

SECTION 2 – MISSION DIRECTION

2.1 What is the Vision statement and or Mission priorities of the placement (or of the individual congregations)

Worshipping, Witnessing and Serving God and our community in the way of Christ, empowered by the Spirit

Mission Priority - Fostering the Christian discipleship among church members

- Members take up ministry

2.2 Date adopted 08/06 /2017

2.3 Provide a short description of the placement/congregation(s)

Horsham and District comprises church congregations at Natimuk (which operates in conjunction with Goroke and Minimay), Dimboola, Murtoa, Rupanyup, and Horsham (which embraces Pimpinio). Horsham has an extensive complex of offices and gathering spaces plus a formal worship space, which can all support the Horsham congregation as well as the outlying churches. There is an office coordinator, with assistance from congregational volunteers. The Ministry Team comprises two FT ordained ministers, as well as one PT pastor in a pastoral care role.

Natimuk is largely an older congregation with an average attendance of 25. They are reliant on a diversity of leadership, including the role of the District Ministry Team. The diversity of leadership at worship is welcomed. The congregation has a sense of the changing social context, and is responding by taking outreach to the local market and agricultural shows. It would appreciate further training and the setting up of pastoral visitation.

Goroke is an essentially older congregation with an average attendance of 8. The people demonstrate a commitment for sharing the Gospel and place a high value on worship. They see their role as a Christian witness in the community as very important, and also value the assistance they receive from Horsham. They also would appreciate further resourcing of lay people.

Minimay has a small congregation of older folk, with other ages represented. There is one young family who are very involved in the church. Services are held monthly, and the congregation is encouraged to join with Goroke at other times (while Goroke combines with Minimay on their service days). The congregation is very faithful, and open to new ideas.

Dimboola's services are conducted weekly, with 20 regulars, with lay people and the Horsham-based ministers alternating services. Luncheons are conducted monthly. An older congregation, they regard themselves as happy and healthy, with a desire to serve and participate in the community, with a potential outreach to different groups. They are very supportive of mission initiatives such as Uniting and Ballarat Regional Healthcare Chaplaincy. There is a desire to pursue ecumenical connections. Congregational members display spiritual energy and enthusiasm, and welcome the support of the District Ministry Team. Pastoral visiting is facilitated by the congregation.

Murtoa has a congregation of 10 to 15 people, with regular services. These are covered by lay people, the Ministry Team and worship teams. The congregation are fully involved in the community and regard hospitality, relationship and belonging as gifts they can offer. Several community events are organised by the congregation each year, and a regular craft group and Op Shop are also conducted. They maintain good ecumenical relations, and look to explore these further. Great importance is placed on worship, but the congregation recognises the need to explore other forms of ministry.

Rupanyup is an older congregation with an average attendance of 15 meeting weekly. The Ministry Team takes services twice a month, with lay people covering the remaining services. Maintaining a pastoral connection with Marnoo has proved difficult. Church members are heavily involved in the community through various groups and auxiliaries and there is a strong sense of hospitality. There are some ecumenical connections, and an elders and carers visit list organised for pastoral ministry. The congregation are positive in their worship and in their place in the

community.

Horsham is the hub of the district churches. The Ministry Team coordinates services across the district. Three Sunday services have been reduced to two, which has allowed some freeing up of the ministers to further support the outlying churches. There is a sense that the Horsham congregation may need to embrace a broader district role for the ministers, to allow them to further resource other congregations and provide lay leadership and training. Contemporary and traditional services are held on Sunday mornings. An “eat-alone” lunch is held regularly as an outreach activity and there is a significant funeral ministry, which includes the ability to cater for funerals. The ministers see a role for themselves in a range of other responsibilities apart from the pulpit, such as ministry to wayfarers and supporting and resourcing leaders in the congregations. Horsham has oversight over the **Pimpinio** congregation, which holds monthly services covered by lay people and a minister which includes a very popular carols service in December. Horsham conducts youth activities and Messy Church is conducted once per month. Horsham coordinates Presbytery’s annual youth camp PC4U.

2.4 How has the placement/congregation(s) changed over the last 5 years?

The strength of the district is our working together with a joint vision. The prevailing sense of change has been one of decline, due to reduced numbers at services, obviously ageing congregations, the loss of many people who have been faithful over the years, and to the impact of the changing social context. Rural churches, like churches everywhere, fly in the face of an increasingly secular society where religious involvement is marginal rather than mainstream. The strain on financial resources is also becoming more apparent. Despite this, reports from the congregations show some strong mission outreach, in areas like mission projects supported, the development of ecumenical relations at a local level, and the maintenance of lay leadership, especially in some locations. Some members were also open to the possibility of education from the Ministry Team. The reduction of services from three to two in Horsham has allowed better use of resources. The District is becoming more open to the FT ministers having the flexibility to meet with congregations across all locations, and that the 0.6 position is part of this as well. Lay people are taking more responsibility for administration and worship, which is freeing up some of the ministers’ time.

2.5 What are the congregation(s)/placement’s goals?

- Working towards a fuller implementation of Ministry resourcing across the District
 - Consolidating and reinforcing the Mission Statement for the whole district
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2.6 What are the next Strategic Steps to achieving those goals?

- Identifying the connection between the church and the local community
 - Assisting Congregations to develop their particular context for mission engagement eg. Natimuk has visiting rock climbers and artists in their community
 - Understanding the diversity and uniqueness of each community – rural (all the smaller towns/farming areas) and regional (Horsham City)
 - Identifying emerging mission challenges in a changing social/rural/country landscape, by matching achievable and contextual understanding of mission outreach related to resources and energy available in the congregations.
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SECTION 3 - CONTEXT

3.1 Describe the communities in which this placement is located (Mission context).

In a general sense, all communities have in recent years become more secular and individualistic in outlook. While this is probably more “disguised” in Horsham itself where the population is more diverse, it is clearly evident in the smaller country towns. An ageing population is evident in all the small communities, and while there is a significant aged population component in Horsham, it is less obvious due to the greater age range across the community. There is a general increasing welfare-dependency, unemployment, and a gradual cultural change through the populations which places less emphasis and influence on the church in the community. Sport has played, and continues to play, an important part in the leisure activities and culture of the whole District.

Natimuk (Population 450) is 20 minutes west of Horsham. The economy is based around farming and rock-climbing/tourism. The rock climbers bring an alternative lifestyle to the community. There is a Primary School. **Goroke** (Population 620) is a further 30 minutes west of Natimuk. The economy is almost entirely farming-based. There is a P-12 School which serves a wide district. **Minimay** is a small farming community west of Goroke.

Dimboola (Population 1600) is located halfway between Nhill and Horsham (approx. 39 kms each way). While farming is the main economic driver, there are other activities, including tourism (Little Desert), attraction of the Wimmera River, a range of attractions and accommodation options. It has a Primary School, Secondary College and Lutheran Primary School. Good sporting and medical/aged care facilities.

Murtoa (Population 990) is a primarily farming district located 30 kms from Horsham. As well as a P-12 College, there is also a Catholic Primary School with a modest number of students. The town has most shops required, and a Community Medical Centre. Aged Care facilities are situated in Minyip and Rupanyup. **Rupanyup** (Population 540) is a further 16 kms east of Murtoa and is also predominantly a farming community. There is a hospital and aged care facilities, and a Primary School.

Horsham (Population 15200) is the geographic and commercial centre of the Wimmera region. It is situated on the Western Highway and the main Adelaide-Melbourne rail link. It has a significant business area, medical facilities, including a large hospital with new Cancer Centre and modern equipment, that are used from across the region, various light industries, and the headquarters of a range of agencies and services. There are four government Primary Schools, a government Secondary School, and several church-based schools. Horsham also has a campus of Federation University, which includes some components of TAFE studies. There are also educational links with Longerenong Agricultural College

There is a strong arts community in Horsham with an Art Gallery, Live Theatre, Performing Arts and regular Amateur Arts Council productions as well as productions by the Primary and Secondary Schools. This is a liveable rural city with a scenic river walk, diverse sporting facilities and gyms, a Horsham Aquatics Centre with indoor and outdoor swimming pools. A good golf course is also available. This city is small enough to know your community but large enough to offer a balanced work/leisure lifestyle.

In the last population census 40% of church goers were listed as UCA.

Horsham congregation gave birth to the Uniting Care Agency (current Uniting Wimmera). There have been strong ties in past years with members of the congregation serving on the former Boards, however, under the current restructuring the congregation is seeking new ways forward. The Rev Lisa Stewart, Mission and Ethos Partner with Uniting VicTas, has been visiting and speaking to the congregation about this.

3.2 How does your congregation reflect or vary from the age, and ethnic mix of your local community?

Horsham – local population includes a diversity of peoples and racial backgrounds – Moslems, Aborigines, Chinese, Indians, Thai, Sudanese, Philipinos. There are also many young families and families from low socio-economic backgrounds.

This ethnic and age mix is not reflected in the congregations.

Murtoa – Rupanyup – there is some ethnic mix in the community, and many families from a low socio-economic background.

Again, this population mix is not reflected in the congregations.

3.3 What are the opportunities and points of stress and pain in the wider community?

- Low socio-economic background of a significant number of families
- Unemployment – limited number of jobs, except perhaps in Horsham
- Drug use, family violence
- Isolation – especially for single parents and the aged
- Youth – providing activities and meaningful things for them to do. Youth Group – alternative ways of offering this. Collaboration with other churches in serving youth.
- Horsham College – chaplaincy and McKenzie Creek alternative campus
- Mental Health issues – some services available eg. Headspace
- Reintegrating SRI into schools
- Support for rural/farm families with their particular issues – rainfall deficiency, climate change, low commodity prices

3.4 List ways in which you connect with, serve, or partner with people in your wider community?

- Organising local events, such as Carol Services, Good Friday Services
- Visiting and pastoral care to nursing homes, hospitals and other facilities
- Support for UC – related mission activities eg. Ballarat Healthcare Chaplaincy, Uniting-Wimmera
- Involvement in a wide range of community activities – Meals-on-Wheels, community fund-raising, Mother’s Day Tea, fashion parade, family community dinner, rose show, craft group, Op Shop, hospital auxiliaries, catering, mentoring in schools
- Hospitality across the community
- Operation Matthew 19:14 – broad ecumenical event
- “Eat Alone Lunch”, for lonely members of the community, once a month.
- Craft Shop - Craft for a Cause run by ecumenical volunteers but overseen by Horsham UC.

3.5 What schools/agencies/institutions are in your local communities?

- Natimuk – Primary School
- Goroke – P-12 College
- Dimboola – Primary School, Secondary School, Lutheran Primary School
- Murtoa – P-12 College, Catholic Primary School
- Rupanyup – Primary School
- Horsham – 4 Government Primary Schools, 1 Government Secondary School, 1 alternative campus Secondary School.
- 1 Lutheran School P-12
- 1 Catholic Primary School and 1 Catholic Secondary School