



34 SYNOD 2019

Report from

Calvary Presbytery



This image celebrates the dedication of the refurbished Gully Peters Mornington Island Church 12 August 2018

Calvary Presbytery is the regional body of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) in Queensland.

The Presbytery has oversight of seven Indigenous congregations.

In the Cape York and Gulf of Carpentaria region:

- Mapoon
- Napranum
- Aurukun
- Mornington Island

Naturally, these are remote communities by any standards. Costs of living, construction and travel are all very high. Within them cultural life is valued and our churches form a moral centring presence for the whole community and a place of Christian nurture for members.

Congregations in urban/rural locations:

- Gordonvale
- Townsville West End
- Zillmere, Brisbane

The general context of these congregations includes housing, employment and social mobility issues.

The Presbytery is strongly committed to a covenant relationship with the wider Uniting Church and welcomes conversations that create partner relationships. Specifically, Calvary notes the support of Period of Discernment applicants by Moreton Rivers Presbytery and the Faith Works Uniting Community in support of the Mornington Island rebuild as part of our covenantal relationships.

Focus since the last Synod

Much of Calvary's focus since last Synod has been rebuilding and refreshment. The Presbytery rejoiced in receiving Rev Tevita Niurua and his family from the Methodist Church in Fiji. Tevita has settled well into well-rounded ministry at Napranum. He has also supported Calvary's ministry to Aurukun and Mapoon.

The continuing need for ministry agent placement at Aurukun is noted. Calvary wants to have a residence for a minister there, and a block has been allocated. In the absence of a minister in residence to instruct and nurture new members, the revival that was noted in the last report to Synod has faded.

Highlights:

1. Settlement of Pastor Dr Gewa Au

Dr Gewa Au accepted a call to ministry as pastor to the Mornington Island Uniting Church congregation, beginning on 1 January 2018. His settlement has seen recommencement of community engagement, youth and children's activities as well as the regular worship services.

2. Mornington Island dedication of refurbished church building

On August 12 2018, Moderator Rev David Baker and the Calvary Presbytery Chairman Rev Dennis Corowa dedicated the newly refurbished church building to the glory of God. It was a time to celebrate the church's presence and ministry at Mornington Island since the time of its formation as a mission in 1914 and its continuing ministry into the future.

The minister of Faith Works Uniting Church (Coorparoo, Brisbane) Rev Linda Hanson and Chair John Loneragan were present at the celebrations. The congregation underwrote the contingencies budget for the project. Many thanks for the support of Faith Works. Connections between the two congregations continue.

3. Leadership formation

While ministerial leadership is noted as a challenge for Calvary Presbytery, there are a number pursuing theological studies and ministry formation. Members attend Nungalinya College in Darwin and Wontulp-Bi-Buya College in Cairns. David Paasi concluded his Period of Discernment and Diploma of Theology at Trinity College. He is enrolled in the BTh program and comes to the May Presbytery meeting as a prospective MOW candidate. Namila Davui is an applicant for the POD, and Patricia Mann, a candidate with NSW Congress, has relocated to Queensland and is welcomed by Calvary Presbytery.

Priority Directions

Noting the Synod's priority of youth, children, and families, Calvary congregations are developing a greater focus around youth and children's ministry. With new leaders at Mornington Island and Napranum congregations this area of mission has developed considerably.

A well-attended Kids' Camp was held at Napranum last year and further such events are planned. Mornington Island congregation has a regular Sunday afternoon youth group activity. Engagement with youth at Zillmere includes hosting a boxing club in its hall. A continuing major task is to produce culturally appropriate Christian Education materials for use in our congregations.

Synod's priority around leadership has been recognised above, but is still a matter of concern, as those who are potential emerging leaders continue their formation journeys.

Making connections with community is a regular thing for Calvary congregations. In these communities there is little distinction between church and community. Specifically, the Mornington Island minister regularly participates in the programs organised by Save the Children, PCYC and the local kindergarten group. The church's links with the community at Napranum are also strong, as evidenced by the number of community leaders providing supporting letters for Rev Tevita Niurua's visa extension.

Challenges/risks as we progress

Leadership roles and development of ministry agents

One of the significant challenges and risks for Calvary Presbytery is around the cluster of issues around succession and leadership development, including ministry agent recruitment. This year Rev John Adams retires from his position as Presbytery Minister, Administration and Resources and Rev Dennis Corowa stands down from his half-time role as Presbytery Minister, Pastoral Leadership. Calvary gives thanks to both Dennis and John for their

dedicated service to its life. They have taken on their respective work with commitment and persistence to the tasks of maintaining Australian Indigenous ministries within the Synod. Succession for this leadership void is unclear as this report is written.

The gaps in ministerial presence in Calvary's congregations over the time leading up to last Synod highlights the difficulty in filling the needs of ministry in remote areas. Does God not call ministers or pastors to this work? Calvary Presbytery, of course, is not alone facing this challenge. Calvary has a history of recruitment of ministers from sister churches in the Pacific area. These are often complicated by permits to work and after the first permit is received, work on the process for renewal of permits soon commences. The need for a successful submission for renewal constitutes a further risk.

This makes those who are embarking on ministerial training and theological formation as well as any seeking to pursue a Period of Discernment very precious to the Presbytery.

For consideration

Calvary Presbytery is encouraged by the appointment of Stuart McMillan as the National Consultant Covenanting. Stuart is a staff member of the Assembly Resource Unit multi-disciplinary team with specific responsibility for resourcing and enhancing the "life" of the Covenant across the church. We look forward to seeing how this works out across the Synod.

Proposal

It is proposed that the 34th Synod receive this report.

Contact for report questions

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