



Report from South Moreton Presbytery



Context

Our vision statement: Cultivating an inclusive, growing and energised church.

South Moreton Presbytery serves the region from the Brisbane River to the Tweed River, Moreton Bay in the east to Beaudesert and the Scenic Rim in the west. The Presbytery has within its bounds some of the fastest growing population areas in the state. These include the Brisbane/Gold Coast corridor, Redland Bay and Yarrabilba north of Beaudesert.

Key cities and towns: the southside of Brisbane, Logan, Redlands, Beenleigh, Beaudesert and Gold Coast.

This region includes high numbers of people from many ethnic groups, all socio-economic sectors and across all ages. There is youth and vitality in almost all the 11 migrant-ethnic congregations and faith communities, however most congregations have a majority who are middle-aged to senior.

2014 data suggests the following with regard to our congregations: growing 11, flat 12, declining 19.

Newlife Robina is the largest Uniting Church in the Queensland Synod and more than a quarter of those attending worship in the South Moreton Presbytery attend Newlife Robina. This is reflected in these responses.

Since last Synod:

- Relocation of the Presbytery office (58 Manila St Beenleigh) January 2015
- Increase in project officer multicultural from 0.5 to f/t July 2015
- Use of Vitality of Call and Covenant in reviewing ministry agents
- Re-structuring congregation links in particular areas (Redland Bay-Victoria Point, Living Rivers and Beaudesert-Canungra) for more effective mission
- Resourcing of congregations in mission planning and ministry with children
- Exploration of a suitable approach to church plant opportunities in Yarrabilba.

Priority areas for Presbytery activity 2014–2018:

- a) Encouraging the renewal and energising of local congregations and faith communities
- b) Exploring and supporting missional opportunities in population growth areas
- c) Growing healthy relationships within the Presbytery.

Ministry/congregational life data

Area covered (sq/kms)	2755	No. of pastors (Stream A)	11
Population	1.8m	No. of pastors (Stream B)	7
No. of congregations recognised as such by Presbytery	40	No. of lay ministry teams	6
Faith communities	5	Placements No. of congregational placements FTE	F/T: 39 P/T: 8
Ecumenical communities	0	No. of non-congregational placements FTE	F/T: 14 P/T: 3
No. of 'cluster' arrangements	4	No. of joint placements FTE (i.e. ministry agents, support staff, total number of people)	F/T: 1 P/T:
Total weekly worship attendance across Presbytery	4709	Presbytery staffing FTE (i.e. ministry agents, support staff, total number of people)	3.65
Percentage of congregations in the Presbytery with Sunday children's and youth ministry with over 15 average attendance	32% and another 18% on days other than Sundays		

Report

Response to the identified priorities of the 31st Synod:

Worship gatherings that can include people who have never attended worship or belonged with church

- Messy Church promotes five principles: Christ-centred, all-age, creative, celebration and hospitality. Presbytery holds training events and Messy Meet-ups for congregations already doing Messy Church and for those who want to find out more. At present there are five congregations conducting Messy Church with another three planning Messy Church for this year. Other congregations do a variety of creative family services. There are 30 congregations who have some form of children's and family ministry in our Presbytery.
- In the northern region of the Presbytery on fifth Sunday months there is a regional youth/young adult service hosted by different churches. These are well attended by churches which have evening youth/young adult services.
- In 2015 South Moreton with Moreton Rivers and Bremer Brisbane Presbyteries took turns hosting Live Life Loud. Over three events, youth and young adults had opportunities to meet with other groups, to join in fun activities, have a meal and worship together. Speakers encouraged those attending to live an authentic faith, to grow in discipleship and to share their faith with others.
- Many people with disabilities find it difficult to access community and worship. This is not just about getting wheelchair access but includes the range of issues and prejudice that people encounter. Crossroads at Newlife provides an accessible, authentic community and contemporary worship opportunity. 350 people attend each week.
- A number of our multicultural churches such as Brisbane Taiwanese Uniting Church and the Matu Uniting Church faith community hold worship events with an outward mission focus to reach 'unchurched' people from a variety of cultural backgrounds.

Making faith sharing a priority for the Uniting Church

- Renovators discipleship training: building leaders. Having identified the need for sound youth leadership training that focusses on developing leaders with skills to not only run a youth group but to grow disciples; three Presbytery youth and children's ministry workers Josie Neuendorff (Bremer Brisbane), Alison Cox (Moreton Rivers) and Beth Nicholls (South Moreton) developed and facilitated Renovators. Fifteen leaders participated in the six-month course, completing 14 units. Renovators will be conducted again this year and the leaders are committed to training up a new generation of youth leaders, not only in the south east corner, but across the Synod.
- Newlife Youth is a movement of youth who are passionate about Jesus. Over the last year Newlife have been empowering young people to step into discipleship, get involved in a mid-week group and grow in their faith. Youth Alpha saw over 15 young people attend the first round. Last year 30 youth made the decision to be publicly baptised and celebrated their faith. With the majority of these youth coming from non-Christian families it was a great opportunity for their parents to witness the power and effect of the gospel.
- Cleveland Uniting Church has begun an informal storytelling slot each week in all three services. People share stories of ways in which they have experienced God being close to them in the recent past. The interesting thing is that while people who have attended for some time still find this a little strange, newcomers see it as normal and quickly join the sharing time.

- Developing mission plans that work and are linked to action plans is one way that South Moreton is enabling congregations to be intentional in their ministry. It helps congregations and groups to re-focus on what is important for the present time and helps to re-establish core values such as making disciples and finding ways to include non-church members.

Church planting

- Funding is available to plant a church in Yarrabilba which is a priority location. The Presbytery is taking time to consider the best strategy for this initiative. Currently there is a commitment to have a sponsoring congregation and a gifted leader.
- Two successful church plants (Carbrook, Logan Uniting Church and Pacific Pines, Newlife Robina) are three to four years old and are reviewing their profile and future mission strategy. This will provide helpful learning for future plants and planters. Carbrook and Pac Pines are congregations that utilise schools, and while there is the challenge of setting up and putting away, these congregations reach out to new areas of population.
- Most churches cannot facilitate external church plants. However some churches in the Presbytery are growing new parallel congregations within their churches. Messy Church, café church, Kidz Art (Southport) and other fresh expressions of church are emerging as a way of reaching out to those who don't already attend. Training such as the Mission Shaped Ministry course, and networking with other like-minded people have encouraged churches to try these different forms of worship and church. Through regional gatherings the Presbytery has also focussed on these areas of ministry.

Developing church planters – pioneers and entrepreneurs

- Presbytery gatherings in 2015 have had a focus on church planting and church mergers.
- South Moreton Presbytery has initiated and is hosting conversations called “Shaping for Mission”. This informal learning community engages in conversations such as, what does church look like, and how do we as the church join in what God is doing in our communities?
- Newlife College was formed with a vision to develop and disciple the next generation of leaders, including church plant leaders, both within Newlife Uniting Church and the wider Uniting Church.

Formation for ministry

- Presbytery staff have invested much time in supporting and equipping ministry leaders in migrant-ethnic congregations. This includes ministers new to Australia and our denomination, and lay people from multicultural backgrounds undertaking lay preacher courses and Period of Discernment.
- Newlife College Robina aims to develop theologically and biblically grounded disciples and to equip, engage and inspire healthy missional leaders for a healthy, missional church. In its first year of face-to-face teaching, Newlife College has exceeded student number expectations and milestones. These students are engaged in practical ministry through intern opportunities and into the future as next generation leaders.
- Mission Shaped Ministry (MSM) course is a joint initiative with Moreton Rivers and South Moreton Presbyteries. The Presbytery is committed to encouraging congregations to discover different and fresh expressions of church, and sponsors individuals and congregations to participate in MSM.

Resource sharing urban/rural

- Go West is a program begun by the previous youth worker at Cleveland Uniting Church and it continues to provide opportunities to support a rural community as they seek to establish a

day camp experience for the children of their district. Currently we are sharing our time with combined Roma churches.

- Presbytery ministry agents (Alison Cox, Moreton Rivers and Beth Nicholls, South Moreton) along with a team of youth ministers and leaders have reclaimed Easter camp as a space for forming disciples and engaging in the Easter story. Easter Madness 2016 will be the first Easter Madness running from Good Friday until Easter Monday at Mapleton Camp. It is a camp for youth and young adults from across Synod and participants have registered from as far away as Normanton. The organising team appreciates the support of the Synod with funding, administration staff and support worker Simone Thorlton. In reclaiming Easter camp the organisers are committed to building the event as the 'go to' place for youth and young adults at Easter in future years.

Children, youth, young adults and family ministry as a priority

- South Morton Presbytery is committed to helping congregations to be family and kids friendly. The Presbytery project officer (mission) Rev Beth Nicholls encourages and assists churches to intentionally minister with children and families within churches and in their communities. By offering resources and coaching the Presbytery has seen a growth in the network of churches committed to offering places and environments that are safe and engaging for ministry with children and their families.
- Children's ministry network breakfasts offer leaders the opportunity to share ideas and to participate in developing skills. The breakfasts are held four times a year. Networking, sharing resources and offering training in children's and family ministry has resulted in more congregations running events such as holiday programs and family fun days that encourage children and families within the church and reach out to new families. More congregations are implementing faith-at-home programs that support parents and carers in sharing and passing on faith to their children. The breakfasts have created an openness to trying new ways of being church.
- Mainly Music and Messy Church are being encouraged and resourced.
- In August the Presbytery held our first Kids Camp Out (KCO) at Calvary Christian College, Carbrook campus. KCO is a 24-hour tent camp where congregations bring tents, food and primary-aged children and their leaders, and join together in the program of craft, games, bush dance, team time and worship. It was a positive and energising time for campers and leaders. Campers enjoyed making new friends and joining in a wider experience of church. Leaders especially enjoyed getting together, sharing stories and experiences. 2016 KCO is scheduled for 20–21 August.
- Discoveries Camp is for children who have just completed Grades 3 to 7. Held in January at Moogerah Dam, Discoveries is an activity of the Presbytery that attracts campers from outside the Presbytery too. It is a week-long live-in camp with a dedicated group of leaders who prepare over a number of leadership training days beginning in May. Campers enjoy a wide variety of activities such as canoeing, abseiling, giant water slide, craft and innovative games. Discoveries also promotes leadership development. There is a Becoming a Better Leader course for younger leaders, and all leaders participate in planning and training days in preparation for camp. Many of the leaders have been campers, and it is a real testimony to the influence of Discoveries when graduating Grade 7 campers leave camp counting the three years until they are invited back as junior leaders.
- 2016 is the 25th year of Discoveries. It started under YACMU and more recently is part of the ministry of South Moreton Presbytery.
- Newlife's ministry kidzlife has a focussed discipleship strategy. Over 70 volunteers serve from the kidzlife Friday night outreach program to the Sunday morning kidzlife service. The kidzlife team now write their own curriculum which lines up with the themes in the adult morning service. This has allowed for parents to be resourced and empowered to disciple

their children at home by making ties between the messages preached in adult and children's services.

- At Newlife over 200 young adults aged between 18-35 years engage with the 12:2 (born out of Romans 12:2 *Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind*) worshipping community. This is a community that is passionate about social justice and missional outreach, aptly demonstrated by two major projects developed within this community: the Rahab ministry serving prostitutes on the Gold Coast, and the sponsorship of a Cambodian slum village enabling the very poorest of children to attend an excellent private school and receive support and mentoring.
- Logan church has focused on discipling young adults. Young people in their last year of high school through to those in their early working life, typically aged 18 to 30 years, began to gather in a home in April 2015. The idea was to create a community of relationships with a focus on discipleship. They began with a group of around 10 to 12 young adults simply opening the Bible together on Sunday nights. Within the community young adults belong to smaller life groups (six groups at present). At the time of writing the young adults are engaging in a young adult version of Alpha material. They will then move more to Apologetics. The first Sunday of the month is set aside as a shared meal. The community has grown to around 40 members over the past nine months. Unfortunately the home is no longer a viable meeting space—but what a wonderful problem to have! The leadership team for this young adults community join with other Next Generation Ministry leaders for fortnightly meetings on a Monday night where they are equipped and encouraged in leadership, ministry and in their own discipleship journey. We are grateful to see God at work in this way.
- At Cleveland Uniting Church one of the priorities has been to assist families to share faith at home. The weekly *Taking Faith Home* publication produced by the Lutheran Church has been a great help in that regard. The added bonus has been to encourage older members to take it home as well and leave it on their coffee table as a conversation-starter with friends who visit or as a resource to share when grandchildren visit.
- Next-generation leadership development for people aged 16-35 years is a major challenge for multicultural church communities. Participation in the National Young Adult Leaders Conference (December 2014) and the leadership offered by young adults at recent Uniting Church national conferences (e.g. Tongan, South Sudanese, Fijian) are noteworthy.

Key achievements/initiatives

1. Restructuring congregation connections and ministry placements with a view to more effective mission e.g.:
 - Redland Bay and Victoria Point
 - Northern Gold Coast corridor (Living Rivers: Pimpama, Coomera and Nerang).
2. Hosting the highly successful South Sudanese National Conference 2015 (Coopers Plains)
3. Development of a children's ministry network within the Presbytery and undertaking training for children's ministry leaders, teachers and helpers
4. Kids campout (August 2015)
5. Newlife Robina is the largest congregation in the Presbytery (and Synod). Conversion growth, appeal to the under 40s and the establishment of Newlife College are among their achievements.

Challenges/risks as we progress

1. In common with other presbyteries, we have the challenge of an ageing constituency. The gap between the worship style and leadership culture of the members and those we are seeking to reach is widening. Whilst congregations seek to warmly welcome newcomers it seems the worship on offer does not always engage them.
 2. While a much younger age profile is evident in most migrant-ethnic congregations and they contribute much to our present and future as a denomination, there are many challenges as the Presbytery seeks to educate, resource and pastorally care for them.
 3. Most congregations are barely managing to maintain the number of active members and an adequate level of giving. Some are no longer able to support a full-time ministry agent, and maintaining (let alone increasing) the Mission and Service commitment is becoming an increasing challenge.
 4. Our future will most likely be determined by our capacity to make disciples for Jesus.
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