

PRESBYTERY OF SOUTH MORETON
UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA



**Life and Witness Consultation Report to
Elanora and Currumbin Valley Uniting
Church Council and Congregation**



INTRODUCTION

In February 2024, the Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC) of South Moreton Presbytery (SMP) resolved to conduct a Life and Witness Consultation with Elanora and Currumbin Valley Uniting Church.

These consultations are intended to be a regular feature of the Presbytery's oversight of its Congregations. The aim is to hold them every five years and/or at points of change and transition for a Congregation. In the case of Elanora and Currumbin Valley Uniting, there is no record in the past 10-15 years of a Life and Witness consultation.

The UCA Regulations relating to Life and Witness consultations are provided at the end of this report.

The current Consultation has been called to assist the Congregation to review its life and mission, discern its goals and directions and consider its future and the kind of ministry leadership which might best serve, inspire and equip the people of God at Elanora and Currumbin Valley Uniting.

PRC appointed Rev Brad Foote (Newlife Robina), Rev John Hopping (Tallebudgera UC) and Debra Pinkerton (Newlife Robina – lay person) to be part of the Consultation team. Debra agreed to Chair the team. PRC records its thanks to Debra, Brad and John and to the people of Elanora and Currumbin Valley Uniting for their involvement.

PROCESS

The Consultation process commenced in February 2024. The key aspects of the consultation were:

- Debra Pinkerton met with Liz Mahon, Chair of Church Council, on 15 February 2024 to outline the Consultation process.
- Debra, Brad and John met with Church Council on Monday 26 February 2024.
- Chair of Church Council announced the proposed consultation with the Congregation at the 9am service on Sunday 3 March 2024.
- The congregation survey in a printed form was distributed by the Chair of Church Council to members of Elanora and Currumbin Valley Uniting from Sunday 3 March 2024 to gauge their feelings about the Congregation's life and witness. The survey was not issued to people who participate in the online, streamed Sunday worship service.
- An interview with Rev Catherine Solomon and her husband Andrew occurred on Saturday 2 March 2024.
- Debra and Brad attended the 9am worship service on Sunday 17 March 2024. John joined at 10.15am. This provided an opportunity for leaders of programs and members of the congregation to meet with the Life and Witness Consultation team in informal groups or on a one-on-one basis to discuss matters relating to church life.

The Consultation and this report has drawn on the Elanora and Currumbin Valley UC Annual Reports and Financial Reports 2016-2022, National Church Life Survey results 2016 and 2022, and the Elanora and Currumbin Valley Uniting Church Vision 2022-2032 proposal and Visioning Day discussion.

The presentation of this report marks the conclusion of this consultation process but leaves the way open for further engagement between Presbytery, the Church Council and the Congregation to further develop many of the matters discussed.

CHURCH PRESENCE AND LIFE

DEMOGRAPHY

The southern Gold Coast community has a high percentage of people with Anglo-Saxon heritage. It has a high number of retirees, many on fixed incomes. It also has a transient population of holiday makers (young families and grey nomads) who visit coastal and hinterland destinations and tourist attractions throughout the year. There are a number of public and private primary and secondary schools in the area catering to young families. Southern Cross University, 12 kilometres south of the church precinct, has a campus adjacent to Gold Coast Airport which attracts domestic and international students.

It is a region marked by a steady population growth. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2016 census there were 28,648 people in the Elanora, Palm Beach and Currumbin Valley areas which included 7,143 families. By 2021 the population had increased to 31,972 with 8,277 families. Since COVID-19 many people have relocated to the Gold Coast for new employment opportunities, to work remotely or for retirement. The Palm Beach to Coolangatta area has been marked by a significant increase in medium-to-high density apartment construction.

Elanora and Currumbin Valley UC is a neighbourhood church which meets in two locations – Applecross Way Elanora and Currumbin Creek Road Currumbin Valley.

ELANORA SITE

Elanora UC is located in the heart of Elanora within 10kms of the Queensland/New South Wales border. The site is split between BlueCare and the Uniting Church of Queensland. The site occupies 3.2 hectares of land and the eastern boundary runs parallel to the M1 motorway.

The Elanora precinct comprises a number of brick, single storey church buildings, BlueCare facilities and the Manse. There is no cemetery or columbarium. A detailed description of each building and the groups who use the facilities is provided in the **Property and Finance** section of this report. The Elanora site comprises:

- A large church auditorium used for Sunday morning worship services, weekly prayer meetings, the Elanora Leisuretime group, and a Fijian congregation
- Attached to the auditorium is a kitchen, small storage room, a hall used by DWELL, a meeting room used by Leisuretime and all church-related meetings, an office space with four rooms (one of which is the Minister's office and the others used for administration) and a toilet block which is serviceable but not accessible
- Wollemi Hall and attached kitchen
- The Carpenters Workshop is a separate building equipped for community woodworking.
- Coinda Place, a craft and commercial coffee shop, is co-located with the church's Community Food Pantry warehouse
- Robinson Hall jointly owned by BlueCare and Elanora and Currumbin Valley UC
- The Manse is a two-storey brick home set on a hill overlooking the precinct. The house is in reasonable condition.



Elanora Uniting Church exterior



Church interior



Wollemi Hall



Church administration building



DWELL meeting room used for fitness, recreation and counselling



Carpenters Workshop



Cooinda Place and the Community Food Pantry



Robinson Hall



Elanora Manse

CURRUMBIN VALLEY SITE

A second church property is located at 1326 Currumbin Creek Road Currumbin Valley 4223. It is approximately 16kms from the Elanora property. The Currumbin Valley property is approximately 465 sq metres and there is no encumbrance. It does not have a cemetery, columbarium or manse on site.



Currumbin Valley Uniting Church property - *photo courtesy Rev Ralph Mayhew*

BACKGROUND

Over the past decade the congregation has had at least eight ministry agents. It went through a period of significant upheaval in 2016. At that time, some congregants chose to leave while others moved into care. In 2017, under the stewardship of supply ministers Rev Robert Weyer and Rev Russell Knight a period of calm and stabilisation began. In consultation with the congregation, work on a Ten Year Vision Plan began which was taken up by Rev Catherine Solomon when she was appointed in January 2019.

In the 2018 congregation profile of Elanora and Currumbin Valley UC, the congregation was described as a caring, friendly and generous community with strong faith and strong links to the lonely, to nursing homes, schools, hospitals and disadvantaged people with excellent facilities well-used by the community through a variety of leases. Leisuretime, Carpenters Workshop, Coinda Place and links with the co-located Blue Care complex enabled many folk to be engaged with the church congregation. The Pastoral Care team was very active with a prayer chain and practical support for many. The church was also involved with the Border Council of Churches. Seniors were the predominant congregants – however, the congregation profile noted that demographic changes were happening in Elanora with opportunities for church growth.

In the Presbytery section of the congregation profile, the congregation were asked to consider its mission opportunities for the next three to five years (i.e. 2018-2023). It was proposed the congregation connect and re-engage with 50-plus aged community members, and to discover methods of engaging with and assisting families in the district to worship at a possible alternative time and method. It was noted that the property was conducive to different worship styles at different times to the traditional 9am Sunday service.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the congregation. In 2020, Rev Catherine and Andrew Solomon established live streaming of worship services and pre-recorded music was used. *Church-on-wheels* began which involved the Solomons delivering paper copies of the Sunday service to over one-third of the congregation who did not have internet access.

During the two years of COVID-19 lockdowns and border closures many plans for the congregation were put on hold. After COVID-19 and as face-to-face worship services returned to more normal formats, the Church Council paid for a musician to come to the weekly Sunday service but this was not successful and was discontinued within a matter of months. Rev Catherine, an experienced pianist, often assisted or led the music and worship.

In October 2023, Presbytery asked the congregation to release Rev Catherine to temporarily work in the position of Acting Presbytery Minister for three months. The deployment period was subsequently extended to 30 June 2024. Many in the congregation regard the deployment of Rev Catherine as having a destabilising effect on the church community.

Since Rev Catherine's deployment there have been three supply ministry agents to date: Rev Barry Walker, Rev Andrea Follett and lay pastor Rebekah Munn.

At the Presbytery meeting on Saturday 11 May 2024 Presbytery voted to appoint Rev Catherine as the Presbytery Minister and Rev Catherine announced this to the congregation in person on Sunday 12 May 2024.

CURRENT SITUATION

Weekly worship services are held on Sunday at 9am at Elanora Church. In 2024 average weekly attendance is 60 people in person and another 39 online. Approximately 20 people are involved in preparing and leading the worship service. Prior to the start of the service there is a short prayer time. Each week this is coordinated by the ministry agent and led by the person rostered for Prayers for the People and includes the Chair of Church Council, Congregation Chair and others involved in the service.

The liturgy is a mixture of contemporary and traditional elements. A number of people, including lay pastor Rebekah Munn, are part of the preaching team and a team of three people coordinate the music. A section called *Insights*, introduced by Rev Catherine in 2022, provides time within the service for individual members of the congregation to share how God has been active in their life. A team of three people are rostered each week to manage the audio-visual desk and the livestreaming.

The Currumbin Valley congregation meets in the afternoon of the 2nd and 4th Sunday each month with a dinner after the service. Ten to 12 people attend. Services are currently led by Rebekah Munn – previously this was Rev Catherine Solomon. In the past year, the congregation has convened several special evening prayer times for the community, has hosted three special worship evenings, started the year with a Prayer Walk in the Valley, organised Christmas Eve carols at the local state school with approximately 150 people attending. On Good Friday several members walk with a wooden cross from the top of the valley to the beach or from Burleigh to Currumbin Alley as an Easter witness. Members of this congregation teach Religious Education at Currumbin State School.

In February 2024, at a meeting of the Life and Witness Consultation Team and Elanora and Currumbin Valley Church Council, members of Church Council commented that after the COVID-19 pandemic period and since Rev Catherine's deployment to Presbytery the Elanora and Currumbin Valley congregation has worked more cooperatively in teams and become less Minister-reliant. It was described as if the post COVID-19 period was a watershed season – i.e. a move away from congregational consumerism and a move toward more participation, with more people involved in a variety of congregational roles.

Church Council and the congregation respect, value and appreciate the ministry of the current lay pastor. However, there appears to be an abiding congregational concern that without a full-time ministry placement new mission objectives and further growth at Elanora and Currumbin Valley UC may be hindered.

Yet, this report will show new 'green shoots', new initiatives have taken place in recent months indicating the congregation is embracing the implementation of the Elanora Uniting Church Vision Plan 2022-2032 (see attached document).

TRENDS

In the four-year period 2013-2016 there were 15 baptisms, three confirmations, three weddings, 26 funerals, 20 members transferred from Elanora and Currumbin Valley UC to other congregations, and one person transferred into Elanora and Currumbin Valley UC.

Recent congregation annual returns indicate the following trends from 2019-2023 in relation to baptisms, confirmations, weddings, funerals and transfer of membership into and out of Elanora Uniting.

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Baptisms	0	5	2	0	2
Confirmations	1	0	4	2	4
Weddings	2	0	2	1	1
Funerals	8	11	7	9	5
Membership in	--	--	5	2	4
Membership out	--	--	--	1	1

Prior to 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic the average weekly worship service attendance was 90 people. After the pandemic, January-June 2023 the average attendance was 73 people. From July-December 2023 average attendance was 67 in person and 45 online. From January-April 2024 average attendance is 60 in person and 39 online. Some of the online participants are not members of the Elanora and Currumbin Valley congregation.

The Church Council comprises the Ministry agent and nine Council members. There are no designated Elders. Church Council meets monthly. Communication across the Congregation is through notices provided verbally during the Sunday worship services supported by a more detailed weekly email with weekly notices.

Internal and external communication is offered through the Congregation website – www.elanorauniting.com.au – which promotes Events (e.g. Alpha courses); Education programs through Bible study, Home groups and Adult Fellowship; Activities (Carpenters Workshop, Coinda Place, DWELL Youth Hub, Leisuretime, Solohearts, Community Food Pantry); and Resources such as newsletters, video links, seasonal devotions, and hall hire details. A Facebook page provides a YouTube link for the weekly online worship service.

Circles of Care (also called ELEOS), established by Rev Catherine in 2023, replaced the former pastoral care program and is having a mixed impact. Some circles are finding the new format is working satisfactorily while others feel that pastoral care could be improved. It is recommended that the Circles of Care pastoral program is reviewed.

Community groups continue to lease the premises. A Karate school leases the premises each week and also contributed a one-off donation towards the cost of floor repairs in Wollemi Hall in 2023. A sewing group and a cards group meet in Robinson Hall on alternate Thursday mornings.

A Fijian congregation, approximately 15 people, uses the church twice monthly.

In 2024 the existing church groups who use the Elanora facilities include the Adult Fellowship, Leisuretime (approximately 100 people meet each Wednesday for arts, crafts, mahjong and canasta), Coinda Place (commercial coffee shop open Monday-Friday 9am-1pm), DWELL (youth and family

outreach programs), Tuesday Happy Group, Thursday morning prayer group, bible study groups, the Community Food Pantry (open three days/week) and the Carpenters Workshop (Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday 8am-Noon).

The Adult Fellowship, Carpenters Workshop, Coinda Place, DWELL and Leisuretime generated approximately \$42,000 income in 2023.

The congregation financially supports four local chaplains who work in State schools.

There have been two recent new initiatives. On 2-3 April 2024 Elanora State School Chaplain and congregation member, Chappy Rob Greenwood, along with other local Scripture Union Chaplains, convened a two-day Christian Camp (non-sleepover) for youth in Years 4-7. There were 35 participants. The event was considered so successful that Church Council are planning to run a similar event in 2025.

On 20 April 2024 the congregation hosted an Autumn Fair. Approximately 300 people attended and the event successfully raised \$6,500.

THE CONGREGATION SURVEY

There were 35 responses to the survey with all questions answered. The number of respondents represents approximately 55% of the current congregation across both church locations and is a good indication of the congregation’s feedback.

The congregation predominantly comprises people older than 50 years of age. Twelve of the respondents were in the 51-70 years old age bracket, 22 were over 70 years old. Only one respondent was in the 21-30 year old age bracket.

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

Gender	Male: 9	Female: 22	Unstated: 4			
Age	21-30 yrs: 1	31-40 yrs: 0	41-50 yrs: 0	51-60 yrs: 6	61-70 yrs: 6	> 70 yrs:22
Attendance	< 3 yrs: 0	3-5 yrs: 3	5-10 yrs: 7	> 10 yrs: 23	Unstated: 2	
Frequency	Weekly: 21	Most weeks: 12	Occasionally: 1	Unstated: 1		

LEVEL OF SUPPORT FOR EACH STATEMENT IN THE SURVEY

The table below shows the number of respondents who agree (either somewhat or strongly) with each statement in the congregation survey. Those who did not agree with a statement may have opted for any of the other response options: *somewhat disagree*, *strongly disagree*, *neither agree nor disagree*, or left the response space unanswered.

Q	STATEMENT	AGREE
	Our relationship with God - faith and worship	
1	I am growing in faith as a disciple of Jesus in this church	29
2	Worship is vital and nurturing for me in this church	31
3	There is an openness to the introduction of new songs and forms of worship	25
4	There is provision for people of different cultural backgrounds	29
5	Children are welcomed and well provided for here	20
6	Newcomers from all backgrounds and walks of life are welcomed here	32
	Our relationship with each other – our life together	
7	Personal needs are appropriately shared and prayer for one another is encouraged	35
8	Small groups for pastoral care, study and prayer are promoted and well resourced	31
9	Pastoral care of members is well organised and effective	31
10	The sacrificial giving of my time and finances is promoted	31
11	Newcomers and regulars that drift away are followed up	17
	Our relationship with the community – our mission	
12	Our church is well known on the community grape vine	33
13	Our members actively connect with unchurched people	32
14	I feel equipped to share my faith with unchurched friends and family	28
15	Our church has a program to nurture people wanting to grow in faith and understanding	24
16	Our church has ministries that serve our community	35
17	Our church is informed about, prays and supports people in other countries	30
	Participation and leadership	
18	I am invited to identify and use my spiritual gifts and natural talents	30
19	I have had opportunities to contribute to future priorities and planning	27
20	I feel I am sufficiently informed about what is going on in our church	29
21	There is an openness by the leadership for people to express their views, offer ideas or raise any concerns in relation to the affairs of the Congregation.	27
22	People are encouraged to move into leadership roles, and existing leaders are happy to make way for new people.	27
23	I have confidence and trust in our Congregation's leaders.	31
	Knowing ourselves and where we are going – our vision	
24	I am confident in our financial management	24
25	I know our church's mission/vision statement	32
26	I know our church's mission priorities for the coming year	25
27	I believe this Congregation is willing and able to change to meet new opportunities to grow.	31
28	I feel positive about the future of this Congregation.	26

CONGREGATION COMMENTS DERIVED FROM THE SURVEY

The 35 respondents were open and honest with their comments. The summary below represents an overview of these comments.

The responses indicate a strong level of spiritual commitment individually and corporately and close bonds exist among the congregation. However, there is a significant level of apprehension about the future of the congregation and its place within the Elanora, Palm Beach and Currumbin Valley communities. It is not pessimism per se but a heartfelt concern that the current congregation is elderly with no younger people to assume roles and responsibilities. The perception is that without a full-time ministry agent to provide leadership and direction, the objectives of the Elanora Church Vision Plan 2022-2032 may be harder to achieve.

Below is a summary of the views shared in the comments section of each part of the survey. No reference is made to individuals who have been mentioned in comments.

Our relationship with God – faith and worship

- Many regard the worship services as good and clear and people are made welcome. Some members expressed concern for more openness and greater cultural inclusivity.
- Prayer is promoted quite well in the church, with a Thursday morning prayer group and prayer chain. No prayer in church for specific people or laying on of hands, which was regarded as a shame.
- Some members of the church lament the introduction of different forms of worship including recorded music, a countdown clock prior to the start of the service; extended periods standing for worship singing; the increasing number of new and unknown songs, decline in frequency of hymns; and the number and variety of people leading sections of the service instead of an ordained Minister.
- Many congregational members express pride in ongoing outreach programs and some new initiatives – for example, Leisuretime, Carpenters Workshop, Cooina Place, the Community Food Pantry, DWELL, the 2024 Autumn Fair (previously fetes).
- Concern was expressed that there is a lack of bible study groups where faith and discipleship are shared and encouraged with only three small groups plus one for Lent and Advent.
- Many respondents expressed their desire to provide for young families and children if they came to worship services but observed there is no requirement (young families tend to drift away). Currently there are few people in the congregation with the capabilities to provide this type of ministry.

Our relationship with each other – our life together

- There is a long-established caring attitude and practice within the congregation
- Comments on how pastoral care should be organised are mixed. Some prefer the previous pastoral care system, including the minister and leaders visiting, while others are thriving with ELEOS and the Circles of Care and feel supported. Others said that while pastoral care processes are in place, follow-up is lukewarm. Several comments indicate the existing pastoral care system needs to be reviewed if it is to work well.
- Members recognise they are an ageing congregation with few younger people to take on church roles and responsibilities. Also older individuals need care for themselves or have increasing commitments to their immediate family and feel they do not have time or energy to care for others.

- Some comments said the ELEOS team members are not well-known and are not involved with welcoming on Sunday or approaching visitors or noticing people in need.
- Bible study small groups and stewardship programs are not promoted enough.
- Some comments suggest a prevailing attitude that the Minister is the person responsible for follow up when people are away while other comments said the congregation should be encouraged to be more proactive through the pastoral care program.

Our relationship with the community – our mission

- The church has a connection with the community through a number of successful outreach groups – Leisuretime (three girls overseas are supported via Compassion Australia), Carpenters Workshop, DWELL etc. However, communication to the congregation about these outreach programs could be improved.
- The objective of DWELL seems to have changed and how it operates and is financed is unclear. Not sure what demographic is being targeted and what services are being provided – and by whom.
- Synod or Assembly programs, like Lent Event, used to be promoted in church but stopped. World needs are neglected due to an over-emphasis on the local community.
- Need for more bible study groups and training to share faith with others and to support those affected by family illness and grief. Suggestion to run more Alpha and Know Your Bible (KYB) programs.
- The Elanora and Currumbin Valley newsletter has become a directory and doesn't encourage personal spiritual growth or devotion.
- We are known as the church attached to the nursing home. This gives the impression in the community we are a church for seniors only.

Participation and leadership

- Comments are varied. Several comments indicated there has been a tightly held leadership/ownership of certain areas of church activities. Some comments suggested there seems to have been a shift beyond the narrow scope into a more encouraging and distributed leadership which needs to continue. Some older congregation members want to hand over responsibilities but feel that newcomers may be overwhelmed.
- Comments are varied. Several comments mentioned the need for more communication from Church Council about major plans (e.g. building upgrades) and strategic directions and for broader conversations with the congregation to explore issues of Mission and the future of the church. Others felt the church has become more transparent in recent years.
- There should be more of a pastoral role carried out by the Church Council and those willing (not just by the minister) to ascertain people's gifts and how they can be applied with the church community.
- Many comments indicate disappointment and frustration with Presbytery and Synod regarding the number of ministers, including supply staff, who have been appointed to Elanora and Currumbin Valley UC over the past ten years.

Knowing ourselves and where we are going – our vision

- There is great confidence in Church Council members and the management of finances but high levels of concerns about increasing maintenance costs and lack of funds for the future.

- Growth and succession is a concern. Without more 20-50 year olds the church will die due to lack of manpower and finances to maintain property.
- Opinions are divided whether worship services should cater for the current older congregation (i.e. more traditional liturgy) or adopt more contemporary elements.
- The lack of a long-term, full-time minister as a leader/facilitator for the congregation and as a person who can be known and active in the local community is regarded as a significant impediment to growth.

Future ministry and mission goals

- There is a strong sense of commitment to the church's outreach to the local community to spread the gospel.
- Some areas/activities have potential for much greater growth locally e.g. – Coinda Place, the Community Food Pantry
- Comments indicate that if DWELL was well-supported, it has capacity for growth through youth activities across the wider community.
- Implementing the Elanora Church Vision Plan 2022-2023 is encouraged as a more open process to engage more grass-roots involvement, raise up more leaders and increase decision-making by congregation members.
- Comments regarding future ministries are quite varied: some want to focus on the re-establishment of children's ministry, others on young adult ministry, some on activities to support young mothers (provide a playground and related activities for infants) while others want to target people under 60 years of age.
- The growth of more bible study groups for faith exploration and more training groups within church to minister to people's needs is seen as an important goal.
- A national and international perspective needs to be promoted to engage in global mission.
- Wider promotion of our church is required e.g. through a good website and Facebook.



PROPERTY AND FINANCE

PROPERTY

The buildings on the Elanora site are maintained by a team of volunteers from within the congregation. There is no preventative maintenance schedule in place. A spreadsheet is maintained which lists ongoing repairs but, with insufficient funds available, only basic and urgent maintenance is undertaken.

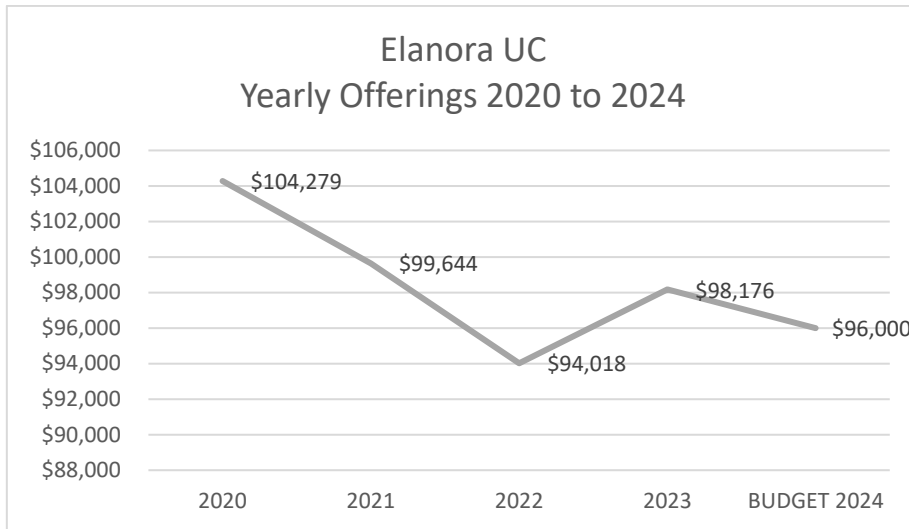
The Elanora buildings comprise:

- A large church auditorium used for Sunday morning worship services, weekly prayer meetings, the Elanora Leisuretime group, and a Fijian congregation who use the building twice a month.
- Attached to the church auditorium is a kitchen, a small storage room, a hall used by DWELL, a meeting room used by Leisuretime and all church-related meetings, an office space with four rooms, one of which is the Minister's office and the others are used for office administration. The toilet block, while serviceable, is not accessible for people with a disability.
- Wollemi Hall and its attached kitchen is used by Leisuretime, Adult Fellowship, morning tea after the 9am Sunday service, church dinners, church events (e.g. fairs) and is also used rented out to community groups.
- The Carpenters Workshop is a separate building operating as a church outreach program three mornings each week for community woodworking.
- Cooinda Place is a craft and commercial coffee shop and is co-located with the church's Community Food Pantry warehouse. Both facilities are run by volunteers. The café is patronised by BlueCare Pineshaven staff, residents and visitors, sundry road construction tradespeople who are working nearby on the M1 motorway upgrade, and others who may be attending activities on the church property e.g. for Leisuretime or Happy Group.
- Robinson Hall is jointly owned by BlueCare and Elanora and Currumbin Valley UC. It is used for hall hire, bible studies, sewing and card groups. BlueCare use it for staff education, community physiotherapy and First Aid Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) certification. Elanora UC manages all bookings. Recently electric fans were installed in Robinson Hall and it is hoped this will make the rooms more comfortable for potential hire groups.
- The Manse is a two-storey brick home set on a hill overlooking the precinct. The house is in reasonable condition, but the bitumen road leading to the property has pot holes. The retaining wall was upgraded within the last two years. Prior to any new occupancy, a full maintenance review should be conducted.

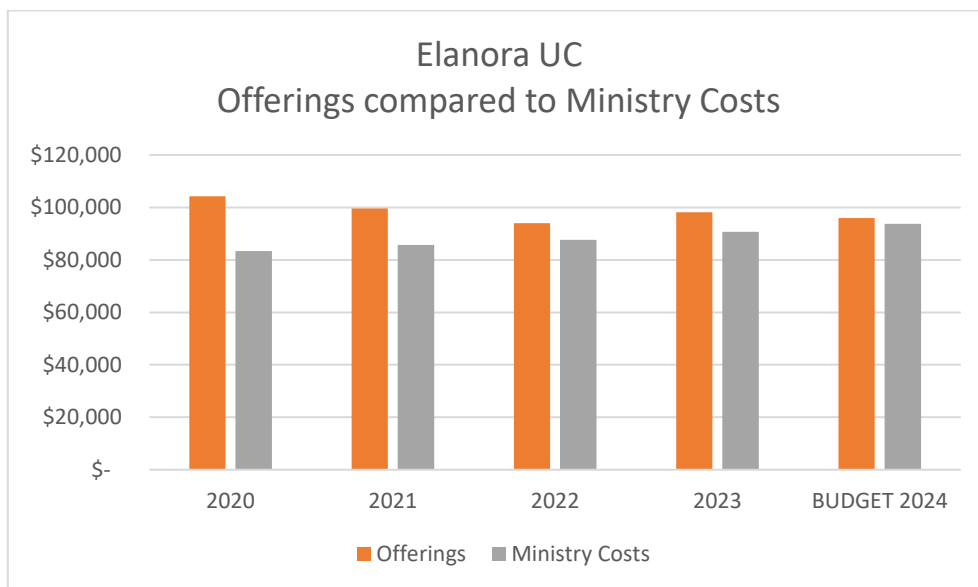
A second church property is located at 1326 Currumbin Creek Road Currumbin Valley 4223. The 2024 Annual General Report indicates:

- the timber church building is in need of renovation because it has termites
- a new path and ramp is needed for wheelchair access
- a child-proof fence needs to be installed
- an inside toilet and vanity basin needs to be installed.

PRESBYTERY ANALYSIS OF FINANCES



- Elanora UC operates on a calendar year financial basis; most congregations now operate on a financial year basis.
- Elanora’s yearly offerings declined by 5.9% over the period 2020 to 2023.
- Offerings were \$98,176 in 2023.
- 2024 Budgeted offerings: \$96,000.
- The other main area of income is Contributions by Affiliated Organisations which was \$49,318 in 2023.
- Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2024 shows Cash Reserves: \$54,294.
- Current Liabilities as at 31 March 2024: \$25,553.
- Deficit as at 31 March 2024: (\$9,421)
- Budgeted Deficit for 2024: (\$20,789)
- Elanora requested a review of its 2024/25 CPMP contribution citing declining attendance numbers and an aging congregation on fixed incomes.
- The main expense to the congregation is the provision of a full-time ministry placement.



The graph above shows the narrowing gap between offering income and ministry costs. Congregations are encouraged to sustain their ministry costs as much as possible through the giving of their people, rather than depend on income from community contacts (property hire and other activities) to meet basic operational costs. Elanora manages to cover ministry costs with giving but the margin is decreasing each year.

The 2024 budget anticipates a deficit for this year of \$20,789. At the end of the first quarter, 31 March 2024, the actuals showed income of \$44,974 and expenses at \$54,395. The performance in the first three months shows a deficit of \$9,421.

It is noted that the first six months of 2024 may be skewed by insurance costs. This may be offset by the \$6,500 income raised at the 2024 April Autumn Fair. However, if projections for the rest of the year are on track, the actual deficit for 2024 may be higher.

Elanora and Currumbin Valley Uniting Church is a mature congregation, but it is financially vulnerable. It has limited cash reserves and is carrying current liabilities of over \$25,000, with a projected budgeted deficit of over \$20,000. Continuing deficits of this size will drain the church's accumulated reserves very quickly. This places the congregation at some element of financial risk. In the future, a full-time placement may not be easily sustainable.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION FROM THE CONGREGATION 2024 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 2024 budget includes nominal increases in administration and ministry costs and a significant 50% increase in insurance costs. While there will be a slight increase in hall hire fee and group contributions in 2024, there is a need for more rental opportunities, particularly to cover the cost of maintenance and repairs to the church property – for example, the toilets on the Elanora property are not accessible and the ingress at the Currumbin Valley building is not accessible either.

In 2024, it is anticipated the offering income for both Elanora and Currumbin Valley congregations is slightly short of covering the costs of a full-time minister and CPMP (Mission and Service fund) contributions. Funds and receivables is \$71,757.00. Of this \$36,548.00 has been set aside for specific purposes which includes \$22,000 for a youth pastor.

As at 31 December 2023 the Adult Fellowship had a surplus of \$2,767. The Carpenters Workshop Westpac account has \$15,613 and a term deposit of \$64,000.

Cooinda Craft and Coffee Place income increased from \$49,000 in 2022 to \$58,000 in 2023. Cooinda contributed \$6,000 to Chaplaincy, \$2,000 towards the installation of the Community Food Pantry and was able to purchase a reconditioned coffee machine for \$5,5000.

TEAM REFLECTION

Elanora and Currumbin Valley Uniting Church is a well-established congregation which has been worshipping in the community for many decades. There is a high level of spiritual commitment individually and corporately and a genuine concern that bible study, spiritual growth and pastoral care is sustained.

Sunday services are competently led by a worship team which includes the ministry agent and lay leaders. There is a willingness to blend traditional and contemporary forms of worship and preaching is bible-based, theologically sound and has application to daily life. The service is undergirded by prayer and, during the service, intercessory prayer touches the needs of the congregation, local community and the world at large. The Insight section provides a time for members of the congregation to give a personal testimony.

In addition, the Currumbin Valley services twice monthly provide an intimate worship space followed by a fellowship meal which helps build friendship and unity for the church family. Those who attend are prayerful and active in the local community.

Like many churches Elanora and Currumbin Valley Uniting has an ageing congregation and the Life and Witness Consultation process has identified the concerns of many of its members about the viability of the congregation.

Despite many different ministry agents over the past decade, stability has been provided by the most recent incumbent, Rev Catherine Solomon. Notwithstanding the impact of COVID-19, a 10-year vision plan has been developed with the support of Church Council, the congregation and a number of stakeholders. During Visioning Day in 2023 the participants articulated that Elanora and Currumbin Valley church is more than a Sunday gathering and they value greatly the positive links into the local community through various activities – for example, Carpenters Workshop, Leisuretime, Coinda Place, Community Food Pantry and school chaplaincy.

Pastoral care is regarded as an important element for the congregation – however, their feedback indicates the existing pastoral care system needs to be reviewed if it is to work well and the Consultation team concurs.

The Coinda Place café has great potential to contribute more to the relational health, community engagement and financial sustainability of the congregation – for example, as a hub providing food and beverage to local tradespeople, school parents, local workers, residents, visitors and staff at the BlueCare facilities, and people coming to the Community Food Pantry, or for future ventures such as a morning coffee venue for parents attending a pre-school playgroup which could be co-located in a meeting room adjacent to the café. To maximise its potential, a thorough review of the mission, vision and operational structure and capabilities of Coinda Place is required.

New programs and activities like DWELL, the Autumn Fair, the Community Food Pantry, and the primary school Day Camp led by the local school Chaplains are ‘green shoot’ initiatives. The Food Pantry which started in 2023 is offering a ministry that reaches needy people in the local community. DWELL is a youth hub which provides a safe place to improve the mental health and wellbeing of youth in Grades six to 12 through health and fitness, spiritual growth, coaching and counselling.

The existing programs and new initiatives provide hope and encouragement for the health of the congregation into the future.

The Life and Witness Consultation team also re-affirms the Presbytery recommendations provided to the congregation in 2018:

1. to connect and engage with 50+ year old community members
2. to discover methods of engaging with and assisting members of the local district to worship at Elanora Uniting Church other than at the 9am Sunday service. The property is conducive to different styles of contemporary worship and fellowship which could be held at other times and on other days which may better suit youth and young families.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Elanora and Currumbin Valley congregation is deeply committed to the Gospel, each other and their community. They demonstrate a faithfulness to God and, despite many different ministry agents in recent years, there is a resilience and independence among its members. The congregation is rightly proud of its long-standing outreach programs and also of its new initiatives and they want the church to grow and thrive and have a positive impact on the community in terms of service and evangelism.

People are realistic about the current situation and about challenges for the future. The Elanora Uniting Church Vision 2022-2032 provides a consensus for mission, vision and planning and the Church Council and the congregation are encouraged to continue to implement this plan.

The church properties are a very valuable asset. The size and location of the Elanora precinct, in particular, the variety of purposes of its current buildings as they are being used and can potentially be utilised, is a resource and a responsibility for the congregation. The existing property can create further viable opportunities for mission.

The Consultation team thank Elanora and Currumbin Valley Church Council and congregation for their willingness to engage in the consultation process. We commend this report to them. It reflects, in a small way, the values of its people and the current situation for the congregation and it is hoped the report can be a catalyst for discussion, reflection and action. While the Elanora and Currumbin Valley community context is unique, its challenges are not.

The recent announcement that Rev Catherine Solomon has been appointed to the role of South Moreton Presbytery Minister means the congregation now needs to discern God's new future season and we pray for God's guidance and provision. We commend the availability, support and care of the Presbytery through this process.

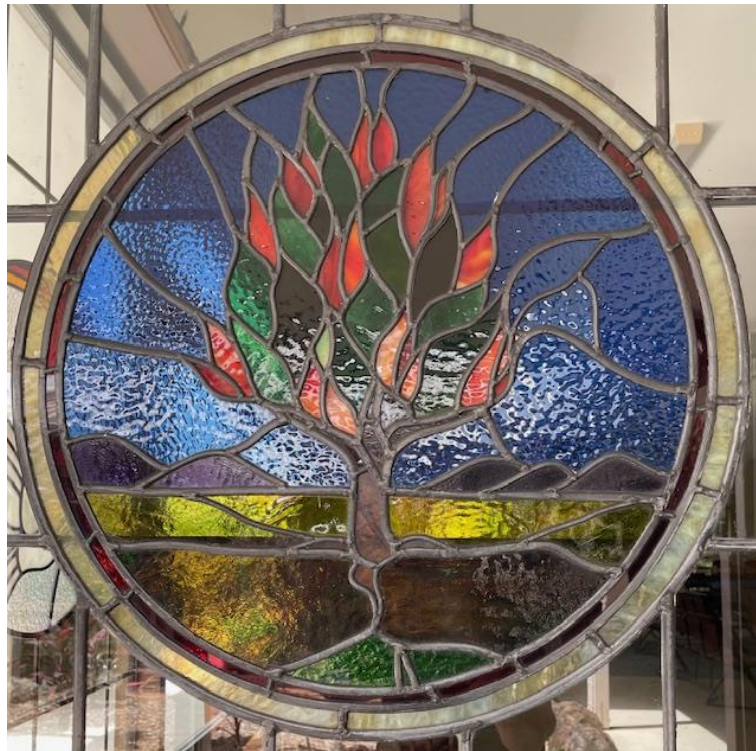
The members of this Consultation team, and other people in the Presbytery, welcome the opportunity to come alongside the Church Council and the congregation to talk through aspects of this report and to look at new possibilities for mission. Presbytery wants the congregation to flourish in faith, hope and love, obedient to the call and purpose of God.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Congregation draw on the expertise and encouragement from the wider Presbytery to help plan for future mission into the community, recognising the changing needs and opportunities for local churches in the post-COVID 19 pandemic era.
2. The congregation begin to plan for its future ministry placement.

The Presbytery leadership and Pastoral Relations Committee members are very willing to assist the Congregation in these areas.

Debra Pinkerton, Chair Consultation Team
Rev Brad Foote
Rev John Hopping
May 2024



UCA REGULATIONS – LIFE AND WITNESS CONSULTATIONS

3.1.4 CONSULTATIONS ON LIFE AND WITNESS OF A CONGREGATION

- (a) Consultations on the life and witness of a Congregation shall be conducted by the Presbytery with the Congregation including any Ministers, Youth Workers, Pastors or Lay Pastors serving in placements in the Congregation and any Community Ministers serving in the Congregation.
- (b) The purpose of the consultation shall be to strengthen the life and witness of the Congregation, to assess future ministerial and lay leadership needs, and to review the records of the Congregation.
- (c) A consultation shall normally take place every five years at the discretion of the Presbytery regardless of the duration of any current placement.
- (d) The Presbytery may conduct a consultation at any time on its own initiative, or at the request of the Church Council or of a Minister serving in a placement in the Congregation.
- (e) The persons appointed by the Presbytery to undertake the consultation shall:
 - (i) consult with such bodies and persons within the Congregation as it determines;
 - (ii) report to the Presbytery and the Congregation; and
 - (iii) make such recommendations regarding the life and witness of the Congregation (including matters relating to placements and property) as they think fit.