

Annual General Meeting

Blackwood Uniting Church
Sunday 16th November 2014



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

Congregational Meeting Agenda

Sunday, November 16th 2014

Blackwood Uniting Church

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2. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting

Congregational Meeting May 25, 2014

Attendance: 81 – See attendance sheets

Apologies: 21 – See attendance sheets

Minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as published

The meeting was opened at 11:30 by Wendy Norris as the Chair of the Congregation. Minutes were by Dave Smith as the Secretary of the Congregation.

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

Business Arising.

A reply to our letter to the Chief Executive Officer Rev. Dr Graham Humphries has been received.

In Summary.

There is a major deficit in the Synod budget and they see no way forward but to cut spending in a number of directions. This is just one avenue they are following. Graham would be interested in any alternative directions that address their budget concerns and provides a benefit to all.

See Appendix 1

New Business.

Phil Hoffman spoke to the discussion paper sent to all members earlier (appendix 2).

Part of the Ministerial Role is to think strategically for the Church as a whole and their congregation in particular. The future needs to be subject to continuous discussion and exploration as we strive to meet the changing needs of the community around us and our own needs as a congregation.

The Church is changing shape. Perhaps not every Sunday at 10:00. Perhaps only on special occasions and celebrations but it is changing. There is a discussion paper called Uniting Church Changing Landscapes. Blackwood will offer a study group around this but this paper highlights some of the changes we are facing and how they will impact us.

Change does not mean that we will lose what we have and value, but it does mean that we need new options. As an example, the Church of England sanctioned 598 new expressions last year. At Blackwood Uniting we are using some of these new options now – the Internet, modifying the 09:15 service, WEB pages etc.

In this time of change we need to look at what is important to us and then determine what we need to make available to others. From this we will be able to define our purposes and what is important about belonging to Blackwood Uniting Church community.

The tables were asked to define 3 things that are important to us on butcher's paper.

Table 1:

- Friendship
- Soul Food
- Inner Peace
- Justice

Table 2:

- Opportunity to serve and to succeed
- Belonging to Community
- Friendship

Table 3:

- Alive and Relevant
- Community
- God Centred

Table 4:

- Helping people Grow spiritually and physically
- Welcoming
- Support

Table 5:

- Fellowship – caring friendship
- Worship – Not boring
- Aiding people to come to the faith

Table 6:

- Community
- Worship
- Service and Justice

Table 7:

- Welcoming and caring
- Central Location and looks like a Church
- BUC is a good example of a Christian Church

Table 8:

- Teaching and Learning in Spirituality
- Connecting to the local community
- Join with other Christians to show a focus on God

Table 9:

- Relevant and vibrant Worship
- Compassionate Justice

Table 10:

- Friendship, caring and sharing
- Emphasising change
- Preaching to others with new expressions

Table 11:

- Friendship and support
- Worship as a demonstration of faith
- Learning

Table 12:

- Friendship
- Listening
- Community Involvement

From the National Christian Life Survey, Blackwood Uniting Church responded with what they saw as important:

- 57%, Community Care and Social Justice
- 37%, Contemporary Worship and Music
- 33%, Practical care to one another in times of need
- Openness to social and cultural diversity

Financial Report:

- In 2013 we had a \$1000 surplus as predicted
- The accounts for 2013 were audited and signed off
- 2014 will be a deficit budget and will be down by \$26,000 for the year though fundraising activities have been planned
- With a do nothing approach this will continue till 2018 when we run out of money

This was then presented to the tables as a question. What do we do about this? The answers were collected and are to be correlated by the Ministers and the Church Council.

Any Other business:

Bev Smoking ran a Community Program Satisfaction Survey and the key results are:

- 226 class enrolments
- 123 responses to the survey
- Majority are in their 60's
- 92% are satisfied or very satisfied with the way Blackwood runs the classes
- 70% say the classes are an important part of their lives

Coral went on to ask how we can do more in this space with less resources. This year they are trying Saturday workshops and some new programs.

On question that came out of this discussion concerned the extent of pastoral follow up there is with the Community classes. There is Coral and two others who have taken this on but in the main the group supports itself.

Bob Lyon on behalf of the property committee raised the questions of Solar Panels for the roof. Blackwood spends about \$12,000 a year on power at present with a consumption of about 45KW per day. If we put 20 panels on the roof we could generate about 46% of our daily requirements (around 20KW per day) with savings of around \$4,200 per year.

This will cost \$11,500 to install with a four and a half year payback period before we make a profit. The Property committee is looking into alternative pricing and options. Given the principals involved both economic and environmental, the Committee asked if we can obtain the capital from the church council.

Discussion followed on sizing methods, power consumption times, the life of the system (about 20 years) and the rate of return on the investment. The discussion continued with several people adding comments:

- Given the \$26,000 deficit can we afford this? The capital is available but it will exacerbate the rate of using capital.
- Do we have a business plan? Have considered the cost/benefit and we come out ahead in the 4.5 year plan.
- What will be the interest lost that needs to be balanced against the income? Lost interest has been included in the 4.5 year plan.
- Will the property committee write a formal case for this and include the other priorities we could have spent the money on? Solar Panels may save money but may not affect the viability of Blackwood Uniting Church in 2018? Everything we save will impact or viability. Power prices are rising and show no signs of falling. The business case is backed by the number of external companies that are interested in providing this service using our roof space.
- Overnight we use about 1.2KW of power, will the panels impact that? The financial return is on the power we consume during the day and do not have to pay for. The night time consumption is the difference between the capital outlay for more panels and the best return for our money. It is always more efficient to use what we generate than to sell power to the grid.
- Can we ask the congregation members to buy individual panels rather than buy them from central funds? Bob to look into this.

Recommendation; that the church council looks into the Solar panel option and the various funding possibilities and then to act on the best choice.

Agreed Unanimously.

Coral: Ricki has a new job and has resigned with 2 weeks' notice. She is finishing the office work and will hand over. The Church Council met last Wednesday and decided to advertise the position as 24 hours per week (down from 32). It will be advertised in the Church Newsletter. Applications to close on June 11 and a start date by negotiation. This position will be appointed as a temporary one as the Community program is under review.

Jeff thanked Blackwood Uniting for supporting the fruit sales for Frontier Services and similar charities. They raise about \$4000 annually and this year they sent checks of \$1200 each to Frontier Services and Motor Neuron Disease.

Wendy Norris is standing down as the Chair of the Congregation and is proposing Mike Bull to take over.

Next meeting is planned as the AGM on November 16.

Tabled Reports

Agenda

Church Council Report

Finance and Stewardship Report

Deacon's Report

Website Report

Solar Panel Proposal

Next meeting November 16, 2014

Dave Smith

Secretary to the Congregation

Special Congregational Meeting August 3, 2014

Attendance: 71 – See attendance sheets

Apologies: 6 – See attendance sheets

Business Arising.

The meeting was opened at 11:15 by Wendy Norris as the Chair of the Congregation. Wendy welcomed the congregation and reiterated the aim of the meeting.

Then Phil Hoffman explained that we have cut all we can from the budget and explored options for increasing funding but the fundamental position has not changed. At Blackwood we have now had two months to think about the issues and to seek alternatives and options.

There were no questions and nothing to clarify at that point. Phil went on to explain that he thought the financial situation was a presenting symptom to use a medical analogy but not the whole problem. He suggested the discussion should not be limited to finance. We should also consider our aging population and that future generations are not loyalty driven. In the past we set up programs that have given us social capital but our aim should be more about relationships. The world is changing and so is the shape and nature of ministry. While this change is happening, we can't see the end yet.

Phil went on to talk about the bigger picture. What is the nature of Church and what is our future model in that Church. One of the patterns emerging is that Ministry is changing from full time to part time. What Phil suggests is using a top down approach and ask, "Who are we" and then asking "what do we want to be"?

Then Coral spoke about her life in the Uniting Church. She joined in 1977 and was asked by her friends why she was joining a fading institution like the Church. Her answer is that the organisation itself has meaning and is life giving. Coral went on to say that there are over 2000 Uniting Church congregations in Australia – twice the number of MacDonald's. These Congregations have over 100,000 worshipping members and over 12,00 children. We still have a lot to offer.

The average Uniting Church congregation has between 20 and 49 people -making us one of the biggest. The maps and ways of thinking no longer work, we need to invent new ones. Coral quoted Tom Bandy in his Questions Of Who We Are with two points to think about:

- We have live through the 18th Century laziness
- In change there is opportunity.

Coral then presented a paper on Future Directions and Finances and followed with two questions of the congregation:

1. What is your vision for the future church over the next 10 years?
(Core Values, Meaning but not programs)
2. How do we achieve this?

(ideas, actions, pathways)

The discussion was not recorded as it will be correlated from the table sheets by the ministers and Church Council.

Ian Penny on behalf of the Church Council continued:

- We have a major financial deficit in 2014 and we need to face this.
- It was highlighted at the last AGM when people were invited to give more.
- It was resolved to continue the existing budget through 2014 making what savings they could.
- Some savings were made by setting minimum numbers in the community program classes, increasing fees and cancellation of smaller programs.
- The deficit has been decreased but still exists and changes will continue to address this issue.

Some options they are exploring are to:

- Reduce expenditure by fitting solar panels. This will return about \$4000 to \$4500 in savings.
- Involving the congregation in looking at our direction and the associated costs
- Making sure the choices we make are relevant to us and our commitment, are affordable and realistic

In terms of the budget:

- We can't support our current staffing costs especially around Ministerial Wages
- Special projects are OK as they are funded separately but our day to day running costs are too high.
- The Church Council suggests we reconsider the cost of the ministers and funded laypeople.

Ian went on to say that the last Mission Budget agreed to by the congregation could not be funded but we stepped out in faith anyway. Now we need to consider the cost and look at what we consider as our core business and what is required to meet our vision. Then we need to look to our skill sets before setting out on this path. We have great skill levels in our Ministers but need to look at the whole program and vision before committing ourselves.

The Church Council recommended:

1. That we review our current paid Ministerial and Ordained staff levels.
2. This review is to be conducted against the member priorities as indicated by the church member survey coming out this week. The survey will cover what we currently do, what we can drop and what we should change. Something will need to change as the present budget and commitment is not sustainable. The results of this survey and consideration will be presented to the AGM on November 16.

Discussion followed:

Are we serious about not being a Sunday church? We were reminded of Carolyn Kitto's sessions where we focused ourselves as a community church around programs such as Playgroup, Mainly Music and Messy Church. This means we need a community minister. If the \$10,000 savings are made by the solar panels, that means we only need to make savings of a further \$15,000. Can we work around this and keep our current staffing levels and programs?

If you cut the Ministerial support by 50% what will be the impact of this? The emphasis should be on how we can keep all the programs running rather than limiting ourselves to the budget. The church Council was asked to look wider for options. This was followed by the question of "Are we a Christian Community living in Blackwood or are we Christians living in Blackwood"? We need to define our mission before we define the management of that mission.

Tim suggested that he was happy with the review but that it should be wider and consider options other than reducing staff. There has been growth in parts of the Church so perhaps we could consider increasing staff in these growth areas.

Wendy agreed with this approach but noted that the demographics of the congregation was growing older and we need to consider growing the other end. Emphasis on Messy Church, Mainly Music and Playgroup are important. Perhaps we should explore this further.

We were reminded how disappointed we were when the Synod cut mission funding. Is this any different?

Neville was reminded of one church partially funded by grants. Is this a possibility?

Perhaps the wording of the Church Council proposal should be changed to include the review of all staff including the most recent.

It was then clarified that the Church Council was proposing to make a recommendation not a decision. The recommendation would include the budget and the mission direction.

The upcoming survey was highlighted as a way to explore all options and directions. It should also address how we connect to the community.

One discussion point made concerned the self sufficiency of all programs. Each should be able to stand on their own feet financially. That way none will be an overhead of the community. It was also raised that while programs may be self-sufficient, we have not included common costs such as cleaning, general staffing, electricity and building wear and tear in our program costings.

Another point was that project giving is usually very good, it is in recurrent costs that we are let down. Could this issue be fixed by digging deeper in our pockets?

Ian Penny closed the discussion by asking everyone to be innovative in their thinking, look at all options and possibilities when they complete the survey rather than just follow with the same things we have always done.

Results:

All but two people agreed with the recommendation by the Church Council and they agreed to follow this path until the AGM so as to have more information to work with at the AGM.

Meeting closed at 12:15

Next meeting on November 17th – AGM

Note that Coral and Ian's speaking notes are available in PDF format for this meeting.

Dave Smith

Secretary to the Congregation.

4.1 Minister's Report to the Congregational Meeting

BLACKWOOD UNITING CHURCH: Minister of the Word's Report to AGM, Sunday November 16th, 2014

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

I am grateful to share the ministry with the community of Blackwood Uniting Church. Blackwood Uniting people are thoughtful and responsive in worship, engaged in ministries and mission here and beyond and concerned for the wider world. I have enjoyed this past year of ministry with and amongst you and trust I have been faithful in opening the Word, providing pastoral care and giving leadership.

At the 2013 Meeting of the Community a “strategic focus” was presented for the year to come [now nearly gone] which had emphasis in three (3) areas:

[Whilst maintaining the life of worship and care ...]

1. Families and Children's Ministries;
2. Review of Community Programs; and
3. Building the Future Church.

Now comes time to report on progress.

Through the dedication of many gifted volunteers, Monday by Monday, Friday by Friday, Sunday by Sunday Blackwood Uniting has maintained its Family Ministries in 2014 through Playgroup, “Mainly Music” and “Messy Church. To all of these valued people, too many to name, heartfelt thanks. We continue to seek to be responsive to other initiatives and one-off opportunities to connect faith and families.

Under Cog's leadership Community Classes have been under continuing review in 2014, with considerable improvement. Cogs' report will address this key area of our community life. However, let it be said here that Jacqui Harrison's appointment as Co-ordinator has been the year's great boon. Her skills, commitment and friendly nature have added greatly. In 2015 the Community programs call for re-invigoration and re-shaping to bring new ways to give life to a tiring program.

This report will therefore concentrate on the third of these emphases. “*Building the Future Church*” has occupied a large ‘slice’ of my leadership, thinking and time this past year and been central to the on-going discussions of monthly meetings of Church Council [and Executive]. I want to express my deepest thanks to each and every member of Council for the patient and considerate year of service they have given in what has often been a struggle.

I consider it crucial that we have this conversation. Like all of you, I wish the solutions were easier come by and more evident. But the church is in uncharted waters. We have never been in 2014 Australian Society before. Today all manner of institutions face 'decay'. Younger generations do not commit to 'belonging'. Lifestyles are different, including on Sunday mornings which offer multiple options for families. It appears that faith is not necessarily in decline, but church attendance most certainly is. We could well therefore ask: 'Why don't people who say they believe in God come to church?' It seems there is no need of 'public worship' [That is, "I worship God in my own way at my own time"]. But how then do people want to express their faith? – in involvement, discussion?

Our context causes us to ask (repeatedly): "What kind of Church do we want to be?"

And "What does a faith community in Blackwood look like today?"

There is hope here in going back to our foundational words, The Uniting Church's 'Basis of Union'

"The Church's call is to serve that end: to be a fellowship of reconciliation, a body within which the diverse gifts of its members are used for the building up of the whole ... the Church is a pilgrim people, always on the way towards a promised goal; here the Church does not have a continuing city but seeks one to come. On the way Christ feeds the Church with Word and Sacraments, and it has the gift of the Spirit in order that it may not lose the way".

In this we note that the 'Church' was only ever a vehicle, a tool for greater purposes which we seek and serve. We are, as the Uniting Church, 'always on the way', a 'work in progress'. There is the reminder in this that, despite the 'good old days' of sporting teams and Sunday School anniversaries that we recall and feel we have lost, the church never 'arrived', even in the days of being the 'centre' of social life.

As well as Church Council considering what the future might look like for Blackwood Uniting, we have held three Sessions to respond to the wider church's "Changing Landscapes" paper and Bible Study series.

Those sessions have focused around

(One): "The Dream: Who do we want to be?",

(Two): "The Context: What are the needs?" and

(Three): a Brainstorming "Ideas" Session to come [November 12]

Cogs will report on the Survey of Community Priorities elsewhere in these papers, but that response clearly affirmed all we are doing as important to the community (at least some), or 'owned' by the community if not participating. Our challenge therefore becomes a resourcing one, not a vision and programs one (hence, the recommendations that will be brought to the AGM). In that Survey report, WORSHIP remains a key function: if it had rated low, we might need to have a different discussion.

We face a tension in our being: the church really is serving two very clear “masters” – the congregation and the community. These two groups sometimes have differing needs and agendas, although there should be something at our core that unifies all we do.

As demographics face inevitable change over next twenty years, what will Blackwood itself look like? Will we provide a transport hub? Will the area see young families moving in, re-gentrifying an older suburb? Will Blackwood one day have multi-storey dwellings? How will we ‘capitalise’ spiritually on our building?

Three key factors have stood out in our discussion of the available research.

- 1) First, that what we offer must be relational. (I think here of the pastoral care in PlayGroup). This is the need of ALL people, even in our times: the need to be known and cared for and share in life together with others.
- 2) Second, what Blackwood Uniting does to address need must be local. It must be an ‘at hand’ expression of community of faith.
- 3) Third, there must be a faith element in both our being together and our provision for the wider community. We must be intentional, deliberate about this.

Therefore, there are ideas which will carry us forward. Here are some:

- WORSHIP: still needs experimentation, new offerings eg. “Bacon & Egg church”, mid-week worship, ‘hear and respond’ discussion in which people are invited to contribute from their lives.
- COMMUNITY PROGRAMS: engagement with younger population eg. Linkage with Child & Youth Health, Seminars, short-term courses, a refreshed and re-focused ‘Craft Fair’
- MAKING OUR RESOURCES KNOWN: eg a “What is this book, the Bible?” Series

I remain hopeful.

In closing, I take this opportunity to express my personal thanks to Ian Penny who has been a diligent and faithful chair of Council for all my time as Minister here. Ian and I have met regularly to discuss ideas, plan agendas and prepare for Council’s work. Ian (and Carys’) dedication to this community and its function is unending and a gift of kindness and commitment to us all.

Finally, I also salute Phil Megaw in his meticulous attention to our finances and chairing the Finance Team. Phil has been a Treasurer with heart and his concern for Blackwood’s overall well-being undergirds his every hour of service to us.

Rev Phil Hoffmann

Outreach Minister's Congregational AGM Report 2014- Rev Coral Cogs Smith

"To everything there is a season and a time for every purpose under heaven" Eccl 3

"It will be alright in the end and if it's not alright, it is not the end"

At the time of writing, Synod has just finished, and we have been hearing more of what the **"Changing Landscapes"** are in the context of UCA SA. In the midst of raw statistics about declining numbers (of both people and congregations) and budgets, there are stories of hope, new beginnings and new life (Playford UCA – a new church plant. The Dinka community getting their own building. Congress growing and developing). The new General Secretary talked about it as a "refining fire".

Here at BUC, as one of the larger congregations in SA, we are so far barely touched by this. Yet, this is not the time to be complacent but rather a time for reconnecting to the foundation questions such as the Rev Dr Andrew Dutney put to us at Synod –

"What kind of church is God calling us to be?"

In a recent report to church council in a document I wrote about my role here at BUC– *What is next?" It is obvious that it is time for a serious rethink about the original "Outreach Worker" role. The pastoral element that I was originally employed for is now a luxury that BUC can no longer afford to pay for and is something I have come to believe can be done quite ably by the volunteers and to a lesser extent the program users themselves. BUC has many fine pastoral people and is a caring church. The difficult "crunchy" bit is the practical help needed to keep programs ticking over. "So what is next?" This is something that I have been thinking about ever since the deficit was announced late last year. **What a stumbling block! How do we turn it into a stepping stone into the future?***

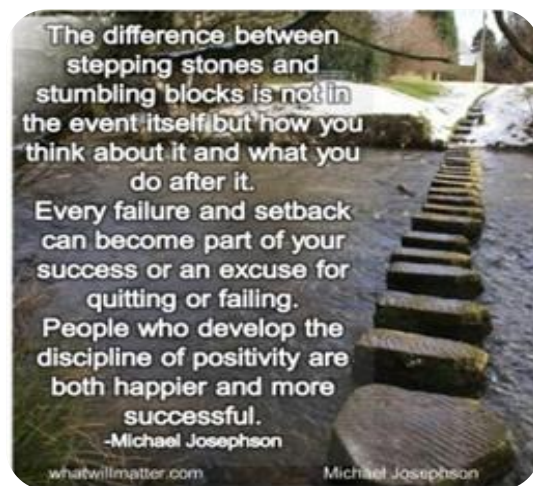
Well, for starters it is giving us an opportunity to count what is really important to the life of BUC. To take stock of what we have and who are. And interestingly that is not a deficit. We are in a better position than many, many churches, even in these traumatic, changing and slippery times. It is not a good time for the Western Church, and yet as the old hymn says, "there is always more truth and light to break forth". ...

So despite recent events, I am confident that there will always be a future for the Western Church, that while its influence and presence may fade, it will not be lost.

More specifically, here at BUC, I believe that we will find a pathway into the future. The important thing is that we find it graciously, being capable of seeing God in our neighbour and in each other, so that we remain capable of offering godly messages of hope, love and peace.

For as a church, that is our core business, which no one else will do! There is not no other organisation to do the work of the Church. And especially not in our own unique BUC style! Or perhaps I should say styles Hmmm, there's a thought

God's Blessings, Cogs.



4.2 Church Council

Blackwood Uniting Church Council Report for Congregational AGM 16 November 2014

It is with pleasure that I submit the Council Annual Report for the Congregational Annual Meeting 16th November 2014

Council has been busy with two reviews involving a survey of Community Class' satisfaction and a survey of members of the Blackwood Congregation. This latter survey was to gain an understanding of the level of support for the many and varied activities that we do and to gain a more complete understanding of the ways in which we might save money or increase our income.

Community Classes

The results of the Community Classes Satisfaction Survey were positive indicating a high satisfaction from the participants with what they do but the implications of the survey raised a number of questions including the relationship of the classes with the church, what is the church's purpose in running the classes and the need to change the title of the 'Community Program' to 'Community Classes' to make it reflect more closely what we are doing. The issues which have been drawn from this survey and its associated implications have led to several improvements being made to streamline the management of the Classes to meet the operational costs resulting in savings and the introduction of some new classes.

The celebration of the 40 years of the Classes were highly successful with a well attended dinner in June, a successful quiz night in September and a well organised and well attended Craft Fair in October. These events have all helped to improve the overall financial state of the Community Classes. We thank Cogs for the leadership she has provided this year which has been considerable in light of the necessary support the program has required and progress has been measurable.

Coordinator BUC Office and Community Classes

The year has also seen the resignation of Riki Owens-Bennett as Coordinator of the BUC Office and Community Classes and the appointment of Jacqueline Harrison. Jacqui was a Community Classes participant and her impact on the Community Classes and associated activities has been substantial benefitting from her vitality, energy, approachability and organisation. We thank her for the attention she has given to her work and look forward to her continuing successful involvement with both her roles during 2015.

BUC Membership Survey

Council is indebted to Cogs for the work that she did in devising the member Survey which was supported by a special Congregational meeting held in 3rd August in response to BUC future and financial discussions. The outcomes of this survey have occupied the attention of Council for several meetings leading to recommendations, which the council has discussed and supported. These will be presented by Cogs after this report. However, apart from a few suggestions from members and an improvement in promised giving there were few major financial improvements suggested. This has led to some recommendations later in this meeting which affect our finances and future ministerial support. Never-the-less, the survey has led us to a point where we can make

some changes to improve the demands placed upon members' time and energy. One thing that is certain, members do support most of what we do and that's positive and helpful for our immediate future. There is also a strong commitment to the Church's Vision Statement which is reassuring Our directions and financial ability to meet these will need to be in constant review as we continue to build an understanding of our future role/function in this place.

Finance Committee

Thanks to the Finance Committee who with Phil Megaw's leadership have continued to provide advice and new scenarios to stimulate our thinking. We are grateful for your ongoing support without which we would not be at the point we are at today.

Property Issues

Again we need to state our ongoing appreciation of the role that the Property Committee plays in this church The successful work of the committee in getting more than sufficient funding from members to not only install solar panels on the roof of the church but to install a much bigger system than initially thought possible containing 30 panels. Grateful thanks must go to Bob Lyon for his strong push for us to give and to Russell Gear for his oversight of the tendering process and installation. Thanks to the rest of the committee for supporting them and helping to evaluate the options. Our Church continues to be a leader in the community in ensuring that our carbon footprint is as light as it can be.

The issue raised in the last report to the midyear Congregational meeting about Belair wishing to realise their share of the value of the manse has not progressed as we are awaiting Lynne Aird, Synod's Property officer's , action in getting an independent valuation done. This will probably be an ongoing issue well into 2015.

Justice Committee

Thanks to the Justice Committee for the work they have done over the year to highlight Justice Issues during the year. We note again the loss of The Rev Christa Megaw from this committee. Christa has supported the committee for many years now and we will miss her ideas and support. No doubt the Justice Committee will need to review its operation and management for 2015 to cover the loss. I need to briefly note that our support for Flora Mansawan is still building with approx \$11,000 in the bank. However, getting the support in her own location is still proving difficult. The committee under the leadership of Jane Bassham will continue to seek concrete ways of getting the support to her to ensure she can lead a productive and worthwhile life. In the meantime the money is earning at least 3.5% interest.

Elders and Council

Thank you to our Elders and Council members for the work that they have done during the year. Elders are continuing to meet approx every three months and in meeting have discussed the functioning of the pastoral groups and their own roles. Their work is evolving gradually as the role of elder is re-examined as it is across the Uniting Church.

Council members have been diligent in their attendance, attending extra meetings to ensure that we have thought through the issues facing us and have taken on board suggestions made through the surveys. Many thanks must go to Secretary Chris Bray for her work in keeping things up to date and especially our ministers who have lead future thinking and surveys. I have been particularly pleased with the way all members have taken responsibility by contributing during meetings and following up issues in between. The support many have given in reviewing the wording of policy and other documents has been most helpful to ensure the work of Council is as effective as possible.

Church of Christ and Blackwood Uniting Discussions

These have been ongoing and have resulted in successful combined services last Christmas, January in the Park services and Easter. Our midyear combined social event including soup and sweets as a fund Raiser for Beacon was highly successful resulting in raising \$1,190. We need to have more activities where we work together to achieve something as it is in this way we will start to get to know each other better. There is no urgency for either party and I believe if we pushed to come together as one congregation our discussions may be curtailed. The group which meets includes the Rev Phil, Ray Bown, Cogs and me and we meet together with 4 Church of Christ leaders. They hope that they will have a new minister appointed soon, a process which has taken them 12 months so far.

Reviewing our Future

The Council has undertaken several sessions on future thinking led by the Rev Phil and he has also led our discussion in two congregational meetings in May and August. Phil has continued to offer such meetings with other members of the congregation which are helping to raise our awareness of possible future options for the wider and local churches not just for Blackwood.

It is important for us all to realise that all church denominations and their local churches are reviewing their functions and roles in local communities it's not just Blackwood Uniting. All Churches are going through a time of change and we must be thinking about and rethinking our options to serve God in different ways and in different places. Our goals may be similar to past eras but our practices are always undergoing change as we seek to serve God and an ever changing community. Thank you to everyone for your historical ability to think through what we do and how we do it. Blackwood is indeed well served by its forward thinking people even if like the Rolling Stones we are ageing actively and energetically. Perseverance has always been the church's strong point and it is the one force that keeps us moving, with God's guidance, towards that future which isn't always easy to grasp.

Special Thankyous

Thank you to Carys Penny who has faithfully undertaken the role of Council Minute Secretary over the last four years and is retiring as from this meeting. Thanks Carys for what you have done amongst the many tasks that you do. The Church is indebted for your effort.

Special thanks to Phil Megaw who retires from his position as Chair of the Finance Committee as a consequence of wishing to support Christa in her new role as Minister of the Word at Bridgewater

U/C. Phil your dedicated leadership of the Finance Committee has been appreciated immensely. Your attention to detail is outstanding as is your capacity for hard work amongst the many demands placed upon you in your day time job. We wish you well in your new church with Christa and hope that it will not entail, at least in the short term, such a level of intensity as you have provided at Blackwood.

Ian Penny

Church Council Chair

5.3 Survey Results

BUC Congregational Community Survey Report- **exploring what gives life, ministry and vision to our congregation**

Context - This document continues the work done in the Carolyn Kitto Report, and the process the Church Council undertook with the Rev Dean Eland in reflecting where BUC's various ministries fit in regard to vision statement. As well as the Community Program Review done by Rev Dean Eland and the Community Classes Satisfaction Review done by Claire Bloom. It doesn't negate this work rather it seeks to provide reflection about the next step along the way for BUC as "Pilgrim People always on the way". There is also now a 27 page working document "BUC Congregational Community Survey Results – Overview Working Document" of all responses from this survey available for further detail, if required.

Thank you, again, to those who took the time to complete this survey!

Your responses are appreciated and will be taken into the reflections by the leadership of BUC. Blessings Revs Cogs & Phil on behalf of the BUC Church Council

The community life of Blackwood Uniting Church -the church on the Roundabout- is important both **'for us'** and **'offered to others'** in how we express the gospel.

In questions 5 & 6 of the survey, the sorts of visionary concepts expressed were similar to those expressed previously and so BUC still holds these as a true vision for ourselves.

In our **Vision Statement** - "Blackwood Uniting Church is called by God to be an inclusive Christian community committed to justice, learning, service and care". As well as in our **Mottos**- "A place to consider the possibility of God" and "A Place to Belong" and the **Mission Statement** (below).

..

Blackwood Uniting Church's Mission Statement-

Therefore in all aspects of our life we will:

- *Provide a welcoming environment for all people*
- *Strive for justice and reconciliation within the whole creation*
- *Continue to grow in our relationship with God through worship and faith development*
- *Be actively involved in service and care for each other, the local community and the wider world.*

Therefore as a church we will:

- *Welcome all people into our fellowship, not just with words but through our structures, our interest in them, our programmes and by encouraging them to use their gifts and time for the life of this community and its goals.*
- *Work for justice and reconciliation within the church, the community and beyond through personal involvement, prayer and specific programmes.*
- *Provide a variety of worship experiences which will enable people to relate to God in a way that is meaningful to them.*
- *Establish ways for people to engage in faith development that equips them to live as followers of Jesus in the twenty-first century.*
- *Seek to actively participate as the whole people of God and as individuals in serving and caring for each other within the church, within the community and within all of God's creation. This means continuing to support the established Community Programme as well as being involved beyond the walls of the church.*

So the bigger challenge is not about how we see ourselves, or what our vision is for the future, but rather, what is the best way to action our vision? How do we do this with the time, talents and resources we have as a congregation? And how do we communicate who we are to the wider community? Perhaps find working partnerships with other organisations to our mutual advantage? Or how do we build social capital in the local community, so that we are contributing to a better society? For with all the faith in the world, we can't do everything, so what do we need to be doing and doing well? What is doable- that is, let us focus on 'doing stuff' that we can do stuff about.

The Survey results provided all sorts of practical ideas and suggestions for this which are detailed in the *"BUC Congregational Community Survey Results – Overview Working Document"*. This document is well worth BUC's leadership reading - to hear the voice of the congregation on these matters.

Question 1 about what Worship service that people attend at BUC?

Note – some people ticked more than one service and not everyone ticked any.

Of the **total 77 people** who responded to the survey, which is a good response and shows community engagement and concern about the issues.

9.15 Worship- 62 attendees.

11.00 Worship- 16 attendees.

Messy Church- 8 attendees.

Overall, nearly all the comments for worship were positive. Those that attend **9.15** commented – the "current format is good", "value the experience leadership", "good videos", "good music" etc., generally well appreciated. Although, there were comments about practising data projection use and microphones.

Similarly, **11.00 attendees are satisfied** with their worship service. They like the traditional service with hymns, organ music, and the caring community.

Comments were also made about **Messy Church**, questioning can it adapt as the children grow (*Yes! It is a broad format although which means it has to be rethought/reinvented as time goes by*) and that it is 'an extension of our worship that reaches families that we would not connect with otherwise.'

While many people (12) commented on the idea of a **Combined Service**, it was offered with a sense of pragmatism about needed change, and with concern for the 11.00 attendees, losing out through loss of fellowship, and their preferred style of worship. It was also suggested that if we were to combine, that we do this in the context of considering other worship options, such as "specials", mid-week or evening services that could be more family friendly or reflective or suit other community based worship needs.

Recommendation about Worship – At this stage, given the high level of satisfaction with both the 9.15 & 11.00 we would recommend that worship services continue in the current formats for the foreseeable future. However, further exploration of other worship needs and options needs to be ongoing so that we continue to respond to community based worship needs. To be reviewed before the 2015 AGM by the minister/s and worship committee.

Questions 2 & 3 – Where about what do we do and what do we value?

- In Question 2 People were asked - which of the following are you actively involved?

(The things that you support with your "time, talents and gifts".)

-In Question 3 - They were then asked to tick a series of boxes for the activities they are currently active in and then asked to evaluate them as either a **core activity, one that needs reworking in some way, or one that needs to be let go or pruned.**

Below you will table of results, the numbers reflecting the actual numbers of responses given, out of a total of 77 responses.

Roles/ Activities	<u>Question2</u> Activities are you currently involved	<u>Question3</u> This is a Core activity at BUC	<u>Question3</u> This activity may need reworking	<u>Question3</u> This activity needs to be let go
Worship	52	71	4	----
Messy Church	9	61	4	--
Cluster Group/s	54	51	12	2
Playgroup	8	51	8	2
Mainly Music	15	49	7	--
Kid's Hope	6	44	15	3
Beacon Emergency Relief	6	45	8	3
Bible Studies	13	42	14	----
West Papua Support	6	37	15	1
Social Justice Committee	5	40	12	-----
Friday Friends	12	33	7	3
Flinders Chapel Services	6	30	16	8
Community Classes (Program)	19 attendees 11 volunteers	27	40	4
Book Club	10	23	11	5
Inner Pilgrimage	2	20	10	3
Friday Night Meals	33	23	30	19
Banner Making Group	4	16	10	3
Walking Group	14	13	20	6

Comments – a summary.

- **Other activities of the congregation included** flower arranging, 11am Sunday lunches, Prayer groups/prayer circles, organising police checks, Wayside Chapel, messages on the outside noticeboard, piano tuning, volunteers in office, furniture construction & moving, funeral catering, fruit sales, secretary of the congregation, 9.15 children's corner, Resthaven communion, building maintenance, and there is bound to be more! People also commented that they are involved in informal ways as well. *This reflects the complexity and depth of what we do here at BUC, even without considering ecumenical relationships or wider church activities or involvement in other agencies!*
- **Other ideas for activities included** – “life skills” classes for parents, “Social activities”, “like to know more about cluster groups”, “Church camp, maybe with the Church of Christ”. “Have an Op Shop?” *In offering more or different choices here it may change what the congregation sees as core activities in the future.*

For everything has its season, and how do we encourage a permission giving culture that say it's okay to let something go, if needs be. Many activities depend on the ongoing willingness of volunteers and equally the 'grace' to surrender them when the time is right. For it is okay for even worthy programs to finish, otherwise we get caught in a culture of filling rosters (and time) for their own sake. And, to risk being too busy/tired to keep an eye out for new opportunities, and miss the still small voice, or the Spirit's breeze.

- **General comments** – “Too many activities”, “hard to fill rosters now”, “concentrate on what is already happening rather than overstretch”. “should be helping the needy”, “all activities should be cost effective”, fundraise, “as long as we have the numbers who volunteer to lead and support all of the activities listed they should go ahead as worthwhile services”. *There is no doubt that working out how best consolidate the activities at BUC is like “cleaning a cupboard”, everyone agrees it needs doing but there are many ideas as to how best to do it!*
- **Wider Community Connections** – there were many suggestions to work in partnership with local organisations such as RSL, be a presence at Rotary and Lion events, be a chaplain to CFS, SES and Scouts, BBDCA and BAG etc. “I would like to see us link with the wider community better” and “Serious needs in the areas of “unemployment/ job seeking, mental health and combating loneliness for the aged and young mothers”. *It is an infinite list, so discernment is needed, as it is important to do them well. Note - we already have relationships of varying levels with Circle of Friends, Lions, Rotary and others.*

The table (above) shows clearly what we think corporately of what we do. Although there seems to be a tendency to list everything as “Core”, even when we don't all share in being involved! Unfortunately, that means it is still hard to work out the financial implications of what is core, which was an objective of the survey.

- The **top 5** listed are – **Worship** (see previous comments), **Messy Church, Cluster Group/s, Playgroup & Mainly Music.** *Which outlines the importance of our Worship times, Family Ministry and our small group life.*
- The **Second 5** are - **Kid's Hope, Beacon Emergency Relief, Bible Studies, West Papua Support, Social Justice Committee.**
- **Third 5** - **Friday Friends, Flinders Chapel Services, Community Classes (Program), Book Club, and Inner Pilgrimage**
- The **last 3** of the list are the **Friday Night Meals, Banner Making Group, Walking Group.**

➤ **Family Ministry- Roundabout Playgroup, Mainly Music, Messy Church.**

A large number of people considered that Messy Church, Playgroup, and Mainly Music are core activities of the congregation which is very encouraging. Currently, these ministries are supported by a dedicated few and yet they are very demanding in terms of energy and time commitment, although other than the building and ministerial costs they are self-funding. So, the question here is not about the significance of Family Ministry but how best to sustain it in the long run? The challenge of how do we connect with families who have busy lifestyles is a tricky one. It would be good to find ways to involve the families more in leadership and decision making and so “own” it for themselves.

Family Ministry Recommendation – Continue into the foreseeable future, however, further work needs to be done to ensure sustainability and to grow this ministry in life-giving ways. Suggest that the Family Ministry Team reform to discuss how best to sustain this ministry as a whole, especially in the area of how it can expand its volunteer support base, reporting for the 2015 May Congregational Meeting to what new steps are developed/ developing.

➤ **Cluster Groups** Cluster Groups are part of our pastoral care structure and so need to be revisited from time to time and new ones may need to be formed when new people attend so that they are included.

Cluster Group Recommendation – As a means of information keeping and coordination, that the minister invites each Cluster Group leader to write a short report which covers – why and how often they met, a description of their activities, and who is involved. This would give transparency to what Cluster Groups are and an opportunity, if needed, to review any or create new ones.

➤ **Kid's Hope, Beacon Emergency Relief** and the Mitcham Hills Interchurch Council are all apart of wider ecumenical relationships, as is our “neighbourly” relationship with the Blackwood Church of Christ. .

Recommendation- these are a part of the Mitcham Hills Interchurch Council relationship and so really beyond the specific focus of this survey. None- the – less, we would recommend that we continue these important relationship with the wider church.

➤ **Social Justice Committee** – This group functions in the area of worship (i.e. Social Justice Sunday), education and outreach, including **West Papua Support**.

Recommendation –As several of our “Mission Council Teams” of the Eland Review need personnel and attention, that in 2015 when the Church Council reviews the committee structure, that the Social Justice Committee is also reviewed and seeks to find fresh ways for BUC to express its social justice concerns.

➤ **Bible Studies & Book Clubs.** One of the things that the survey expressed was a hunger for more learning opportunities and small groups of this nature.

Recommendation - Perhaps short courses or a different time of day/week could be a way of doing this. Church Council seek an interested lay person to coordinate.

➤ **Flinders Chapel Services** while a small undertaking for our church, makes a big difference to those who attend and run the services but it does need more people.

Recommendation – Coordinators of this undertaking review and will report to council with the best possible action.

➤ **Friday Night Meals**

This stood out as an activity that needs reworking/redeveloping or letting go. This is also reflected in the comments, while there were a couple of positive comments such as “There are needy, positive people who value what we do and contribute donations each week” and people come for social interaction. There were more negative comments such as “consumes many time & \$ resources”, “remained unconvinced of its worth”. *We need to be clear on why are we doing this ministry, what is its purpose and goals and how are we achieving them.*

Recommendation – The Friday Night Meals Committee report to the next Church Council on the purpose of the Friday Night Meals, future structure, and assess sustainability to willingness of volunteer groups (and clusters) to continue. Cogs to contact them.

➤ **Blackwood Community Classes (previously Community Programs),**

The comments suggested “one day instead of two”, “patronage reduced”, “people should pay upfront for the courses”, “wider activities such as Book Group or What is Christianity?”, “needs to become financially viable”. “And now that we have a New Coordinator that the Outreach Minister could do less hours”. On the positive side- “Thursday Talks appreciated”, “the classes paid for air-conditioning and other things over the years” and “is a key part of our service to the community”.

The Community Classes have been in a time of change and consolidation for nearly a year now, yet many comments made didn’t reflect the change. This is possibly because many of the changes have only been in the last few months, or we are only just now seeing the effect and there has not been time for them to filter through to the congregation. (i.e. Fees have gone up, unprofitable classes closed, there has been more fundraising events.) As a consequence class sizes have stabilised and finances have already begun to improve, which should mean that they will be very much closer to the budget in 2014.

In 2015, 226 people are enrolled in Classes 31 classes over the two days. Wednesday mornings – 6 classes + bike shed. Wednesday afternoons – 6 classes. Thursday Morning – 7 classes + *Continuing Learning*. Thursday Afternoons – 2 classes, *Patchwork* with 14 enrolled and *Chair Yoga* with 10 people enrolled, so that sections of the hall no longer needed are available for other purposes, thus reducing the Classes “footprint”. Although numbers are down from the Programs “glory days”, to only run classes on one day a week would still represent a significant closing of the current Classes activities.

There has also been the *Community Classes Satisfaction Survey*, which showed that many people have supported the classes for a long time and enjoy it. They described it in life giving terms that added meaning and value to people’s lives, this builds what is often called “social capital” as it makes a positive contribution to society. Many of these people have been coming for a long time and BUC is like their “village well” where they gather, meet their friends, and so mutually pastoral care for each other in life’s journey.

Recommendation – The rebadged Blackwood Community Classes continue into 2015, continuing to carefully restructure and moving towards financial independence by the end of 2015. That ministerial input be limited to occasional pastoral care, as needed. In doing so, become more financially and practically independent of BUC, although remaining under its “umbrella”. Community Classes are to continue to explore other ideas of working towards its vision statement of “*To provide friendship and fun through craft, fitness and learning in a caring community environment.*”

➤ **Banner Making Group, Walking Group, Inner Pilgrimage, Friday Friends** Several of these groups/activities are small, lay self-organising, use little resources and are local interest groups that are functioning well.

*So while we remind them that they are a part of the general Council oversight (like everything else), we invite them to keep up the good work! They are **Banner Making Group, Walking Group, Inner Pilgrimage, Friday Friends, and any other small groups.** However, we would encourage them to be self-reviewing, perhaps with discussions with the minister/s, for we need to*

keep a pastoral eye on those who contribute so much, inviting them to seek the following of the Spirit, so that they use their time, talents and gifts for those ministries where they can discern a calling.

Question 4. Finances

This question was specifically about BUC's own finances, a gentle enquiry, to check if people were willing to consider the possibility of covering the shortfall by simply upping their offering. Also, we do acknowledge that there are many worthy causes both church based and in the wider community, which are beyond this survey's scope.

While many people could increase their offering and **21 offered to do so, 10 people declined** to do so and many people didn't answer this question.

"No" Comments – Generally went along the lines of needing to "prune", "already substantially giving", congregation is "mostly retired and on limited income", need a more "businesslike approach", more giving is "only a short term/Band-Aid fix". Increased giving recently.

"Yes" Comments - Generally went along the lines of – "If we want 1 ½ ministers we have to give more", "considered **electronic giving**," the occasional **"one off" is a good** ideas as the solar panels are going up", "believe that we are **capable** of raising the \$26,000 deficit, through various initiatives", **"Faith \$5" promotion**.

Comments about Minister's Costs. Several people suggested cutting ministerial costs to one minister, yet a couple of people suggested that it was a bad idea as one person commented "minister's provide the theological backbone to all we do." Unfortunately, BUC has not really conveyed clearly, through this survey, what it is willing to do without in terms of those programs/activities which have budgetary impact and pragmatically, the increase in giving offering isn't enough to maintain the current level of ministry at 1.5 ministers.

Recommendation – Church Council to review the total level of paid ordained ministry. For planning purposes, we need to have a clear idea of this before the October Church Council , as planning for next year will begin in the last quarter of the year.

In Conclusion-

Exploring what gives life, ministry and vision to our congregation is not a simple thing to do. Yet we have done some good vision and mission work in the past and it is clear that the BUC congregation have come to own those statements. So the challenge becomes how do we best action that vision as the people of God?

Also, as a Church each individual is responsible for responding to their particular ministry call within the congregation, to ensure that they are listening for the voice of God in their daily lives, and in how they manage their time, talents and gifts in their response to God. So both corporately and individually, we need to take the time to pause and reflect on our community life: or we risk it being reduced to a series of rosters and time fillers. Yet, the Christian hope is that we are loved by God and always invited forward to new life in Christ. Even in these changing landscapes, changing times, we seek a 'roadway in wilderness' into the future, taking comfort in the mystery that somehow God is with us.

This report has been produced for the Congregational AGM on 16th November 2014.

5.4 Finance and Budget 2015

Blackwood Uniting Church - Proposed 2015 Budget

Our Finance and Stewardship Committee comprises Phil Megaw (Chairperson), Jan Furness (Treasurer of the main Church Council Account), Brian Pickering (Treasurer of both the Property group and the Community Outreach program), Mark Gill, Ray Bown (Giving Recorder) and a minister's representative, Phil Hoffmann.

We also assist with financial administration of the Helen Lee Trust Fund and the Flora Mansawan Trust Fund.

Financial summary reports are produced after the end of each month for presentation to the Church Executive or the Church Council (depending on which month it is) so that we can regularly monitor the trends. These are available to anyone else upon request.

Progress in 2014

We started 2014 with a bank balance of about \$135,800. 2014 has been a deliberate review year when we knew we were proceeding with a deficit budget of about \$26,000. In February we prepared financial projections for the next 5 years and presented these to the full Church Council. These showed that with a 'do nothing different' approach, we will have a deficit budget every year and BUC uses up its entire financial reserves in 2018. These reserves includes the \$96,750 of Percival James Thomas bequest money received in 2011. With large deficit outcomes predicted every future year, doing nothing different was not an option.

At the Congregational meeting on 25 May 2014 small groups were asked to record their ideas to the question "How can we respond to the tightening financial situation at BUC?". Then later on we had a special Congregation meeting on 3rd August 2014 to discuss the financial situation and a survey to more closely understand the desires of the congregation. I thank you all for your considered thoughts and comments.

Throughout the year Council and the Finance Committee have continued to monitor the financial health of our programs.

For our Community Classes many positive changes have been made which have improved the financial situation of this program and we look forward to ongoing reviews and then adopting new initiatives.

The Property Committee have done a great job again in maximising value for money in hiring out our facilities and carrying out the property maintenance work. We thank them for their many hours of skilled volunteer work and particularly for promoting and implementing the solar panels project which will continue every year to save us thousands of dollars in electricity costs.

In financial terms, with a slightly higher income than expected, the implementation of the solar panels project and adjustments to expenses in several areas, I expect that we will finish 2014 with a deficit of about \$20,000 and a final bank balance of about \$115,000 (includes the Bequest money).

Budget for 2015

As flagged at our May 25th Congregation meeting and again at our 3rd August Congregation meeting, changes in our income and/or financial commitments are needed for 2015. We have recently sought updated commitments to our regular giving program which produces the vast majority of our income. We

have prepared an updated 5 year budget and examined all key costs and various scenarios of different paid staffing levels.

Council has requested a balanced budget for 2015 and hence the data presented below (the summarised version of a more detailed budget) has been based on a reduction of Ministerial time from 1.5 to 1.2 ministers from 1/3/15 onwards. Note that the 5 year projections based on this scenario still have deficits for 2016 to 2019, but greatly reduced from that predicted earlier this year, and ongoing year by year monitoring will be needed.

BUC 2015 BUDGET - Summarised

INCOME

Offering	\$168,500
Community Classes	\$56,000
Room Hire	\$15,000
Garage Sale	\$8,500
Family Ministry	\$4,300
Other (inc Mission donations)	<u>\$15,500</u>
Total	\$267,800

COSTS

Ministers (1.2 time)	\$114,500
Office	\$22,000
Mission Giving - UCA	\$16,700
Mission Giving - direct to others	\$8,800
Community Classes	\$58,000
Property	\$39,200
Family Ministry	\$3,100
Other	<u>\$3,800</u>
Total	\$266,100

Difference = Income minus Costs \$1,700

This proposed 2015 budget has been endorsed by the Blackwood UC Council.

Recommendation: The Blackwood UC Congregation approves the proposed 2015 budget.

Phil Megaw
Chair, Finance and Stewardship Committee
3rd November 2014.

6.1 Property

Ministry Committee membership has changed very little over the last 15 years with most current members over 70 years of age. It is now essential that a number of “younger people” offer to join the committee to ensure that it can continue to function into the future.

In July **Danny Goldsmith** retired after many years of valuable service.

Current **Committee members** are Graham Brown, Russell Grear, Lisa Hadrick, David Hawkins, John Hewitt, Phil Hoffmann, Bob Lyon (*secretary*), Jane and Phil Marlow, Geoff McLean, Tony Otworowski (*chairperson*), Meg and Ray Pentland, Brian Pickering (*treasurer*), Bob and Jean Potter, and Keith Rodda.

The Church’s Mission activities frequently depend on the availability of well maintained facilities and the Committee’s role is to ensure that these are available when required by Church groups and other community users.

Routine Maintenance is an essential part of the Committee’s role including painting inside and out, floor polishing, window and carpet cleaning, cleaning gutters and drains, maintaining church furniture and fittings, kitchen and office equipment, organ and piano tuning and many other minor maintenance tasks. During the year the hot water service was replaced, the office air-conditioner and refrigerator in the kitchen were repaired.

Major Developments included the installation of a 7.5Kw Solar Power system, the redevelopment of the Church gardens to reduce maintenance, and a review of the Church’s signage and community image. It is planned to improve the rear entrance by widening the access ramp and the back door, and providing wind and rain protection and a roof over the ramp.

Blackwood Manse is “owned” by the 4 Churches of the old Blackwood Hills Parish. It is currently managed on their behalf by the Blackwood Property Committee. Belair U.C. is currently negotiating to “sell” its rights to Blackwood U.C. giving Blackwood an 80.7% interest in the property. The manse is currently being rented privately providing an income to the Manse account which currently stands at \$25,550.

Finances to 30th September -

Income was **\$27,780** from Room Hire \$11,082, Church Offerings \$6,000, Solar donations \$10,512.

Expenditure was **\$34,490** for Utilities \$9,833, Cleaning \$10,040, Maintenance \$6,040, 7.5kw Solar Power system \$8,578 **Balance** on hand is **\$5,111**.

Bob Lyon

6.2 Family Ministry

Overview - The programs of **Messy Church**, **Playgroup** and **Mainly Music**, are tactics as a response to such questions- *How can we connect to the families in the area? How can offer something that has appeal to them and support them in the challenges of family life?* Thus building social capital in the wider community and offering them an “invitation to consider the possibility of God.” Overall, they have been well received and supported by the families. It is lovely to see several families now going to 2 of the 3 programs.

As a congregation, while those involved find it very satisfying work, the challenges of maintaining these programs are ongoing, and we do need more volunteers, if they are to continue, let alone develop. This is a brief report concentrating on numbers, but beyond that we all have wonderful stories of lives shared, fun times, and celebratory worship, telling of God’s Great Love and how we are invited to participate in it!

Come and talk to any of us for further details.

Rev Cogs & Rev Phil & volunteers

Messy Church (*Sundays – monthly, 4pm. All Ages, craft, chapel service, simple meal.*)

We averaged 9 families per Messy Church session so far this year, many with both parents and multiple children, usually with about 9 ‘helpers’, which means about 40 people attend the Chapel service! Messy Church is slowly developing into its own community. Thematically, this year, we have focused on basic Christian concepts as – “Who is God?, Who is Jesus?, Easter, Holy Spirit, Baptism , then moved onto “I am the vine”. “I am the light” and lastly we will have a Messy Christmas! Next year we are considering using themes around Godly relationships and what we mean by them. It is good to have Phil as part of the team in the planning and preparation of these sessions.

Rev Cogs

Playgroup (*Mondays, 10 am. 0-5 year olds and parent/carers, playtime with crafts, story and songs, morning tea.*)

Numbers fell off at the start of the year due to new playgroups in the area. However, during the year numbers have steadily grown, from 16 families to 25, with 38 children. We currently have around 50 families on the roll, many with two children. The baby playgroup disbanded and we now absorb new mothers into the 10am playgroup. Anyone interested in reading stories or leading simple songs once or twice a term, please see

Marnie Agnew

Mainly Music (*Fridays, 10 am. 0-5 year olds and parent/carers, music session including 3 ‘God songs’, child’s playtime while parents have morning tea together.*)

The **Mainly Music** program has now been in progress for nearly two years. The leadership has expanded this year with Jan Furness and Judy Lower joining Carys Penny and Bev Eccleston as music leaders. The team of 14 dedicated members make the sessions run smoothly and well. There is always room for more helpers to relieve when people are on holidays, come and see Carys.

The average number of families attending is 14 with about 28 children, with a total of 25 families on the roll. Positive feedback from families was received from a recent survey and planning for 2015 has already begun.

Carys Penny.

6.3 Community Classes

Firstly I would like to thank everyone for welcoming me into the role of Community Program Coordinator and making me feel so welcome. I am now in my second school term of the Community Classes and they seem to be running well. I am extremely enthusiastic and very keen to help improve the running of the classes and increase the numbers.

Following on from the Blackwood Community Program Satisfaction Survey and also the Congregational Survey we have instigated changes to the Community Program as briefly detailed below.

The Community Classes have been in a time of change and consolidation for nearly a year now. We are now just seeing the effect of these changes made. Fees have gone up, unprofitable classes closed and there have been more fundraising events. As a consequence class sizes have stabilised and finances have already begun to improve.

In 2015, 226 people are enrolled in 31 classes over the two days. Wednesday mornings and afternoons we have 6 classes plus bike shed and Thursday morning we have 7 classes plus continuing learning and only 2 classes on Thursday afternoons which is Patchwork with 14 enrolled and Chair Yoga and meditation with 10 people enrolled. Therefore on Thursday afternoons sections of the hall are no longer needed and are available for other purposes, thus reducing the Classes footprint.

We are carefully monitoring class numbers and finance and I am pleased to say that following a predicted budget deficit the Management Committee would like to advise that we are now making a profit.

The Quiz Night raised just under \$1,200 and the Craft Fair over \$7,000 profit (the budget for this was \$5,000). We have also done some more minor fundraising and also started charging people a gold coin donation for tea and coffee and the crèche.

Next year we have one confirmed new Mosaics class with a new tutor. We are also looking at another Knitting & Crochet Class depending on numbers. Every week I am fielding questions about our classes resulting in a number of new people attending. The Management Committee are meeting this week to discuss new ideas for 2015. Some ideas we are throwing around are Parenting Skills, Cooking Classes and finding the “current” trend and holding a weekend workshop. Also, taking advantage of the closure of the crèche at the Blackwood Gym and providing fitness classes for Mums with children.

My plans for next year (2015) are to target more specific demographics through focussed advertising towards age groups and genders, and work more closely with the Mitcham Council, other Community Organisations and schools.

We will and are continually applying for grants for particular needs that will benefit the Community Classes such as new tables, coffee machines, etc.

As always, the Community Classes continue to work towards its vision statement, “To provide friendship and fun through craft, fitness and learning in a caring community environment”.

Jacqui Harrison
Community Program Coordinator

6.3 Website

Report not received at time of printing.

6.4 Justice Report

Activities February – beginning of November 2014

Members of the group for 2014 were: Phill Hoffmann, Tricia Rushton, Jane Bassham, Ewan Hazeldine, Christa Megaw, Ian Penney, Malcolm MacArthur, Anne Magarey. Christa left the group when she took up the position of minister at Bridgewater UC. Members of the group are often involved with several other groups and activities and are very busy.

At a meeting on 12 February 2014, activities for the year were planned, and people to be responsible appointed. We decided to limit activities to one per month, and use the special days in the UCASA calendar as a guide. Not all planned activities eventuated.

March

Lent commences 5 March

17 – 23 UCA Week of Prayer and Fasting for Justice for Indigenous Australians. The group will request a donation from Council for this, to be repaid from a fundraiser during National Reconciliation Week. This will most likely be in the form of a retiring offering.

18 March evening special service for this event, similar to the Service of Lament for Asylum Seekers and Refugees. Phil Hoffmann will take the lead in bringing this together. Members of the congregation will be provided with postcards to send to the government regarding the plight of Indigenous prisoners and the cut in funding for legal services.

April

6 March Lent

27 Fair Trade

May

27 May – 3 June National Reconciliation Week. Aboriginal Appeal to replace money donated during Week of Prayer and Fasting for Justice for Indigenous Australians

June

1 World Environment Day

July

6 – 13 NAIDOC Week

August

31 Refugee and Migrant Sunday, with special guest/s. 'Jesus was a refugee' event during service.

September

28 Social Justice Sunday

November

30 Advent Conspiracy (Advent commences). Act for Peace (Christmas Bowl retiring offering during Advent)

Money raised by the cake stall at the Craft Fair is to be sent to the Congress.

6.6 Urban Mission Network

The Urban Mission Network, is a group of church communities that meet about once a term. They are like sized or minded. It is a good opportunity to share knowledge, resources and learn.

The next meeting is at Para Hills on November. 27th. Please let us know if you would like to attend. We are looking for a new Representative from BUC.

To find out more about the work it does, <http://www.urbannetwork.org.au/>

I have enjoyed my encounters with others.

Wendy Norris

6.7 Kid's Hope

We are still operating the World Vision program Kids Hope at Blackwood Primary finishing our 6th Year. The program has been operating nationally for 10 years and each of us attend the school to work with one child for an hour a week each week of the school year, barring sickness or holidays.

There are 10 Kids Hope Mentors 8 male and 2 female working at the school and we enjoy our interaction with the children who need our assistance by build better relationships with others, doing a bit of school work to build skills where this is practical, playing games and generally having fun to enrich their lives and ours as it becomes a two way process.

Recently some of us assisted the Christian Pastoral Support Worker to read stories about caring to each class. This led to some firsthand stories about cooperation and caring between a group of children in Africa, caring in Palestine and other inspiring stories from books for younger children. The exercise was highly useful and Dianne Deed and the teachers were very happy with the outcomes as were we all were. It is to be hoped that the event will reoccur next year.

We are always looking for other people to join us to take on a child and help their development. In this way we can make a difference in one child's life.

Ian Penny
Coordinator

6.8 Mitcham Hills InterChurch Council (MHICC) & Beacon

The Mitcham Hills Inter-Church Council [MHICC] is the primary expression of Blackwood Uniting's commitment to ecumenism and co-operation with other churches. In 2014 meetings have been held at the Belair Anglican, Blackwood Church of Christ, St Peter's Lutheran, and Belair Catholic. Each meeting gives us opportunity to view their physical building and some of the ministries that operate there.

At each meeting there is also an open agenda item for discussion which enables exchange of what is happening in each of our communities. For example, we have had conversations around "How our church is facing changes" and "What our church plans for Christmas".

A major new initiative of this year was "The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity" in which members of the Council 'rotated' on behalf of the MHICC to each other's faith communities according to a roster, bringing a greeting and prayer to the congregation that each visited. On June 1st we were pleased to welcome Renate Shanahan from the Lutheran Community and Bev Eccleston carried Uniting greetings to Belair Catholic. This was an enjoyable exchange in Christian unity and sharing.

MHICC continues to support the Christian Pastoral Support Worker program ['chaplains'], providing placement support and oversight. With Government review and changes to this program and some funding uncertainty, this has been quite complicated. As at Sept 28 the program continues to be funded by State Government after a (successful) High Court challenge. This relies on co-operation with local ecumenical church fellowships for the administration of the program. Currently local Blackwood Churches support workers in each of Hawthorndene, Blackwood, Belair and Coromandel Valley (new person) Primary Schools and Blackwood High.

Fundraisers towards chaplaincy have been the donations of local churches, and the "Supreme Mamas" concert on September 14.

Our other combined function is Beacon Emergency Relief which continues this year under a new co-ordinator, Stuart Rutter. Blackwood Uniting shared in a "Soup and Sweets" evening with Church of Christ friends on July 20. Volunteers spoke of their roles and of the personal satisfaction gained.

The Inter-Church Council meets bi-monthly, hosted by churches of the local area. Blackwood Uniting Church is represented by Gloria MacArthur, Bev Eccleston, Rev Cogs Smith, and Rev Phil Hoffmann.

GloriaMacArthur

BEACON EMERGENCY RELIEF SERVICE

Clients

Beacon continues to provide emergency relief to clients who find themselves in a unique set of circumstances.

It can be challenging to discern how we can best meet their needs but every effort is made to treat clients with sense of fairness, equality and justice.

Fundraising and Donations

The fundraiser at the Blackwood Lions Bargain Centre in September raised \$840 for the purchase of food, fuel and meal vouchers for clients and to cover administration costs at Beacon. 13 volunteers from 3 different churches (Blackwood Church of Christ, Blackwood Uniting Church and Blackwood Catholic Parish) helped to make this a success. Certificates of Appreciation will be presented to them shortly. It was a delight to join in with members of the public and help to make the Bargain Centre a vibrant and effective community service.

I presented a talk about Beacon at the Coromandel Valley Quilters Group, who donated \$1250, on Wednesday 22nd October and will speak at the Mitcham Kiwanis Club, who wish to donate \$1000, on Monday 24th November. I am meeting people who help to keep Beacon running and thanking them for their generosity. I am also developing my public speaking skills and promoting the work of Beacon in the local community.

Volunteers

The volunteers continue to keep Beacon operating smoothly. They are a vital part of the service. I encourage everyone in the community to show our appreciation for their ongoing commitment to making life easier to deal with for our clients.

Signage

Recently, Beacon was given permission to place our A-frame sign outside the entrance to the Blackwood Drakes/Foodland Supermarket. This will be a key position in the local shopping precinct and inform potential clients and supporters of our presence and contribution to the welfare of people in our community. For the past several weeks, the sign has been placed near the entrance to Woolworths.

Christmas Hampers

Work is well underway with regard to Christmas Hampers for our clients who find it particularly difficult to “make ends meet” at this time of the year. The hampers will be offered to 20 clients who have used Beacon this year and have children under their care.

Donations

I am pleasantly surprised by the generosity of individuals, groups and churches in the local community who continue to give food and monetary donations to Beacon. On behalf of Beacon, I have been sending letters of thanks to express our gratitude for their kindness and thoughtfulness.

Newsletter

The next edition of the Beacon Newsletter will be available in November so please remember to distribute it amongst your networks in churches and the local community.

Community Dollars Program

Please remember to swipe your key tags each time you make a purchase at a checkout at Drakes Supermarkets. Beacon is on track to receive a significant amount of money in November as a result of this initiative.

Stuart Rutter
Coordinator

6.9 Library Report

“Books stimulate imagination, dreams and hopes. If we can have children reading and engaging in the stories of others we will have a more compassionate world” Dr Susan Hill.

This year we have added 57 books to our collection, 50 of which have been donated. 7 issues each of *New Internationalist* and *Australian Leadership* have also been donated.

Among our acquisitions is *Falling upward, a spirituality for the two halves of life* by Richard Rohr. Rohr concludes “What looks like falling can largely be experienced as falling upward and onward into a broader and deeper world, where the soul has found its fullness, is finally connected to the whole, and lives inside the Big Picture.”

Praying our Goodbyes by Joyce Rupp. The author writes about many different kinds of losses and sorrows and includes prayers which offer help and encouragement.

A Different Sun is a poem written by Desmond Sim about children in a hospital in Singapore who are stricken with cancer and how they learn to cope together with their families.

We have also acquired four books written for leaders of Messy Church.

Although most of the collection is arranged by the Dewey Decimal Classification we have several sections that are separate. These include Fiction, Children’s books, Mainly Music Books CDs and DVDs.

Community Outreach books are arranged by Dewey but are also in a separate section.

Thank you to all those who have donated books and those who have suggested new titles.

6.10 Synod & Presbytery Meeting

Report not received at time of printing.

6.11 11am Community

The 11-00am community continues to enjoy meaningful worship services and fellowship together. While ageing and smaller in number we remain a vibrant and enthusiastic community serving the church and wider community in a variety of ministries.

We continue to share a commitment to providing pastoral care and support to all those who worship with us and to those who no longer can come but still desire to know what is happening around our church.

The pastoral care list is updated regularly providing an easy way of identifying new people. We thank those who have given time over many years to visit and care for those people.

Each month Friday Friendship group meets for fellowship, informative discussions and afternoon tea. All are welcome to join us and share life stories and happenings around Blackwood and beyond

We thank Mary Thomas and her teams for continuing to co-ordinate this group and special lunches and events such as the World Day of Prayer held earlier this year.

Mary and Geoff are always seen selling fruit etc raising much needed money for the Frontier Services

Many of us participate in cluster groups and bible studies meeting together formally and informally with an understanding that this is another way of extending our care and support for one another.

We take this opportunity to thank Rev Phil and Rev Cogs for their support and encouragement throughout the year.

Jan Wiseman

6.12 Flora

Update on Flora Mansawan for Blackwood Uniting Church Annual General Meeting

Flora Mansawan is a 7 year old who was born without a left lower leg. She lives on the little island of Numfor, West Papua. There was a decision to support Flora when members of Blackwood Uniting Church met Flora when visiting West Papua in February 2014, as we are Partners with the West Papua Church (GKI) on Numfor and Biak Islands, in particular.

There are limited services on Numfor Island and Flora gets around by hopping or crawling.

We developed a Covenant of Partnership between Blackwood Uniting Church, GKI (Papuan Church) & Synod of South Australia specifically to support Flora. Blackwood Uniting Church also manages a Trust Fund for Flora. Progress relating to Flora is reported to Blackwood Uniting Church Council via Jane Bassham.

Over the past 4 years fundraising has occurred to assist with assessment and treatment for Flora. Many members of the community both locally and further afield have been touched by Flora's story and contributed to assist her. Flora's story enables a platform for informing people about West Papua more broadly.

Elna Kapisa (a West Papuan who studied conversational English via BUC in 2010 for 3 months) visited Flora in April of this year. We have contact via facebook with a young minister who used to live on Numfor, and still has regular contact with people from Numfor. We are trying to work with Papuans to ensure assessment and treatment for Flora. This has been difficult work. We started liaising with the GKI specifically, and more recently Lyn Muller and Jane Bassham have been in email contact with the director of a group who work with people with disabilities, which is based in Bali and have expressed interest in helping Flora. To date this has not culminated in practical assistance to Flora and we are considering our next steps, whilst continuing to fund raise and liaise with our Indonesian contacts.

Please keep our West Papuan partners, friends and Flora in your prayers.

Syalom,

Jane Bassham

6.13 Friday Night Meals

In light of the recent Congregational Survey & the Friday Meals Committee's own observations; the committee has sadly agreed that it is a good time for our Friday Meals program to be reworked. Observations of the current Program have indicated that it may not be reaching the intended target in the local community.

The Friday Meals committee made the following recommendations to the BUC Council, which have been accepted:

- Friday Meals will finish in its current format at the Christmas Meal on 12/12/2014
- A new committee to be formed by Council in early 2015 to consider what purposeful program would be an appropriate response to the needs in this area.

The Committee wishes to thank everyone who has been involved in this program.

With grateful thanks also to the FM committee: Rev Cogs Smith, Roma Muzzatti, Helen Blake, Penny Harper and Elisabeth Williams.

Jackie Otworowski

FM Coordinator

6.14 Flinders Medical Centre

The Flinders Medical Centre multi-faith chapel is located on Level 4 and is available for prayer (included is a Muslim prayer space), quiet time, meditation or quiet conversation. It is open from 8.00am to 8.00pm.

Worship services are held in the chapel on Sundays at 11.00am (and other times as arranged). The morning worship is for all denominations celebrated by a rostered chaplain and is open to patients, visitors and staff.

Blackwood Uniting Church, along with other churches, is rostered on to support this service once every 3 months.

Helpers arrive at the chapel at 10am and report to the chaplain and together decide what wards they will visit. These visits have a two fold purpose:-

- 1) To provide pastoral care in the form of a friendly visit where appropriate and offer prayer at the service or occasionally by the bedside.
- 2) To accompany any patients interested in the service and able to attend, to the chapel, usually in a wheelchair.

The services are small and simple and always include communion. Having a musician adds an extra dimension to the worship and we have been fortunate to have a few musicians to call on and at the moment are relying on Jeff Hunter who entertains anyone waiting for the service to start as well.

3 months ago we had no patients attending but still took part in the service. Last Sunday 2nd we had 5 visitors and 4 on our team. One mobile patient brought along his guitar and joined in accompanying the singing with encouragement and support from Jeff Hunter. An elderly patient in a wheel chair read the Bible reading.

Every visit is different and rewarding and the more helpers we have means that we can connect with more patients.

Tony Miller, Anne Grear, Dave Smith, and Jeff Hunter