



Report from Moreton Rivers Presbytery

Context

Moreton Rivers Presbytery takes in the Brisbane CBD, some of the southern river suburbs, and the northern suburbs of Brisbane up to and including Caboolture, Kilcoy and Bribie Island. With a prominence of suburban churches and a hint of rural lifestyle the Presbytery encompasses 37 congregations, faith communities and a number of non-congregational placements.

As a presbytery we are focussed on encouraging and equipping congregations and agencies to be active in mission in their local context. We continue to focus on training, education, resourcing and mentoring through working with ministry agents, worshipping communities and agencies. Significant effort has been made since last Synod on Life and Witness Consultations and using these as a tool to help discover and live out specific mission directions in a variety of settings within the life of the Presbytery.

Also of note is the significant partnership that has been formed between the Synod and Moreton Rivers Presbytery in regards to implementing the Mission Shaped Ministry training and program. A good number of individuals and congregations have engaged with training and it has been encouraging to see the life-giving changes that have been occurring within the life and ministry of worshipping communities as a result of this initiative.

Ministry/congregational life data

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| Area covered (sq/kms) | 2800 | No. of pastors (Stream A) | 8 |
| Population | 1.1m | No. of pastors (Stream B) | 2 |
| No. of congregations recognised as such by Presbytery | 37 | No. of lay ministry teams | 2 |

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| Faith communities | 2 MFC and Sudanese | Placements No. of congregational placements FTE | F/T: 28 P/T: 10 |
| Ecumenical communities | | No. of non-congregational placements FTE | F/T: 12 P/T: 6 |
| No. of 'cluster' arrangements | 1 | No. of joint placements FTE (i.e. ministry agents, support staff, total number of people) | F/T: P/T: |
| Total weekly worship attendance across Presbytery | 3200 | Presbytery staffing FTE (i.e. ministry agents, support staff, total number of people) | 2.5 ministry agents 1.5 admin |
| Percentage of congregations in the Presbytery with Sunday children's and youth ministry with over 15 average attendance | 30% | | |

Report

As a presbytery we have had a relatively clear sense of direction based around a five pillar strategy. These strategies have allowed some of the policy decisions from the previous Synod to be incorporated into the work of the Presbytery, however it is recognised that we 'can't do everything' and that our energy and resources have needed to be prioritised to allow us to do some things well.

Response to the identified priorities of the 31st Synod:

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

A number of congregations have taken initiatives through the Mission Shaped Ministry course to seek to engage with people who have never attended worship before. A good example is Faith Works Uniting Church.

"At Faith Works we have embraced all-age worship where young and old are equally valued and contribute. At Coorparoo older members quickly befriend younger visitors or visitors from a non-English-speaking background when they enter our door, so no one is sitting alone unsure what is happening. At Norman Park worship is informal with everyone taking part in the service. Language is simple and what we do and why we do it is explained each night. The service always ends with sharing a meal together. Worship is unashamedly family-friendly, but surprisingly it is older members of our community who have embraced the inclusiveness of our worship services and meal. Once a month our evening service is Messy Church, which families with little church experience have found the easiest to connect with."

Making faith sharing a priority for the Uniting Church

A number of initiatives have been undertaken since the 31st Synod to help make faith sharing a priority in worship and to help grow our local worshipping communities.

In partnership with Synod staff the Mission Shaped Ministry program has started and a significant number of individuals and worshipping communities have undertaken this training. This is a relatively new thing in the life of the Presbytery and it will be interesting to see where God's Spirit moves through this training.

The annual youth camp program has been changed to include September camp as a more intentionally focussed discipleship camp. This, along with the two day camps run in the Presbytery, the Renovators program, Summer Madness and young adult gatherings, has allowed for the congregation-based youth and children's programs to be supported by the Presbytery.

Life and Witness Consultations have been given a priority within the Presbytery with the goal of each worshipping community undertaking a consultation in every five-year window. These consultations help each local setting reflect on their current ministry, the reality of their wider community and how they can set strategic plans for their congregation and faith community.

Formation for ministry

Significant energy has been spent on helping support formation for ministry within the life of the Presbytery. This includes but is not limited to candidates for specified ministry. Through the work of the Presbytery ministry team (children's and youth worker, mission education officer and presbytery minister) we have been helping form people for ministry.

The Learning for Living program is intentional about educating and equipping lay people interested in expanding their theological understanding and also in training and commissioning lay preachers.

The Renovators program is another initiative that looks at mentoring and training youth and young adults to be active in ministry within the life of their local church.

Approximately 13 people are in their Period of Discernment (POD) and through our POD coordinator we seek to encourage and support these people to discern the call on their lives.

We are in the process of developing a third phase of ministry program to help continue and coordinate the formation process for ministry agents who have recently finished their training.

Worship and preaching workshops have been held on a regular basis to allow for the sharing of resources within the life of the Presbytery. This helps some of the smaller semi-rural congregations and also the congregations that are intentionally led by lay ministry teams.

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

Working with children, young adults and families is a priority within the Presbytery. A significant day camp program (over 200 primary school-aged children) is held every year. A second day camp program has been initiated in the Caboolture region and this is providing a focus for churches to work together and reach out to children in that region.

The camping program also incorporates a discipleship camp for youth held in September, and youth being encouraged to be involved in Synod and Assembly events such as NCYC and Summer Madness.

The Renovators program is an intentional effort to mentor, encourage and equip youth and young adults to be involved in ministry in their local settings. This program continues to gain strength and we look forward to what may happen in this space.

Key achievements/initiatives

We are looking to double the capacity of the Learning for Living course in 2016 and also to diversify the delivery methods. This course has allowed a number of people to be commissioned as lay preachers and also provides for the ongoing formation and faith development of individuals.

Significant encouragement and equipping of leaders of all ages continues to take place through the Presbytery-initiated mentoring and training programs.

Most if not all congregations in the Presbytery over the past five years have been through a Presbytery-led Life and Witness Consultation.

Challenges/risks as we progress

A challenge continues to be how we develop a process and resources to help support and equip the growing number of small congregations and lay-led congregations.

An ongoing challenge exists in regards to declining congregations and the capacity for smaller congregations to resource their ministry through both paid and lay-led ministry.

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