

**EASTWOOD UNITING CHURCH**

**ONGOING MISSION PLAN**

**REVISION for 2025 – 2029**

**AUGUST DRAFT**

# CONTENTS

## **Executive Summary**

- Five marks of mission
- Theological framework
- Purpose of the Ongoing Mission Plan

## **Section 1 Background and Purpose**

- Historical context
- Demographic context
- Initiation of Ongoing Mission Plan
- Implementation of 2018 Mission Plan

## **Section 2 Mission, Vision & Values**

- What we aspire to achieve, how we want to behave and how we want to participate in what God is doing.

## **Section 3 The Way Forward**

- How ministry and mission are expressed at this time in our Church
- Mission in the Eastwood district
- Relationship with local community
- Relationships within the City of Ryde Zone and SCC Presbytery

## **Section 4 Future support for the wider work of the Uniting Church**

- Indigenous heritage
- Support for the mission of the Uniting Church (NSW/ACT Synod)

## **Section 5 Support for Mission in Eastwood**

- Resources needed
- Anticipated expenditure to support mission in Eastwood
- External support for mission
- How will we monitor and review our progress
- Conclusion

---

## ***CURRENCY***

**Prepared by Church Council: 1 August, 2024**

**Endorsed by Congregation: September, 2024**

**Endorsed by Presbytery:**

## **Executive Summary**

This Mission Plan outlines how Eastwood Uniting Church intends to continue its mission to the people of the Eastwood district, as its former congregations did for more than a century. Over the four decades since the Uniting Church was founded the Eastwood community has changed as the district continues to experience significant physical, social, and economic challenges. In response the Eastwood Uniting Church has continued to modify and refine its mission. Successive mission plans have identified opportunities for fresh expressions, and these have been pursued. This Mission Plan seeks to extend and build on recent successes and respond to conditions that have changed since the previous Mission Plan was adopted in 2018.

Today the Lakeside Road property is a vibrant community hub for many activities associated with the Eastwood Congregation. God is presenting the Congregation with new opportunities. Limited resources must be utilised as effectively as possible to achieve the mission outcomes supported by the Congregation and Sydney Central Coast Presbytery.

The focus of the Mission Plan is the new initiatives to be taken over the next five years in response to the changed circumstances and new opportunities. New initiatives will be pursued in addition to continuing existing programs. Achieving the intended outcomes will require the effective use of resources. The Mission Plan identifies the required resources and the actions necessary to obtain and apply them.

This Mission Plan recognises the Five Marks of Mission. In relation to the period 2025 – 2029 Eastwood Uniting Church intends to undertake the following:

### **Tell – Proclaim the good news of the Kingdom**

- Conduct different forms of worship services in response to the needs of various groups. They will be at different times and provide traditional and contemporary forms of worship.
- Establish worship services aligned with the needs and comprehensions of people in the first third of life - young adults and young families.
- Continue to produce a range of Chinese, Korean, and other community language translations of sermons and written materials used in worship.
- Apply for a Non-Real Estate Mission Activity grant to support employment of two community resource workers who will focus on creating connections with people in the first third of life, especially young families and/or adults of Asian background
- Prepare an application for a Synod Growth Fund grant to enable employment of a resource worker who will establish connections between students at Macquarie University and young adult programs conducted at Eastwood Uniting Church.
- Build on existing multicultural and intercultural gatherings where the Gospel is proclaimed in community languages. This includes discussion groups after worship services in relevant languages.
- Conduct services of Holy Communion in multiple languages.
- Continue to conduct services in response to special circumstances, and to recognise specific events, anniversaries, and community needs.
- Expand opportunities throughout the week for the informal and unstructured proclamation of the gospel to individuals and small groups in various forums during day and evening.
- Establish connections with other Uniting Church congregations to share in worship and other activities for the benefit of their multicultural community.
- Facilitate participation of other congregations from Sydney Central Coast Presbytery in activities at Eastwood Uniting Church such as hosting an annual combined City of Ryde Zone worship service.
- Collaborate with United Theological College to provide educational opportunities for students to experience, participate in, and contribute to multicultural ministry.
- Support the activities of the NSW Synod by an annual Stewardship Contribution (Living is Giving).

### **Teach – Teach, baptise and nurture new believers**

- Maintain the opportunity to provide teaching for children and youth through Sunday School in the morning and Sunday Youth in the afternoon.
- Implement a co-ordinated annual program of continuing Christian education through regular home-based Bible study groups which provides opportunities for consistent teaching across the Congregation.
- Continue mid-week study groups that specifically cater for the needs of people who have little previous exposure to Christianity, including *English and Bible*.
- Conduct study groups during the principal seasons of the church year that introduce people to an understanding of the major elements of Christianity.
- Consider proposals formulated by the community resource worker to establish an intercultural study group that will accommodate the particular needs of first-generation children/youth of Asian heritage.
- Explore the potential to deliver Special Religious Education classes in local schools.
- Continue to improve Asian cultural literacy of our congregation.
- At every opportunity acknowledge that the site occupied by the church premises is the traditional Country of the Wallumedegal people, and improve our understanding of indigenous culture, history, and spiritual connections through educational activities and partnering with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC).

### **Tend – Respond to human need by loving service.**

- Continue to operate informal intercultural leisure and sporting activities, gatherings, and chat groups on weekdays and evenings.
- Collaborate with Eastwood Christian Community Aid to deliver services to vulnerable groups within the Eastwood community for people of all backgrounds.
- Provide facilities for Eastwood Christian Community Aid to deliver Leisure Learning classes.
- Deliver English speaking classes.
- Examine proposals formulated by the community resource worker to establish an after-hours study hub which provides support facilities, tutoring, and mentoring for older students who need a support network.
- Continue activities that support Uniting World and Christmas Bowl.
- Examine proposals formulated by the community resource worker to establish a play group to specifically cater for children and parents/grandparents of Asian heritage.
- Support and facilitate the Pastoral Friends network.
- Examine options for people who speak an Asian language to provide pastoral care in local hospitals and seniors housing facilities.

### **Transform – Seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation.**

- Deliver regular training for Safe Church, working with children, ethical ministry for lay leaders and preachers and mental health issues guided by a church-appointed Safe Church Co-ordinator.
- Promote cross-cultural understanding through sharing in *culture night* events where students and families celebrate and learn about the diverse cultures of the Eastwood community.
- Establish a program to inform Church members and the wider community about Australia's indigenous heritage, the plight of Australia's first people especially regarding social justice, restitution, and reconciliation.
- Partner with rural congregations (including one UAICC) and swap ministry experiences, such as pulpit swap or a combined service.
- Actively express the diversity of the Eastwood congregation and its support for LGBITQA people.
- Create opportunities for Congregation members to understand the Uniting Churches' social justice ethos by participating in the activities of Uniting Church Action for Society and Environment.

## **Treasure – Strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth.**

- Minimise electricity consumption by continuing to generate electricity with photovoltaic panels.
- Manage the Lakeside Road property to maximise the advantages of the cross ventilation and passive solar design elements of the building complex.
- Apply for a grant to install photovoltaic panels and solar hot water systems at the manses to reduce electricity consumption.
- Avoid the need to water gardens by maintaining the existing drought tolerant plants.
- Reduce dependence on water supply by installing water tanks to capture stormwater when the manses are upgraded.
- Reduce the generation of carbon dioxide gases by replacing gas appliances.
- Be a responsible steward of all properties and facilities by ensuring that sufficient funds are retained in a sinking fund for the care and maintenance of land and buildings.
- Work with Uniting Climate Action Network to promote environmental care and action.

## **Theological framework**

Eastwood UC has sought to discern how God is calling it into the future, and how the Congregation might participate in shaping that future. The Congregation seeks to apply its capacity to be creative because creativity is a gift from God the creator.

In a rapidly-changing social context the Congregation affirms that what it presents is good news for people. It embraces its calling to be a community of welcome for all people, and proclaims the message of love, truth, justice, and reconciliation. The Congregation seeks to articulate a vision of what might yet be - the reign and realm of God more fully experienced.

Experience of the changing nature of the local community, combined with people's experience of migrating to Australia from many nations, resonates strongly with the transformative nature of God's work, and the new beginnings God offers in Jesus through the Holy Spirit. In this endeavour the congregation has been mindful of the wisdom contained in Proverbs 16:3-4 – "*Commit your work to the LORD and your plans will be established. The LORD has made everything for its purpose.*"

## **Purpose of the Ongoing Mission Plan**

It is important for us as a Christian community to periodically review who we are, where we have come from, and the progress we have made. Importantly we continually need to discern how best to move forward as we seek to be the people of God in Eastwood. This is imperative given the extent of change in the demographics of the local community.

This Mission Plan considers programs and activities in the context of our Mission, Vision and Values so that they can be understood, owned, and embodied in all that we do. This also places necessary resourcing and financial considerations in the right context. It represents a summary of where we are presently, and sets a foundation for moving forward from 2024. Moving forward it becomes an implementation and communication tool. The Plan will guide the decisions of the Church Council and Congregation. They will use it to inform Sydney Central Coast Presbytery and Synod about our mission goals, priorities, and projects. In this role it is an instrument for seeking support from other councils of the Uniting Church.

## **Section 1 Background and Context**

### **Historical Context**

The present Eastwood Uniting Church became a regional church through the amalgamation of three congregations in the Eastwood district, namely Lakeside Road, St Andrew's, and Denistone East congregations. Through a process of reform and rationalisation over two decades, activities were consolidated, and now operate from one site at Lakeside Road, close to the Eastwood commercial centre. Property sales enabled the upgrading of buildings and released funds to enable mission activities centred on

the site. This Mission Plan outlines the intention to build on the Congregations' past work and mission as it creates its future.

Eastwood Uniting Church currently has three worship services on its site every Sunday. The 9.30am service, which has a traditional style, is conducted in community languages, namely English, Mandarin, and Korean. A Korean language service is conducted immediately after at 11.00am. An interactive service at 8.00am is mostly lay-led and conducted in English.

During the week the Eastwood church building complex is used extensively by Eastwood Christian Community Aid as a low rent paying tenant. One long-term activity with the local community is English-speaking classes. Several other groups rent rooms for community activities.

### **Demographic context**

The national population census undertaken in 2021 provides some information regarding the demographic context for mission in Eastwood. This is augmented by the results of the National Church Life Survey also conducted in 2021. A community social profile supporting that report provides more detailed analysis.

#### Population census 2021

Data has been compiled for the locality of Eastwood. This postal district is divided between the City of Ryde and the City of Parramatta. Some caution has been applied to using data from the 2021 National Population Census because responses were obtained during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is illustrated by the proportion of the population aged between 18 and 34 recorded in the census. In the period from 2016 to 2021 the population of Eastwood increased by 802 people but the number of people aged 18-34 decreased by 772. The number of university aged people (18-24) fell by 28%. This reflects the consequences of COVID-19 on the number of overseas students studying at universities, principally Macquarie University.

As a result, 8.4% of the population was aged 18-24 compared to 8.8% for Greater Sydney. The 25-34 age group was 15.8% compared to 15.5% for the region. The census shows that the absence of students released more housing for people in the 35-49 age bracket because this cohort increased by 678 people. Overall, the age profile for Eastwood more closely resembled the age profile for Greater Sydney than it has in the past.

Acknowledging these shortcomings, the census reflected some distinguishing characteristics of Eastwood compared to Greater Sydney (shown in brackets). A majority of people, 59% (38.6%), were born overseas principally in China 26% (4.6%), South Korea 6.8% (1%), and Hong Kong 4.5% (0.9%). This is reflected in the use of language because 66% (37.4%) of residents speak a language other than English at home. The principal languages are Mandarin 28% (5%), Cantonese 14.5% (2.8%), and Korean 8.3% (1.1%). Together these figures show that the number of residents who speak an Asian language at home is greater than the number of people who were born overseas. This indicates that Australian born people of Asian heritage often speak the language of others in their household when at home.

People who speak only English, 30% (57%), are a minority in Eastwood. As half of the population is multilingual, 79% (88%) of residents speak English well or very well. The remaining 17% (8.2%) who do not speak English well would rely on one of the many languages used in the community. The intercultural and multilingual nature of Eastwood means it is possible for residents to participate in social and economic life even though they do not speak English. It also highlights the need to provide English language lessons.

A large proportion of Eastwood residents, 45.3% (30.5%) stated that they have no religious affiliation. Together the Christian denominations have a proportionally low count, 36.4% (45.8%) than other areas, particularly Roman Catholic and Anglican. In contrast, 408 people, 2.2% (1.5%), identified with the Uniting Church, which is a higher proportion than elsewhere. Nevertheless, this is less than Buddhism 6.6% (3.8%) and Hinduism 2.2% (1.5%). There is considerable scope for Eastwood Uniting Church to bring news of Jesus to more people given that almost half of the population has no religion.

### National Church Life Survey

In 2021, 87 people attending Eastwood Uniting Church participated in the National Church Life Survey. The demographic profile of the participants was consistent with the broader population of Sydney in terms of ethnicity and language. There was a higher proportion of females, people aged over 50 years, retired people, and people with a university degree. Despite the difficulties caused by COVID 39% of attenders were new arrivals in the previous 5 years.

In terms of mission planning, 87% of attenders agreed they are aware of the vision, direction, and goals of the Congregation, although 7% were not supportive. Nevertheless, 85% of attenders agree that the Congregation is always ready to try something new, and 85% agreed they would support any new initiatives in ministry and mission.

### Community Social Profile

More detailed demographic analysis was produced in support of the National Church Life Survey. This Community Social Profile enables a better understanding of the people who reside within 2 kilometres of Eastwood Uniting Church. Some key statements from the report regarding Eastwood residents are:

- The median age is 36 years compared to 38 years for all Australians. The most common age group is 25 to 29 years.
- Households are most likely to be a family household, most commonly a couple with no children.
- The percentage of families with children under 15 years has increased.
- There has been a large decrease in the percentage of single person households, and this is below a typical suburb.
- Most people were born overseas and speak a language other than English at home.
- There has been a large increase in the percentage of people born in a non-English speaking country

The largest cohort of people in the Eastwood district consists of people aged between 20 and 39 years who were born overseas, mostly in China and speak Mandarin, speak English well, and are well educated.

### **Initiation of the Ongoing Mission Plan**

In 2011 the Congregation initiated a significant mission planning project known as eVision. From this process our Mission, Vision and Values were determined. They have been critical for setting the direction for mission, and form the framework within which the Congregation's thinking and decisions continue to be made. They established the basis for successive revisions of the Mission Plan. The congregation fully participated in all aspects of the process, formulation of the mission plans, and support of the outcomes.

Previous periodic reviews of the Mission Plan were undertaken in 2014 and 2018. The latest review in 2024 examined the outcomes from implementation of the 2018 Mission Plan.

### **Implementation of the 2018 Mission Plan**

When Presbytery endorsed the 2018 Mission Plan there was considerable optimism for what would be achieved in the ensuing period. There was no portent of the challenges that would arise during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many aspects of the Mission Plan had to be temporarily halted or performed in different styles or formats, sometimes using new technology. Some elements continued to be pursued despite numerous constraints.

As a consequence, some aspects of the 2018 Mission Plan were successfully implemented. However, in relation to some other items there has been little or no success in achieving mission priorities when compared to the situation in 2018. Before considering future priorities, it is appropriate to appreciate the current situation by analysing implementation of the Mission Plan so that items which are no longer a priority can be identified, and items which remain a priority can be determined.

### Connection with people of Asian heritage

The 2018 Mission Plan envisaged continued strengthening of the connection with people of Asian heritage, especially with people from the Chinese-speaking community. This was expressed in the statement: *The highest priority in mission must be to the demographic with Asian heritage that now characterises the Eastwood centre and its surrounds. The initial goal is for Eastwood UC to have a strong missional connection with our Chinese-speaking community by 2020.*

Several separate statements outlined details of how this connection would be established, based around the concept of ‘gatherings.’ This concept proposed to build upon the successful establishment of several groups in the previous two years (e.g., Chinese Happy Friends Group). It was expected that by 2020 additional ‘gatherings’ would have emerged from connections and relationships formed with people both from within the existing Church community, and the wider community. While progress was being made towards this outcome the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic halted most activities.

Following the lifting of COVID restrictions the restoration of activities has become possible. The weekly/fortnightly ‘gatherings’ in June 2024 are:

- English language classes (Monday)
- Mainly Music (Tuesday)
- Community Chat (Tuesday)
- Women’s Bible Study (Wednesday)
- Table tennis (Thursday)
- Chinese language classes (Friday)
- English and Bible (Friday)

### Finances for mission

In the Mission Plan the Congregation acknowledged its responsibility to fund its ongoing mission work in Eastwood. Grants from several sources had been received to enable employment of a Chinese-speaking community resource worker from October 2016. The Mission Plan identified the need to expand this work and envisaged the employment of two additional resource workers who would make further connections. It identified “a need to appoint a person who can specifically connect with families with young children. The other significant gap is a connection with youth and young adults. This would include secondary and tertiary students.”

Funds for this initiative would come from the sale of the Denistone East church site which had become surplus. Eastwood Methodist Church planted a congregation at Denistone East in 1953 as a mission initiative. Between 1950 and 1962 land was purchased and a church, hall, and manse were constructed. Needs had changed by 2018 and the sale of the property released funds for new mission priorities.

Again COVID-19 complicated and delayed the process of rezoning, subdividing, and selling the site. After the site was sold the commitments in the Mission Plan were satisfied through the distribution of proceeds to Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress, NSW Synod Growth Fund, and Uniting World’s PNG water project. Surplus funds of approximately \$2 million were deposited in sales proceeds account from which Non-Real Estate Mission Activity (NREMA) grants could be made to support implementation of the Mission Plan.

To regain momentum for outreach and mission after the COVID 19 pandemic, NREMA grant 21.05N was obtained in November 2021. The purpose of the grant was to fund a Community Catalyst Minister who would initially identify opportunities to engage with groups of people currently not within the church community. Existing relationships with the broader community would then be extended to build relationships with new groups, principally the large proportion of the local community with Asian heritage, including tertiary students. Volunteers are continuing this work following the conclusion of the Community Catalyst Minister placement.



The expectation in the grant that progress would be made towards financial sustainability proved to be naïve and unwelcome. Such expectations are founded on a culturally inappropriate appreciation of how people from different cultures participate in community activities. When people not currently within the church community become engaged, they usually have little understanding of how a church operates. From their initial perspective, the church is an open, welcoming, and ‘free’ organisation. Churches are perceived to be benevolent organisations which have access to ample resources. These people do not anticipate that their engagement may require a financial commitment, either initially or in the future. As a consequence, financial sustainability can only be a long-term aspiration. The ambition for engaging with groups of people not currently within the church requires long term and sustained financial support.

## **Section 2 Mission, Vision & Values**

### **OUR MISSION**

*To witness to the Gospel, spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ in word and action*

### **OUR VISION**

*To engage and connect with our diverse community through active discipleship*

### **OUR VALUES**

*Visible*

*Inclusive*

*Relevant*

*Active*

### **Ten areas of focus emerged from the initial eVision process:**

Worship

- current
- alternative

Pastoral care

Christian Education

Communication

Multicultural nature of our community

- Chinese
- Korean

Youth

Seniors ministry

Macquarie Park outreach

Big Project in the community

Life Transitions

A number of these areas were examined in detail and various activities commenced. As was expected some initiatives thrived and continued, some had initial success, and some did not ‘take root.’ The initiatives that ‘worked’ show certain characteristics, in that they

- meet a need
- have committed leadership groups
- have congregational involvement, and
- have good perseverance and follow through.

Over the past decade it has been found that motivated leadership and adequate resourcing are critical to effectiveness and success. When leadership and resources are limited, there is a need to focus attention on the areas most likely to succeed. This means every need cannot be satisfied. To be effective, mission will be directed towards areas considered to have the greatest potential for successful outcomes.

## **Section 3 The Way Forward**

Several criteria have been applied when determining priorities for future mission activities. They are:

**GROW      Developing and strengthening our current activities**

- Worship
- Communication
- Faith development

**CONNECT      Understanding and meeting the needs of demographic groups inside and outside the church**

- Families
- Youth
- Elderly

**REACH      Developing connections in the community**

- Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of the community
- Developing a presence outside the Church building

### **Mission in the Eastwood District**

While ministry within our existing congregation remains strong, this congregation is changing. The future of Eastwood Uniting Church is dependent on its ability to better represent the community within which it is located. This community is multicultural, with a steadily increasing proportion of people with Asian heritage (principally Chinese and Korean). For many years the Congregation has recognised the need to connect with and build relationships with its community. This strategy has been implemented over the past eight years through the efforts of volunteers, assisted by the outreach activities of the Community Catalyst Minister.

Our experience has been that the wider Uniting Church is itself grappling with this area of ministry and mission. The Congregation has pursued its direction in collaboration with other councils of the Uniting Church. It firstly directed resources towards connecting with people who attended activities at the church, principally English Language classes. Many of these people were of Chinese heritage, the largest demographic group. These connections enabled further links with the broader community.

The goal is to now extend the network. Volunteers will continue their excellent work within existing groups. The next step is to connect with the largest age cohort; multilingual youth and young adults of Asian heritage including young families.

It is recognised that other congregations and presbyteries have concentrated on serving people of Korean heritage. Eastwood Uniting Church will not ignore or neglect the Korean people of Eastwood which is the second largest demographic of people with Asian heritage. Having a Minister of the Word and a Minister-in-Association with Korean heritage facilitates connections with the Korean community. Given this currently advantageous position, maintaining and strengthening connections with people of Korean heritage remains a high priority.

An uncomfortable but significant issue in the context of Eastwood is the nature and theology of the Uniting Church. Whether or not the characterisation is justified, there are perceptions that the Uniting Church is liberal and socially progressive. Often these descriptions come from those of a conservative persuasion. Rather than this being a negative characterisation, the Congregation believes these are qualities which can distinguish Eastwood Uniting Church from other Christian denominations.

Younger people are generally less conservative and more likely to embrace progressive perspectives. This applies equally to young people of Asian heritage. Given that the largest segment of the Eastwood population consists of younger people with Asian heritage this is the cohort with which Eastwood Uniting

Church has the greatest potential to engage. This has been an aspiration for many years but a position has been reached where this must be the priority.

**The highest priority in mission must be to the demographic with Asian heritage that characterises the Eastwood centre and its surrounds. The initial goal is for Eastwood Uniting Church to have a strong missional connection with multilingual young adults of Chinese and Korean heritage by 2029.**

In order to achieve this goal for mission we believe it is imperative

- to establish a group of multilingual outreach/mission workers who will be a part of the Eastwood Uniting Church Mission and Ministry Team.
- to develop an integrated mission team that will create a chain of support from within the broader Eastwood community into the Uniting Church community.
- to resource, encourage, and support the volunteers who continue the outreach activities established under the 2018-2023 mission plan.
- to review all aspects of Congregation life, including Sunday services, with the goal of becoming relevant, approachable, and capable of being comprehended by young adults and people with no previous exposure to Christianity.
- that the wider Uniting Church (Assembly, Synod, and Presbytery) affirms the potential for pioneering intercultural mission and ministry, and recognises this as a key mission area not just for Eastwood but for the wider church.
- to initiate the process for Eastwood Uniting Church to develop as a place for training other workers for intercultural ministry by becoming a successful model of intercultural mission.

In line with pioneering experiences, an emphasis will be placed upon ‘gatherings,’ which may include, but are not limited to, worshipping communities. An important role of resource workers will be able to identify the needs of people with whom they connect. They will create ‘gatherings’ which respond to needs and not be moulded by preconceived concepts. It is expected that within 12 months of initiating the next stage of the mission plan, ‘gatherings’ will have emerged from connections and relationships formed with people both from within the existing Church community.

### **Relationship with local community**

It is recognised that the COVID-19 pandemic severely disrupted the outreach projects with the local community. Nevertheless, community-based events, English language classes, and Leisure Learning have returned. Networking with the people who attend has focused on the needs of primarily older, non-English-speaking people. Volunteers will maintain these connections as new relationships are forged.

The shift in focus can be perceived in some practical changes. These factors will be significant in terms of defining and describing the resource workers for the next phase of mission. In summary, there is a shift to:

- a younger cohort rather than older people
- multilingual people rather than non-English speakers
- evening and weekend activities rather than weekday activities
- tertiary students in formal education rather than people undertaking informal education or leisure learning

While there is wisdom in not being prescriptive about the nature of future ‘gatherings’ at this stage, there are several areas to explore. These areas relate to:

- education, study, tutoring, and mentoring
- indoor sports and leisure activities, such as table tennis, badminton, and chess
- establishing connections between people who are experiencing similar challenges
- contemporary music
- learning how public administration operates in Australia
- Australian ‘culture’ and history

## **Relationships within the City of Ryde Zone and Sydney Central Coast Presbytery**

The Eastwood mission plan is to foster connections and networks with other congregations and agencies within the Ryde Zone and Presbytery, as the Uniting Church develops models of ministry and mission with people from diverse cultural backgrounds, and especially people of Asian heritage. The goal is to learn from the experiences of others while sharing with others the lessons learned from our experiences.

## **Section 4 Future support for the wider work of the Uniting Church**

### **Indigenous Heritage**

The Wallumuttegale clan are the traditional Darug-speaking people of this area. For countless generations they cared for and nurtured this Country of which they are part, as the Country cared for and served them. They understood the spiritual nature of Country and exercised their spiritual connection with this place. Before the arrival of Europeans indigenous people acknowledged the creator, told sacred stories, and fostered faithfulness in the creator.

Eastwood Uniting Church acknowledges the spiritual connection of the Wallumuttegale people with this Country – its land, waterways, fauna, flora, and its communities. It recognises that the land for which it has stewardship is now and always will be Aboriginal land and that Aboriginal people have never surrendered their claim of custodianship of this land. Our Congregation has inherited land that was stolen.

It is our desire to work in solidarity with the Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress for the advancement of God's kingdom of justice and righteousness in our country. In partnership with our indigenous brothers and sisters, and as a symbolic acknowledgement of the history of this land. As part of our multi-racial bond of fellowship, Eastwood Uniting Church will continue its activities to increase awareness of aboriginal and islander heritage and culture within our local community.

### **Support for the mission of the Uniting Church (Synod of NSW ACT)**

In the past Eastwood Uniting Church has generously supported the work of the Uniting Church Synod through *Living is Giving* in excess of the level of funding suggested by Synod. The congregation will continue to make an annual contribution to the work of Synod. Additionally, the congregation financially supported the Synod's decision to establish a Growth Fund to resource initiatives 'to help support mission opportunities that will breathe new life into our communities.' The Eastwood congregation acknowledged that it has been greatly blessed and in order to support this work a distribution of \$200,000 was made to the Growth Fund from the proceeds of sale of the Denistone East property.

## **Section 5 Support for mission in Eastwood**

### **Resources needed**

Careful and prayerful use of our people, property and financial resources as we move forward is critical, and we recognise that we need to be good stewards, utilising the resources God gives us to grow the kingdom of God. While we can and will continue our existing mission activities within our existing resources, our vision for the future mission of Eastwood Uniting Church requires additional expenditure that cannot be funded from current finances. There is a need to continue using sources of funding external to the weekly offerings from the existing congregation.

### **People:**

We need a team of people with diverse skills that can provide a range of ministry and pastoral services. The people required for this team will be:

- A Minister of the Word who will be the leader of the ministry team. This is a full-time position.
- Ministers-in-Association and volunteers engaged in mission
- Office staff to provide 50 hours per week of administrative support for the ministry team, mission volunteers and the congregation

- A resource worker for 20 hours per week who can institute and direct ‘gatherings’ to cater for people in the first third of life, especially young families and/or young adults of Asian background
- An outreach worker for 20 hours per week who can focus on creating connections with people in the first third of life, especially young families and/or young adults of Asian background.
- A part-time outreach worker who can focus on establishing connections between students at Macquarie University and young adult programs and gatherings conducted at Eastwood Uniting Church.

It is anticipated that there will be several phases in the recruitment and building of this team. The outreach workers will not begin their work until the core activities at Eastwood Uniting Church to cater for young families and/or young adults of Asian background have been initiated. The mission activities of the outreach worker for students at Macquarie University will be the last phase because this work will extend and build upon the achievements of the other workers.

#### Succession planning:

One aspect that has been noted about ministry and mission with some Asian groups is a focus on a key leader. Many congregations are minister-centric, which means that there needs to be an intentional succession-planning as part of the mission plan.

Eastwood UC’s intention to have multiple resource workers seeks to ensure that, if one resource worker leaves, the entire missional work is not compromised. To strengthen the mission plan’s effectiveness, it is proposed that each resource worker will disciple an associate both to ‘future-proof’, as best as possible, Eastwood’s missional objectives, and also to be available to partner with other areas of the Uniting Church.

#### Property:

The properties required for the next decade are:

- Worship spaces at the Lakeside Road site for different forms of worship services.
- A manse to provide accommodation for a Minister of the Word. The manse must at least satisfy the minimum standard for accommodation required by Synod.
- Halls and meeting rooms for a variety of community outreach activities, other gatherings, mission programs, service delivery, and alternative forms of worship.
- A house that will be available to accommodate a second ordained person should the need arise. At that time the house would need to satisfy the minimum standard for accommodating a Minister of the Word.

Under these circumstances the manse at 16 Vera Street Eastwood will be retained. At present it does not meet the minimum standard for accommodating an ordained person, and is privately rented. Major upgrading of this house will be required in the future. Funds for this purpose are being accumulated by depositing the net income from rents into a reserve fund for property projects. The goal is to increase the Property Reserve Fund to \$200,000 over the term of this mission plan.

#### **Anticipated expenditure to support mission in Eastwood**

Funds will be required to support the expanded mission activities of Eastwood Uniting Church. These funds are required to employ staff, maintain properties, and provide materials to support mission in the Eastwood district. Collections declined during the COVID-19 pandemic but this was offset by government financial support. Since then, rationalisation of the use of halls and meeting rooms has released more areas for mission activities while rental income has increased.

For many years the Congregation has provided significant practical support for community outreach to groups such as Eastwood Christian Community Aid. It is expected that this support will continue. The sources for funds to implement the initiatives in this Mission Plan have been identified. The investment income on the funds held in the Eastwood Uniting Church Sales Proceeds account will be directed to supporting the Eastwood mission. Funds to enable the employment of 2 part-time workers will amount to

approximately \$100,000 each year for 3 years, 2025-2027. The level of funding for the period beyond 2027 will be determined according to the results achieved in the initial 3 years period.

Extending the mission work of Eastwood Uniting Church into the sphere of Macquarie University is considered an area of growth for the Uniting Church. The position is not intended to be a chaplain who focuses on activities on the University campus. The purpose of the outreach worker is to establish connections between University students and young adult programs and gatherings conducted at Eastwood Uniting Church. This is an area of growth for the Uniting Church which is beyond the financial capacity of the Congregation. It is considered that the NSW Synod should finance this position. An application for a Synod Growth Fund grant will be submitted after the initial phases of the Mission Plan are implemented.

### **External support for mission**

To ensure this Mission Plan succeeds we need:

- the recognition and support of the wider Uniting Church for this mission
- the support of Sydney Central Coast Presbytery to access a Non-Real Estate Mission Activity grant.
- financial support for the outreach work at Macquarie University by way of a grant from the Synod Growth Fund.

### **How will we monitor and review our progress?**

The success of this Mission Plan will be measured by the number of people reached during the implementation of the mission projects. To be successful in achieving long term relationships between Eastwood Uniting Church and members of the community it is accepted that only a portion of the total number of people reached will establish a longer-term relationship. Monitoring implementation of the projects will measure the number of people reached infrequently and those people with whom a more regular relationship is established.

The outcomes from the work of the mission workers will be monitored by a committee established by Sydney Central Coast Presbytery. Six-monthly progress reports will be provided to the Church Council, with an annual report to the Congregation and Presbytery.

### **Conclusion**

This Mission Plan proposes a way forward for Eastwood Uniting Church in 2025 and beyond. It requires continuation of the ministry, mission and structures that have been put in place over the last decade. It proposes the need for a renewed focus on mission and ministry with members the Eastwood community of Asian heritage. To pursue this goal, it proposes the employment of resource workers who will join an enlarged ministry team.

As the Uniting Church community in Eastwood, we will together continue to strive to be a loving, unified, prayerful, worshipping, Spirit-led community that teaches and applies God's word in truthful, relevant and engaging ways!