

Report from the BLACKWOOD COMMUNITY MEETING:
Sunday 3rd August 2014

Last Sunday we had a Special Congregational meeting which was attended by 71 Members/Associates. The meeting was very important in the life of our church as we began the process of reviewing the mission and operation of our church to help us amend what we do and to make financial savings for 2015 and beyond.

In the first part of the meeting a paper, distributed by email, was briefly presented by The Rev Phil Hoffmann and then The Rev Coral Smith initiated group discussion on an analysis of the current vision for our church and what if any changes should be made, thinking about how we might operate in ten or so years from now. (See the table responses below)

The meeting was also advised that a questionnaire will be sent out to all members which is designed to review all our ministry and activities. It is hoped that this will enable us to prayerfully discern what are our core priorities at BUC, that is, what activities or programs should continue, be restructured or be let go. The ideas from last Sunday and from the member survey will be used by Council to review our mission.

In recent years we have had a mission budget which included 1.5 ministers and some clerical assistance to support the Church programs judged then to be important. However, our members have been unable to fully fund the mission budget they approved which has resulted in a shortfall for this year of approximately \$28,000. Hence our need to review what we do now or we will have higher shortfalls in following years. Our current finances are being supported by our reserves which will not continue to sustain us if we don't curtail our expenditure. It was stated during the meeting that perhaps members who can, could consider pledging more to help e.g. \$10 extra per week by at least 100 individual members would cover most of the shortfall.

It is important for us all to complete the survey, which will be sent out by email and be available in printed form, so that the church can profit from everyone's ideas and wisdom to work towards God's purpose for our future.

Yours with God's love and support,

Ian M. Penny,

Chair Blackwood Uniting Church

Topic: Blackwood Community Finances and Future directions
Responses from the TABLE GROUPS Discussion:

Q1-WHAT IS OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE CHURCH?

[note: Not activities, programs (10 Minutes)

Q2- HOW CAN WE DO THIS?

[Ideas] (5 Minutes)

Q3- Discussion of RECOMMENDATIONS

1-That Council review our current paid, professional and ordained staffing levels

2-That this review be conducted against Community Priorities as indicated in a SURVEY – to be made available this coming week

[A Review of all our ministry and activities according to

- core, to be funded, b) continue, out of Budget or c) let activity/program go]

Council to provide this Report to Annual Meeting of the Congregation

16th November 2014

Process- points from the various table groups have been sorted into subgroups of similar statements. The sub-headings and the groupings are Cogs' editing. Apologies if I have misinterpreted anyone's comment. Any comments I have added for clarification are in italics. Thank you for your contributions and blessings to all as we travel on this journey of discernment, Revs Cogs and Phil.

Q1-WHAT IS OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE CHURCH?

Leadership

- Leadership in a faith development challenge

Being Community and relationships

- Fellowship now and in future and caring.
- Support each other
- A belonging place – welcoming
- Community
- Physical presence in Blackwood
- Inclusive and open Community counts.
- Relevant to all ages
- Keep broadening our relationships without and within the church and the wider community and the world
- Reaching out to community groups- CFS, Rotary etc. – thanksgiving services for their service to the community.
- Is it Christian community in Blackwood or Christians in Blackwood community?

Expressing the Gospel

- Continue to be expression of Gospel: "Love as I love you"

- Spread the gospel.
- Worship
- Organised small groups – study
- Outreach
- Alternative to capitalist emphasis on money and goods.
- Focus on community and environment & social issues.
- Christian spirituality, mission work & outreach.

Alternatives

- Offer “alternatives” – what’s important?

Q2- HOW CAN WE DO THIS?

Being Community and relationships

- Be visible.
- Open questioning, accepting, challenging, Christian Community.
- Continue to look outside the square for ways to encourage newcomers.
- Small group focus – interest, bible, care- multiple and varied.
- To attract younger people
- Sense of belonging, being loved and cared for.
- Maintain and increase connection with community.

Worship

- Inspired to about God
- Worship Centre
- Consolation of resources- possibly one service. Comprised by everyone, hymns, songs etc.
- Change in worship time? Might be more convenient to younger people.
- Smaller worship opportunities?
- Give people a reason to come to church – playgroup, community program, concerts etc.
- Purpose shouldn’t be to get people here on Sunday a.m., however, it takes church people to run activities.
- Once a month might be a reality for people nowadays.
- Relevance of faith in the world- finding hope.
- Combine the two similar services that we have already Sunday morning and run something more radical, perhaps a family orientated one at lunchtime or??

Finance

- Grants- Mitcham Council
- Who is paid? Tutors, cleaners, Revs, office workers.
- Possible grants for community work
- Paid expertise needed with willing volunteers
- People involved in programs contribute to finances.
- Community Minister partially funded by grants.

Programs, activities, events.

- Chaplaincy to retail community.
- More events for people – youth, children etc.
- Less programs.
- Focus our activities, we are doing too many programs.

Wider church

- Broader understanding of church as a movement rather than an institution.
- Combined Uniting Church events – youth services etc. – might draw people in, make connections with each other.
- Are people who come to programs actually coming because it is ‘their church’ or only because their church isn’t providing that activity?
- Work with other local churches, wider Uniting Church to organise combined events for young people.
- Go back to sharing ministry with Eden Hills, Belair etc.
- Unity of denominations

Volunteers & Ministers

- Address volunteer issue – aging volunteers. Volunteers doing too much.
- If minister’s time cut, others will be called on to volunteer. Is this viable?
- Can we expect 1.0 minister to cover all “not on Sunday” role?
- Don’t spread ourselves too thinly.

Theology, Broad Principles & Other Ideas

- Let Christ build it.
- Think about what we think our core business is.
- Do a few ‘things’ very well.
- Be realistic
- Multiple ways of engaging.
- Do we need such a large building?
- Need a ministerial presence in the Community Programs.

Q3- Discussion of RECOMMENDATIONS

- Not necessarily reduction of staffing
What’s the link between programmes and traditional church?
- Redevelop site?
- Let go/ re-evaluate (open?) Meals.