



Uniting Church. **Uniting People.**

Presbytery and Synod SA

Annual Meeting

15 - 17 November 2018

Urban Mission Network Report

1. Executive Summary

Practice • presence • place has been a focus for the Urban Mission Network during 2018, as we consider, reflect on, and resource the practice and presence of the church in the public square. How does the church show up and connect with the wider community? What can we learn from conversations and participation with the wider community? Opportunities have again presented for research, conversations, and connections with local and state government initiatives, and with international organisations and denominational change agents who are working for positive community change. With a heart for the transforming presence of the church, the Urban Mission Network continues as a collaborator with the Local Public Theology Collaboration, and with a mission focus on multi-cultural ministries, creative ageing and spirituality, social justice – a voice in the marketplace and in transforming policy for the well-being of all – and eco-sustainability.

2. Introduction

Urban Mission Network members share an understanding of being called to give witness to the love of God in Christ as word and deed in environments that are primarily urban, secular, and culturally diverse. It comprises congregations, faith communities, and centres located in mainly civic and regional centres and on main thoroughfares.

There are 37 member groups -- congregations, faith communities, and centres. This year, we welcomed Heaven's Springs Uniting Church as a full member. A monthly bulletin keeps members informed of events planned by the Network as well as member congregations and the wider church.

The Network is served well by the members of the Reference Group (its management group), who give generously of their time and talents in progressing the work of the Network. The Reference Group has a pastoral relationship with congregations and Ministers, and is responsible for strategic planning, and maintaining oversight of programs and other events hosted by the Network. Reference Group for 2018 consisted: Rev Alan Biglow, Rev Sandy Boyce, Mr Bruce Ind, Rev Christa Megaw, Rev Wendy Prior, Rev Dr Peter Trudinger, and Mr Jeff Telfer. Alan and Peter both retired from the group during 2018; Alan due to a new placement at Woodville Uniting who are members of the Community Outreach Mission Network, and Peter due to increased ministry responsibilities. Both have served as Reference Group members for a considerable time.

Ms Susan Burt, as Coordinator of the Urban Mission Network, is also a member of the Reference Group and the Key Liaison Person and the Network representative on the Pastoral Relations Committee and the Placements Committee. She is currently an elected member of the PRC/PC Executive.

The Reference Group is grateful to Rev Andrew Prior for his assistance with all things digital, and the Uniting Technology team who support and equip our gatherings and other programs.

3. Summary of Key Activities and Outcomes since November 2017

3.1 Presbytery and Synod

Members of the Network participate on Joint Nominating Committees when UMN congregations are involved in the placement process. Network representatives have resourced consultations and committees within the Network and seek to attend ordination and induction services within the wider Presbytery.

3.2 Gatherings

Network gatherings are held quarterly and include a meal, worship, stories from the host church, and a guest presenter. These are times for congregation representatives to meet, relax, share ministry achievements, and encourage one another in ministry and mission. Gatherings form around a particular theme. "Community Connections" has been a focus for 2018.

The February Gathering was hosted by the Spire Community. The guest speaker was Brett Manuel, the then Project Change and Community Project Manager for the Department of Premier and Cabinet. An excellent introduction to our 2018 theme.

Christ Church Uniting, Wayville, hosted the **May Gathering**. The community connection theme at this event was "Church in the public square: exploring the (small "d") Diaconate ministry of the UCA."

Morialta Uniting Church welcomed us to the **August Gathering** when we explored connecting, collaborating, and celebrating presence in our multi-cultural neighbourhoods.

Sandy Creek Uniting will host our final gathering for 2018, with an opportunity to worship in their delightful bush chapel and engage the theme of "Moving Forward with the First Peoples."

3.3 Workshop for Church Councils

A workshop for church council members, leaders and committee members was held at Christ Church Uniting on 11 August. This was to equip church councils as they discern and determine strategic actions to connect and engage with the social fabric of their local communities. Plenary sessions were led by Rev Dr Ian Price and Sharonne Price. Electives included: Creating projects that engage the wider community; connecting with and relating to corporate organisations and local councils; making it work in your congregations (Asset Based Community Development); engaging with sovereignty for the First Peoples and our congregations.

3.4 Connecting with Network and Wider Uniting Church

3.4.1 Reporting to Urban Mission Network Congregations on 15th Triennial Assembly

Urban Mission Network Reference Group hosted an **Assembly Information Sharing Session** on 5 August. Interim General Secretary Rev Rob Brown and others who had attended the 15th Triennial Assembly in Box Hill 8 – 14 July reported on some key resolutions and shared about this significant time in the life of the church.

3.4.2 Drinks, Cheese and Conversations Evening

With Unity and Friends, Urban Mission Network hosted a time of conversation, storytelling, and learning from one another as we reflected on what it means to be affirming and inclusive congregations. Stories from Unity and Friend and articles arising from the 15th Triennial Assembly guided our conversations, as we considered marriage within the context of the Assembly resolution and the upcoming Presbytery and Synod meeting.

3.5 Local Public Theology

The Urban Mission Network provides many opportunities to assist congregations to reflect on ministry practices. Not only for members and "in-house" pastoral responsibilities but by the way congregations relate to their context and connect with their communities. The Urban Mission Network's monthly bulletin demonstrates how congregations promote a wide range of events and experiences inviting local residents to join in a partnership to create a better society. There are examples each month of music events, conversations, educational opportunities, learning experiences, justice campaigns and support and leadership provided for Synod and Presbytery -- including advocacy for Covenanting, Social Justice, becoming a CALD church. Each week, our songs, scripture reflections and prayers inform our ministry in the public square. These, in turn, inform our liturgy.

Café Conversations

"The most effective mission strategy for any church is to intentionally create spaces for meaningful dialogue" (www.unitedchurch/blogs/round-table/creating-sacred-conversations)

As a collaborator with the Local Public Theology collaboration, Urban Mission Network hosts casual but intentional Café Conversations where we share stories of experiences connecting with neighbourhoods, strategies, issues faced and how they were dealt with, and so on. Each conversation features a speaker telling about their work on a related topic. A facilitator then leads a group conversation.

Where possible, these conversations are held in a social enterprise or "community" café. Three conversations have been held during 2018.

3.6 Creative Ageing and Spirituality

Introduced in August 2017, the Creative Ageing and Spirituality Collaboratory had its public launch in April 2018 with a successful Seniors with Style event. This was held in conjunction with the Adelaide City Council. Creative Ageing and Spirituality continues their conversations with state and local government bodies and departments, and peak and local community organisations. Resources are continually posted to www.creativeagingsa.org.au. This year, Urban Mission Network joined Meaningful Ageing Australia. Membership provides access to professional and engaging resources.

Urban Mission Network also sponsored an application made by Stillpoint to the Ageing and Wellness Grant offered by Resthaven Inc. The application was successful, and the grant money will be used for the production of Life History and Spiritual Reminiscence resources for use by aged care practitioners and aged care settings.

3.7 Mission and Building Cohort

The Mission and Building Cohort began with a request to Urban Mission Network to facilitate a conversation regarding heritage buildings requiring maintenance and congregations that fall into categories of asset rich and people poor, and people rich and asset poor. How do we share together to create new opportunities? What might be some models of regeneration? And so began conversations between like-minded or similarly positioned congregations on how we might support each other effectively. The cohort has been exploring ways our buildings might assist greater involvement in and with the community and what might need to happen for our buildings to serve mission, rather than the church's mission being hindered through the financial pressure and stress of maintaining heritage buildings.

Currently, five congregations are in the cohort. Conversations are moving toward creating case studies as we reimagine how to use our assets for spiritual impact, social impact, economic impact, ecological impact.

3.8 Sponsorship

In accord with our objectives to “share together in discerning trends in the social environment” and exploring ways to “engage in the wider community,” the Urban Mission Network subsidised attendance at the *Ageing Well Revolution International Conference* in Adelaide that was sponsored by the Economic Development Board of South Australia. The Network also subsidised one person to attend the *Welcoming Cities Seminar*. And in accord with our objective to “encourage one another to address issues of social justice... explore new insights in mission together and, as appropriate, take joint action,” the Urban Mission Network has responded to a request to sponsor a volunteer with the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) Act for Peace.

3.9 Morning Tea with Ministers

Relaxed times of conversation and refreshment are enjoyed by those in active ministry and retired ministers. On 6 November we will enjoy the ambiance of the newly renovated Hopes Café.

4. Forward Thinking

Continue to resource and support congregations as we reimagine church in the 21st century.

Through Creative Ageing and Spirituality Collaboratory, continue to encourage congregations with ageing members as they nurture faith in the latter years of life, offer resources for meaningful ageing, and build on relationships with local and state government bodies and organisations.

Encourage multi ethnic congregations of various cultures within the UCA.

Susan Burt

Urban Mission Reference Group

1 November 2018