form that may be, journeys with them we see hope.

Those who minister in the region, lay and ordained, are often surprised and delighted to discover that God is already there in our communities. It is a joy to walk alongside the people of Central Queensland through all the situations that arise, always on the lookout for the new shoots of God's work.

Our disaster recovery minister Rev Malcolm Bottrill has ‘hit the ground running’ in the northern areas of our Presbytery and the southern areas of the North Queensland Presbytery as an impartial and understanding presence. There has been no time lost making contacts and sowing seeds in this ministry. In all areas visited, people have welcomed the minister with open arms and conversation. People are looking for support and are keen to talk to someone who is not tied to a government authority or insurance company.

Issues outside the mainstream of property damage and loss were identified; issues such as mental health, domestic violence, increased drug and alcohol problems and relationship stress.

Malcolm is blessed with affirmations and is eager to build on the work that he has done so far.

Remote area ministry

Desired outcomes from this process were:

- Assessing congregational viability and where appropriate, the re-alignment of any existing congregational relationships.
- Identifying available education resources for the laity.
- Identifying ministry provision in a range of models to operate throughout the Presbytery.
- Promoting a more visible Christian presence in communities.
- Identifying adequate resources to give ongoing expression to desired outcomes.
- Forming links with ‘stronger’ congregations throughout the Synod/Presbytery and beyond.
- Identifying suggestions for rationalisation of property to effect significant cost saving.

Stage 1 of our remote area ministry has been completed and a report provided to Presbytery. The outcome is three models of mission and 12 proposals that were presented to our July 2017 Presbytery meeting by Rev Arthur Tutin, remote area ministry facilitator. The foundation of these proposals is the development of meaningful partnerships with the sharing of resources throughout the Presbytery: human, intellectual, property and financial. It is now our task to implement those recommendations moving forward. As Arthur says, ‘we’re all in this together’.



The inaugural **Country Madness 2017** camp at Seaforth near Mackay, facilitated by the youth task group, was successful. Building on the success of 2017, it is hoped that momentum will carry the group onto bigger and better things in 2018. Country Madness 2017 was successful in both building relationships between young people of the Uniting Church across a wider area and encouraging our young people to engage more deeply with God. Although participation was geographically limited to coastal areas, we hope that reports will encourage others in Central and North Queensland Presbyteries to join in next year.

Thirty four campers registered for this inaugural event and with 16 leaders, our attendees were certainly supported.

Lael Piteau from Melbourne (YWAM trainer with many years of experience) was our guest speaker/teacher. She brought Joanna Aherne with her as a support person. Her main interest is encouraging us to believe that God wants to interact with us, speak to us and guide us. There were several prayer opportunities throughout camp, and people sharing what God did in those times grabbed everyone's attention.

Feedback from campers and leaders alike reported that God was certainly present amongst them and encouraging everyone to know Him more.

Leadership building continues with lay preacher workshops and lay presidency training sessions. Our compliance with Safe Ministry with Children policies continues to be a high priority.

Discipleship in Central Queensland is diverse, with activities such as 'Cuppa with Jesus', Messy Church and regular worship that are active expressions of the body of Christ continuing to nurture faith. The mission of these fresh and traditional expressions is to be vibrant communities, providing a safe and caring place that nurtures health and well-being and a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Due to the tyranny of distance, looking for ways to resource these discipleship processes of our communities requires the assistance of technologies which are now becoming more accessible. Tools that enable communication and the participation of people without the need for long-distance travel are being trialled to enable the people of God to tell the story of the love of God.

An example of an ecumenical tool which is being used by many Uniting Church members in Central Queensland is the Walk to Emmaus and Chrysalis Flight programs which offer an understanding of the gift of God's grace. Discipleship is expressed by our younger generation. Even though they may have moved for study or work out of Central Queensland they return to the region to be part of building up young leaders.

The benefit of this is that it initiates relationships with people from the community; it enables the body of Christ to be a witness of God's love through service, providing an additional or alternative way for all people to learn about faith.

Mentoring these and other expressions is a key function for the building up of the church and for the service of the world to which the church is sent.

Joyful news from our Presbytery, with two ministers and their spouses blessing our meetings with baby girls since our last Synod. They certainly brighten our gatherings.

Our **ministerial candidate** continues her studies at Trinity College Queensland.

Fresh Expressions, which arose out of the Synod-funded visit from Mark Berry from the United Kingdom in 2015, has expanded on the coast and now includes sessions at other churches, alternating so that there is a meeting almost every week.

Challenges/risks as we progress

‘Juggling hot coals and cyclones’

One of our challenges will be to disseminate the results of the work that Rev Arthur Tutin has done and take them into the next ‘period of mission’, particularly the major recommendations of connecting our congregations through the installation and utilisation of information and communication technology, with ‘viable’ congregations nearer the coast streaming interactive services and workshops to smaller rural congregations. This is an ideal resource to share our worship, workshops and Safe Ministry with Children training. Our support for the coalfields is upheld within this program.

Our disaster recovery support is a challenge and Rev Malcolm Bottrill will continue his good work among the people of Cyclone Debbie-affected coastal Central Queensland.

For consideration

At our July meeting we paid our respects and delivered our gratitude to our retiring Presbytery Minister, Rev Brian Gilbert. Whilst Brian formally retires at the end of the year, he effectively retires soon after this meeting and will then enjoy a well-earned rest.



A Joint Nominating Committee identified a new Presbytery Minister to take up this role from 1 February 2018. Rev Dr Kerry Pierce has accepted a call to ministry across this Presbytery and we wish her every blessing as she prepares to lead us into the future.

Proposal

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

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