

The Congregation of Mark the Evangelist

Focuses for Mission and Ministry in 2021

Being served, Serving the Community, Serving the Church

*'The congregation is 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'*

Basis of Union, paragraph 15

The Congregation of Mark the Evangelist is a Uniting Church Congregation, designated as a “parish mission” and incorporating Hotham Mission. Through our presence in the city and local community we seek to reflect the light of Christ and make visible what God intends for all human life. The interests of the congregation, including its liturgy, theological engagement and Hotham Mission attract members from a wide geographical area.

The mission with which the church is concerned is God’s own mission, God’s own “sending”. God the Father sends the Son in the power of the Spirit to declare God’s universal love for the world. In worship and mission we declare that the Crucified and Risen Christ encounters his fearful and doubting people, granting them the Spirit and empowering them to be God’s witnesses to the Father’s love. In this way the church is created, being conformed to Christ as his Body, sharing in his work of offering self-giving love in the world and exercising a prophetic ministry that challenges our own lives as well as others’. The church works for justice for the vulnerable in our society, for reconciliation and human development, and for the renewal of the face of the earth.

With this in mind, the following are proposed as the focuses for mission and ministry of the Congregation in 2021.

1. Being Served: worship, fellowship and pastoral care, faith education, stewardship

God’s mission creates a people conformed to the image of his Son: the church. In this way, God’s mission begins in serving this people, building them up as a community of faith, hope and love that they may faithfully witness to God’s love and model a faithful response to God’s call to love – to consciously work for the good of the other. Before the church begins to serve it is itself served by God.

i. Worship

The Congregation seeks to maintain a stable pattern of worship and community life in which the gospel is proclaimed and heard in Word and Sacrament, and which forms us in mission. This is done through a liturgical and musical tradition that highlights and seeks better to understand the major seasons and festivals of the Christian year: Advent and Christmas, Lent and Easter, Pentecost and All Saints.

Focuses for 2021

- a. To establish a worship reference group with which the minister can consult, and to develop ways in which the Congregation’s worship life can be enhanced.

- b. Opportunities will be provided for members of the Congregation to give regular feedback on worship services during the year.
- c. To develop further the participation of children in Sunday worship services through contributions to prayers, readings and music, learned liturgical songs for children, lighting candles, collecting communion glasses, carrying the Bible into worship and in other appropriate ways.
- d. To develop a pattern of participation by more musicians from the Congregation, including an occasional choir in Sunday services.
- e. To facilitate an ecumenical worship service in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, 16 to 23 May 2021, on the theme 'Abide in My Love...You Shall Bear Much Fruit'.

ii. Fellowship and pastoral care

The Congregation seeks a culture of pastoral care in which we are built up in love. It aims to be a welcoming and inclusive body, where regular and new worshippers are welcomed and included in the Christian community. Fellowship occurs after each service through provision of tea and coffee and time to converse. It is encouraged by designating a specified person to welcome newcomers, and through congregational lunches and special occasions. To reinforce a culture of pastoral care, Church Council has specified elders each with responsibility for a list of members, and they and the Minister provide pastoral care to all members and adherents.

Focuses for 2021

- a. Arrange pastoral care training for elders and other interested members to better effect pastoral oversight throughout the Congregation, including in relation to baptism (ongoing contact with baptism families) and confirmation.
- b. Arrangements will be made for Communion to be brought to members who are sick.
- c. Enhance a focus on pastoral care under the conditions of a Congregation that cannot gather fully.
- d. Encourage members to check in with each other, such as by the 'catch-up' sessions of Mark the Evangelist ladies by video.
- e. Foster the hearing of stories and experiences of these times via Mark the Word.
- f. Acknowledge and reach out to those who access the online Sunday services but are not members of the congregation.

iii. Faith Education

The Congregation provides opportunities for its members to expand their understanding of our common faith through worship itself, through the Sunday children's program, the monthly Sunday conversations and through regular study group series offered during the year.

Focuses for 2021

- a. To develop a children's worship book.
- b. The congregation will be provided opportunities for reflection on community discussion of various themes including, in 2021, marriage, death and climate change.
- c. Present an extended series of online Bible studies based on the New Testament and encourage broad participation.

iv. Stewardship

The Congregation works to ensure that the buildings in its care best suit their purposes, and that its other capital resources are responsibly managed for the work of the congregation

and the wider church. The MtE Futures Project has reached cross-roads and requires priority attention from the congregation following the 2020 corona virus pandemic.

Focuses for 2021

- a. Church Council will lead the congregation through a series of small and large gathered meetings to address the results so far of the Mark the Evangelist Futures Project and the implications for its future accommodation.
- b. Consolidate the pattern of focussing on congregational giving at a particular time each year.
- c. Encourage the use of bank transfers for making weekly offerings.

2. Serving the Community

The Congregation sponsors Hotham Mission and, through the Mission and other ways, it maintains connections with Uniting Lentara, The Venny, Kensington Neighbourhood house and several local schools. It continues material support for asylum seekers in detention. It seeks also to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to all who hunger for it. The Congregation is mindful of the demographic changes in the local area and looks for new possible ministry opportunities in those changes. Conversations about mission are undertaken and encouraged between Hotham Mission, Church Council and the Congregation, and within the Congregation.

Focuses for 2021

- a. Invite Hotham Mission to identify a specific area of its work about which the Congregation could deepen its understanding and respond to more directly.
- b. Justice and Peace - Promotion and Advocacy: Invite members of the Congregation to indicate interest in participating in a justice and peace working group to assist the congregation in developing awareness and understanding of justice and peace issues, including those which are indigenous- and climate-related. Given the interest identified among several City Church ministers, this will be explored as a co-operative venture with other Melbourne city congregations.

3. Serving the wider church

The Congregation maintains links with the congregations of St Mary's Anglican Church in North Melbourne, Christ Church, Kensington, and the West Melbourne Baptist Church, and with the Uniting Church chaplain at the University of Melbourne. The Congregation maintains a website through which it provides some resources in service of the wider church, including the *LitBits* and *Illuminating Faith* study and liturgical resources.

Focuses for 2021

- a. To re-visit and move forward on the proposal to promote the question of a weekly Eucharist within the Uniting Church, including the development of study resources for congregations, to be distributed through *Illuminating Faith*.
- b. To revamp the congregational web site.
- c. To promote the use of *Illuminating Faith* resources in the wider church, and to add new resources including a Passion Sunday reading of Mark's passion narrative, the MtE Communion settings developed in the last two years, Lenten studies for 2021, and studies on Jonah and on Isaiah's Suffering Servant.