



Croydon Uniting Church

Strategic Plan, 2018-2022

Theological Affirmation

We believe that God is at work in creation and society to renew and unite all things, bringing abundant life. In the life, teaching, actions, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth we see God most clearly. Jesus brings in the kingdom of God which is the manifestation of God's purposes of restoration, turning creation right-side-up. The Holy Spirit is God at work today in our lives and in the world, creating new communities of love and justice.

We believe that the church, with all its imperfections and failings, is called to be a sign and agent of God's renewal. The church is called to worship, witness and serve as a fellowship of the Spirit. In worship, we celebrate who God is and what God does, and are ourselves renewed for witness and service. In witness, we proclaim who God is by our words and actions. In service, we demonstrate God's inclusive, compassionate love in practical action.

Having prayerfully discerned God's call on this congregation, we commit ourselves to the following.

Mission Statement

Following **Christ** as **intentional disciples**,
Walking **together** in **fellowship** with **all peoples**,
Seeking **community**, **compassion** and **justice** for **all creation**.

Strategic Objectives

1. Share the Good News of Jesus Christ by nurturing followers of Christ in life giving communities
2. Respond in compassion to human need
3. Live justly, seek justice for all and care for creation
4. Listen to each generation and culture so as to live out the Gospel in fresh ways
5. Pursue God's mission in partnership
6. Ensure future sustainability by faithful stewardship of our resources

The *Mission Statement* and *Strategic Objectives* are inspired by the Vision and Mission Principles of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, together with the work of the Croydon Uniting Church Mission Development Group (MDG).

The plan follows on from the work of the Mission Development Group, the shaping of this document at Executive level together with consultation with the Church Council. On July 25, 2017 the Church Council resolved to endorse this Strategic Plan and to commend it to the congregation for approval. It was approved by the Congregation on August 6, 2017.

Where we have been

1.1 The Current Vision

For some years Croydon Uniting Church has been guided by the following vision:

We at Croydon Uniting Church with God's grace and guidance will witness and proclaim the good news of God's love through Jesus Christ to the local and wider community.

We will focus particularly on: our prayer life, contemplation and discernment; pastoral care of the frail and aged; ministry with children, youth and their families; and actively serving the local and wider community.

1.2 Areas of Ministry

Croydon Uniting Church responded to the vision with active participation in four key Ministry areas. Through these, the congregation has lived out its vision for the spiritual guidance and growth of the Church in Croydon, its support and involvement with the local community and engagement with the world.

1.2.1 Worship and Education

Worship and spiritual growth has been a very important part of the life of Croydon Uniting Church for many years. There is significant diversity in our worship both within our traditional 10:00am Sunday morning worship services, and other gatherings, and this diversity has included opportunities for all members of our Congregation to be involved in the various aspects of worship. This encourages a variety of perspectives and different interpretation of the messages. 'Quiet church', 'messy church' and the monthly weekday Pastoral Care services have continued as important initiatives and approaches.

We have explored a variety of different worship styles to appeal to a broader range of people, and have over the years developed small group studies and prayer groups that have encouraged members to share and grow their faith. In recent times, in particular, a greater emphasis on faith sharing is something which has been yearned for.

1.2.2 Prayer, Contemplation and Discernment

Prayer, contemplation and discernment are central to a Christian life. A specific focus on this through the vision statement is a relatively recent inclusion. A reinvigoration of a weekly prayer group and a prayer chain has followed. Further opportunities to deepen and enrich our faith are something that many of us seek.

1.2.3 Children, Families and Youth Ministry

The Children, Families and Youth Ministry was initiated as an intentional mission area in 2004, and has been strongly supporting through dedicated staff and general commitment and support of the Congregation. It has actively encouraged young families and children to actively engage and participate in the life of the Church, while offering practical support for many people that have participated in various programs, including Playgroup, FFEET, STEPS, YUCC, KUCA, WOW, Young Singers and Music Together. A number of young people are now taking an active leadership role in Church activities and worship, and Croydon Uniting has become known for our specific focus and skills in this important area of mission.

It could be said that our work in this area has effectively engaged those with a 'heartburst' for children, families and young people - and for young families themselves - but significant

participation in this area of mission by the full congregation has remained elusive. Notwithstanding the excellent efforts of many (including the continuation of an employed playgroup leader), this dimension to our mission has been increasingly difficult to sustain since the departure of Carolyne Chandler as paid CFYM worker at the end of 2014, and, in looking to the future, we need to consider other approaches.

1.2.3 Pastoral Care

The congregation has always placed a very high emphasis on providing pastoral care to members, extended family and the community. The Pastoral Care Committee provides strategic oversight and direction and facilitates practical delivery of pastoral care to the Congregation. For eight years, concluding in 2011, this area was supported by Adele Allen in a paid capacity as Pastoral Care Associate. In the years since, it has relied much more on voluntary efforts, and the focus has been on the care of the frail and aged.

The provision of excellent pastoral care is a large and increasing task for a congregation of the size and demographic of Croydon Uniting Church; we must nevertheless wonder about the best way to provide pastoral support for the whole congregation as we move forward.

1.2.4 Community Outreach in Croydon and beyond

Croydon Uniting Church has provided an active witness in our community through a diverse range of activities beyond our buildings, and beyond our regular worshipping community. We have been actively involved in delivering practical community support through Helping Hand, with a number of members taking an active role in leadership, or being a volunteer for this important outreach activity. Helping Hand continues to be an important part of our vision and mission, and has been operating to assist people in need in the Croydon community for over 25 years.

Support of chaplaincy in the local schools has been continuing since 1976, and continues to be a significant contribution to the local community. Like Helping Hand, it is supported by small active committee with a number committed Church people. Looking forward, it is important to discern whether this, like Helping Hand, will remain a 'heartburst' and commitment for individuals, or whether it will be missional dimension (and therefore financial commitment) for the congregation as a whole.

Croydon Uniting Church continues to be a voice for the many diverse areas where a stronger sense of social justice and advocacy for those lacking a strong voice is required. We endeavor to keep well informed about issues of social justice and encourage members to be strong advocates for better social policies in a range of areas. The Social Justice Committee provides practical ways for the congregation to be involved in relevant issues, and information about the many ways the wider Uniting Church is working for justice within Australia and globally.

Preparing for the Future

Croydon Uniting Church continues to be a vital place of fellowship, faith development and community outreach. Much has been achieved as we have faithfully followed our vision and mission.

We recognize this is not a static environment, and there are likely to be many challenges that face us as a Church community as respond to the changes that will occur over the next decade. Some of these changes are already very evident (e.g. challenges to property maintenance, changing congregational demographic). We recognize that times will continue to change, and it is important to establish a clearer view of our future, and the vision and goals which will be important for us to be prepared and to provide the leadership to be the Church that we discern God calls us to be and to become.

2.1 The Mission Development Group (MDG)

Accordingly, the Church Council has put time, energy and prayerful discernment into considering our future vision and mission goals. This included the work of the Mission Development Group which was set up in the last quarter of 2016 specifically with the objective of providing a perspective on desirable future directions for Croydon Uniting Church. This was a very diverse group of people who were able to provide a broad perspective on future possibilities, with a sense of 'implement-ability' and 'action'.

The essence of their discernment was a focus on "intentional discipleship", recognising that whenever we are at mission we need to have a clear focus on the ministry of developing disciples. We all need to grow in the Christian faith and become disciples of Jesus Christ. This represents an imperative for us who are 'inside' the church, one which has not received specific attention through the previous mission statements. It also identifies a key point of contact and 'reason for being' with those 'outside' the church. The ways we do this will emerge to meet the passions of the congregation, but may include project based groups (e.g. doing practical things for community support) or groups centered on spiritual growth including life education for the community. We expect these small groups to be diverse in nature, to be flexible with a limited life to meet the changing needs and interests of our community, and to be adaptable as membership changes.

2.2 Future Vision

The vision for the future builds on the strong foundations that have been established by our faithful community over many years, with a strong tradition in worship and education, CFYM, pastoral care and community involvement as described above. However it identifies changes in foci and emphasis necessary for the future.

We foresee a vibrant and invigorated Church community with a focus on active Christian discipleship, continuous learning and spiritual growth through faith development and sharing. This is underpinned with increased focus and opportunities on continuous learning and growth, both internally within the Congregation, but also beyond it, involving broader community engagement.

We aspire to become more active in supporting and helping the community, with increased opportunities for sharing our faith, both continuing and extending the practical support that we provide. We may develop new specific community outreach programs to respond to particular community needs, and become more responsive to the community including developing more inclusive forms of worship. There is increasing flexibility to encourage us to become involved in more diverse forms of ministry and mission which may become apparent as we explore new ways of expressing our faith. Some alternative approaches to "worship" will almost certainly flow from this new perspectives and styles of engagement.

There is a very strong sense of faith in the future, and that if we continue to pray and act as we ask for God's help in discerning our future that we will be lead in directions that will continue to nurture and give good witness to God in the community of Croydon for many years to come.

2.3 Strategic Plan

A five year Strategic Plan has been prayerfully developed so that Croydon Uniting Church can respond to the new challenges and circumstances, and can communicate clearly the areas for focus and priority. The objectives focus on new initiatives that we consider important in allowing our Church community to faithfully adapt to the changes that are happening around us, and continue to ensure that we witness and proclaim the good news of God's love through Jesus Christ to the local and wider community.

It is important to note that the plan is not set in stone, and needs to be adaptable as time moves on and as circumstances change. We would expect that continued discernment and new passions will result in new initiatives emerging, which should be embraced as part of the future. It is important to set out some future directions to guide our future, but not be so rigidly tied to this that it constrains real spiritual growth and faith development.

We envisage that the plan will transition us from the current faithful witness which we have established over many years and allow us to continue this tradition in the changing world, and assist us in faithfully creating a sustainable future.

2.4 Continuing Commitments

Our current commitments and approaches provide the foundation for the development of Croydon Uniting Church. While in some cases the initiatives outlined in the Strategic Plan modify and build on these commitments and approaches, and may introduce some changes around established ways we do things they will not fundamentally change them, especially in the short term.

In particular, regular gathered **worship** and **pastoral care** are central to our life together. These are important elements of any Christian community, but they are not the sole or even primary focus of the plan. These will both be enhanced through the proposed focus on intentional discipleship: the most evident aspect of this is a shift from passive 'recipients' to active 'participants' exploring and sharing faith and discipleship together.

Throughout the Strategic Plan, there is a clear continuing commitment to working with young families and to working with the disadvantaged in the community. Therefore, we also commit to continuing the following in the short-term: **Playgroup**, **Helping Hand** and **STEPS**.

Over the five-year life of the plan, we will remain open to God's continuing invitation to new and abundant life, and we expect further revisions to our current patterns and practices as together we continue to pray, discern and act together as a community of God's people in Croydon.

Strategic Objective	Key Direction	Actions
Share the Good News of Jesus Christ by nurturing followers of Christ in life giving communities	1.1 Provide opportunities for the church community to deepen their faith	1.1.1 Establish small groups for intentional discipleship, incorporating learning, growing, and action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify leaders of small groups and their focus Equip small group leaders (education and formation) Identify space and times for meeting Establish and enrich relationships between the groups which comprise the congregation Create a communication and engagement plan
		1.1.2 Retain current patterns of weekly Sunday morning worship, adapting in order to deepen their faith, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education on liturgy and symbols
	1.2 Engage with the broader community to deepen faith and continually renew worship to reflect its needs	1.2.1 Establish intentional discipleship via small groups specifically developed to meet community interest. (e.g. Social Justice) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify leaders of small groups and their focus Equip small group leaders (education and formation) Identify space and times for meeting Establish and enrich relationships with the congregation Create a communication and engagement plan
		1.2.2 Explore opportunities for stronger integration between CPP and the Church community
		1.2.3 Explore opportunities for stronger integration between the playgroup (and similar groups) and the Church community
		1.2.4 Explore opportunities for stronger integration between the Chaplains and other existing links with local schools and the Church community

Strategic Objective	Key Direction	Actions
Share the Good News ...	1.2 Engage with the broader community ... <i>continued</i>	1.2.5 Explore opportunities for stronger integration between Helping Hand and the Church community
		1.2.6 Explore new patterns of worship to engage with, and deepen the faith of, the broader community, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for a richer inclusion of Arts and Media • Opportunities for stronger integration with CPP
Respond in Compassion to Human need	2.1. Provide emotional and spiritual support for the church community and their loved ones	2.1.1 Engage the whole church community in pastoral care roles for each other by exploring pastoral care approaches and programs (UCA and beyond) to achieve this aim
	2.2 Identify community needs and respond compassionately and practically	2.2.1 Identify a project which meets currently unmet needs in the local community and develop a implementation plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This could be the same action as 4.2.1, below
Live justly, seek justice for all and care for creation	3.1 Advocate for equality for all people	3.1.1 Create a social justice action group to engage issues in the local and wider community (<i>this is the same action as 4.1.1, below</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify leaders of small groups and their passion or focus • Equip small group leaders (education and formation) • Identify space and times for meeting • Establish and enrich relationships with the congregation • Create a communication and engagement plan
		3.1.2 Incorporate into Sunday worship speakers representing organisations at the forefront of caring for those on the margins of society

Strategic Objective	Key Direction	Actions
Live justly, seek justice for all ...	3.2 Operate in an environmentally responsible manner	3.2.1 Develop an environmental action plan
	3.3 Engage in advocacy for specific environmental policies	3.3.1 Explore the establishment of a community-based small group with a focus on protecting God's creation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify leaders of small groups and their passion or focus • Equip small group leaders (education and formation) • Identify space and times for meeting • Establish and enrich relationships with the congregation • Create a communication and engagement plan
Listen to each generation and culture so as to live out the Gospel in fresh ways	4.1 Engage with new arrivals to Australia and provide opportunities for them to become an active part of the church community	4.1.1 Create a social justice action group to engage issues in the local and wider community (<i>this is the same action as 3.1.1, above</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify leaders of small groups and their passion or focus • Equip small group leaders (education and formation) • Identify space and times for meeting • Establish and enrich relationships with the congregation • Incorporate current initiatives with regard to asylum seekers and refugees • Create a communication and engagement plan
	4.2 Engage with new arrivals to Croydon and provide opportunities for them to become an active part of the church community	4.2.1 Create a local community group to engage new arrivals with the local and wider community (<i>this could be the same action as 2.2.1, above</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a communication and engagement plan • Establish and enrich relationships with the congregation
	4.3 Find ways to connect with young people, empowering them to take a leading role in developing our future	4.3.1 Identify the skills required for a ministry team to provide leadership and ways forward to achieve this strategic direction

Strategic Objective	Key Direction	Actions
Listen to each generation and culture ...	4.3 Find ways to connect with young people <i>continued</i>	4.3.2 Explore innovative opportunities to engage young people in the full range of key directions through, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social justice (see 3.1.1, 4.1.1) • Environmental responsibility (see 3.3.1) • Richer inclusion of Arts and Media (see 1.2.5) • Create a communication and engagement plan
	4.4 Find ways to connect with families, and provide opportunities for them to become an active part of the church community	4.4.1 Identify the skills required for a ministry team to provide leadership and ways forward to achieve this strategic direction
		4.4.2 Explore innovative opportunities to engage families in the full range of key directions; refer to 1.2.3 and 1.2.6
Pursue God's mission in partnership	5.1 Take a leadership role in establishing a model for partnership with neighbouring churches	5.1.1 Take full advantage of opportunities to partner with Croydon North UC
		5.1.2 Continue engagement with the Outer Eastern Cluster Churches
		5.1.3 Explore engagement with other churches in Croydon
	5.2 Seek partnership opportunities with the local community	5.2.1 Maintain our relationship with the Chin Christian Church Melbourne
		5.2.2 Explore potential partnerships to support other community groups

Strategic Objective	Key Direction	Actions
Ensure future sustainability by faithful stewardship of our resources	6.1 Engage relevant staff	6.1.1 Engage congregation in Mission Study process (which is a necessary first stage for the calling of a minister)
		6.1.2 Develop the congregational profile for ministry leadership to serve the needs and meet the aspirations of CUC as outlined in the strategic plan (particularly community based small groups, e.g. 1.1, 4.3)
		6.1.3 Call a new minister (or ministers) and relevant staff (ministry team)
	6.2 Develop property that meets the Church's needs	6.2.1 Follow Project Plan for the redevelopment of CUC property
	6.3 Maintain a sustainable financial position	6.3.1 Maintain a 5 year rolling financial plan
		6.3.2 Review all stewardship processes to ensure effectiveness and make swift changes where required to improve effectiveness
	6.4 Governance structure and processes are effective	6.4.1 Review and restructure governance structure and processes
		6.4.2 Succession planning and leadership regeneration
	6.5 Administration processes are efficient	6.5.1 Understand and establish the gifts of the church community and empower them to use these gifts within and beyond the church community
		6.5.2 Implement alternative approaches to rosters, including the investigation of rostering software