

**AUSTRALIA
MISSION
CENTRE
STRATEGIC
PLAN
2018-2022**

AUSTRALIA MISSION CENTRE STRATEGIC PLAN 2018-2022



Introduction

The Spirit is inviting the church in Australia to transform itself into a new expression of community. Shifts of this nature require us to make significant investment of time and energy; valuable resources in our society at present. This investment plays a critical role in ensuring the Australian community experiences the message of Jesus Christ through our expression, which we believe to be an important part of the fabric of Christianity and global faith movements.

We are called through Doctrine and Covenants section 164:9 to a new great commission, one which invites us on a journey to search deep within ourselves to seek encounter with life's most important questions. We say 'encounter' because it's in the search that we find meaning. This commission confronts our fears, our innermost concerns, yet calls us to a new place where the vision and mission of Christ is lived out. It points out that to pursue the mission of the church, we must align our lives whole-heartedly with the concerns and passions of Christ, which means making some difficult choices.

The world today is craving community and spirituality. It is also rejecting organised religion as a source of community and spirituality, perhaps as a result of its inability to adapt to a new world where we have far more information and stimulation at our fingertips. It's the role of the church to be a place where people can challenge, learn, experience and grow together, living truth in a way that brings us closer. It's the role of the church to challenge culture and society in a way that embraces Jesus' life story, calling for peace and reconciliation between people. It's the role of the church to enhance connection between humanity and the earth, the greatest symbol of harmony, especially at a time where its health is

threatened. All of these elements are about people coming together in the presence of the Spirit, which, regardless of time and generation, are central to human existence. The greatest question now becomes, 'how do we do that today?'

Author Tom Sine said, *'Every denomination and religious organisation...does long-range planning. Ironically, they do long-range planning as though the future will simply be an extension of the present... As a result, we are chronically surprised by change. We can no longer afford this luxury.'* This plan will build on the successes and learnings of the past, while reaching far into the distance, discerning where the Spirit is calling us. Change is difficult, even scary. The way we meet, the way we learn, the way we talk to each other - all will need to adapt in order for us to continue reaching those in need. Our experiences to this point have been abundant, yet we are called to bring a new world into being. This strategic plan doesn't have an answer to the question 'what does the church of the future look like?' It calls us to discover new ways to connect through experimentation, playfulness and deepening our understanding of ourselves, God and our community. Through those explorations we will find fresh ways to express ourselves in each location and expand the influence and impact of Community of Christ in Australia.

May we live boldly into this plan, creating communities that share love with the world. Be jubilant, for the path of the disciple is a place to rejoice in knowing that God goes with us wherever we are!


Ben Smith,
President, Australia Mission Centre



2018 & 2019

COMMUNITY OF CHRIST MISSION STATEMENT

We proclaim Jesus Christ and promote communities of joy, hope, love and peace.



Doctrine and Covenants section 164

- 9a. Beloved children of the Restoration, your continuing faith adventure with God has been **divinely led**, eventful, challenging, and sometimes surprising to you. By the grace of God, you are poised to **fulfill God's ultimate vision** for the church.
- b. When your **willingness** to live in sacred community as **Christ's new creation** exceeds your natural fear of spiritual and relational transformation, you will become who you are called to be. The rise of Zion the beautiful, the peaceful reign of Christ, awaits **your wholehearted response** to the call to make and steadfastly hold to God's covenant of peace in Jesus Christ.
- c. This covenant entails sacramental living that respects and reveals God's presence and reconciling activity in creation. It requires **whole-life** stewardship dedicated to expanding the church's restoring ministries, especially those devoted to asserting the worth of persons, protecting the sacredness of creation, and relieving physical and spiritual suffering.
- d. If you **truly** would be Community of Christ, then embody and live the concerns and passion of Christ.
- e. The challenges and opportunities are momentous. Will you remain hesitant in the shadows of your fears, insecurities, and competing loyalties? Or will you move forward in the light of your **divinely instilled call and vision**?
- f. The mission of Jesus Christ is what matters most for the journey ahead.

LOCAL PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of Community of Christ in Australia is to engage people in connection with each other, and with God, through the message of Jesus Christ





Timeline

The strategic plan will run from 2018 – 2022 (five years). Each year it will be evaluated to ensure its progress is on track, and a report will be produced for the church and published with results of evaluations.

Definitions

Aspects:

Four main areas have been identified to assist the church in its direction and focus. While not limited to these aspects, a focus on four areas will aid the church in identifying the various categories for attention.

Objectives:

A number of objectives are used under each aspect to guide the church in achieving its aims. They are clear and simple to understand, measurable, tangible, and realistic, and are designed to be achieved or well under way by the end date of the strategic plan.

Response:

To get to a destination, we need directions. Responses are the things that help us achieve our objectives, outlining headline areas that build the framework to success. Each measure will have outcomes to assist in evaluation and reporting, which will be established by Mission Centre officers together with the Mission Centre Council at the commencement of the plan.

Assumptions and Core Values

It is important to remember some key elements that are considered by leadership to be critical to any successful plan. These include evaluation, communication, monitoring, feedback mechanisms, reporting, and accountability measures. They will all be established to ensure we are being honest with ourselves, as well as being good stewards. These elements aren't mentioned here specifically.

Other factors (or core values) that should be mentioned here are:

- The strategic plan will be centred on Christ's mission;
- We accept that change is inevitable;
- The Enduring Principles and Mission Initiatives are present and influential;
- All aims and goals will be relevant to today's world.

THE
PLAN
Aspect
1
Depth

For us to understand why we are disciples, we must explore the purpose of our response. Study, engagement and leadership development are key to positioning the church in its ability to engage in its mission. Depth includes these things, focusing on deepening our understanding of our faith.

Objective 1:

Enhance discipleship formation

(Commentary: Strengthening individuals for the journey requires support and resources. To do this, extensive effort must be applied in understanding who we are as a movement)

Response 1: Further develop our identity as Community of Christ in Australia, enabling a deeper connection with how it relates to individuals and the community

Response 2: Create innovative opportunities for individuals and groups to share their experiences with each other with the view to strengthen discipleship and resilience

Response 3: Create resources for personal discipleship formation curated locally

Objective 2:

Build continual leadership development pathways from high school age through to retirement age

(Commentary: To ensure the church retains its human resources, consistent pathways for engagement must be established)

Response 1: Appoint a specific role for developing leadership programs for all ages

Response 2: Conduct training workshops in conjunction with local facilitators, with the view to carry the programs further into the Australia Mission Centre (AMC)

Response 3: Focus on the development of Priesthood, equipping them with the skills to live out their calling

Objective 3:

Deepen our understanding of scripture, spirituality and our identity as Community of Christ in Australia

(Commentary: Scripture and spiritual formation are the backbone of our faith and are two of the lenses we use to experience God. This objective will ensure there are opportunities to strengthen this part of our body)

Response 1: Develop and encourage theological learning and training, particularly in educational institutions aligned with the church, and practical learning experiences

Response 2: Host community events/retreats/camps that foster spiritual growth and discernment, peace, reconciliation, mediation and dialogue, with a focus on events such as Wholeness and Wellness (WOW) that embrace church principles in innovative ways

Response 3: Appoint a spiritual formation team to consult with congregations about spiritual direction and team based approaches to congregational organisation

THE PLAN

Aspect

2

Growth

Underpinning the future of the church is creating new disciples, which is the purpose of this aspect. A number of objectives are used here to elaborate on what 'growth' means and how it will be achieved.

It seems that community expectation around growth is that the church will experience more things. That is, there will be more participation, more financial assets, more education, more members, more inclusion, and more access to leadership.

This expectation needs to be balanced with the reality that this 'more' will need to be delivered with fewer available resources and volunteers, as our demographic is displaying signs of slowing. That being said, there is a way to restructure this expectation to achieve a greater sense of purpose.

Objective 1:

To increase the number of participants and members in church life under 50 years of age

(Commentary: Without neglecting the absolute value of those outside this age group, this objective focuses on bringing younger life into the church to ensure the future is sustained through depth and whole life experience)

Response 1: Monitor and critically evaluate participation numbers across all Community of Christ programs and expressions, with the view to continued emphasis on this age group

Response 2: Create new models for children's ministry that lead to long-term participation and spiritual/discipleship formation

Response 3: Align resources with events designed for community and family engagement

Response 4: Increase ties with World Service Corps (WSC) and identify areas where leadership training grounds are ready and able to host WSC representatives

Objective 2:

Create two new congregational models

(Commentary: As with any model that has experienced longevity, it is time to identify new ways of expressing congregational life in Community of Christ, this objective focuses on this concept)

Response 1: Research sites/locations/formats that are considered fruitful opportunities for new models for mission

Response 2: Redeploy resources in order to appropriately establish and manage new congregational models

Response 3: Build the approved Tiona Chapel as a way to reach out to the community and communicate the identity, message and mission of the church to a wide audience

Objective 3:

Create a volunteer ministry team to strengthen existing congregational life

(Commentary: As with any change, when/if resources are withdrawn from existing congregations there may be a negative impact in terms of ministerial availability. This objective aims to stabilise this resource and tap into the lifetimes of experience and leadership available in our own congregations through a coordinated effort)

Response 1: Establish a comprehensive volunteer training program that draws expertise from a wide range of resources, which will include theology, ministerial practices, scripture study, improving interpersonal skills and the ability to share testimonies

Response 2: Appoint a coordinator to facilitate visiting ministry to each congregation annually and to members who are not attached to congregations

Response 3: Develop a list of self-sustaining ministers willing to serve in this capacity, and use this database to facilitate Response 2.

THE PLAN Aspect 3 Mission

The role of the disciple is to live the Word, specifically, the call found in Luke 4:18-19. The church must be teaching, living and embodying the Gospel. Mission is where this will be captured.

'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.' Luke 4:18-19 NRSV

Objective 1:

Create a team(s), focused on outreach ministries directed toward the marginalised in our community such that we become clearly known as a people focused on justice in order to create peace.

(Commentary: Christ's mission must be our focus, therefore building a team specifically designed to breathe life into this calling will ensure we are living with integrity)

Response 1: Conduct initial research into specific areas of need around geographical centres

Response 2: Re-organise Saints Care's structure, binding it closely with the mission of the church as an extension of its purpose

Response 3: Engage in social gospel ministries, specifically those that reduce poverty, reduce violence (domestic and family, emotional, economic, and physical), and work towards justice

Response 4: Build frameworks for program effectiveness, ensuring early and honest evaluation that allows for adaptability and change

Objective 2:

Structure communications to report on progress being made across the Mission Centre, and to share the Good News.

(Commentary: To share our experiences and learnings more effectively, new reporting and evaluation concepts will be established, assisting in communication to the wider church and the community)

Response 1: Establish a team for marketing and communications to ensure our message is consistent and effective

Response 2: Evaluate the use of the Australia Herald (and all other media) and identify ways to enhance and implement communication of the message and mission of the church to the community

Objective 3:

Build interfaith and ecumenical alliances

(Commentary: As with any community, we must know and love our neighbours. Especially in today's political and community climate, developing relationships with other faith movements will be critical in building cohesive communities)

Response 1: Develop an interfaith and ecumenical focus, building relationships with local and national bodies

THE PLAN

Aspect

4

Sustainability

Sustainability is about ensuring that we are living within our means, and, in addition, highlighting to stewards new ways of expressing one's generosity in time, talent, testimony and treasure. This will include sustainability of the environment within which our ministry is conducted, and financial sustainability. It is the responsibility of the church to ensure that we are being good stewards of our resources.

Objective 1:

Enhance how Community of Christ gathers physically and operates sustainably into the future.

(Commentary: It is prudent to understand how communities gather and operate efficiently, then shift our way of operating to align with those needs)

Response 1: Conduct discernment/visioning sessions in all congregations/areas where the church currently has a presence

Response 2: Review and adapt internal processes to ensure efficient use of all resources across the church, particularly administrative practices

Response 3: Adopt new technologies where possible to increase efficiencies and resources

Objective 2:

Create a Disciples Generous Response team

(Commentary: Separate to the Australia Investment Committee, this team will assist in building capacity and generosity. It will contain several groups with specific tasks and areas of expertise including revenue diversification, tithing, fundraising, education resources and volunteers)

Response 1: Create a group focused on asset alignment and revenue diversification, designed to evaluate the use of assets and create innovative revenue streams

Response 2: Create a group focused on tithing and fundraising, designed to promote new ways of giving to strengthen local congregations and world mission, including an e-tithing platform, bequest income to \$50,000 per year and endowment fund growth from \$2.8M to \$4M

Response 3: Create resources for financial education and generosity to be shared at congregations and events

Response 4: Explore financial opportunities to assist the church's World-wide Mission

Objective 3:

Assess the structure of all aspects of the Australia Mission Centre

(Commentary: As per the recommendations in the 2016 AMC Review, changes may be required to better protect and utilise the church's assets, manage our risk, along with delivering a sustainable structure into the future)

Response 1: Task the Community of Christ Ltd. Board of Directors to research and formally document the most appropriate corporate legal structures to fulfill the strategic direction of the AMC, taking into account existing recommendations from the 2016 AMC Review

Response 2: Appoint a legal consultant to recommend changes to administrative functions within the AMC

Response 3: Work across all levels of church leadership to transition from the current structure to a proposed new structure

Objective 4:

Aim to become 100% carbon neutral in all church life

(Commentary: With sacredness of creation being an enduring principle, this objective aims to put practical steps in place to create a sustainable future for the planet.)

Response 1: Re-charter the Australia Earth Stewardship Team to partner with congregations to identify ways our impact on the environment can be limited through education, sourcing grants and other practical ways to reduce our carbon footprint

Response 2: Achieve carbon neutrality in the AMC office by 2022

Mission Initiatives



Invite People to Christ



Abolish Poverty, End Suffering



Pursue Peace on Earth



Develop Disciples to Serve



Experience Congregations in Mission

Enduring Principles

Our Enduring Principles define the essence, heart, and soul of our faith community. They describe the personality of our church as expressed throughout the world.

THE FOUNDATION: GOD, CHRIST, HOLY SPIRIT

God's revelation in Jesus Christ and continuing presence through the Holy Spirit, as proclaimed by scripture, is the foundation of our faith, identity, mission, message, and beliefs.

We do our best to uphold these principles (values, concepts, themes) as a faithful response to our heritage and our continuing experience with God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

GRACE AND GENEROSITY

- God's grace, especially as revealed in Jesus Christ, is generous and unconditional.
- Having received God's generous grace, we respond generously and graciously receive the generosity of others.
- We offer all we are and have to God's purposes as revealed in Jesus Christ.
- We generously share our witness, resources, ministries, and sacraments according to our true capacity.

SACREDNESS OF CREATION

- In the beginning, God created and called it all good.
- Spirit and material, seen and unseen, are related.
- Creation's power to create or destroy reminds us of our vulnerability in this life.
- God is still creating to fulfill divine purpose.
- We join with God as stewards of care and hope for all creation.

CONTINUING REVELATION

- Scripture is an inspired and indispensable witness of human response to God's revelation of divine nature.
- God graciously reveals divine will today as in the past.
- The Holy Spirit inspires and provides witness to divine truth.
- In humility, individually and in community, we prayerfully listen to understand God's will for our lives, the church, and creation more completely.

WORTH OF ALL PERSONS

- God views all people as having inestimable and equal worth.
- God wants all people to experience wholeness of body, mind, spirit, and relationships.
- We seek to uphold and restore the worth of all people individually and in community, challenging unjust systems that diminish human worth.
- We join with Jesus Christ in bringing good news to the poor, sick, captive, and oppressed.

ALL ARE CALLED

- God graciously gives people gifts and opportunities to do good and to share in God's purposes.
- Jesus Christ invites people to follow him by becoming disciples who share his life and ministry.
- Some disciples are called and ordained to particular priesthood responsibilities and ministries for the sake of the community, the congregation, and the world.
- We respond faithfully, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to our best understanding of God's call.

RESPONSIBLE CHOICES

- God gives humans the ability to make choices about whom or what they will serve. Some people experience conditions that diminish their ability to make choices.
- Human choices contribute to good or evil in our lives and in the world.
- Many aspects of creation need redemption because of irresponsible and sinful human choices.
- We are called to make responsible choices within the circumstances of our lives that contribute to the purposes of God.

PURSUIT OF PEACE (SHALOM)

- God wants shalom (justice, reconciliation, well-being, wholeness, and peace) for all of creation.
- Jesus Christ, the embodiment of God's shalom (peace), reveals the meaning of God's peace in all aspects of life.
- The vision of Zion is to promote God's reign on earth, as proclaimed by Jesus Christ, through the leavening influence of just and peaceful communities.

- We courageously and generously share the peace of Jesus Christ with others.
- Led by the Holy Spirit, we work with God and others to restore peace (shalom) to creation.
- We celebrate God's peace wherever it appears or is being pursued by people of good will.

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

- Community of Christ is a diverse, international family of disciples, seekers, and congregations.
- Local and worldwide ministries are interdependent and important to the church's mission.
- The church embraces diversity and unity through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- We seek agreement or common consent in important matters. If we cannot achieve agreement, we commit to ongoing dialogue and lovingly uphold our common faith in Jesus Christ and the mission of the church.
- We confess that our lack of agreement on certain matters is hurtful to some of God's beloved children and creation.

BLESSINGS OF COMMUNITY

- The gospel of Jesus Christ is expressed best in community life where people become vulnerable to God's grace and each other.
- True community includes compassion for and solidarity with the poor, marginalized, and oppressed.
- True community upholds the worth of persons while providing a healthy alternative to self-centeredness, isolation, and conformity.
- Sacred community provides nurture and growth opportunities for all people, especially those who cannot fully care for themselves.
- We value our connections and share a strong sense of trust in and belonging with one another—even if we never have met.
- Some disciples are called and ordained to particular priesthood responsibilities and ministries for the sake of the community, the congregation, and the world.
- We are called to create communities of Christ's peace in our families and congregations and across villages, tribes, nations, and throughout creation.

Community of Christ

CHRIST'S MISSION OUR MISSION