

WODEN VALLEY UNITING CHURCH

PLANNING OUR MISSION IN 2021 AND BEYOND

1. Introduction

Over the last 12 months we have had extensive discussion about our mission direction and strategy. This included developing a Mission and Vision Statement and Statement of Values (see Appendix 1), which direct us to move toward a clear plan and strategy. But there is no cohesive 'Mission Plan' as yet. Further, Standing Committee of the Canberra Region Presbytery has specifically requested Woden Valley Uniting Church to work toward a Mission Plan for 2021-22 and beyond.

This paper sets out a road map to achieve this planning during the next six to twelve months and outlines some important congregational endorsements or decisions. Two stages are set out below: engaging this new congregational entity in owning the commitments that come from the two merging congregations (Stage One) and establishing a Mission Planning and Implementation Committee (Stage Two).

It is important to recall that in the discussions around our coming together, one of the reasons was to secure our future as a congregation within the Woden Valley community and as part of that, embark on new mission opportunities.

2. Background

2.1. The former St James.

A key mission activity of the former St James was making part of 'The Block' available to MyHome in Canberra to establish a residential facility for people with long term mental illness. For the remainder of the block, we are exploring options for affordable housing. An amount of \$10,000 was allocated from reserves earlier this year, to prepare an indicative master plan for the entire block. A large amount of time has been devoted to this project by members of the congregation and is continuing. For more details see Appendix 2. The St James congregation has also ensured extensive use of our Curtin premises in support of the local community, has supported the Red Cross local refugee program, and conducted craft and second-hand book stalls at the Curtin shops with the proceeds supporting Council-designated causes.

2.2. The former South Woden

In 2020, the former South Woden UC budgeted \$15,000 for donations in support of 'Wider Work'. This is a process that has been in place for well over nine years, with the amount depending on the financial situation. A significant contribution to the amount has come from the sale of Christmas cakes and craft activities. A number of factors were considered, including available funds, the number of proposals, priorities, future budget requirements and so on. Suggestions were sought from members of the congregation, with a consolidated list of proposals then considered by Council, leading to final recommendations put to a congregational vote.

Many of the donations have gone to organisations or causes with which the former SWUC has had a long association, others have been inspired by personal stories. There is a strong missional connection between many of the funded initiatives and the former SW congregation. The guidelines and list of 2020 contributions are available at Appendix 3.

The donation total did not include other missional activities in the form of 'in kind' donations such as the use of the Manse, contributions from the Craft and Phoenix Knitters groups and so on. However, since February 2015, the unrealised rent of the Manse (occupied by an asylum seeker family at little or no rent) has been notionally attributed to the Wider Work program; this is conservatively estimated at being over \$25k pa.

3. Stage One. Congregational engagement in respect of ongoing activities

The purpose of stage one is to engage the congregation in owning these existing projects and processes. Some activities and projects may be well known to some people and to each of the separate congregations, but they will not be known to everyone.

3.1 The new WVUC congregation needs to formally endorse an existing commitment of the former St James and the NSW/ACT Synod, and which has been conveyed to and acted upon by the ACT Government, for the use of part of 'The Block' for the development of the proposed 'MyHome in Canberra' facility. Management of WVUC's involvement in this project would be delegated to the Interim and then newly elected Church Council. Regular written reports will be provided to the Congregation (approximately three monthly).

3.2 The new WVUC congregation should also formally endorse an approach to the development of the entire Block to include possible development of affordable rented housing, as discussed in more detail in Appendix 2. Such further development of the block will involve a time commitment by individual members of the congregation but not a financial commitment.

3.3 Wider Work: The congregation is asked to endorse making \$20,000 available from reserves for Wider Work projects in 2021-22 (rather than \$15,000 as in the previous year), with the process a repeat of previous years' approach at SWUC, and that a new category of 'Supporting Projects within the Canberra Region Presbytery' be included. WVUC is in a comfortable financial situation, in contrast with Presbytery and some individual congregations within the Presbytery. Three suggestions for Presbytery projects are at Appendix 4. Allocations to projects will be agreed subsequently by the congregation after a consultation process.

3.4 The new WVUC congregation is asked to endorse the continued subsidised rental arrangement of the Pearce manse to the current tenants, an asylum seeking family.

4. Stage Two - Mission Planning for the new WVUC

To achieve Stage Two, it is proposed that a Mission Planning and Implementation Committee be established, drawn from members of the congregation and reporting to Council. Although it might have a core of members from the Mission Working Group that developed the Vision, Mission and Values statement, this is a new group.

This Committee would develop mission strategies with different time horizons (say 3,5, and 7 years). Its first step would be to review the results of the mission discussion exercises undertaken last year and the recent social justice meeting held after church, and the earlier Capacity Quadrant analysis, taking into account Presbytery and Synod mission strategies (such as explicitly embodying the five marks of mission).

In the process, the Committee should predict/propose any resources that may be necessary (in terms of facilities, finance, personnel etc) to inform budget considerations. It could also propose larger initiatives which may be possible with additional employed staff.

It is expected that the Committee would engage the congregation in discerning new mission projects and activities, as appropriate. It should also develop a communication strategy and plan to inform the wider community of our activities, as a way of attracting supporters and possibly new congregation members.

A discussion paper on the overall mission strategy, and proposed initiatives and activities that flow from that, would be presented to Church Council and then the congregation when ready.

5. Concurrent Budget Planning

Budget planning will be an important concurrent element. In the early stages of our discussions leading to our merging, it was agreed that the revenue from giving and the use of the church property, and continuing with a half time minister, would leave our finances in a healthy state. One suggestion was the employment of a part time deacon or project officer to pursue or provide support for mission initiatives. This and other possibilities will be important elements in preparing forward estimates for say the next three to five years.

5. Conclusion

As the new WVUC, we need to secure our future as a viable church. We have the responsibility of directing our assets, physical, people and financial toward achieving the objectives of the Uniting Church as followers of the way of Jesus. We believe this road map starts us on the way.

Stephen Brand and Janet Kay

9 June 2021



***PROPOSED WODEN VALLEY UNITING CHURCH
VALUES, VISION AND MISSION***

As followers of the Way of Jesus, within a Uniting Church congregation, we strive for a church community which is:

- Welcoming and hospitable to all regardless of race, sexual orientation, gender, age, circumstance or cultural background.
- Loving, compassionate and steadfast in our relationships with each other, supportive in pastoral care and offering encouragement for active participation and lay leadership.
- Honest and accountable to each other and to the communities we serve.
- Inclusive and creative in worship which nurtures faith and strengthens connections with each other, the sacred and the world.
- Serious and honest in our exploration of the Christian faith, respectful of the Bible and informed by contemporary Biblical scholarship, while allowing room for questioning and doubt.
- Open to learning from other faith traditions, scientific revelation and contemporary thought.
- Active in our support of our local communities.
- Fearless in advocacy and energetic in action in support of social justice, reconciliation, peace and wise environmental stewardship, locally, nationally and globally.
- Acting ecumenically with other churches and other faith groups.

VISION

- A vibrant community of faith living out God's love and acting for the common good to build a just and compassionate society.

MISSION

- To be a welcoming, inclusive, progressive and outward looking Christian community that nurtures spirituality and faith and encourages service.

July 2020

Appendix 2

The Block - the church's land in Curtin

(Block 1, Section 15, bordered by Carruthers, Theodore and Martin Streets)

The original land grant

"The block" was originally granted as community facility land, to the Presbyterian Church in the 1960s for church use, but aside from a church manse was never built on. Instead, agreement was reached with the local Anglicans (Church of the Good Shepherd) to jointly develop the land they had been granted on the other side of the road. Various alternative uses for the block (including youth club, aged care and childcare) have been considered over the years by the Presbyterian, Uniting and Anglican congregations but never to the point of finality, due mainly to finance and zoning limitations.

MyHome in Canberra

In 2013 MyHome in Canberra, a local community organisation which aims to provide supported accommodation to people with enduring mental illness, approached the church about using the land to build a complex of twenty single bedroom apartments. The congregation gave in-principle agreement to the request and then worked with the Presbytery and Synod to formalise an offer to MyHome about use of the land: essentially to make part of the block available to MyHome, subject to adequate capital funds being available and operational and financial feasibility being established.

MyHome's proposed use of the land would provide no financial return to the Uniting Church. Yet we have persisted over these past eight years in our support for MyHome, through offer of land and the efforts of individual church members in the work of MyHome, because:

- we believe that housing for people with mental illness is an area of acute need in our city;
- HOME in Queanbeyan, on which the MyHome proposal is largely modelled, has for over 10 years been successfully providing supportive accommodation for people with enduring mental illness;
- the proximity to shops and public transport makes the site a very suitable location for this type of accommodation. Moreover the 2018 Curtin Group Centre Master Plan encourages the development of supportive housing on the site; and
- this land has been underutilised for too long. The church wishes to see it put to use in a way that is beneficial to the community.

The church was affirmed in its support of MyHome by the inclusion in the 2020 ACT Parliamentary Agreement of a commitment to "work with the landowners and community organisations to deliver the MyHome proposal in Curtin." We are working with the ACT Government and MyHome to achieve this end. More information about MyHome is at <https://myhomeincanberra.org.au/> Note that the church's involvement is through the offer of land; the actual operation, fundraising etc are matters for MyHome.

Affordable Rented Housing

The MyHome proposal would use only part of the block. The church is exploring with CHC, a local community and affordable housing provider, the use of the remainder of the block for affordable rented housing. (More information about CHC is <https://chcaustralia.com.au/>) The 2018 Curtin Master Plan recommends the investigation of our Curtin site for affordable housing.

Affordable rented housing on the block would help meet a significant social need and would complement the MyHome development. At this stage, however, it is merely just an option being considered. We recognise that affordable rented housing is likely to require a Territory Plan variation. Further, any such development would need to include replacement of the church manse and some ongoing financial return both to compensate for costs and disruption that would inevitably stem from the development and because, as a church, we have mission priorities in addition to housing.

Indicative development plan for the site and engagement with the local community

In May 2021 WVUC, with the support of MyHome and CHC, commissioned architectural and planning consultants to prepare an Indicative Development Plan for the site. The purpose of the plan is to help determine the best location on the site for MyHome, to explore options for affordable housing on the remainder of the site and to provide a basis for community consultation with regard to the use of the site.

The establishment of MyHome on the site, involving as it would 19 people with mental illness living in apartments near the centre of the suburb, will need to be carefully explained to the local community. Likewise, the local community will pay close attention to the possibility of an affordable rental housing development which rises perhaps as high as six storeys at the entry point of the suburb. We are keen to ensure that the community is well informed about our proposals and given ample opportunity to comment.

Appendix 3.

Wider Work explained as undertaken by the former South Woden Congregation in 2019-2020:

In deciding where our donations would go, Council considered the following guidelines:

- To exclude organisations for which donations of \$1000 to \$3000 is relatively insignificant,
- To include organisations for which these size donations can be quite significant,
- To include organisations for which our contribution over some years has become a reliable source of income,
- To support organisations that are in keeping with our broad and agreed mission directions and values.

The following donations were approved from the South Woden UC financial reserves in 2020:

Organisation	Type	Years of support	Amount
Technology for the Aging and Disabled	Local	8	\$1,000
Companion House	Local	6	\$2,000
Community First Development	Local	2	\$2,000
Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia	International	3	\$1,000
Cooperation in Development (Fred Hyde Schools, Bangladesh)	International	2	\$1,000
Lalgadh Leprosy Hospital Nepal	International	8	\$3,000
Canberra Refugee Support	Local	8	\$2,000
YWCA Canberra for the program Next Door	Local		\$1,000
Overseas Development arm of UC: Zimbabwe Livelihoods and Clean Water, a Poverty Alleviation Project	International		\$1,000
Overseas Development arm of UC: Women in Ministry in Fiji, Vanuatu, PNG, a Gender Equality project	International		\$1,000
TOTAL			\$15,000

Appendix 4

Possible Wider Work Recipients Proposed by Presbytery (Information provided by Rev Andrew Smith)

Rise Ministries

At its 22 April 2021 meeting, Standing Committee of Presbytery agreed by consensus to approve the use of the St Aidan's property by Rise Ministries and endorsed the Mission Strategy Committee's engagement with Rise Ministries as part of the strategy to grow mission with its Congregations, faith communities and other initiatives.

Sharing in mission with Rise Ministries will help grow the ways that entrepreneurial flair and ministry heart can combine to give rise to innovative fresh expressions of church, to connect with parts of our wider community that are largely missing from the Uniting Church across the Presbytery. Rise Ministries is church re-imagined.

For more information about Rise Ministries, see [Rise Ministries](#)

Rise Ministries has applied for a grant from Uniting Mission Education to help fund the setup costs of fitting out St Aidan's. Donations to Rise Ministries could assist with these set up costs and could also contribute to funding the wages of the Director of Rise Ministries.

Braidwood Uniting Church

Central to Braidwood's mission plan is using proceeds of sale for building additions to provide more space for their Op Shop, and for extending pastor Julie's hours from 16 to 24 hours/week to help resource mission through the Op shop, Summerfield (new over 55s estate) and the aged care of the multi-purpose service (MPS) hospital. Growth outcomes of the mission plan include a new community of faith based out of the op shop and another based out of Summerfield.

To move from maintenance focus to a missional focus can be achieved through fostering more leadership and ministry time by a 50% increase of paid ministry hours (moving from 16 to 24 hours a week) for the part time Pastor, Dr Julie Fletcher. These extra hours would allow for community engagement at the Op shop to provide spiritual care for volunteers and patrons. The Op shop is a space where natural conversations happen. Extra hours would also give time to provide spiritual care to Summerfield Estate and the Braidwood MPS residents and staff.

Braidwood UC has already begun to enact this mission plan without the further resourcing mentioned above. Donations to Braidwood UC could assist with funding the extended hours of Julie's employment, or funding additional features to the op shop development, including developing the child friendly space with play equipment.

Support to ministry of UAICC

The NSW/ACT Synod and Macquarie Darling Presbytery are supporting the operations of three UAICC Ministry Centres in NSW – at Condobolin, Wellington and Broken Hill. These ministries are recognised, or are in the process of being recognised, as Faith Communities in the Macquarie Darling Presbytery.

To help build understanding of UAICC ministry, here are a couple of stories about the ministry centres, written by Nathan Tyson, Relationship and Service Manager Synod Office:

<https://www.insights.uca.org.au/a-cool-drink-and-a-yarn-with-pastor-tom-sloane/>

<https://www.insights.uca.org.au/pastor-beth-wolfe-doing-the-work-the-lord-called-me-to-do/>