

Blackwood Uniting Church

Annual General Meeting November 17, 2013

Attendance: 86 – See attendance sheets

Apologies: 16 – See attendance sheets

The meeting was opened at 11am by Wendy Norris as the Chair of the Congregation. Minutes were by Dave Smith as the Secretary of the Congregation.

Wendy opened the meeting by reading the safe place followed by prayer.

Wendy asked for the attendance sheets and explained the consensus voting method.

Nominated scrutineers were Jane and Phil Marlow.

Minutes of the previous meeting was accepted with nothing to add or clarify.

There was no business arising.

Outreach Minister's report

This was delivered by Coral Smith.

The Emerging Church. It comes from where we are today and goes into the future where we take it.

We are starting from a structural base of Messy Church, Friday night Meals, the Young Adult Group and similar activities. The question we need to discuss and develop is "where are we taking Blackwood"?

See the tabled report for more details.

Wendy thanked Coral on behalf of the congregation.

Minister of the Word's report

Phil Hoffmann led us in considering a strategic plan for Blackwood Uniting Church in 2014.

Starting from our current strengths and activities Phil discussed our current social capital and ways to build from that.

Caroline Kitto's review of Blackwood in July 2012 highlighted some of our strengths:

- The number of families with children connected to us
- Our varied and active worship
- The availability and flexibility of our property
- The communications and connections we have with the community around us
- Our Inter-church activities

In his time with us Dean Eland also made some observations about the strengths of this community:

- Our strong sense and focus on justice
- The way we care for others
- The community learning and Service team
- Our focus on celebrating and learning
- The focus on community learning and service

From this strong base Phil proposed to work towards 5 points in the coming year:

- A revitalised Eldership while maintaining worship and care
- Families and children
- A review of the Community Program

- Building the Future Church

One of Phil's comments on wider community involvement was around the number of people we get to our special and one off programs such as the Service of Lament. This is something we should consider as part of our strategic direction.

Carys raised the question about providing take home resources to new people and families. Perhaps by providing a gift to new children. Carys to offer examples at a future time.

Phil proposed to renew Elders and their function in the life of the Blackwood Uniting Church community. Currently their main role is oversight but separated from the Church Council. Their role encompasses but is not limited to pastoral care. The discussion raised three significant points around the role of Elder at Blackwood.

- Who do we relate to
- What is the cement that holds the Blackwood mosaic together (a reference to a picture from Caroline Kitto's review showing the many different and separate groups and aspects of or community life)
- Eldership works best when we elect people who are already performing this work.

Currently we have 5 Elders, 3 will continue and 2 will leave. Phil proposed that we elect 5 new elders. The list of proposed names was circulated and in the ensuing discussion it was found that Joy Boase thought she was an Elder but was not on the current list by the Church Council. This was considered an oversight as in the past roles and numbers were often not clear. Joy was asked if she wanted to continue. Her name was added to make a sixth name for voting.

Marnie raised the point that in the Presbyterian Church (the background of some of our members) you are ordained as an Elder and not elected on a regular basis.

Further discussion occurred around how the Elders were to be reinvigorated and the length of service (this is to be nominated by the Elder and is expected to be from one to five years).

Proposed as Elders

Jan Wiseman, Marnie Agnew, Wendy Norris, Robert Corbett, Bev Eccleston and Joy Boase were proposed as Elders. The proposed Elders were voted on, the votes scrutinised and all were accepted by the congregation with a unanimous vote.

With no further questions Phil was thanked by Wendy for his work and enthusiasm.

Church Council Report

The Church Council's report was delivered by Ian Penny.

Ian opened by discussing the ministerial appointments over the last year. He thanked Phil for the work he had done since his arrival and the importance to the community.

Ian also thanked Cogs for the extra work she had put in this year as well as the range of tasks she had undertaken. He reminded the congregation that she is doing more than the 0.5 she is paid for.

The Church Council thanked Riki Owens-Bennett for the work she had done with the community program in spite of her health related issues.

Ian started the discussion on proposed guidelines for monetary appeals within Blackwood by stating that the congregation had donated \$1,156 for disaster relief in the Philippines this morning and that there would be another collection next week.

Official Appeals:

- Planned Collections in line with the BUC Mission Budget
- Official appeals from the Uniting church, both Ste and Federal

- Disaster appeals

Once off requests:

- Requests from other churches
- Incident request from individuals

This is outlined in more detail in the tabled report. It was decided by unanimous vote that the Justice Committee would own the official list of appeals and publish it early in the year.

Questions raised:

Who determines if money is to be spent?

A minimum of 3 Church Council members.

Where does the Helen Lee Trust fit in?

It is a separate Trust with separate officers and does not fit in this appeals model.

Have you considered a discretionary limit on individuals in Once Off Requests by individuals (see part B of the guidelines)?

Considered but up to Council given the rigor these are considered with.

Would the Helen Lee Trust fund administrators like to use these guidelines for requests?

Not at this stage but are open to the suggestion. The implications of this will need to be considered with the Church Council. It was noted by Adrian that the Trustees must operate the money. They can ask advice but are still responsible. This is not to be added to the proposed guidelines at this stage.

It was proposed that a monetary ceiling be set if one or two people were to make a financial decision. After discussion it was decided to set the ceiling at \$200 and this is to be set up by the Church Council.

Marnie noted the amount of time being spent by Blackwood ministers on Synod activities and asked the Church Council to talk to Synod to minimise this. Cogs responded that the synod work she is involved in is not salaried time but comes from her private time. In effect this is her hobby as well as her job.

There were no further questions for the Church Council or their report.

Wendy thanked the Church Council for their work and energy.

See attached Congregational meeting report for more details.

Finance Report

See Tabled report from Phil Megaw.

See also the Budget Power Point in Appendix 2.

Ray Brown went on to discuss the giving program especially around the eGive program. The incentive is that Blackwood will get a donation of \$20 for each new person subscribing or \$20 for each person increasing their giving by \$5 or more.

It was recommended that we accept the proposed Mission Budget. Agreed unanimously.

There were no further questions for the Finance Committee.

Wendy thanked the Finance Committee for their work and diligence.

Other Business

Proposal to Synod to reconsider their proposal to cut funding to International Mission.

Proposed: While appreciating our Synod's need to reduce deficits, this congregation deplores the proposed halving of funding for International Mission. We believe this should be the last area of outreach the church should cut and urge the Standing Committee to review the proposal.

Proposed by Ian Penny. This was discussed and agreed to by the congregation. The secretary was tasked with writing to the Synod in response to this. The letter was written and sent on December 15, 2013. See Appendix 3.

Tabled Reports

See below for the tabled reports. No questions from the congregation on any report received.

Next meeting on May 3rd, 2014.

The meeting was closed in prayer at 12:00.

Dave Smith

Secretary to the Congregation.