



A Report of
NEW & RENEWING COMMUNITIES
Within the UCA Synod of
Victoria and Tasmania

Based upon the results of the
2017 Community Life Survey
and consultations



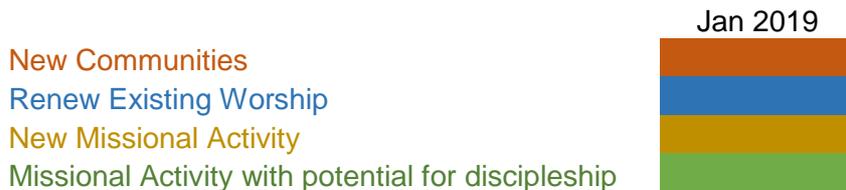
This is a snapshot of one
moment in the Church's life.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Definitions	3
New Communities	3
Renewing Communities	4
Renewing Existing Worship	4
New Missional Activity	5
Missional Activity with Potential for greater Discipleship	5
Author’s Note	6
Executive Summary	7
Background to a “New and Renewing” Report	7
New and Renewing Mapping	8
CLS Numbers and Strategies by Presbyteries	9
Yarra Yarra	10
Port Phillip West	11
Port Phillip East	13
Gippsland	14
Tasmania	15
Western Victoria	17
Loddon-Mallee	17
North-Eastern Victoria	18
Synod-Wide Numbers	19
Further Distinctions of ‘New Communities’	19
Important Insights from the Synod-Wide Numbers	19
Inspiration for New & Renewing Initiatives	20
Messy Church Uptake	20
Lessons About Implementing Strategy	21
Next Steps	22
Contact Details	23

Definitions

This description of New and Renewing Ministries in the UCA Victoria and Tasmania collates the data available in January 2019¹ under four categories for each Presbytery. It puts this data alongside the most recent “Missional Communities” strategy identified in each Presbytery. This is a snapshot of one moment in the Church’s life, but we hope that this material will be used as a tool to enable Presbyteries to better identify how they can assist the growth of Missional Communities, discipleship and renewal.



New Communities

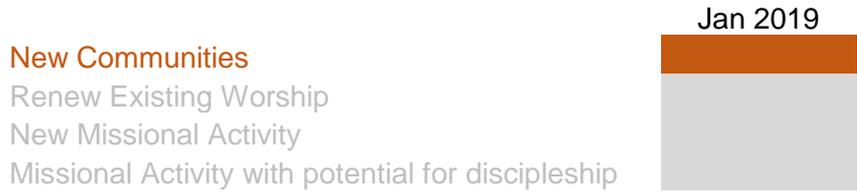
These are intentional efforts to establish new Uniting Church of Australia (Victoria & Tasmania) faith communities or congregations. These include:-

1. New attempts (begun within the last 5 years) to develop Christian community positioned geographically in an area that is experiencing population growth. Traditionally these have been called ‘**church plants**’. However, they will not necessarily establish a community based upon an inherited model of church. An example of this is the Armstrong Creek Community in the growth corridor of Geelong.
2. Christian communities that intentionally **attempt to connect with a specific group of ‘unchurched’ and / or ‘dechurched’ people**. These communities are distinct in some way from the inherited model of church. An example would be Café Church Melbourne who meet weekly on a Wednesday evening in a pub. They may also include distinct worshipping communities such as CALD communities.
3. Attempts to develop **faith communities arising out of community initiatives**. These attempts may, or may not, be connected with an existing congregation, school or agency. An example is the Messy Church community at Hampton Park that was established out of the relationships developed through the community initiatives of the existing congregation including a Community Garden, free meal for the community, playgroup etc.
4. **Alternative worship communities** such as Messy Church and Café Church. These may, or may not, be connected with an existing congregation, school or agency.²

¹ The Community Life Survey of 2017 includes the year from 1 January – 31 December 2017. Additionally, extra information has been sourced from Presbyteries and local practitioners through until January 2019.

² Initiatives are categorised differently dependent upon when and where the gathering is held and the primary people it is conducted with. For example, if Messy Church is – or is attempting to – create another Christian community it is categorised as a New Community. If, for example, “Messy Church” or “Café Church” are a different style of worship service for the existing congregation it is categorised as a Renewing Community.

Throughout this report, all of these forms of New Communities are listed as:-



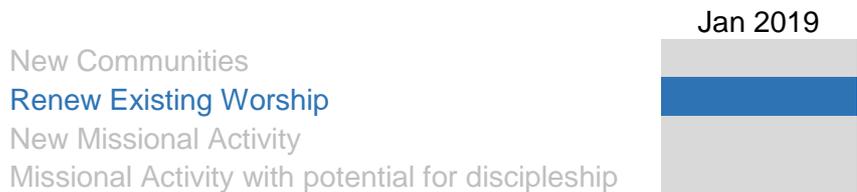
Renewing Communities

Renewing communities are those existing Uniting Church of Australia (Victoria & Tasmania) faith communities or congregations that are revitalising to be more fruitful and missional. Alongside regular worship, many established UCA communities have outreach initiatives that serve the local community and have the corresponding effect of rejuvenating the church community. These missional activities are varied and contextual in their scope – dependent upon the resources of the local community – and include for example, Opportunity Shops, meals programs, drop-in centres and Community Gardens.

The questions from the 2017 Congregational Life Survey allow us to categorise congregations that are ‘Renewing’ in some way. Due to the purpose of the mapping exercise, detailed on page 8 of this report, the author has taken the approach of categorising communities as renewing in three ways. These three categories are; the renewing of existing worship services; the creation of new missional activities; and the identification of missional activities with the potential for greater discipleship.

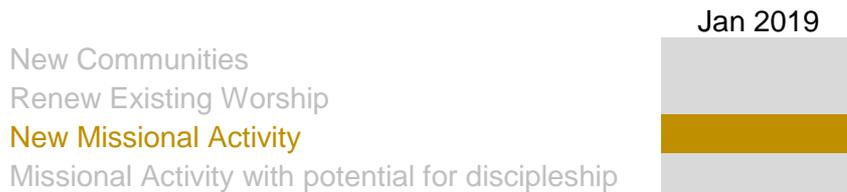
Renewing Existing Worship

Some established churches are changing ways of gathering as community, which inspires new interest and possess the possibility of equipping new disciples. Of course communities may change in many ways, but renewal of worship is evident and intentional. This may include Messy Church and intergenerational worship as part of the existing worship community. An example of a community that God has been renewing through changes to worship and gathering is Richmond UCA. Renewal of the Sunday morning worship service at Richmond has led to the tripling of the size of the community including many adult confirmations and baptisms.



New Missional Activity

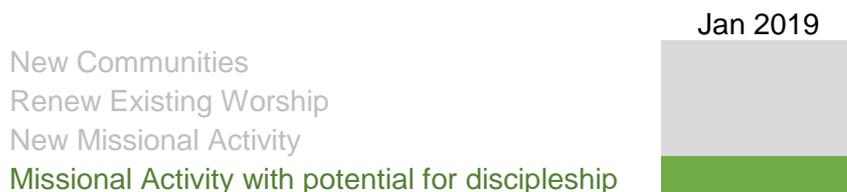
These are missional activities which have started since January 2017, and have a capacity to reinvigorate the church community and / or from which new Christian community can emerge. An example of this is the Playdate Café. Playdate began to operate out of the Hoppers Crossing church as a missional activity to young mothers and their children.



Missional Activity with Potential for Greater Discipleship

Genuinely missional activities develop relationships with unchurched and dechurched people.³ They are entered into with the intention of serving the wellbeing of those who are not presently engaged within the church community. Consequently, they possess the potential to develop disciples, if the people of faith involved are willing to be ‘*alongside*’ other people to explore faith (to incarnate the gospel).

Additionally, there is the potential for those who are doing the serving to reflect upon their Christian actions and grow in Christian formation. This categorisation does not assume that discipleship does not already occur within these missional activities, rather it highlights the capacity for greater discipleship within existing relationships and acts of service; therefore, this category of “Missional Activity with Potential for Greater Discipleship”.



³ With both New and Renewed communities it is important to recognise to whom these communities are attempting to serve and connect with; regular attenders; fringe attenders (less often attending than monthly); open de-churched (those who have left church participation but would return if a suitable situation arose); or the non-churched. Mission Shaped Church, p. 37

Authors Note

We live in times of great change and institutions such as churches are attempting to adapt in order to bring life in all its fullness as promised by Christ. These adaptations are greatly varied, and will continue to be so, in order to faithfully respond to the communities we live within. Some responses by disciples and communities of faith will be slight and some will be more dramatic – as the context demands.

We acknowledge that ordained leaders and lay people work hard across a range of ministry contexts within the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania. Every week creative liturgies guide worshipping communities. Pastoral care and the sacraments are offered within schools, hospitals, agencies and faith communities. Many faithful communities serve their wider local communities in a myriad of different ways.

*This is not a
complete
picture.*

To that end, over the past 12 months I have been trying to collate data to give us a snap shot of the new and renewing ministry activities across the Synod. This is not a complete picture. I relied heavily on the 2017 Community Life Survey for that analyses. However only 52 % of all congregations in the Synod completed this survey. Supplementing this data with conversations with Presbytery and local leadership has made the analysis broader and has provided some interesting information.

This survey is not complete and we acknowledge that there may well be many UCA communities who are experiencing vibrancy, as a result of 'being church' more effectively than they were previously. However, the questions on the 2017 Community Life Survey did not necessarily allow us to identify such communities.

This is just the beginning. I am hoping you will feel free to let me know of any activities you are doing within your own ministry which we can add to our data and develop the picture further.

Thanks needs to be given to the Heather Ackland, Shweta Paliwal and the team at Congregational Business Services – Mission Resourcing Unit of the Synod for providing all of the spreadsheets of information from the Data Warehouse.

Thanks also to the Presbytery leaders, Rose Broadstock, Rohan Pryor, Gordon Bannon, Caro Field, Dan Wootton, Andrew Phillips, Jeanne Beale, Des Parker and Andrew Boyle among others. The information and insights into the Presbytery contexts has been invaluable.

Rev (Deacon) Mat Harry

*New and Renewing Communities Catalyst
June 2019*



Executive Summary

- There exist around 50 New Communities within the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania.
- Overall 58% of these New Communities are Messy Church.
- Over the period this report analyses (2017) there were 52 new missional activities established.
- Half of these new missional activities were initiated in one Presbytery.
- The data from the 2017 CLS suggests that UCA communities serve their local communities strongly, as there were 206 missional activities with potential for greater discipleship identified.
- There has been a great diversity in the strategies adopted by Presbyteries to support New and Renewing communities.
- Intentional strategies adopted within different levels of the church have provided congregants with clear pathways to respond to the Gospel, and these have more often resulted in action.
- There are distinct opportunities for Presbyteries to take further steps in supporting and developing “New and Renewing Communities”.

Background to a “New and Renewing” Report

The Uniting Church in Australia – Synod of Victoria and Tasmania – undertook a ‘Major Strategic Review’ over a three year period. At the June 2016 meeting of the Synod it adopted the following key strategic priorities of the Synod for the next 3 – 5 years:

- i. *Ministry which fosters diverse gathered communities of renewal, Christian practice and mission.*
- ii. Culturally diverse mission and ministry.
- iii. Mission and ministry with children, youth, their families and young adults.

This ‘New and Renewing Communities’ Placement has been created with the intention of assisting the Synod of VicTas achieve these strategic priorities. Noting – in particular – that the focus for this position is priority (i).

This priority (i) is about ***inspiring and enabling more new contextual Christian communities to be born, and to renew existing ones to be more faithful and missional.*** Given that the strategic priorities are to be informed by the Synod’s areas of focus which includes: “The identity of Jesus Christ and Christianity in a post-Christendom world”.

New and Renewing Mapping

New and Renewing Mapping is a process of identifying the present locations of new communities and renewing communities within the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania. This process initially utilises the results from the “Community Life Survey” (2017). This information is incomplete as not all congregations and faith communities fill out the survey. Therefore, further consultations with Presbyteries and local visits have been conducted to establish a more comprehensive survey.

The purpose of identifying the existing new and renewing communities is to resource all levels of the church to:-

1. Locate communities involved in strategic church planting, new forms of church, and / or renewal of existing communities.
2. Assist in the identification of leadership, and potential leadership, within the Synod with respect to the development of new and renewing communities.
3. Identify stories which could be shared with others, which have the potential to inspire or inform other communities to explore new and renewing ways of being church.
4. Identify congregations, faith communities and missional opportunities that have the greatest capacity to develop new forms of church or renew existing ones.
5. Describe the level of Presbytery experience and support for new and renewing communities. This includes investigating any strategies Presbyteries may have taken to encourage new and renewing initiatives.
6. To establish a benchmark to measure the progress of actions taken within Synod, Presbyteries and local congregations to establish new communities and to renew existing ones.

This is a snapshot of one moment in the Church's life, but we hope that this material will be used as a tool to enable Presbyteries to better identify how they can assist the growth of Missional Communities, discipleship and renewal.

We acknowledge that there may well be many UCA communities who are experiencing vibrancy, as a result of 'being church' more effectively than they were previously. However, the questions on the 2017 Community Life Survey do not necessarily allow us to identify such communities.

It is hoped that Presbyteries and Synod will utilise this report to further develop strategies to encourage more congregations and communities to engage with the Synod's key strategic priority of New and Renewing Communities.

CLS Numbers and Strategies by Presbyteries

Gathering the results from the “2017 Community Life Survey”⁴ (CLS) and with the assistance of Presbyteries⁵ and local visits some initial mapping has been completed. This is far from exhaustive as Synod IT services have advised roughly 50% of congregations in VicTas complete the return. The “Community Life Survey” does not categorise mission and ministry activities into the same categories used for the purposes of this mapping. Therefore, the categorisations used here are based upon the answers within the return as well as Presbytery consultations that have been completed so far, in addition to visits to communities.

These statistics may reflect a response to strategies adopted by congregations, Presbyteries and Synod. The data has been categorised by Presbyteries in order to analyse if there are any common threads and to see if any insights emerge. Against this, we will name details of any strategy to develop New and Renewing Communities, Presbyteries may have implemented.



⁴ The forms are completed by congregations during 2018 for the year ending 31 December 2017.

⁵ All Presbyteries were invited to assist in making the numerical data, as well as the strategic details more accurate

Yarra Yarra

	Jan 2019
New Communities	11
Renew Existing Worship	6
New Missional Activity	6
Missional Activity with potential for discipleship	35

5 of the 11 New Communities are “Messy Church”

Strategy

The Presbytery of Yarra Yarra developed “The Missional Principles” in August 2012. This is a two page document that sets out four principles for the Presbytery;

- missional communities
- diverse ministries
- innovation, imagination and intentionality
- new forms of church

These principles that were intended to act as a guide for its various bodies are explicitly about the development of New and Renewing Communities. It sought to encompass the four priorities of the Synods strategy “On the Way Together”⁶. However, there is no indication of where, when, how or by whom the Presbytery was to enact these principles.

The Presbytery appointed a “Mission Think Tank” in March 2014 in order to assist the Presbytery in fostering a missional culture within its life. One of its functions was to “network in regards to educational opportunities”.⁷ With the leadership of the Presbytery Minister – Mission and Education, Yarra Yarra joined with the Port Phillip West Presbytery and facilitated the ‘Mission Shaped Ministry’ (MSM) course. This was offered to congregations within the Yarra Yarra Presbytery as a learning opportunity and was taken up by those who wanted to engage with it.



⁶ “On the Way Together” was the Synod’s strategy for 2011-2015.

⁷ Presbytery of Yarra Yarra, Mission Think Tank Terms of Reference

Port Phillip West

	Jan 2019
New Communities	12
Renew Existing Worship	0
New Missional Activity	26
Missional Activity with potential for discipleship	47

6 of the 12 New Communities are “Messy Church”

Strategy

In 2013 Port Phillip West Presbytery approved a strategy called “Regenerating the Church”.

It seeks to encourage, nurture and sustain a culture of church renewal across the Presbytery through developing new forms of church, planting a variety of expressions of church and encouraging new missional life in existing congregations. This strategy is not about encouraging congregations, agencies or schools to do ‘new things’; it is about a new way of being church. This recognises that there will be what Rowan Williams describes as a ‘mixed economy’ church with ‘inherited’ forms of church existing alongside new forms of church. This strategy does not limit or direct the shape of church in particular areas, but seeks to support the emergence of a multiplicity of ways of being the church in our changing world.⁸

This document sets out clearly the Context, Mission Principles, Theological Framework, Vision and Goals and the Multiple Approaches to achieve the vision and goals. It then articulates the phases of implementation, with further details about how learning huddles and coaching will be a significant way to equip leaders.

The intentionality of Port Phillip West Presbytery’s strategy to encourage new and renewing communities was strongly supported by the work of the Presbytery Minister – Mission and Education, as well as a full time Missional Development Strategist. This second position created a team to focus on the strategy. The Presbytery has a fund called “New Approaches to Ministry Fund” that enabled the strategist position as well as financially supporting new initiatives, coaching etc.

In June 2016 a report was produced which assessed how well the strategy was being implemented [A Report on the Review of Regenerating the Church: a Strategy for Port Phillip West (June 2013 – May 2016)]. The report states the significant outcomes for New Communities:-

More than a third, possibly 45% or more, of congregations and faith communities, are experimenting with new forms of church. They are at different stages of development, but at least 6 (and up to 13) of them have fully emerged as a new form of church.⁹

Additionally a significant number of new missional activities begun during this period of the strategies implementation:-

⁸ Regenerating the Church: A Strategy for Port Phillip West, p. 2

⁹ A Report on the Review of Regenerating the Church: a Strategy for Port Phillip West (June 2013 – May 2016) p. 3

It is more difficult to confirm the number of new mission activities (as distinct from new forms of church)... We were told of up to 44 new activities, based in at least 10 (and up to 25) places; others may be underway and not reported through the survey.¹⁰

These are significant results three years into the strategy and the key findings named within the document from external commentators consulted states:-

- International experts on missional strategies of this kind reflect that, based on this report and their own experience, Port Phillip West has made extraordinary progress in a very short period.
- They also note the importance of having set and worked to a Strategy, which draws on international work but is contextualised to the Presbytery's situation.
- The Associate General Secretary confirms that significant challenges have arisen in the area of Regeneration Ministry Placements.
- Researcher Phillip Hughes suggests that, in future, it will be important to identify which of the New Expressions are achieving significant outcomes in terms of engagement with new groups of people, providing support and spiritual nurture for those people, and building community among them.
- The Strategy should be commended to other Presbyteries and Synods.¹¹

With this analysis and encouragement from the outcomes of the strategy, Port Phillip West built on the learnings from the review and developed the "Regenerating the Church 2021 Strategy". This acknowledged the need to shift the focus of the strategy, as practitioners, leaders and the Presbytery grew in their experience and practice. It encompassed a clear vision for the subsequent 5 years to 2021 and articulates the vital elements, objectives and even measures of progress. Significantly, it defines who has the responsibilities to ensure steps are implemented, and which committees or individuals have the responsibilities of oversight.

Further investigation has revealed that other UCA bodies have learnt from the PPW Strategy. This includes the Parramatta-Nepean Presbytery (Synod of NSW/ACT) that drew upon the strategy and experience of PPW in order to give greater strategic direction to their '50 Year Vision' developed in 2005.¹²



Fiona Adams at the Playdate Cafe

¹⁰ Ibid p. 3

¹¹ A Report on the Review of Regenerating the Church: a Strategy for Port Phillip West (June 2013 – May 2016) p. 4

¹² Geoff Stevenson – Parramatta-Nepean Presbytery Strategist – “gave life” to the Vision 2050 strategy by developing 5 objectives and Measures of Progress, Implementation and Timeframes for each of the 5 Big Moves of the original strategy. Resulting in a Mission Strategy for 2018-2021.

Port Phillip East

	Jan 2019
New Communities	8
Renew Existing Worship	6
New Missional Activity	1
Missional Activity with potential for discipleship	43

6 out of the 8 New Communities are “Messy Church”

Strategy

Port Phillip East have recognised a need to develop a strategy and in November 2017 engaged the services of Ecclesia Leadership – Phil McCreddin – to assist the Presbytery tackle some of the issues they face. Phil introduced an initial report titled “Cultivating a New Future”. The intention of the process was:-

Key Purpose

To create and implement a strategy to:

- develop a cultural change process for the Presbytery that responds to the challenges presented by the post-Christendom mission context
- respond to changes brought about by the MSR.

The Presbytery endorsed a four-staged approach of cultural change from the report. A second stage proposal document was provided to Presbytery. However, implementation of any of this cultural change with regard to ‘New & Renewing’ initiatives is in later stages of the process.

It is important to note that the process itself has been brought on by the realisation that the Presbytery and the congregations and faith communities within its bounds cannot simply continue on with a ‘business as usual’ practices and mentality.



Gippsland

	Jan 2019
New Communities	2
Renew Existing Worship	2
New Missional Activity	3
Missional Activity with potential for discipleship	13

2 out of the 2 New Communities are “Messy Church”

Strategy

Written and approved in 2015 the “Mission and Strategy” document essentially asks a series of questions for congregations within the Gippsland presbytery to engage. It is not prescriptive and seems similar to questions within a mission study process. The intention appears to have been to empower congregational representatives at Presbytery to have input and ownership of the Presbytery vision. The feedback from Presbytery has been that so far there has been resistance to engagement with the vision and that there has been little effect upon the ground.

The Strategy states:-

“SUMMARY OF SOME OF THE KEY RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PRESBYTERY (from the Regulations of the UCA)

4. To encourage congregations to actively explore and support (through people, financial and other resources) the development of new forms of church and planting a variety of expressions of church.”¹³

Therefore, there is an explicit awareness within the Presbytery of the need for ‘New & Renewing Communities’. However, the report does not name any support or learning opportunities that the Presbytery is actually offering to provide.

However, it should be noted that the Gippsland Presbytery supported an intention to create a new form of church within the growth corridor of Officer / Pakenham. Supported by both the Gippsland and Port Phillip East Presbyteries for about seven years with the placement concluding around 2014. No ongoing Christian community was established from this ministry. It is understood there is a document that details the learnings and insights from this initiative, but this document has not been located.

¹³ Mission and Strategy: Presbytery of Gippsland October 2015, Part 3, p. 1

Tasmania

	Jan 2019
New Communities	3
Renew Existing Worship	0
New Missional Activity	7
Missional Activity with potential for discipleship	16

1 of the 3 New Communities are “Messy Church”

Strategy

Hobart 2020

There was an intentional strategic direction set for Hobart in 2011. The strategy was to provide direction to the UCA in Hobart until 2020. This document was called, “How Then Shall We Live?”

How then shall we live? is a call to the Uniting Church in greater Hobart to become a new kind of church. Its emphasis is on the living out of our faith as we seek to participate in the mission of God. It’s a challenge to us to live in relationship with our community, and to make the best use of our resources as we seek to enable this renewed approach.¹⁴

This included an emphasis upon new ways of being a church community.

PROPOSAL 5: Fresh Expressions. Each cluster be encouraged to develop fresh expressions of faith community.¹⁵

As at November 2018 the Lacuna service at Kingston is the only “New Community” gathering in the Hobart region. With a change of leadership within the Tasmanian Presbytery since the development of this strategy, the evidence suggests this strategy did not gain much traction. However, it is unknown how much this strategy was emphasised and supported within agencies, congregations, Presbytery and Synod. Given there has been no document providing an assessment of the implementation process and the subsequent outcomes it is difficult to fully glean the lessons that could be learned.

Tasmania 2016-18

It is interesting to note that in 2016 a new strategic direction was developed for the whole of Tasmania without any reference to the Hobart 2020 vision at all. This strategy was a vision to include the years 2016-18. It begins:-

“Transformative Discipleship - a community of faithful followers of Jesus expecting to be transformed, and to be agents of transformation, through the grace of God.

Our strategic directions document offers us *signposts* on our journey to being faithful followers of Jesus, serving the world for which Christ died. We hope that the vision, goals and descriptions that follow will inspire and guide us and our communities of

¹⁴ How Then Shall We Live: We Shall Live in the Spirit, p. 3

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 5

faith. We also know that God uses not only our gifts but also our brokenness and our weaknesses in order to bring about God's reign of justice and peace."¹⁶

The vision is a 'signpost' and offers no specifically named actionable steps for any levels of the church to carry out. Nor is there any reference to resourcing such a vision. Additionally, it does not explicitly have a 'New and Renewing' focus. However, in support of the vision to "form leaders for a missional church" some – possibly 4 – identified leaders were further equipped as Christian leaders. This teaching was facilitated through the use of the 3DM coaching huddles. This involves receiving coaching and grouping within a 'huddle' of peers who learn together. Anecdotally, participants gained a lot of fresh understandings and insights from this training. Again, an assessment of outcomes of the program would be beneficial in providing guidance to Tasmania, and the wider church, as to whether the 3DM program should be recommended to other congregations.



¹⁶ Strategic Directions for 2016-2018 Uniting Church of Australia Presbytery of Tasmania, p. 1

Western Victoria

	Jan 2019
New Communities	6
Renew Existing Worship	1
New Missional Activity	2
Missional Activity with potential for discipleship	26

4 of the 6 New Communities are “Messy Church”

Strategy

The author has not been furnished with any documentation regarding a recent specific strategy for future directions and priorities for agencies and congregations within the Western Victoria Presbytery. However, it is understood that the Presbytery is seeking for congregations to collaborate within regional areas with larger congregations offering support to smaller ones. This is a reaction to the shrinking of resources within the country churches. The author is not of the understanding that this is to specifically support ‘New and Renewing’ initiatives.

Loddon-Mallee

	Jan 2019
New Communities	5
Renew Existing Worship	3
New Missional Activity	3
Missional Activity with potential for discipleship	18

2 of the 5 New Communities are “Messy Church”

Strategy

The author was not furnished with any historical Presbytery strategic documents. However, a document headed “Presbytery Visions and Plans for 2019” has now been provided. Annotations suggest this was developed on 13 December 2018 at the Presbyteries-Synod Forum. This 3 page document does not name any tangible plans for New and Renewing initiatives.

North-East Victoria

	Jan 2019
New Communities	3
Renew Existing Worship	0
New Missional Activity	4
Missional Activity with potential for discipleship	8

3 of the 3 New Communities are “Messy Church”

Strategy

The author was provided with a PowerPoint version of the NEV Strategy 2014. This presentation names the dilemma’s facing the Presbytery at that time:-

- Congregations struggling to finance a placement
- Congregations wanting ministers that we can’t provide
- Presbytery committees losing leadership¹⁷

The presentation then goes on to name some of the issues the ‘Strategy Committee’ has made including the “need to develop different models of resourcing and ministry leadership.”¹⁸ To that end, the Presbytery strategy is to ensure the six regional hubs of Seymour, Echuca, Shepparton, Benalla, Wangaratta and Wodonga have full-time ministers in placement who are also to be available for support to the feeder areas. The report then concludes by naming some goals:-

Immediately – a co-ordinated program to sustain, equip and strengthen leadership in congregations

Short to mid-term – develop centres which will support other congregations in their ministry

Long term – a centre for teaching and encouraging, a base for mission¹⁹

It is unclear how far the Presbytery progressed in realising this strategy. However, it would be very difficult to determine such progress as the Strategy does not really name any time frames or measurable elements. There are also no action steps detailed in how the strategy may be achieved.

This strategy attempts to address some of the “dilemma’s” faced by the rural church in a post-Christian context, but makes no reference to anything that could be described as New and Renewing initiatives.



¹⁷ NEV Strategy 2014 (PowerPoint) slide 11

¹⁸ Ibid. slide 18

¹⁹ Ibid. slide 30

Synod-Wide Numbers

	YY	PPW	PPE	Gipps	Tas	West Vic	Lod Mal	NEV	Synod
New Communities	11	12	8	2	3	6	5	3	50
Renew Existing Worship	6	0	6	2	0	1	3	0	18
New Missional Activity	6	26	1	3	7	2	3	4	52
Missional Activity with potential for discipleship	35	47	43	13	16	26	18	8	206

29 of the 50 New Communities are Messy Church (This represents 58%)

Further Distinction of 'New Communities'

Allocating the initiatives – other than Messy Church – designated as 'New Communities' into the subcategories identified in the Definitions Section (Page 2) for the period since 2017:-

Church Plants	1
Connect with a Specific Group	6
Communities arising out of Community Initiatives	7
Alternative Worship Communities	7



Important Insights from the Synod-Wide Numbers

The Synod wide numbers indicate significant things:-

- 58% of 'New Communities' are Messy Church.
- During the period analysed in this report, half the 'New Missional Activities' began in one Presbytery – Port Phillip West.
- There is potential for even greater discipleship with the missional activities that already exist within the Synod.

Inspiration for New & Renewing Initiatives

It is known from conversations with practitioners that these 'New Communities' have arisen in different ways, supported at different levels of the church.

- **Local Community Level.** 'New Communities' such as Sipwell and Messy Church at Hampton Park have been developed by local practitioners. Both the leadership and inspiration for these came from a local level without intentional strategic action from Presbytery or Synod levels of the church to establish them.
- **Presbytery Level.** Currently, the only church plant within the Synod was initiated at a Presbytery (PPW) level. The Armstrong Creek Church Plant was the idea of the Presbytery and resourced financially by the Presbytery to fund a half time Pastor. It began as an intentional and strategic endeavour to establish a UCA presence in a new suburb.

An additional example is Playdate Café which emerges somewhat differently. It began with a person on the edges of a UCA community having a 'heartburst' to provide a place for young families to belong. The Presbytery were supportive, and enabled the provision of resources, and negotiated a 'space' for this to occur. The inspiration and equipping of the person who has become the leader of Playdate came through the Mission Shaped Ministry (MSM) course that the Presbytery provided.²⁰

- **Synod Support.** 'New Communities' have not been initiated at a Synod level. However, the work of the Children and Families worker at eLM (Chris Barnett) has been instrumental in inspiring local congregations to imagine and then develop Messy Church communities and worship services.

Messy Church Uptake



²⁰ A video story documenting this can be found at:- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=py5zx_6Eqto

Messy Church is a style of gathering which works particularly well for young families. Over the past 8 years it has been intentionally supported by the work of Chris Barnett within CTM (now the eLM unit). This work has been:-

- Resourced by the Synod (formerly CTM, now the eLM unit). Chris is in a full-time position to facilitate support to those conducting ministry with children and their families.
- Encouraged through an intentional process of offering Messy Church information sessions and workshops conducted in places local to congregations.
- Established in all Presbyteries across the Synod. Although Port Phillip West is the only Presbytery to have intentionally supported Messy Church.
- Providing a clear pathway for people to express their passion for mission and worship.

Messy Church provides a clear pathway for people to express their passion for mission and worship.

Lessons About Implementing Strategy

Over the last decade, many Presbytery “Strategies” or “Plans” have been developed. However, with the exception of one Presbytery within the Synod, there has been no ongoing or final analysis of application, struggles or learnings.

Port Philip West Presbytery in establishing clear goals within the strategy they adopted enabled an analysis of the effectiveness of the strategy. This Presbytery set about implementing the stated objective – initiate more contextually appropriate outreach initiatives and contextual communities of faith. As a result, there has been a measurable increase of new missional initiatives and renewed ways of gathering as the people of God, within the Presbytery.

The Presbytery elected to utilise the Mission Shaped Ministry (MSM) course as the basis for their education. The author is aware of substantial critique within the wider Synod of the content of MSM. This critique includes that it is imported from the UK and therefore contains contextually inappropriate language and theological priorities. Notwithstanding the critique of content, the MSM course provided a pathway for people to better understand the current Western context and ideas of how other Christians were responding to this context. It sparked the imagination of faithful Christians who took intentional and deliberate action as a result.

The Strategy encompasses a clear vision for a period of 5 years and articulates the vital elements, objectives and even measures of progress. Significantly, it defines who has the responsibilities to ensure steps are implemented, and which committees or individuals have the responsibilities of oversight. As such, many elements of this Strategy could be learned from.

Next Steps – 2019 and beyond

It is hoped that Presbyteries will deeply engage with the eLM Unit and the content of this report to develop strategies for New & Renewing Communities.

Acknowledgement is given that new Presbytery Ministers are now in placement (from 2019) and that it is an ideal time for Presbyteries to develop a plan for how they will support the emergence of “New and Renewing Communities” within their bounds. This is already beginning to occur.

It is hoped that Presbyteries will deeply engage with the eLM Unit and the content of this report to:-

Develop strategies for New and Renewing Communities with the following elements:-

- 1) A clear vision for a defined timespan.
- 2) Clear articulation of the objectives.
- 3) Defined steps of implementation with timeframes.
- 4) Allocation of responsibility (who / which committees are responsible).
- 5) Measures of progress.

With these strategies to incorporate:-

- a) Support mechanisms for the leadership of New Communities and those who have renewed the existing worship service.
- b) Intentional action to develop more “New and Renewing Communities”.
- c) Development of leadership pathways.
- d) Development of training of leadership for the realisation of the potential of greater discipleship of existing missional activities.
- e) Coaching of leadership as a defined technique.
- f) Incorporation of the use of technology to facilitate interactions and communication.

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