



Blackwood Uniting Church

the church on the roundabout

Blackwood Uniting Church is called by God to be an inclusive Christian community committed to justice, learning, service and care.

Church Council Report to the Half Yearly Congregational Meeting May 2014

It is with pleasure that I submit the half yearly report of the Church Council.

Our Ministers

I wish to pay tribute to both our ministers for their ongoing support for the work of this church without which the Council's role would be most difficult. **The Rev Phil Hoffmann** who has continued to engage us in thinking about the future direction of this church and the wider church and as is evident from this meeting is continuing to do so. His leadership has been challenging as he has grown in knowledge about what happens or could happen in this place. I personally have valued the way he has steadily worked to tackle the issues and challenges we face and not allow the grass to grow under his feet. The leadership he provides through worship has also been welcome. engaging us with his insights into the biblical stories and messages through his knowledge of the Middle East, especially the Holy Lands and for making worship alive and interesting through the resources he uses and tinged with his entertaining humour. Phil has shown significant leadership in revitalizing the role of Elders which is continuing as we grow further in our roles and new insights into this ministry. He has also gathered the leaders of the various Cluster Groups together to ascertain how they operate and who they represent which has enabled both he and The Rev Coral Smith to direct newcomers to the appropriate groups.

The Rev Coral Smith (Cogs) has had to exercise even stronger leadership over the Community Program following the Rev Dean Eland's review in the latter months of 2013 as a consequence of the need to revitalise the program and to pick up the short fall from a cut to Riki's time. She together with Phil is furthering their understanding of the role that the Community Program could play in the Blackwood Community and to further enhance the outreach of this church. We expect that later in the year they will lead the Council in thinking about new directions for this program which I expect will further challenge us as our church redirects its role more firmly into the 21 Century.

Cogs has and is working strongly to support the Church's Family Ministry with her strong and talented band of workers. The achievements in this area are pleasing but will grow further as we grasp the future directions for us at Blackwood. Thanks Cogs for your ongoing work for the church which hasn't been easy for you especially with a knee operation and recovery during January and February.

Other Achievements of the Council

Since the Annual Meeting of the Meeting of the Congregation the usual busy-ness of the work of Council has consumed its time and energy.

- **The Community Program**

The Eland Review threw up many issues to address in the current program to help streamline efficiencies and to build the program via advertising and ensuring minimum numbers to maintain the viability of courses. The need to address short term financial economies saw the reduction in the Coordinator's hours and hence modifications to the job duties. The need to look into the future of the program however, was of paramount importance which has become the goal of both ministers and the Community Program Management Committee. This is ongoing as mentioned above and will result in more analysis later in the year. The council is regularly monitoring the operation of the program.

- **Belair Request for Their Share of the Value of the Manse**

The Belair Congregation who, through past associations with Blackwood, Upper Sturt and Eden Hills, have a share in the value of the Manse and wish to realise their share in cash. Discussions have been on going to determine the monetary value of the manse and the value of the various churches share of this. The percentage of each church's share was laid down originally based on the size of the relative congregations. This discussion is continuing and as we are in a unique situation with so many churches being part of the arrangement the Synod has been asked to assist in the ongoing determination. We hope to resolve this as quickly as possible.

- **Church of Christ and Blackwood Discussions**

Regular meetings have been held with representatives from the Church of Christ. The meetings have resulted in last Christmas joint services and the joint Palm Sunday celebration .The Palm Sunday event was an outstanding success with an estimated 250 people attending. We are organising a joint concert to support the work of Beacon on Saturday 26 July where we propose to have a soup, dessert and coffee evening with entertainment. Later in the year we will plan joint Christmas events together. Our association with the Church of Christ is proceeding positively and it is important that we maintain this and other regular events to build strong relationships. A joint Easter Camp at Goolwa is proposed for 2015.

- **The Rev Phil Hoffmann 6 month Review**

Two Council representatives on behalf of Council conducted a short review and feedback on The Rev Phil's first 6 months which gave him very positive feedback. It is important that we give both our minister's regular feedback to ensure they feel the support of the Church so that we continue to work together positively and strongly to further God's work in this place.

- **Elders and Council Roles**

The Council and Elders have reviewed their roles which has resulted in the understanding the Elders are not required to attend Council meetings unless they wish or are requested to do so to discuss issues which pertain to their role.

This has resulted in Council Meetings during 2014 comprising up to 9 members including convenors plus our two Ministers of the Word totalling 11 possible members. Of the elders, two have elected to attend regularly and two when they are able. An Executive of the Chair, Secretary, Finance convenor plus our two Ministers of the Word meet to ensure the work of Council continues in the off month.

- **Finances of the Church**

We congratulate members of the Finance Committee for their work in advising the Council on our finances. Special mention must go to Phil Megaw and from time to time Ray Bown who have enabled us to have a clear picture of our finances. The various cost over runs we are experiencing are an ongoing challenge which can only be addressed by making efficiencies or increased giving. We are investigating improved efficiencies but unless our income is improved over the next few months we will have to consider staff cutbacks for 2015. On that note I urge those who can to consider regular increased giving or one off donations to ease the situation.

- **Reviewing Our Future Options**

The Rev Phil as mentioned above is stimulating ongoing discussions on our future in Council meetings as he will today in the Congregational meeting.

- **Property Issues**

We are very grateful for the work of the Property Committee as they have and are doing much to further the health and effectiveness of our buildings. The current work of the Committee in investigating installing Solar Panels on our church is very beneficial for our long term finances as well as ensuring that our carbon footprint is not a heavy one. Their investigation of possible improvements to the back entrance to our church is welcome as this is now the main entrance to our church and does not present a positive welcoming one. This committee is very active which is due to all of them but enhanced by the continuing effort of Bob Lyon who represents them on Council.

- **Recognition**

I extend my thanks to the continuing work of all members of Council for the various roles that they perform. I thank them immensely for their loyal attendance and attention to their work. It is appreciated and valued.

Special thanks has been extended this year to several people for their work in this church Mary and Geoff Thomas for their work in raising money for Frontier Services and Motor Neurone Disease, Bev Eccleston for the work she has done for so many years in taking the Easter and Christmas stories to schools and to Alastair Blake for the outstanding work that he did to further the work of this church and for his work for justice in the wider church.

I am always reminded of the “Cloud of Witnesses” that surround us, go before us and inspire us, the church is built on such as these and will prosper on our backs as we grapple with what is meaningful to do in the future.

Ian Penny
Chair of Council
May 2014