

WORKING GROUP REPORT TO CHURCH COUNCIL

Meeting - 27 September 2022

INTRODUCTION

The April Meeting of the Congregation approved the budget for 2022 after detailed discussion concerning the Projected Deficit of \$51,320.00. The undertaking was given that steps would be taken to address the deficit and to examine ways of reducing and managing it. A report would be made to the Congregation in due course.

Subsequently Church Council appointed a Working Group to undertake that task, to develop a process for the purpose, and consider the questions that had been raised. Membership of the group would be Bruce Ind, Rev Bob Hutchinson, Chris Ayles, Lachlan Mackenzie and Mary Thornley.

This report to Church Council outlines the process undertaken by the Working Group, reports on the findings, and makes recommendations to Council in preparation for a report and recommendations to the Meeting of the Congregation on 9 October.

CONSULTATION 1

Consultation 1, was designed for members to acknowledge the meanings and hopes they felt in Morialta UC, and to provide clear information about the recent history and current financial and missional background for this discussion, including identifying Morialta's assets. The process in the Consultation would then give opportunity for members to work together to compile ideas and strategies which may contribute to financial viability and enable Morialta UC to continue in mission into the future. In the concluding stages Rev Bob Hutchinson shared his reflections on what he had observed in the process. The ongoing discernment process, which would move into the Stewardship & Service phase, was outlined. The schedule for the Working Group's report to Church Council and subsequently Council's report to the Congregation, was shown.

This Consultation, attended by more than fifty members, brought written responses from the table groups and individuals. Live streaming during the session was viewed by more than ten people, with some viewers watching with partners and friends. Emailed responses were submitted by five people. Some responses were comprehensive considerations, supported with personal observations and analysis of Morialta's past and recent history. Others communicated with sms and phone conversations. The Consultation program and working papers were available on the website with invitations to respond. In all it is estimated that over 60 people contributed comments and ideas.

FINANCE, MISSION, AND RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION 1

The state of our church's finances was the prime motivation for this discernment process. It is crucial to our immediate and possible long term future. We are a church with a strong commitment to missional activities and being a resource to our local community. Consultation 1 confirmed the desire for this to continue.

The working group has examined the many responses generated during the Consultation, prior to it, and subsequent contributions by congregation members. These generated more than 150 individual suggestions. Because of similarities in comments, some can sensibly be grouped together. Some of the most frequently occurring suggestions expressed a desire to:

- Keep Morialta Uniting Church as a worshipping community and try to grow it.
- Define Morialta Uniting Church as a progressive, spacious church with a strong social justice ethic that provides a "home" for people from a wide range of social groupings and promote ourselves vigorously as such.

- Continue using our strong audio/visual commitment to provide high quality worship experience and other events to those unable to attend our centre in person.
- Make more income generating use of our physical property.
- Be a focal point of and resource for our local community.

These consolidated points, drawn from the many suggestions, have informed the Working Group's thinking about the next steps in the process and will influence the selection/identification of matters for action. Two other factors also need to be kept in mind: the availability and capacity of our people, our human resources, to engage in investigation, planning, and then action, plus the matter of a realistic time-line and scheduling of tasks for the short, medium and longer term.

The Working Group warmly acknowledges thoughts and suggestions provided by the congregation and seeks to channel them into recommendations, some coming from particular topics and suggestions, and others from a wider collection of topics or suggestions.

We believe that a way forward is to identify those actions which seem likely to produce a positive outcome relatively quickly, and which also seem important, given the type of church we seek to be. That type of church is expressed in the Vision Statement, the Stewardship brochure, and below, in "Who are we? What is our Core Ministry?"

Clearly, our ability to undertake these endeavours is jointly dependent on having both the financial and human resources required. Therefore the phase of Stewardship & Service was included in the discernment process, seeking jointly to increase our monetary giving and our commitment to service. Morialta Uniting Church has not had such a program for five years. To this end, Giving has been a theme during worship over recent weeks, then on the 11th of September Bruce Ind, as chair of Council and Congregation, presented a brochure entitled "A Step in Faith", copies of which have been made available to everyone in the congregation. Importantly, this brochure has a response section through which we can all make our renewed financial commitment to our church. Our "commitment to service" will be addressed further in the Meeting of the Congregation.

WHO ARE WE? WHAT IS OUR CORE MINISTRY?

Vision Statement

Morialta Uniting Church seeks to be an inclusive community who hold to the way of Jesus, expressed through love, service and hospitality. We offer, for all ages, learning opportunities, spiritual expression, action for justice, and social connection. We understand the Chapel Street property to be a community resource.

Stewardship Brochure

The Vision Statement is restated in a different way in the Stewardship brochure:

We profess Morialta UC to be a Christian church which is progressive, spacious, liberal, welcoming, embracing, holistic and allowing questions rather than giving answers, and which can offer a haven for those who can no longer subscribe to a theology that dictates what we should and should not believe, and who we should not accept.

RECOMMENDATION – CORE MINISTRIES

The Working Group has considered Morialta's history and commitments in mission; it has examined the Congregation's responses in the Consultation, and their consolidation into five (dot-pointed) areas; it has recognised a need for clarity in ministry focus.

The Working Group, therefore, Recommends to Church Council and the Congregation the following areas for Core Ministries:

WORSHIP and SPIRITUALITY

Emphasis and practices which nurture a spiritual attitude and approach;

ON-LINE MINISTRY

Continuing current streaming of Worship and expanding on-line ministry formats

SENIORS

Worship and activities

CHILDREN & YOUNG ADULTS

Worship and activities

MULTI-FAITH

Initiatives and connections

ACTIONS FOR JUSTICE

Refugees, Recent Arrivals, LGBTIQA, and other groups in need -
Initiatives and opportunities for support and engagement

The Recommendations which follow reference and address matters in these Core Ministries.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTIONS

These Recommendations take into account the considerations and views of the Working Group which are outlined earlier in this report.

- **Recommendations for Actions – Early**
Late October, November and early December
- **Recommendations for Actions as soon as possible in 2023**
and going forward
- **Recommendation for Action on Projects/Partnerships -**
For larger scale initiatives which may require significant change and radical shifts.
commencing in 2023 and continuing for the required period.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTIONS

The following summary shows matters for which recommendations are made.

The Appendix outlines the Recommendations, showing extracts from the Congregation's responses in Consultation 1 and beyond, and adds notes which may assist Church Council and the Congregation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation:

that all sub-groups, teams and persons appointed by Church Council will report to Church Council unless otherwise stated.

ACTIONS – EARLY (late October, November and first week in December.)		
No.	Focus and Recommendations for Action	Working/ Reading Notes
1.	NETBALL CLUB	
2.	ADVERTISING	
3.	HIRING PROPERTY AND OTHER ASSETS	
4.	DAWOODI BOHRA COMMUNITY	
5.	FUTURE USES OF KOOKA	
6.	REFURBISHMENT Possibility of main foyer, and passage	
7.	GRANT SOURCES	
8.	LOCAL COUNCIL – DATA, GOALS, etc.	

ACTIONS – SOON Soon as possible in 2023 and going forward.		
No.	Focus and Recommendations for Action	Working / Reading Notes
9.	FUNDING SOURCES / AGENCIES	
10.	WORSHIP, SPIRITUAL GROWTH, SPIRITUALITY	
11.	ON-LINE MINISTRY	
12.	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENTS AND INITIATIVES	
13.	PARTNERSHIPS in the Community ...with Community Garden, etc.	
14.	DAYS AND EVENTS TO INVITE OR NEGOTIATE WITH OTHER USERS OR HIRERS	
15.	SENIORS' HOPES & ACTIVITIES	
16.	MUC COMMUNITY BUILDING	
17.	CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE	
18.	SOCIAL JUSTICE	

PROJECTS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Potential for larger scale initiatives which may require significant change and radical shifts. Investigations to commence in 2023 and continue for the required period.

Two steps in the process

1. Fore-runner investigations
2. Focus on Projects

RECOMMENDATION:

that Church Council appoints a small group to investigate the possibilities of projects and partnerships, addressing all topics in this section, engaging firstly in the fore-runner investigations and advice, and then considering projects and developments arising from the Consultation 1 suggestions and ideas.

Note – this small group should collaborate with other groups including when engaging with local government and investigating demographics and needs.

19.	FORE-RUNNER INVESTIGATIONS	Working / Reading Notes
	HERITAGE QUESTIONS	
	DEMOGRAPHICS & NEEDS IN CONTEXT	
	LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONNECTIONS & CONVERSATIONS	
19.	FOCUS OF PROJECTS	Working / Reading Notes
	ARTS & MUSIC	
	FOOTPRINT REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT : PROPERTY INITIATIVES/ REFURBISHMENTS / REPURPOSING OF KOOKA ROOMS...and OTHER	
	HOUSING/ACCOMMODATION INITIATIVES	
	AGED CARE FOCI & INITIATIVES	
	STUDENT HOUSING – EXPANDING CURRENT MISSION	
	MULTI FAITH AND MULTI-CULTURAL CONNECTIONS	

The Working Group presents this Report and Recommendations to Church Council for consideration, and for its response to its efficacy, usefulness and relevance in addressing the issues and purpose for which Council appointed the Working Group, viz. *to address the deficit and to examine ways of reducing and managing it.*

Council is reminded that in adopting the design of the discernment process it was understood that this Report would be considered by Church Council and then presented, as Council approved and advised, to the Meeting of the Congregation.

Therefore, the Working Group seeks Council's response.

The presentation of the report to the Meeting of the Congregation will be as determined by Council.

Following discussion by the Working Group the following **Proposals** for the Meeting of the Congregation on 9th October are made for Council's consideration:

That

- **the Meeting be held in the Church using the same seating format as that used in Consultation 1;**
- **the Working Group undertakes to present the content of the Report and the Recommendations, taking into account Council's response and advice;**
- **the matter of human resources for more immediate tasks, and for meeting the challenges of the future, is outlined again;**
- **the concept of "A Step in Faith" is acknowledged, as it was noted in the Stewardship brochure, where it addressed both financial and human resources;**

and that

- **the Recommendations are put, they are discussed according to members' responses, and the Meeting's approval or otherwise is recorded, providing the basis for the actions which should follow, and**
- **as an integral part of this endorsement process members are asked to indicate on a personal response paper their interest and willingness, firstly to be involved in the working groups and actions indicated in the recommendations, and secondly to participate in the future in the activities which would continue or be developed.**

There is one further Recommendation to deal with the outcomes of the Meeting of the Congregation:

that following the Meeting of the Congregation, Council requests that the Working Group gives attention to developing further the Mission Overview which was accepted as a Working Document by the Congregation in Consultation 1, so that the actions arising from the endorsed Recommendations are added to that Mission Overview Working Document.

It is noted for continuing understanding of that Overview that the Priorities under which Actions are grouped are not entirely synonymous with the familiar team names. In sorting the Actions which were derived from the 2021 planning sessions, those Actions fitted most easily into the named categories/Priorities.

This ongoing task is intended to bring together the Actions which include those already showing in the document with those which will follow from the decisions taken by Council and the Congregation. The document, Mission Overview, continues to be a "working" document and, as agreed on 14 August, it will be expanded and developed as steps and strategies are agreed, and it will be amended according to feedback from members of Teams and the Congregation.

The next stage of that document can be reported to the Meeting of the Congregation in early December.

The Working Group remains available for further tasks as determined by Church Council and/or the Congregation.

Working Group:

Bruce Ind, Rev Bob Hutchinson, Chris Ayles, Lachlan Mackenzie, Mary Thornley.

APPENDIX

RECOMMENDATIONS

Including:

ACTIONS – EARLY Late October, November and first week in December.

ACTIONS – SOON Soon as possible in 2023 and going forward.

PROJECTS AND PARTNERSHIPS –

Potential for larger scale initiatives which may require significant change and radical shifts.

Investigations to commence in 2023 and continue for the required period.