

## Mission Facilitator, Next Steps Update from Leadership Council to Rockingham Mandurah Lutheran Church inc. (RMLC Inc)

August 2021

### Background

RMLC Inc voted in 2020 to employ Matt Schubert as a Mission Facilitator and Church planter. Matt has been working towards planting a church by forming Missional Communities, surveying the current membership, explaining the process via video clips at services and in person.

The planted church will require word and sacrament to be provided. To enable Matt to deliver word and sacrament the Leadership Council is following the Lutheran Church of Australia's (LCA) process to deliver word and sacrament via the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) process. It enables a person, such as Matt who has studied at other theological institutions, to plant a church without having completed the traditional LCA 6-year pastor training in Adelaide at the Australian Lutheran College. The SMP process requires further supervised study with the Australian Lutheran College.

Two missional communities, one in Rockingham and one in Mandurah have been formed. Most members of these missional communities will combine to form a church planting team, preparing to plant a church in the growing suburbs midway between Rockingham and Mandurah.

The next key steps in the Church Planting Process are:

- 1) Leadership Council will apply for Matt Schubert to join the SMP program. *(Update: On 18-19<sup>th</sup> August the College of Bishops supported RMLC's application and Matt has been formerly admitted into the Specific Ministry Pastor program.)*
- 2) The RMLC Inc church will commission the Church Planting Team at a combined service on Sunday the 31/10/2021 at Warnbro. The intent of the service is to:
  - a. symbolically remove any duties and commitments that they have to RMLC Inc to free them to concentrate on the Church Plant.
  - b. Bless the team and show our support for them as they step out in faith to share Jesus with others.
- 3) The team will begin to meet together for home worship, with special attention given to equipping team members to disciple others. The regularity of public worship will take shape depending on when the SMP application is approved, the progress of the church plant team, and the way that the broader fellowship is developing.
- 4) When Matt has progressed through the SMP program and is ordained as an SMP, then RMLC Inc will officially call him to the Church Plant as a Pastor. How soon this occurs is at the discretion of Bishop Mike Fulwood, but may be in 2022 or 2023.

RMLC Inc Leadership Council

Chairperson

Secretary

# Frequently Asked Questions

## RMLC's goal to plant a new church

*Prepared for the members of Rockingham Mandurah Lutheran Church, to encourage prayer, unity, and understanding. Bring further questions to a Leadership Council member or Matt Schubert.*

### **Why are we church planting?**

We're planting a church in order to make new disciples. It's a key way we fulfil the Great Commission (Mt. 28:16-20). In a typical established church, 6% of the congregation were previously unchurched or dechurched (in the last 5 years). This number climbs to 33% in new church plants. New churches reach different kinds of people.

### **When did Rockingham Mandurah Lutheran Church begin our church planting journey?**

Up to six years ago. We first received training in relational evangelism when Dean Eaton visited in 2015, and these workshops continued until 2017. Around 2018, Matt Schubert felt a stirring to become a church planter. In 2019, RMLC got a bit more specific and asked the LCA's New and Renewing Churches department to lead us in 3 workshops throughout the year on the implications of church planting. In November 2019, RMLC formerly voted to become a Sending Church, making focused efforts to plant a new congregation. Midway through 2020, RMLC called and employed Matt Schubert as a Church Planter & Mission Facilitator to catalyse this effort.

### **What kind of church planting model are we using?**

We're using a mother-daughter model of church planting, also known as a sending church model. This means a mother church sends a daughter — the daughter is distinct, has her own name, charts her own course (vision), but requires support in her early years of leaving home. There continues to be a family-like relationship for mutual help and encouragement. The daughter will grow up and have her own kids in the future (plant another church).

### **When will this church planting team be sent?**

This team will be commissioned at a special combined worship service on the 31st October. After this time, those who are sent won't be expected to attend or serve at the Chapel or Lions Hall services. This team will enter 4 months of team training, building on the Missional Community training many will have already received. The goal is to ensure a healthy Gospel-centred foundation is laid for this new church. This training will be conducted at small worship services alongside Word and Sacrament, led by Matt Schubert at his and Becca's new home in Golden Bay. This is known as a soft-launch.

### **How many will be on this church planting team?**

We estimate 12-15 people, drawn from each of our worship sites, and hopefully some coming externally. This is smaller than some church planting teams (and bigger than some), but we think it's in proportion with the size of our total membership.

### **Who will be sent as part of this planting team?**

A number of people are still in a discernment process as Matt meets with them. Hopefully this group will firm up so that by mid-September we can communicate who is being sent. It's important to remember that these people aren't 'leaving' our church, but are answering a call to step out and serve God in a new context. We will continue to be family in Christ.

### **What will happen to RMLC rosters?**

The current rosters will continue until 31st October. From then on, those individuals or families that are involved in the church plant will be removed from ongoing responsibilities. Leadership Council believes that it's vital to release these people to serve God's Kingdom in this new way. To allow this to happen, extra commitment may be asked of remaining church members, or better yet could you put up your hand? By stepping up in this way, you're partnering with this church planting effort in a real way. Sending a church planting team is an opportunity for the mother church to grow, but this growth isn't automatic.<sup>1</sup> For every person RMLC sends, let's pray God will bring another to our fellowship. If, however, the current rosters become too burdensome for our numbers, Pastor Steve and Leadership Council will adjust duties to suit, changing the design of services if that's what's required.

### **Will this be a completely new church, or just another worship site?**

As Lutherans we believe that a church is a community of people gathered around the Word and the Sacraments. Because this community will have a distinct worship life and its own pastor (i.e. the position who serves with Word and Sacrament), what we're forming is theologically a *new church*. However, so that RMLC can support this new church in the with governance, bookkeeping, copyrighting, and ChildSafe procedures, this church will constitutionally sit as a worship site within RMLC for the medium term. Nevertheless, because we desire this church to become self-governing and self-supporting as it matures, even now *we will speak about it as a new church*.

### **What about finances?**

The RMLC Leadership Council will carefully monitor how sending a planting team affects RMLC's finances. A separate account to support Matt's position has existed for quite some time now and we're so grateful for the generous donations that have been made, both from within our congregation and from afar.<sup>2</sup> Another separate account will be made to keep track of the church plant's general expenses and offerings. The Leadership Council is currently considering what the relationship will be between this account and RMLC's general funds. A budget for the new church is being formed and Matt and the RMLC Leadership Council will work together closely to ensure good stewardship. The church plant's funds will sit under RMLC's books until they're self-governing, and neither Matt nor anyone on his team will have direct access to the funds. The new church will be financially sustainable, but experience from other church plants indicates that this could be five years away.<sup>3</sup>

### **When will the first public worship happen?**

We know that Word and Sacrament are the life-blood of the church, but this new church will not be Sunday-centric. This means that we won't be pouring all our efforts into conducting great church services. We want to be disciples of Jesus in the everyday stuff of

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<sup>1</sup> It requires all of us to embrace a big vision of God's church and our place in it – first and foremost in prayer. In prayer, we ask God to save others and bring them into our fellowship. We also cultivate a heart to serve God's church and the broader world, whether that be rosters, ministry roles, or at-home hospitality.

<sup>2</sup> We're particularly grateful for Hope Lutheran Church (Geraldton) who have made a three-year financial commitment.

<sup>3</sup> For example, LCA church plant Beyond Church in Queensland was planted in 2015 and is still being supported from outside the congregation.

life, and the pace we move towards *public* worship will be determined by how the community of faith is growing and maturing. A public launch *will* happen, but God can do great things during the days of smallness and intimacy.

### **So, who will pastor this new church?**

Even if this new church has a number of leaders, a church still needs someone called by God and by the congregation to teach and to administer the sacraments. Recently, the RMLC Leadership Council requested that Matt be admitted to the Specific Ministry Pastor program of the LCA. On the 18-19<sup>th</sup> August, the College of Bishops supported this application. Bishop Mike Fulwood will now work with Matt to test his call and to offer support and training towards ordination.<sup>4</sup> RMLC has already called Matt as a Mission Facilitator & Church Planter (2020), but in due time RMLC will have the option to call Matt to serve this new church as its pastor. Until then, Bishop Mike will work with us to ensure the new church plant is not left without Word and Sacrament ministry.

### **What will this new church look like?**

As a Lutheran Church, it will have the key elements a church needs – preaching of Law and Gospel, Baptism of young and old, Holy Communion, confession and absolution, other helpful creeds and prayers on occasion, and a pastor to shepherd the church with these things. The worship service will be a time of equipping and grace-giving, laid out relationally around tables with food and drink. There will be formal times in the services (i.e. preaching, singing, Communion) but there will also be less formal times during the services, of prayer, sharing about our week, and meeting new people.<sup>5</sup> Yet most discipleship will happen outside of the worship service, in the everyday stuff of life. We will use groups like Clusters and Missional Communities to keep us cared for and focused on mission. We'll endeavour that everyone can articulate the Gospel and has an understanding of their missional calling, whether that be their walking group, basketball team, prison ministry, or their kids school etc.

### **What will success look like?**

On the one hand, if this church hears the Word and celebrates the Sacraments, we've already won. But on the other hand, what is this church trying to become? We don't think this new church will ever become a megachurch. And it may never be able to afford its own building. For us, the goal will be multiplication rather than addition. The multiplication of leaders, missional communities, and even churches. We believe that planting small churches in every suburb just might change the whole city.<sup>6</sup>

### **What will the new church's name be?**

In the coming weeks we'll have a grand reveal of the church's name. It will reflect the church plant's vision of Jesus bringing long-lasting hope to everyday people and everyday life.

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<sup>4</sup> Matt holds a Bachelor of Ministry (Pastoral) from Perth Bible College and is currently completing a Master of Theology with Australian Lutheran College.

<sup>5</sup> A little bit like how a birthday party has a lot of flexible time, but also formal times of cake, speeches and singing happy birthday. Both flexible and formal times are important.

<sup>6</sup> These churches may be served by volunteer or part-time pastors, but that's a conversation for another time.