



Report from

Mary Burnett Presbytery



Report

Inspired by the imperative to “be My witnesses” call from Acts 1:8, Mary Burnett presbytery will be making and growing disciples; serving others in mission; and working collaboratively for intentional mission and ministry. We have created a Strategic Missional Alliance Resource Team (SMART) and appointed a part-time (0.5) Mission Engagement Officer. We are moving from a mostly reactive mode to one of being more proactive.

About our Presbytery

Extending from the Glasshouse Mountains, to Eidsvold and Burnett Heads, Mary Burnett Presbytery is a combination of urban centres and small rural communities. Inspired by the imperative to “be My witnesses” call from Acts 1:8...

By 2025 Mary Burnett Presbytery:



...will be **disciples, making and growing disciples;**



...congregations and ministry agents will be equipped and released to declare the transforming presence and power of Jesus and **serve others in mission;**



...congregations will be working **collaboratively** for intentional mission and ministry with schools/communities/agencies and other congregations.

Focus since the last Synod

We have created SMART (our Strategic Missional Alliance Resource Team) and appointed a part-time (0.5) Mission Engagement Officer (MEO) role and filled it (Pastor Phil Smith). This has enabled us to move from a mostly reactive mode to one of being more proactive. The MEO’s key focus will be determined by three areas of potential (in line with our key identified priority areas) - the inland corridor, the Sunshine Coast, and the relationship between congregational life and our agencies.

The arrival of the pandemic has caused a similar level of disruption as would be the case for the whole UC. This was exacerbated by the number of vacancies (with supply and JNC processes underway) current when lockdowns happened. SC and PRC have been very supportive to those asking for help and even taking the initiative where needed. Live-streaming and recorded services have forged closer links and even created new relationships between smaller worshipping communities and larger centres. Whilst some congregations have experienced a real crisis, others have been blessed with growth on a spiritual, numerical and offerings level.

Several congregations have resumed face-to-face worship, some are still doing everything online, and others are doing both.

Highlights:

- Very strong building of collegiality during the crisis. Weekly TEAMS meetings, pastoral support and sharing at a variety of levels.
- Strong engagement of our chaplains with the wider Presbytery life and congregational and lay leaders engaging with chaplains at new levels.
- The “coming of age” of Coral Coast congregation as separate from Bundaberg UC with almost unanimous support.
- Growth in SurfChurch since the last Synod meeting.
- A church plant is taking shape in the Sunshine Coast's new 'Digital CBD'. Approximately 30 people, past UC members and those outside the church, from seven households, are praying and planning with the aim to launch a Faith Community in February.
- Communities and individuals are truly diverse and needed to be dealt with accordingly. There is no “single recipe” to deal with the extra pressure and challenges we face due to Covid-19.
- Nothing replaces real relationship building and true pastoral care and love.

Project Plenty

- 2 special sessions in different geographic areas (very well attended).
- Engagement at Presbytery Meeting.
- General enthusiasm with the “from the roots up” process.

Challenges/risks as we progress

- Struggling with aging, vulnerable congregations/ worshipping communities. Elderly leadership in COVID-19 era poses real difficulties.
- Closure/pain. Decline. Vacancies.
- Survival vs thriving. e.g. the reality when it is a challenge to even pay for Sensitive Matters.
- Inability to attract “disciple-making” ministry agents.
- Old style worship... is not attracting “new people”
- Division over the SGM issues have not gone away.
- We are building real bridges with our agencies.
- Congregations where everyone is retired presents a different challenge (majority in “vulnerable people space”).

- “Re-start” of the Strategy and Mission Committee in SMART.
- We have some Ministry agents disengaged from Presbytery work.
- Our first live-in Presbytery meeting in years was a huge success.
- We have reinvented our consultation process (with the help of North Qld and Bremer Brisbane).
- The last retreat focus was on being and growing disciples.
- There are new initiatives in the “church plant” area.
- Adopting the “Be my witnesses document.”
- Creation of a Mission Engagement Position.
- Serious rethink about “reboot”. Continuing live-streaming services/remote connections?

For consideration

There are some things that worry us more than others:

- The lack of ministry agents with a “disciple-making” ability of ministry.
- The struggle to attract ministry agents willing to leave the greater-Brisbane area.
- The rapidly aging profile of our Presbytery (15% more over 65 than the Synod average).
- The refreshing of the "Inland Corridor" from Nanango to Childers. We are trying to develop a two-person team placement for a patrol-style work in those once prosperous rural towns. This area is also a key focus for our Mission Engagement Officer.

Proposals to the 35th Synod

It is proposed that the 35th Synod receive this report.

Contact for report questions

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