

VISION2055
THE CONCEPT OF AN INTEGRATED UNITING CHURCH PRESENCE

The vision is to mobilize resources to facilitate effective mission in the rapidly growing population in western Sydney.

Mobilizing already committed but under utilized resources given current church processes is a long term project. That is, ten years plus for significant change.

The period of 50 years has been chosen for Vision2055 to remind us that major strategic decisions taken now will impact upon the church and its mission for at least that time. It is important for us to try to make decisions that will give the church a good base and provide flexibility into the future.

Integral to the vision is the concept of establishing major centres for mission in strategic locations. We see value for the broad mission of the church for these centres to present an **integrated Uniting Church presence** in appropriate key locations. It is envisaged that such centres would resource linked satellite groups, congregations, faith communities and other special interest groups.

THREE CURRENT EXAMPLES.

1. Parramatta Mission is known for its mission activities that serve the wider community. Its work with homeless people is significant. It also has Fijian congregations worshipping at Ermington as well as Parramatta. There are multicultural congregations at Leigh Memorial and Westmead. A Korean faith community and an African congregation worship at Leigh Memorial and are becoming more closely linked to Parramatta Mission.
2. At Blacktown there is both an aged care facility and a child care centre on the site where the church is located. This provides opportunities for the

church to connect with people in the wider community and for the wider community to see that the Uniting Church is providing an integrated, holistic ministry.

3. At St Marys there is a church and a preschool at present. Discussions are underway with Burnside and Lifestart to expand services to children on the site. Again this would mean greater contact with the families in the community and show that the Uniting Church is wanting to assist people in their lives by not only providing worship but also services that contribute to people's well being.

While it is important that services be run on a professional basis, we believe that it is also imperative that the congregation have **clear intentional** connections with these services demonstrating that the gospel is good news in word and deed. The mission of congregations necessarily reaches out into the community. Having connections with services on site is an obvious way to connect with the community thus showing God's love and representing Christ to those people.

THREE REGIONS OF STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE

Apart from those centres already existing, we have identified three regions having particular strategic importance. These are the North West Sector (now the NorthWest Uniting Church) in the Rouse Hill-Kellyville area, the South West Sector which is the large newer areas west of Liverpool, and the Peteli Tongan Congregation which is currently worshipping in a tent at Plumpton as the church is too small.

The NorthWest Uniting Church currently worships in the Rouse Hill Community Centre and has already developed a reputation in the community with its children's programs and special events that touch many families in the area. As the ministry develops there is the intention to involve groups such as Hillside Family Centre which could be included in future ministry expansion. They have leased the land bank site in the area and will be setting up a demountable building to cater for some of their activities.

The South West Sector initiative is in its early stages. Nevertheless, there have already been investigations as to what community services might be appropriately developed in order that the ministry have strong connections with the people in the area. Establishing a school was considered but found to be financially prohibitive. Now there are investigations **underway to find alternate** means of serving the community and being a base for ministry. A worship group and a home group have been started.

The Peteli Tongan congregation has bought a large property at Cecil Park near the new M7 motorway. They will build in stages a large facility that will serve as a regional base for ministry initially to the many Tongans in the region, with the second generation especially in mind. There is also the longer term goal of becoming a multicultural congregation. Serving the community and not just worship are envisaged.

THE INTEGRATED MODEL

The integrated presence model is seen as important **element of** meaningful future mission in western Sydney as church sites need to be more than places for worship and fellowship. The Basis of Union of the Uniting Church defines the congregation as "the embodiment in one place of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, worshipping, witnessing and serving as a fellowship of the Spirit in Christ" (par 15). This says that while worship and fellowship are primary roles, so too are witness and service. An integrated church presence enables congregations to be involved in witness and service on site. This of course does not limit congregations to such activities but it does show the wider community that the Uniting Church is about word and deed, mission and service.

One of the key considerations in such a model is the need for a leadership team containing a diversity of gifts and skills. Rather than a "minister and people" model of ministry, a team approach that includes both paid and unpaid leaders is essential. Key attributes will be the need for a team leader

and skilled management to build and maintain the team **with its** specialist skills.

CONCLUSION

We therefore seek from the wider church a commitment to put such a model into place by working with local leadership and presbytery to refine, develop and implement the model. This will require ongoing support and monitoring to ensure effectiveness.

The Presbytery Strategy Team