

**Congregation of Mark the Evangelist
Reconvened Special Congregational Meeting**

19 June 2016

Agenda

- i. Opening
- ii. Attendance and Apologies
- iii. Business
- iv. Project update since 1 May Special Congregational Meeting
- v. Presentation of Proposals B and D carried over from 1 May 25th Special Congregational Meeting:
 - Proposal B**
That the congregation resolves to no longer seek to renovate Union Memorial Church for the purposes of worship, and proceeds instead to consider at a future meeting non-UMC alternatives for its future accommodation.
 - Proposal D**
That the congregation resolves to proceed to consider at a future meeting non-UMC alternatives for its future accommodation.
- vi. Next Steps
- vii. Close

The formal meeting is to be followed by a discussion around the paper by Craig Thompson titled "Interpreting our Vocation in the MTEFP".

PROJECT UPDATE SINCE 1 MAY SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

1. This is a reconvened Special Congregational Meeting which is obliged to proceed from the concluding stage of the Meeting held on 1 May 2016 which was adjourned.
2. The 1 May Congregational meeting decided, by consensus and after extensive discussion, that Mark the Evangelist should not move ahead with developing and selling, and then restoring and worshipping in Union Memorial Church (Proposal A).
3. That meeting also unanimously acknowledged and recorded that Union Memorial Church would not be sold until permanent accommodation had been determined (Proposal C). This resolution leaves the way open for the eventuality that if no other accommodation option is acceptable, the Congregation could still return to consider renovating and worshipping in Union Memorial Church.
4. At the adjournment of the 1 May meeting, Proposals B and D remained for consideration by the Congregation. These proposals are taken up again at paragraph 7. below.
5. On the basis of members' suggestions and Church Council recommendations, additional proposals (named 'Manse', 'Hall', 'Minimal Renovation', and 'Church Cottage' to identify them) for developing parts of the Elm Curzon Queensberry site have been explored with SEMZ and are in the process of assessment.
6. Initial advice from SEMZ Advisory was that the 'Manse' proposal was not at all feasible. Both the Planning and Heritage sub-consultants had advised that that proposal involving a three-way subdivision of the overall heritage site would not be at all acceptable either to Heritage Victoria or Melbourne City Council. SEMZ proceeded to undertake a high level assessment of the remaining three proposals under both 'sell' and 'develop then sell' scenarios. SEMZ concluded and Church Council has agreed that the three 'sell' proposals and the 'Minimal Renovation' 'develop then sell' proposal should proceed to detailed assessment. The financial feasibility of the additional on-site proposals (in draft form) is not likely to be available until 4 July.

7. PRESENTATION OF CURRENT PROPOSALS

The additional research and assessment that has been set in train since 1 May in relation to the new Union Memorial Church (UMC) and non-UMC proposals has changed the purpose of the reconvened Special Congregational Meeting

a. Proposal B

That the congregation resolves to no longer seek to renovate Union Memorial Church for the purposes of worship, and proceeds instead to consider at a future meeting non-UMC alternatives for its future accommodation.

This proposal addressed two separate issues:

- i) 'no longer seeking to renovate Union Memorial Church for the purposes of worship', and
- ii) 'foreshadowing consideration at a future meeting non-Union Memorial Church alternatives for its future accommodation'

On the basis of earlier congregation proposals, Church Council is proceeding with the assessment of three on-site ideas including both Union Memorial Church and non-Union Memorial Church possibilities, the results of which are expected in July. As Proposal B has now been overtaken by this Church Council action, there is little point in proceeding with it.

b. Proposal D

That the congregation resolves to proceed to consider at a future meeting non-UMC alternatives for its future accommodation.

This proposal was accompanied by a Rationale that said (in part) that Proposal D was an amendment of Proposal B, and Proposals C and D 'would enable a decision about accommodation to be based on a comparison of UMC restoration against alternative options'. To this end, the proposer of Proposal D (Gus MacAulay) indicated in the meeting that he would move an amendment that would add the words 'UMC and', thus changing Proposal D to read 'That the congregation resolves to proceed to consider at a future meeting UMC and non-UMC alternatives for its future accommodation.' Given the Church Council action already in train, Gus has agreed that it is not necessary to proceed with this Proposal.

Another possible proposal was mentioned at the Meeting by Lauren Mosso. In view of the further Church Council work now in train, Lauren has decided not to proceed with her proposal.

NEXT STEPS

- A. While further work is being completed around the last of the new on-site possibilities raised, Church Council has authorised informal consultations with other parties over selected off-site tenant and merger accommodation possibilities. This will enable Mark the Evangelist to compare its preferred on-site option with some possible, but not yet firmly negotiated, alternatives that have been identified off-site.
- B. Following its formal meeting on 19 June, the congregation will have the opportunity to discuss the reflection being prepared by Craig at Church Council request. Craig is outlining and presenting for consideration and discussion a reflection on "Interpreting our Vocation in the MTEFP" as we consider Mark the Evangelist's ministries and accommodation needs.
- C. Both on-site and off-site accommodation options are expected to be considered by Church Council at its 4 August meeting for recommendation to the congregation.
- D. A Special Congregational Meeting is being scheduled for Sunday 21 August for consideration of the latest property options recommendation from Church Council.
- E. The congregation's preferred option at that time will determine the course of action to be approved by Church Council as the outcome of the MTEFP Business Case.
- F. Once the Business Case is approved by the Synod Property Board, MtE under a new contract with a consultant (most likely SEMZ Advisory) will proceed to refine and detail the concepts of the approved course of action (as the basis for the next stage of the Property Services approval procedure).
 - i. If an on-site accommodation option is proposed by Mark the Evangelist and approved by the Property Board, detailed concept designs will be prepared.
 - ii. If an off-site accommodation option is proposed by Mark the Evangelist and approved by the Property Board, concept designs, consultations, or negotiations as appropriate will be set in train.

Church Council Working Group
(Rod Mummery, Maureen Postma, Greg Hill, Alan Wilkinson, Craig Thompson)

9 June 2016

Interpreting our Vocation in the MTEFP

1. The purpose of this paper

Our sense of vocation (call) to mission as a church is central to our thinking around the issues which constitute the Mark the Evangelist Futures Project (MTEFP). Granted that we are called to *be* the church, it is then given to us to *interpret* this call in our context: *how* will we live out that call, determine the shape which this particular congregation takes? Our answer to this question will involve both personal, subjective preferences we might have for how we like church to be, and our sense more broadly for what we think is *right* – objectively – to do as church.

2. MtE's Interpretation of our Vocation

MtE, of course, has existed for a long time. We have already given clear shape to the way in which we think it appropriate for a church to *be* church in this time and place.

So, what shape is MtE?

There are clear theological and liturgical contours. Over many years, a particular flavour of church has developed, which has been attractive not only to locals but to people prepared to travel considerable distance for what MtE offers. This has also had the reinforcing effect of strengthening the theological and liturgical characteristics which were attractive in the first place. This appeal is one of the reasons MtE has bucked the trend of numerical decline characteristic of the church in the West. MtE is a larger congregation than it was 20 years ago, and enjoys the presence of a number of children and their young(ish) parents. Another contributor to the relative numerical strength of MtE is that city churches benefit from people's willingness to travel *into* town for church, which does not apply so much in the opposite direction. Influences like these have given MtE shape as a "gathered" congregation.

Another aspect of MtE's particular way of being church is the congregation's sponsorship of UnitingCare Hotham Mission (UCHM). While the congregation seeks better to understand and express the relationship between itself and UCHM, the Mission's work continues to be a much valued part of what the congregation does.

Because of its heritage, MtE is also a very well-resourced congregation, despite our apparent budget woes! This creates for us many options which other faith communities do not enjoy. Part of the challenge facing us is negotiating what to do with what we've been bequeathed. More could be said to outline the way in which MtE "does church"; these three aspects – theological and liturgical flavour, UCHM and our resources – have perhaps been the most prominent in our thinking to date about our future.

Different circumstances – limitations and opportunities – require or enable different *ways* of being. If we were limited in resources and opportunities, our ways of being would also be limited – and perhaps much simpler. As it happens, we seem to have a great range of options before us, from restoring and returning to worship in UMC to selling everything and dispersing the congregation, with a number of significant options in between. In sifting through these, we are motivated in one direction or another by a sense for what is "required" or what would "work" for the congregation's mission. What do MtE's particular circumstances require if we are to be the church in this time and place, while also anticipating as best we can what the future might require of us?

Our particular circumstances might be understood to be twofold. There is, firstly, the way in which the congregation has interpreted its call to date: its theological and liturgical interests, its sponsoring of UCHM and its resources. Under “resources” fall the budgetary issue of the condition of UMC and the need to address this, in conjunction with our need to tend to an ongoing budget deficit. Secondly, there is the circumstance of the place of the church *per se* within contemporary western society. The former of these two circumstances is one over which we have considerable influence; the latter we seek to influence but there is little we can do to change our cultural context.

When it comes to our choosing the way in which we will continue to be church, the issue which most obviously presently confronts us is the condition of Union Memorial Church and the need to do something about that. For the most part, our reflections to date have prioritised the question, Can we afford to fix UMC? The answer seems to be Yes, under certain circumstances.¹ Documentation prepared for our May 1 congregational meeting noted that there are two other important questions to be considered here: whether we *need* to fix UMC, and whether we want to. The answer to the “need” question is probably No – on a legal level (we can transfer the heritage responsibility by sale) and on a missional level (it’s possible to be a congregation without that particular building). The “want” question is the more challenging one, for it is again the broader question of how we interpret our call to be church. Our answer will include personal preferences (aesthetics, tradition, location, financial commitment) as well as our sense of what mission requires in this particular cultural space.

How we answer the question of what the cultural space might require will not immediately determine for us what to decide about our buildings. The important point is that we have things to consider about our way of being church into the future *because of* the condition of UMC, and things to consider about our way of being church into the future *despite* the condition of UMC. The first set of considerations are about preserving what is valuable about our way of being church to date. The second set of considerations is about reforming our way of being church, where that might be appropriate to our current or anticipated context.

Any congregation which regularly reviews its response to its call must consider these issues from time to time. MtE is, however, at a cusp moment, not unlike where a new congregation finds itself as it consider building its first “church”. Had we a freer hand in this (that is, had we not had a history with UMC), we would probably not consider a UMC-type building. Unavoidably, our history with UMC colours our thinking a bit. Yet it is important that, even if we finally determine to return to UMC, it would not be satisfactory to do it principally *because of* that association and the things in it to which we have ascribed value and meaning. Rather, weighing up the various missional opportunities and limitations regardless of whether we return to UMC or do something else, we should decide in full awareness of how the dimensions of our church life will need to be as they once were, and how need to be different. These dimensions include matters of location, theology and liturgy, aesthetics of worship and buildings, congregational integrity, evangelism, community service and budgets.

What follows is a series of prompting statements to encourage some reflection on these dimensions: how we imagine they would be addressed or reflected in a return to UMC, or in some other accommodation of MtE’s life. In each case, it would be helpful to consider your response to the particular statements in relation to some of the several accommodation options which have been mooted in our conversations; some these are listed under each section, alongside which you might like to make some notes (or add others).

¹ 1 The financially viable option of develop-and-sell to renovate and return to UMC – Option 3.2 – was rejected at our May 1 congregation meeting. At Church Council request SEMZ is still investigating whether a less expensive UMC renovation and linkage of buildings might possible in conjunction with the sale or the development then sale of unneeded parts of our property.

a) Location

Consider:

“As a congregation gathered from a wide geographic area, the location of our gathering point for worship and other communal activities does not matter much.”

What does your Yes, No or Indifferent response to this statement imply for some of the accommodation and mission opportunities associated with the following options, keeping in mind considerations of resourcing (people and financial) and the freedoms and limitations each option might offer:

1. Returning to UMC
2. The “Hall” option – developing a smaller church plant in the Hall corner of the property
3. Worshiping at the CTM (OR SIMILAR)
4. Buying or renting another traditional-style church space
5. Buying or leasing a community or commercial space
6. Amalgamating with another congregation

b) Aesthetics – the worship space

Consider:

“An aesthetically pleasing worship space is a fundament requirement of the congregation”

What does your Yes, No or Indifferent response to this statement imply for some of the accommodation and mission opportunities associated with the following options, keeping in mind considerations of resourcing (people and financial) and the freedoms and limitations each option might offer:

1. Returning to UMC
2. The “Hall” option – developing a smaller church plant in the Hall corner of the property
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4. Buying or renting another traditional-style church space
5. Buying or leasing a community or commercial space
6. Amalgamating with another congregation

c) Aesthetics – the exterior appearance and visibility of the building

Consider:

“It does not matter that our building be recognisably a church or easily visible as such to a local community.”

What does your Yes, No or Indifferent response to this statement imply for some of the accommodation and mission opportunities associated with the following options, keeping in mind considerations of resourcing (people and financial) and the freedoms and limitations each option might offer:

1. Returning to UMC
2. The “Hall” option – developing a smaller church plant in the Hall corner of the property
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d) Theology and liturgy

Consider:

“It is crucial that the theological flavour and liturgical style of MtE be preserved into the future.”

What does your Yes, No or Indifferent response to this statement imply for some of the accommodation and mission opportunities associated with the following options, keeping in mind considerations of resourcing (people and financial) and the freedoms and limitations each option might offer:

1. Returning to UMC
2. The “Hall” option – developing a smaller church plant in the Hall corner of the property
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5. Buying or leasing a community or commercial space
6. Amalgamating with another congregation

e) Congregational integrity

“MtE makes an important contribution to the wider church, and so it is important that its integrity as a worshiping community is preserved”

What does your Yes, No or Indifferent response to this statement imply for some of the accommodation and mission opportunities associated with the following options, keeping in mind considerations of resourcing (people and financial) and the freedoms and limitations each option might offer:

1. Returning to UMC
2. The “Hall” option – developing a smaller church plant in the Hall corner of the property
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4. Buying or renting another traditional-style church space
5. Buying or leasing a community or commercial space
6. Amalgamating with another congregation

f) Evangelism

Consider:

“An active engagement with the wider community, and extension of the invitation to ‘Consider Christ’, is crucial for the future of the congregation.”

What does your Yes, No or Indifferent response to this statement imply for some of the accommodation and mission opportunities associated with the following options, keeping in mind considerations of resourcing (people and financial) and the freedoms and limitations each option might offer:

1. Returning to UMC
2. The “Hall” option – developing a smaller church plant in the Hall corner of the property
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4. Buying or renting another traditional-style church space
5. Buying or leasing a community or commercial space
6. Amalgamating with another congregation

g) Community service (UCHM, among other things)

Consider:

“Maintaining the work of UCHM is an essential part of any future accommodation option for the congregation.”

What does your Yes, No or Indifferent response to this statement imply for some of the accommodation and mission opportunities associated with the following options, keeping in mind considerations of resourcing (people and financial) and the freedoms and limitations each option might offer:

1. Returning to UMC
2. The “Hall” option – developing a smaller church plant in the Hall corner of the property
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h) From our “Mission Futures” Document

Our “Mission Futures” document was prepared in advance of the current property options study, and was received and approved by the congregation in February 2015. For the most part it describes the congregation’s history and present operations, and sketches a sense for the “next” in our activities. The following is taken from the document:

The future of the congregation is in large part dependent upon its making the best use of the human resources which make up its membership. Here the adoption of a “charismatic” (from Greek charisma: “gift”) set of ministry focuses, as distinct from an “institutional” set, is the model the congregation is beginning to develop. The charismatic approach asks, What gifts do we have?, and seeks to foster those particular gifts and interests. An institutional model asks, What do we need?, and seeks to fill gaps in a perceived sense of what is required for a complete church. Striking an appropriate balance between these two is always necessary, but it is the former which generates energy and enthusiasm in a congregation and creates effective and distinctive ministries.

In what ways does this understanding of our work inform our thinking about our accommodation?

To what extent do you find your approach to our coming decisions to arise from “institutional” concerns you have? And to what extent are you coming from “charismatic” considerations?