



Report from

Moreton Rivers Presbytery



Report

Moreton Rivers Presbytery has responded well to the challenges of COVID-19 and many congregations have used the opportunity to develop an online presence as a new way of connecting with people. Congregations in Moreton Rivers Presbytery have many positive stories and opportunities for mission however, congregations and the presbytery do also face challenges for the future related to workloads and sustainability which COVID has intensified.

About our Presbytery

Moreton Rivers Presbytery (MRP) covers the geographic area from just south of the Brisbane River to just north of the Caboolture River, west to Kilcoy and east to Bribie Island. This area includes 40 rural, semi-rural, urban and CBD congregations and faith communities. There are approximately 70 placements within the Presbytery covering a range of ministries placed within congregations, Wesley Mission Queensland, UnitingCare, the Synod office, hospitals, schools, Police, Army and presbytery roles. Our mission statement says that we are called to be a presbytery made up of congregations, agencies, mission, and schools who are: Encouraging and equipping God's people for God's mission.

To guide our decision making, our values are:

1. Strength Based
2. Permission Giving
3. Outward Focused
4. Generously Collaborative

Since the 34th Synod the Presbytery's focus has centred around living out the *2021 Let it Flow* missional priorities: While continuing to work within the regulations and policies of the Uniting Church in Australia, as a Presbytery we are committed to the following mission priorities for the period 2017 to 2021.

1. be a lighthouse for Youth and Children's Ministry
2. congregations and ministry agents will be equipped and active in mission
3. congregations will be working collaboratively for mission and ministry with schools/communities/agencies and other congregations.

Focus since the last Synod

In December 2019 MRP updated its strategic objectives of its 'Let it Flow' Strategic Plan to the end of 2021. The key focuses were about developing health (Ministers, Church Councils, Congregations) and expanding capacity (Developing Leaders with a focus on young people and young adults and strategic mission and property development).

The updated strategic objectives are:

HEALTHY CONGREGATIONS & MISSION

growth flows from healthy people & relationships

Ministers

- Building Resilience
- Healthy Expectations - self, workload, ministry
- Healthy Relationships - conflict & change management
- Presbytery Pastoral Contacts
- Pastoral Support BEFORE burnout

Church Councils

- Training roles and expectations
- Behaviour Covenanting
- Further Training - Chairing meetings, setting agendas, finances

GROWING MISSIONAL CAPACITY & VISION

going beyond where we are now

Ministers

- Local and relevant CEM opportunities
- Networking (ecumenical & internal)

Congregational & Church Council leadership

- Sharing Stories
- 'Curating' Resources
- Leadership Development (e.g. worship leader and lay preacher training)
- Mission and Formation workshops (e.g. MSM day seminars)

Agencies

- Networking and building relationships

Property

- Looking at development/redevelopment opportunities for mission and/or income

Young People

- Developing Congregational Mission and Ministry Capacity through resourcing congregational youth and children's leaders
- Developing Young Adult Leaders to lead in both church and their vocation
- Working with Congregations to develop missional connections with emerging Fusion youth leaders

As part of the strategic update, the MRP Office/staff also reviewed how best to use staff to resource MRP's objectives. As part of this review, it was identified that a key part of MRP's youth and children ministry is based around young adult leaders who are part of the Gap's regional Night Church Service. Night Church had suffered from lack of stability in leadership, with consequent dropping in young adult engagement. MRP saw an opportunity to support Night Church through contracting part of the MRP's youth worker to the Gap on a short-term basis. To develop and strengthen Night Church and therefore also meet MRP's key need of developing young adult leaders who are engaged

in MRP mission activities. This is an example of how MRP is seeking to creatively use its resources to leverage the best ministry outcomes for congregations and the Presbytery.

In March, along with the rest of the world, our plans were disrupted by COVID. However, we have found that all our key strategic objectives are as relevant as ever. COVID changed how we prioritised the objectives and how we had to start implementing them. At this time the priority has been in resourcing congregations through the shut down and opening up (web resources, answering OH&S questions etc), engaging ministers and church council chairs in small zoom groups so that they can learn from each other, putting in place regular pastoral care contacts and resources for Ministers. The focus till the end of 2020 is developing and rolling out Church Council training which is seen as more vital than ever.

Highlights:

1. Newlife Brisbane going well at end of first year
2. Launch of The Cooperative at WMQ
3. DA Approval for Redcliffe Uniting HUB project
4. First Daycamp @ Home successfully run with opportunity to resource other presbyteries using this model
5. ORCA continues to grow and develop
6. New youth ministry started at Faithworks UC
7. A number of MRP congregations supporting community through community meals and/or grocery boxes

MRP Congregations did an amazing job in responding to COVID lockdown with almost all our congregations moving online within 2 weeks of shut down. Ministers and congregations have shown capacity to innovate, adapt and iterate their online worship. It has been interesting to see how many congregations have adapted their liturgy to fit the medium of online.

Early on we engaged MRP congregation treasurers in projecting cash flows till the end of 2020. Almost all congregations were projecting to be okay until the end of 2020 and JobKeeper has improved the finances of all congregations. We will do the same process again at the end of 2020 for the first half of 2021.

While almost all congregations were similar in their initial response to COVID by moving to online worship within 2 weeks, the 'opening up' of congregations has followed a very different pattern. Some congregations moved back to physical worship almost immediately, even if it meant only 20 people attending. Many congregations planned for an August opening and have started face to face worship as well as continuing an online worship – though in many different ways. Some congregations have still not gone back face to face and are not sure when they will.

Many congregations have realised that online worship opens up many opportunities for engaging people who would not otherwise come to church. But how best to do online + physical + engage online, only people into community with limited tech and people resources is an issue which everyone is grappling with in different ways.

Project Plenty

MRP has connected with the Project Plenty process through:

1. Presbytery Consultations (face to face before COVID and then online after final report)
2. Some Congregations have done their own engaging with the process
3. Presbytery Standing Committee has engaged with the Project Plenty Process
4. Presbytery Chair and Ministers have had significant involvement with Project Plenty

Challenges/risks as we progress

Before COVID MRP had both significant opportunities and challenges, COVID hasn't changed the nature of our opportunities and challenges but intensified them.

Opportunities

1. COVID has opened up new ways of engaging people in the life of Christian Community, through online worship and communication tools. Many congregations are exploring the opportunities to extend their mission using these tools.
2. There are several opportunities in MRP (incl 22 Ashgrove) for significant property development/redevelopment for either mission or resourcing mission.
3. COVID has presented an opportunity to re-think how MRP staff and committees better leverage current resources for ministry and mission.

Threats

1. The unpredictable and constantly changing nature of the COVID situation is a significant threat to stability and the capacity of congregations, agencies and presbytery to continually adapt.
2. The increased strain and workload from COVID, is a significant threat to church staff and volunteers through fatigue, mental health issues and burnout
3. The current funding arrangements for MRP and the pressure on the CPMP budget are not sustainable.

Proposals to the 35th Synod

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

Contact for report questions

Name **Rev. Mark Cornford**
Position Presbytery Minister
Email presmin@mrpres.org.au
Phone (07) 3366 0236