



**34 SYNOD 2019**

**Report from**

# Presbytery of Central Queensland



The Presbytery of Central Queensland gives prayerful thanksgiving to Gavin Caird for his unwavering faithfulness to God, expressed in his many years of excellence in service through his leadership responsibilities within the Presbytery

From the coastal regions of the Capricorn Coast, Tannum Sands and the Whitsundays, through the industrial area of Gladstone, the beef capital of Rockhampton, to the sugarcane and tourism 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 economically productive and rich in diversity of community expression.

### **Focus since the last Synod**

Natural disasters are part of life in Central Queensland. Having recovered, mostly, from the cyclones and floods through 2015–2017, many of us continue living with extreme drought conditions. We have received a great deal of support for our congregations and our communities from all around the country, assisting us in the ongoing struggle of rural and regional strife. We give thanks to God for all who continue to offer assistance.

Rain earlier this year did provide a glimpse of relief, not much though, and some of our communities now find themselves on the boundary of two distinct disaster areas: one with plenty of water and one with plenty of dust. Many hours have been spent by our ministers in the west managing the administration and pastoral responsibility of distributing disaster support to the regions around Longreach and Barcaldine.

The Assembly decision on marriage also adversely affected a number of our congregations and leaders, adding further strain to faithful followers of Christ struggling with church decline and societal change.

Our focus has been on finding hope amidst the adversity and discerning God's call on us for mission into the future.

### **Highlights:**

We have welcomed our new Presbytery Minister, Rev Dr Kerry Pierce. Kerry has been orienting into the role through travelling the length and breadth of our Presbytery, focusing on getting to know the many faithful expressions of church in our midst and exploring innovations for developing the Presbytery's mission.

Since the last Synod, our ministerial candidate Moira Dodsworth was ordained at the Northside Mackay Uniting Church on 12 January 2018, and she is now fulfilling God's call in her first placement.

We, as a Presbytery, shared in the joy of Rev Nathan Barton and his new wife Kate, married in Mackay in October 2018.

CQ Connect is growing and continually improving its potential for outreach.

## **Priority Directions**

### **Leadership**

In September 2018 Rev Dr Kerry Pierce and Rev Prof James Haire, along with six other presenters, facilitated a Lay Ministry Workshop with the focus on worship.

Rockhampton hospitals chaplain Rev Ann Hewson was appointed. Gracemere Blue Care chaplain Pastor Donna Muston was appointed. Donna is also heading up our new Rural Mission Ministry. This new role will provide missional leadership development outside of our regional cities.

### **Discipleship**

Resourcing discipleship growth over the vast distances between our communities requires the assistance of technologies which are becoming more accessible and more reliable. Our CQ Connect streaming project has been

trialled and has now gone live in small and growing ways. This is a growth area for us and will enable the people of God to be further equipped in telling the story of the love of God within and around a wider range of communities. This is an ideal resource where we can share in worship, facilitate meetings, workshops and training opportunities across vast distances.

Our compliance with Safe Ministry with Children policies continues to be a high priority. Kate Barton has commenced her role as our Safe Ministry with Children Coordinator.

We continue growing disciples through:

- ✚ Messy Church
- ✚ Cuppa with Jesus
- ✚ Mainly Music
- ✚ Emmaus walks
- ✚ Playgroups
- ✚ Family film nights
- ✚ Mentoring the younger generation to encourage the building up of young leaders
- ✚ “Doodly for Churches” project.

The mission of these fresh and traditional expressions of church is building exciting faithful communities, providing safe and caring places for people to explore faith, nurturing health and well-being, and enhancing relationships with Christ Jesus.

#### **Connecting with communities**

- ✚ Memory Café – Sing for health and happiness
- ✚ “Chill Out” for teenagers – time spent in the holidays engaging with high schoolers
- ✚ Christmas lights
- ✚ Walk to, and Walk through, Bethlehem
- ✚ Men’s Sheds
- ✚ Teddy Bears Picnic – post-baptism community connections

Some of our congregations worship ecumenically with other denominations sharing ministry agents, lay preachers and resources.

#### **Remote area ministry**

With the completion of the Remote Area Ministry Project to support rural and remote congregations, it was obvious that an ongoing ministry agent was needed for developing mission with congregations and communities. The purpose of this placement is to provide missional engagement in rural communities and identify missional opportunities which will instil hope for the flourishing of life in rural Central Queensland.

#### **Youth, children and families**

Country Madness will be held in May at Seaforth near Mackay. The goals of this camp are to build relationships between young Christians (Year 7 to 25 years) and those interested in exploring the faith across a wider area and also to encourage our young people to engage more deeply with God. Fa Matangi, Youth and Children’s Ministry Coordinator in Moreton Rivers Presbytery, will be guest speaker for Country Madness 2019.

Last year’s campers and leaders alike reported that God was certainly present amongst their gathering and they were encouraged in getting to know God more fully and faithfully together. We pray this report encourages others in Central and Northern Queensland Presbyteries to join in this mission.

## Challenges/risks as we progress

Our current challenges lie in accepting the reality of rapidly changing society and discerning God's call on our future mission orientations as people of God in our times and places. The decreasing membership in traditional congregational expressions of the Uniting Church face increasing compliance demands and increasing costs with decreasing incomes. We risk not hearing God's call and promise of hope amidst our own sense of loss and fear in an unknown future.

We risk burnout of key leaders in this under-resourced climate.

## For consideration

We are discerning fruitful missional priorities and there are signs of hope and renewed life being affirmed by God's loving creative generosity around many corners.

## Proposal

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

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## Contact for report questions

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