

# Uniting Church in Australia – Synod of Victoria and Tasmania

## Presbytery of Tasmania

### Consultation

#### Kingston Uniting Church, Rowallan Park – August 2016



The consultation process in action – Sunday 21 August 2016

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The Presbytery of Tasmania initiated the Consultation as part of the regular review processes of the Uniting Church. It was felt that the 'time was right' for the consultation after the opening of the Rowallan Park supported accommodation and integrated community.

### **The purpose of the consultation**

The purpose of the consultation was to listen to the wider Rowallan Park integrated community and provide feedback on the shape of their mission and future direction.

Provide an initial platform for the calling of a new Minister, following the retirement of Colin Gurteen in April 2017.

### **Consultation team and process**

The consultation team included the following members-

- Bev Gibson (Kingston Uniting Church)
- Ray Quinn (Kingston Uniting Church)
- Sophie Visser (Kingston Uniting Church)
- Ann Jennings (Kingston Uniting Church)
- Graham Sturdy (Scots Memorial Church – Minister)
- Helen Geard (Claremont Uniting Church – Member)



A team 'selfie photo' 20 September 2016

with the assistance of the wonderful members of Church Council and the Rowallan Park community who embraced the consultation opportunity.

The consultation team met on 3 August 2016 to develop processes and arrange the collection of background documents. It should be noted that the range and detail of the supporting Church information was impressive. During the initial meeting a questionnaire was developed for use during the consultation process and for completion by members unable to attend consultation events. The questionnaire was distributed and responses from absent members form part of this report.

Graham and Helen met members of the Church Council on Thursday 18 August 2016. The meeting was an opportunity to explore important issues from a Church Council perspective.

The first consultation was held on Friday 19 August 2017 from 4.00pm to 6.00pm. It was advertised as an open door opportunity for members to come have an informal chat with the team. Only 2 members attended and both are on the Church Council. During that time however the team were able to gather further background information and discuss a range of possibilities.

The second consultation was held on Saturday 20 August 2017 from 9.30 to 12.30pm. There were 3 members in attendance. There was an excellent discussion about the church and wider community as members worked their way through the questionnaire.

Helen attended the worship service on Sunday 21 August 2017. There were at least 50 people in attendance and members/visitors engaged in 'rectangle table' group exploration of the Lords Prayer followed by Communion. Helen provided an explanation of the consultation process and outlined that members could participate after the service.

Graham was able to attend the morning tea and consultation process. During the morning 19 members were able to contribute to the completion of the questionnaires during facilitated conversations. At least another 20 members (7 young people) contributed verbally to a team member and these responses were recorded.

During the consultation period members of the consultation team had conversations with key individuals within the community including the Minister Colin Gurteen.

All the information gathered was captured in a comprehensive summary document. The consultation team met on Tuesday 20 September 2016 and reviewed the summary document to ensure that there were no 'missing pieces'. Recommendations were then formulated based on what the team had heard from everyone involved.

The consultation report went through a number of review processes before being finalised.

### **Theological Reflection**

Underpinning the consultation were three important questions that for some time now the church has been encouraged to ask.

Who is God? What is God doing? How do we join in?

During the consultation, with these questions in mind, we reflected briefly on a number of bible passages and some themes began to emerge.

Often the unexpected happens: Jesus washes feet (John 13:1-9); the Samaritan helps the injured man (Luke 10:30-37); the fisherman cast the net on the other side and are overwhelmed with fish (John 21:1-8); the grain of wheat dies in order for there to be fruit (John 12:24). Perhaps God is calling us to look for the unexpected.

The image of the vine resonated with a number of people (John 15:1-8). In worship we are nurtured and as branches we reach out (are sent out) into our community to find 'people of peace' and to work in partnership.

Others found the story of the 'casting the net on the other side' important. Listening to God, doing what we feel he is telling us to do even if it might only be a small change of tactics.

Other biblical themes included, listening, hospitality, being one body with many members and different gifts. Using our different gifts to share the work.

## Background documents

The following documents were provided in support of the consultation process-

- Treasurers Annual Report and Budget for 2015
- Monthly Reports from Church Council 2016
- Church Annual Report March 2016
- Sample Notice Sheet
- Vision and Mission 2016

## Kingborough Local Government Area – ‘2011 Census QuickStats’

- There were 33,893 people living in the area; of these 48.5% were male and 51.5% were female.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people made up 3.1% of the population.
- The median age was 40 years. Children aged 0 - 14 years made up 20.7% (Tas 19%) of the population and people aged 65 years and over made up 15.2% (Tas 16.3%) of the population.
- Of people aged 15 years and over, 53.7% were married and 11.9% were either divorced or separated. There were 54.0% of people in a registered marriage and 10.7% in a de facto marriage.
- 29.1% of people were attending an educational institution. Of these, 35.2% were in primary school, 22.4% in secondary school and 21.1% in a tertiary or technical institution.
- The most common responses for religion were No Religion 32.9%, Anglican 23.2%, Catholic 16.9%, Christian (not further defined) 3.9% and Presbyterian and Reformed 3.6%.
- There were 16,813 people who reported being in the labour force in the week before Census night. Of these 53.8% were employed full time, 35.7% were employed part-time and 4.6% were unemployed.
- The most common occupations included Professionals 25.5%, Clerical and Administrative Workers 16.3%, Technicians and Trades Workers 13.6%, Managers 13.3%, and Community and Personal Service Workers 10.4%.
- The median weekly personal income for people aged 15 years and over was \$594 (Tas \$499; Australia \$577).
- The unemployment rate was 4.6% compared to the Tasmanian average of 6.4%.
- 91.5% of the population only spoke English at home. The top responses for other languages were German, Dutch and Mandarin.

Information for the dot points above was obtained from Australian Bureau of Statistics web site, reference - [http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census\\_services/getproduct/census/2011/quickstat/LGA63610?opendocument&navpos=220](http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2011/quickstat/LGA63610?opendocument&navpos=220)

The population in Kingborough is slightly younger than in the rest of Tasmania. The statistics do not reveal a significantly larger older population as may have been expected based on informal comments that Kingborough attracts many retirees.

Nearly 50% of the population identified a Christian religious affiliation. The Uniting Church however did not rate a mention in the top 5 responses.

## Description of the Kingston Congregation / Rowallan Park

The Kingston Uniting Church is situated between the towns of Kingston and Blackmans Bay, some 14km south of Hobart, within the Council area of Kingborough.

The congregation has been on an exciting journey over the past few years which has seen the complete redevelopment of its property. The Bushland site now comprises

- Supported Accommodation for 12 people with disabilities
- A manse so that the minister can live on the site of the growing community
- A flexible building for worship and community use, accessible to all

The church is still committed to its master plan and strategy of building an Intentional Community on the site. An Intentional Community has been described as a planned residential community designed from the start to have a high degree of social cohesion, teamwork and shared values. The following is an extract from the Rowallan Park Intentional Community Master Plan, June 2012-

*Whilst retaining the existing church as the focus of the scheme, the intentional community concept results in a development model with a strong sense of purpose, cohesion, place and identity and delivering an innovative alternative to conventional church space and suburban living. It responds to contemporary changes in society towards more diverse and inclusive social living arrangements and provides an example of social justice for people on the margins to the broader community.*

The congregation meet for worship each Sunday at 10:00am. The minister Colin Gurteen has helped to develop this family oriented worship service with a mix of traditional and contemporary styles aimed at reaching all age groups. Tea and coffee are provided afterwards. Communion is held on the third Sunday of each month. The Church has a number of families with young children and grandchildren. The Sunday school runs during part of the service.

Other regular congregational activities include

- Uniting Church Adult Fellowship
- A Book Group
- Music Group
- Home Lunch/Dinner Groups
- Bible Study Fellowship Group
- UnitingCare's Emergency Relief Programme

The Church Council meets monthly and offers clear leadership. Colin has encouraged the church to think theologically about the way forward and under his guidance the Church Council has presented a clear 'Mission and Vision 2016' to the congregation. This is based upon 'The five practices of fruitful congregations' (Robert Schnase); Radical Hospitality;

Passionate Worship; Intentional Faith Development; Risk taking Mission and Service; Extravagant Generosity.

The congregation is enthusiastic about the journey it has embarked upon and looks forward to growth in all areas of church life. It is an open, flexible and welcoming congregation.

This quote from their website seems to sum up the ethos of the congregation: *'We invite people who are searching, dreaming or giving thanks in their lives to join our searching, celebrating and discerning. Together we engage in joining in what God is doing in our world.'*

### What the consultation team heard

All the feedback was pulled together into a summary document based on the questionnaire that had been used during the consultation. It should be noted that not all feedback was obtained by the formal questionnaire process however care was taken to ensure responses were captured and written within the question framework.

The team reviewed the summary document at its meeting on Tuesday 20 September 2016 and believed that it painted a genuine picture of what the team had heard. The decision was made to make the summary document the foundation of this section of the report rather than trying to distil it further and potentially leave out key points.

Following are the set of questions that were asked during the consultation process and the responses provided by members of the Rowallan Park Community. There is a mixture of direct quotes and summary points that highlight key themes that emerged.

### Why do people come to the Kingston Uniting Church?



## What has changed in your congregation in the last three years?

### Community

- Become more outward looking with the development of the Intentional Community
- More community minded

### Congregation

- Congregation has grown closer together
- People are mixing more
- Age dynamic has changed – aging
- New children are arriving and others are leaving
- Older members have died
- Children arriving with Grandparents
- Sunday School smaller
- A more 'uniting church'
- A much more inclusive church
- Not enough people for the church rosters
- A church with a shared vision
- Consensus has been vital in keeping everyone on board

### Worship/ ministry

- More relaxed style of ministry
- Great participation in worship
- Minister encouraging the young people we have

### Buildings

- Building projects – excitement at the completion of this stage
- When will all stage 2 works be completed?

### Name three signs of hope in your congregation.

- Enthusiasm
- Enormous energy
- Opportunities for outreach through the redeveloped building which is more user friendly, and through developing stronger links to the Intentional Community
- Preparedness to change, to be open and inclusive
- The congregation is compassionate and caring
- Young people becoming involved
- Housing and other units for affordable housing
- New people getting involved
- The minister
- Trust in leaders to develop a strategy and bring everyone along
- Need to keep the long term vision

## Name three things that you would like to see develop in your congregation. Why?

### Small groups

There was a lot of feedback about the need to develop small groups. It can be 'summed up' in the following statement – "more small groups because they allow us to be real with each other, to learn about each other and grow together. They can be a point of inclusion for new people as well as active in outreach. Some of these should involve members of the Rowallan Park Community". Ideas included pastoral care, prayer, prayer trees/chains, meals, books, music, bible study, activity based groups and running Alpha Courses for young people.

### Worship

- Members are open to explore alternative worship arrangements. A contemplative service or a different style of worship in the evening as an alternative to Sunday at 10am because some people, might be looking for this. Could be Messy Church.
- Greater use of the skills and talents of congregation members within the Church.
- 'Minute for mission' – share what people are doing each Sunday / what others are doing.
- Some people don't enjoy round table services and other people do enjoy them.



### Sunday School / children

There was a sense that 'more could be done' for children and were the current arrangements meeting their needs? Suggestions ranged from - all age worship every week with no Sunday school to a more formal structure accommodating different age groups. Other suggestions included displays in the Sunday School room, encouragement stickers and books and the development of a playground. Other members suggested that the children/families needed to be asked what they would like to do.

Family camps and Sunday School picnics were also mentioned.

### Youth Group / Youth ministry

A youth group based at Rowallan Park - would this be feasible? Young people are attending youth groups facilitated by other Churches. Development of young adults ministry was also highlighted.

### Wider Community

- Options to take over 'Linc' type programs
- More community events to attract 'non church' people eg games and dance nights
- Start up something like Crossroads again
- Huge range of ideas to utilise the buildings and facilities

## **Pastoral care**

In a larger congregation it becomes more difficult to ensure that pastoral care matters are handled well. There was discussion about how pastoral care could be further supported ranging from pastoral care groups to members being in charge of sending cards to people who are ill and the celebration of Birthdays.

## **What are the opportunities and points of stress and pain in your wider community?**

Congregation members are genuinely connected to their community and they understand that many people are struggling. Themes - poverty, addictions, loneliness, access to services, disadvantaged young people, domestic violence, mental health issues, Aboriginal community stresses, older people at risk and welcoming refugees / migrants.

The other theme that emerged was a Church navigating a world that may not want to hear our story. The following quote says a great deal – “a lot of people don’t think God can help them – they don’t want to hear ‘God talk’ from us”.

## **How does your congregation connect with, serve or partner with people in your wider community?**

The following is a list that was gathered during the consultation and may not completely reflect what is happening. The congregation needs to be acknowledged for the work they do.

- Uniting Church Emergency Relief / Food Bank / tinned food donations
- Fusion
- ‘Possabilities’ and NDIS through the Community (supported accommodation)
- Talking to people with language difficulties
- People using the facilities
- Community dinners and events
- Pastoral care activities
- Retirement homes

This list does not include the individual contributions that congregation members may make to the wider community. The Church is playing a role in equipping those people to go out and work in community.

## **Are there opportunities for new ways of serving or partnering in your wider community? (Particularly as a result of your new premises)**

- We could have groups where congregation members and people who live at Rowallan Park could join together for activities eg cooking, table tennis (we now have a table), barbecues, Christmas party etc.
- Could have more discussion with Fusion about possible links, also Uniting Care.
- Increase use of facilities
- Young parents groups
- Interfaith opportunities – combing with other churches on special occasions

- Support a refugee family
- Bus to support access for people with disabilities
- Singles lunches
- Events beyond church people
- Developing relationships
- Play groups on Friday mornings
- Cooking cup cakes with Muslim women
- Run a children's expo – encourage young people to bring their friends
- Dancing – all types
- Fashion parades
- Art shows
- Christmas fair in November
- Silent auctions
- Film nights
- Afternoon tea speakers
- International food nights



### What comments would you like to make about the structure and leadership of the Congregation.

- Current structure works well and could be enhanced by small groups to lead in areas of worship planning, pastoral care etc
- Need a meeting to discuss further
- Greater feedback on what Church Council has discussed and ability to let Church Council know what we want in a minister
- Continue to ensure that young people are involved eg leadership and taking part in services
- More 'lay people' involvement in running services
- Provide mentors to younger people as they mature (late teens)
- Need an administrative person working in the new office aiding the Church Council
- Need more people with management and governance experience – complex projects ahead that will require the right skills

### Communication

The following is a direct quote-

“Don't know much apart from that we have a Church Council. As a new person coming in it is not easy to find information on church structure. I am used to a church with Elders and I struggled here to find a similar person to contact / talk to. More information about how to do offerings, updates on how we are doing against budget, information that you can do auto payment if applicable. Maybe an info sheet for new people.”

The statements above reflect the difficulty some members had when they joined the congregation and sought information. It seemed that everyone else knew what was 'going on' and they were reluctant to ask the questions.

### What bold steps would you like to see your congregation take? Why?

Some of the bold step suggestions fell within the connecting to community question and have placed in that section.

There was a feeling that the congregation had already taken very bold steps with the development of the Intentional Community and the expansion of the church building. There was an understanding about the Stage 3 development and it seemed that members just accepted that this would happen. There was some concern expressed that the current stages needed to be fully finished (eg landscaping within the site) before embarking on the next stage.

The challenge identified was being intentional about creating genuine community connections and building on the possibilities that the new buildings provide. It may prove difficult to discern where to focus energy and will require leadership.

There was also a feeling that the congregation should not avoid having the 'hard conversations' with the community and facilitate discussions about everything from heaven to death.



## Recommendations

**Sunday School / youth faith development** – there is an opportunity to build upon the excellent work being undertaken by the Sunday School teachers and youth leaders.

- Encourage teachers, leaders and the wider congregation to have a focused conversation about future frameworks and resources required to continue nurturing the faith of young people.

**Small groups** – a key theme identified during the consultation period was a ‘yearning’ for more small groups.

- It appears that congregation members would benefit from time invested in exploring together the small group ‘yearning’. A facilitated process to review existing small groups, develop new ones and issue intentional invitations would be significant, at this stage, for the congregation.

**Governance** – what has been achieved at Rowallan Park would not have been possible without sound governance practices and the leadership team should be acknowledged for their hard work and dedication. As Stage 2 final works are being progressed it is an opportune time to review existing governance arrangements to ensure the governance structure remains appropriate to meet the needs of the community.

- Review existing governance structures with a focus on how the Church Council can continue to build its capacity and the capacity of the congregation to meet future challenges eg new working groups, skills development, talent identification, delegations, mentoring young people and additional administrative support.

**Vision and Mission** – a great deal of time and energy has been invested in the development of the vision and mission for the Kingston Congregation and it has played a significant role in bringing the congregation together. The congregation is in an ‘exciting place’ with many options to explore about how it wishes to continue connecting with the wider community.

- The congregation remains focused on the vision and mission document (Appendix A) as a guide for further discussions about connecting with the wider community.

**Rowallan Park** – what a wonderful outcome for the residents and the opening of the complex was a celebration of a dream coming true. This is the start of a journey together.

- The congregation needs to remain intentional with the development of strategies to ensure continued and genuine engagement with Rowallan Park residents.

**Pastoral care** – when a group of dedicated people are genuinely focused on ‘doing good things’ self-care can gently slip to a lower priority. There is great work to ensure pastoral care remains a priority within the congregation and this would be a good time to review the surrounding support systems.

- Review the formal systems in place that facilitate pastoral care – do the systems support appropriate pastoral care for individual congregation members? Are the communication channels adequate for new and existing members?

### **Calling a new minister**

The Congregation ask the Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC) to establish a Joint Nominating Committee (JNC) with a view to calling a new minister.

# Vision and Mission 2016

## KINGSTON UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

We believe God is love, and God's love is unconditional. We believe God's love is for all people regardless of race, colour, creed or gender. We recognise God's love for us in the richness of our lives and our community. The love of God calls us to respond in love of God and of our neighbour.

We look to our future where our community of faith discerns the presence of God in the world around us; where all our resources are used in ways congruent and consistent with the church's calling and purpose; where we bear witness to God in this community with those we are in relationship; where our life together is a faithful expression of the church sent to serve God's mission in the world, for all the world.

Our dream is to develop the skills, confidence, resources (people & facilities) and structure within KUC to be able to engage with the community in a manner which develops the number of people connected with the KUC community to achieve our vision over the next ten years. To do this we will listen to and proactively support the young and the ageing to provide leadership opportunities, spaces for growth and meaningful interaction. We dream we will have a resilient and thriving community of children, young people and families with KUC and the wider community, where we all engage positively and connect across all generations.

In striving for these goals, we see Rowallan Park becoming an inclusive, actively interdependent and dynamic community where people know, value and care for one another. We see ourselves providing social support and community based care for people living at Rowallan Park, and providing friendship, hospitality, facilities and programmes that create interdependence and participation in the community. In sharing the resources God has given us, we look for our multipurpose community building to be fully utilised as a major resource for community development, learning, discipleship, worship, social enterprise, and hospitality.

### Explanation of chart:

1. The first column lists as our core priorities "The five practices of fruitful congregations" as explained by author Robert Schnase.
2. The second column articulates these priorities in the language of commitment.
3. The third column spells out what we will then see when we fulfil these commitments.
4. The colour coding indicates whether the signs/activities are something we are **currently doing**, expect to do in the **next three years**, or dream of achieving in the **next ten**.
5. Some events/activities/tasks will match more than one priority. The best match will be in regular type, and other instances in *italics*.

Table 1

Core Priorities	Mission Commitments	Signs of life - events, activities, tasks
<b>Radical hospitality</b>	<i>We commit ourselves to practise hospitality, becoming part of God's invitation to new life, showing people that God in Christ values them and loves them.</i>	A thriving small group life which includes all ages and abilities, e.g. Adult fellowship, lunch groups
		Neighbourhood engagement events (e.g. Winter market, Art with a bite)
		Regular/scheduled social and recreational activities and events
		One or more weekly play groups
		Shared/community garden
		A café where relationships are first priority
<b>Passionate worship</b>	<i>We commit ourselves to worship that is authentic, alive, creative and comprehensible, where people experience the life-changing presence of God in the presence of others.</i>	Congregational worship that is relaxed, intergenerational, with vibrant singing/music, and the hospitality of food and drink
		Regular worship at Bishop Davies Court.
		Communion celebrated with people beyond the gathered congregation
		Non-Sunday worship
		Regular and engaging drama
		Worship in a variety of formats and styles
		The development of our music ministry through other expressions, e.g. a youth band

<b>Intentional faith development</b>	<i>We commit ourselves to grow in faith through placing ourselves in community to learn the faith in a network of support, encouragement and direction.</i>	<p>Sunday school, bible study, book group</p> <p>A broader and stronger small group network with a focus on faith</p> <p>Active youth ministry</p> <p>Regular, specific youth events and activities</p>
<b>Risk-taking mission and service</b>	<i>We commit ourselves to mission which turns our church service outwards, reminding ourselves that Christ's compassion, grace, mercy and love extend to the entire world.</i>	<p>The life of Rowallan Park community is overseen by the Kingston Uniting Church Council. This includes leadership and governance of Rowallan Park facilities, assets, programmes and services. The Supported Accommodation Governance Team is a subcommittee of the Church Council with specific responsibilities for the oversight of the supported accommodation.</p> <p>Engage with the wider community to determine and respond to needs, e.g. emotional, cultural, health, education</p> <p>A thriving community vegetable garden and chicken run.</p> <p>Community social enterprises operating at Rowallan Park</p> <p>Hospitality events, education and training programmes are being fully realised by our new facilities.</p>

<b>Extravagant generosity</b>	<i>We commit ourselves to the unselfish willingness to give in order to make a positive difference for the purposes of Christ.</i>	Well managed supported accommodation for twelve young adults. <i>The Supported Accommodation Governance Team report to KUC Council</i>
		Support the Kingston Emergency Relief programme through provision of goods, money and volunteers.
		Accommodation for the minister is provided at Rowailan Park.
		Stage three of the master plan has been advanced.
		Affordable accommodation is available.
		The community centre is used seven days per week
		Long term leasing is providing funds for community development, outreach, emergency relief and our mission commitments.