

Special Congregational Meeting Minutes

Sunday, 8 March 2020

Blackwood Uniting Church

Attendance:

| | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Chris Bray | Ian Penny | Jocie Dennison |
| Margaret McCaskill | Avis Whitbread | John Whitbread |
| Bev Eccleston | Bev Allison | Helen Blake |
| Jan Furness | Anthony Furness | Helen Brown |
| Graham Brown | Claudia Cliff | Estelle Pearce |
| Judy Adami | Peter Stead | Elisabeth Williams |
| Mark Williams | Robert Colbert | Bruce Marriott |
| Bonnie Marriott | Trevor Sutcliffe | Alison Sutcliffe |
| Carys Penny | Gwendolyn Morphett | Jan Wiseman |
| Bob Roach | Bob Potter | Ros Bardsley |
| Ken Bardsley | Kay Cranwell Mullin | Marnie Agnew |
| Daniel Roach | Christine Roach | Phil Marlow |
| Jane Marlow | Pat Collette | Jacqui Harrison |
| Jocelyn Gamble | Mark Gill | Richard Stead |
| Peter Smith | Julie Haddrick | Joan Hazeldine |
| Ewan Hazeldine | Penny Harper | Glenis Reid |
| Malcolm McArthur | Gloria McArthur | Jill Pope |
| Neville Pope | Ros Miller | Doff Lyon |
| Jan Rawolle | Keith Rawolle | David Hawkins |
| Lynona Hawkins | Bryan Belling | Joy Belling |
| Liz Waters | Peter Waters | John Hewitt |
| Gwenyth Hewitt | Rodney Pike | John Dixon |
| Anne Dixon | Janet Paull | Michael Bull |
| Peter Cranwell | Tony Miller | Anne Magarey |
| Michael Dowling | | |

Apologies:

| | | |
|-------------|-------------|----------|
| Wes Bray | Bec English | Bob Lyon |
| Thelma Pike | | |

The meeting opened at approximately 11.30 am, following a combined worship service.

1. Welcome & Opening Prayer

Chair Michael Bull welcomed everyone and offered an Opening Prayer.

2. Overview of Meeting Items

The Chair introduced the single agenda item, ie a progress report on the project *“Forward with Purpose”*. He invited members to sign the Attendance Sheets being circulated, and noted that questions would be welcomed after the full presentation.

3. Presentations

Peter Cranwell acknowledged and thanked the other members of the *“Forward with Purpose”* sub-group of Council – Tony Miller, Anne Magarey, Michael Dowling – for their work in organising the 6 workshops that took place earlier this year and the development of the surveys sent to BUC members and to organisations within the wider Blackwood community.

Peter began with a powerpoint presentation, providing an overview since *“Forward with Purpose”* was first presented at the Annual Congregational Meeting in November 2019. He noted that BUC sought to be a flourishing, engaged and connected community, connected with each other and with the wider, local community – in a way that was a fresh expression of church.

To establish lasting, quality connections with our wider community, we need to know ourselves and the community better and, in this process, we seek to present ourselves in a way that makes us more relevant to the wider community. Although we are a small part of our wider community (eg, about 1%), the way we live out our faith hopefully will have a bigger ripple effect on our community.

The following activities have been done so far:

- Surveys
 - Online congregational survey – 88 surveys completed, representing 105 people
 - Community classes survey – after 2 weeks, 14 completed
 - Wider community survey – to be released in 2 weeks
- Workshops

- Six (6) completed, focusing on 3 separate themes
 - Faith – “To further explore our expression of what we believe” (47 attended)
 - Connecting – “How to engage with people to flourish” (51 attended)
 - Other – “Creative ways to practical action” (38 attended)
 - 65 people attended at least one workshop – a strong turnout from members
- Facility improvements
 - The Technical Committee has worked over the past 12 months.
 - Committee consists of Graham Brown, Peter Smith, Tony Otworowski, Mark Gill, Ben and Rina Mathews, Jacqui Harrison, Peter Cranwell
 - Information gathered will influence changes to be proposed later in the year. Some building works will need to be done in the first instance, eg creating a formal rear entry, updating the toilets, some painting and floor coverings.
 - Any other changes will be done only after significant consideration, including financial viability.

Tony Miller next presented the first-cut analysis of the online Congregational Survey. Respondents were asked to “tick” their preferred choices for church activities, across a number of predefined categories. Any open-ended comments received are being analysed with the comments documented in the workshops. Survey responses were analysed by age group:

- Group A - Age 20-29 9 responses
- Group B - Age 40-59 10 responses
- Group C - Age 60+ 69 responses

Common interests and “passions” of the congregation were defined as those items that received a response level of 67% or more, as summarised below.

- Areas of Interest
 - Friendship Groups A,B,C
 - Spirituality A,C
 - Learning B,C
 - Support B
- Social Justice

- Indigenous issues A,B
 - Inclusion issues B
 - Women's issues A
- Faith & Spirituality
 - Children or youth A
- Environmental
 - Climate action conversations A,B
 - Conservation conversation B
- Health & Well-being
 - Mental health A,B
- Social Interests
 - Movie nights A
 - Music performances B
 - Lego club A
- Preferred Times
 - Weekdays (day time) C
 - Weekdays (evening/night time) A
 - Weekends (day time) B
- Logo
 - 70% indicated "I like 'the buc' logo shown"



Peter thanked Tony and all who completed the survey, noting the fantastic level of response and encouraging people to look further at the full data at: http://blackwooduc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/200303survey_quantitative-results_88-responses.pdf

Anne Magarey then presented a summary of the initial analysis of comments/feedback/suggestions provided at the 6 workshops.

- "Love" was clearly a common thread throughout all the workshop discussions – especially in the faith workshops.

- Love and compassion were seen as special elements of our faith community.
- Love was described as a core belief that is demonstrated through inclusion, acceptance and being non-judgemental.
- We want to serve, be kind, and advocate for those who need help.
- We feel that helping those in the community is something we should do.
- We noted that Jesus lived out unconditional love and this is fundamental to who we are.
- We don't want to "step on toes", don't want to "take over", be pushy or "churchy" – but we want to be recognisable in the community.
- We might need some training to do this right, to know what our skills and passions are.
- We want to grow and learn in our faith journey.
- How we use our property, our car park, our manse should be guided by our commitment to love.
- The sub-group was struck by how love permeated the responses.
- We are seeking ways to operationalise – to put into action – this love.

Anne noted that the workshop feedback will be further explored. She thanked all for their attendance and input.

Peter thanked Anne and emphasised how much material Anne had been looking through, with 270 bullet points having been collected from the Faith workshops alone. People were advised to contact Michael Dowling if they wanted to look further at the "raw data" from the workshops.

Peter noted that, in terms of a road map for moving forward, the sub-group will be concentrating initially on what things could be done quickly without much cost or significant additional effort. Although no decisions have yet been made, feedback does suggest such areas as:

- Extending the "breadth" of the Community Classes
- "My Story Telling" opportunities
- Meeting the needs of the ageing
- Creating a commercial precinct
- Having opportunities for board games, hosting a Lego club, having music jam sessions

While about 70% liked the proposed logo, or a slight modification, all comments on the logo will be further considered before any decision.

Peter presented the following tasks for proceeding from here:

- **SYNOD notification**

Start the conversation with them so they are in the picture

- **Plan - sequence**

Activities must be realistically achievable

Each activity to have goals to measure progress e.g. start and finish dates or duration

- **Finance**

Need to determine budget expenditure required for various stages

Need a Business Plan detailing viability – based on previous Technical Committee suggestions

- **“Low hanging fruit”**

Identify in sequence, based on least cost and most achievable

We expect there will be quite a number in this category that can be started very soon.

- **Timeline**

Need to be realistic, based on detailed assumptions regarding human and financial resources

- **Effort strategy**

Who will do What, When and How?

Management – needs to be driven by someone until bedded in.

Possibly 3 years?

Audits – Would be wise to have someone audit against plans on a frequent basis. Phil Megaw, former member and a qualified engineer, has offered to do this.

4. Questions

Bev Eccleston - Will we see a plan of what will be done to the building?

Peter – Yes. It is too soon for specific building works but there have been 3 draft plans developed. One was presented in the workshop to give some idea of changes being considered. However, until more analysis of what will be needed, eg moving walls, we can't present a final proposal. The congregation will be involved in further discussion.

Michael Bull – Could you describe what's being considered with the *Blackwood Times*.

Peter – We have met with the paper's editor and he's very excited about what we are doing. He wants to publish a story each month about BUC.

5. Concluding Comments

Michael Dowling expressed much thanks to Peter, Tony and Anne for all their work. He noted that quantitative data is easier to analyse, with more time needed to fully summarise the qualitative workshop data. We will look for patterns of what people have said, what they want – will do this using “soft eyes”, looking for the whole gestalt vs the little pieces. Patterns are waiting to be seen, to emerge.

6. Next Meeting

The next congregational meeting is scheduled for Sunday, 17 May 2020. We expect more information on *“Forward with Purpose”* will be available then. The Chair expressed sincere thanks to the sub-group, and also to Council for their direction and support.

The meeting concluded, with a closing prayer from Michael Dowling, at approximately 12.20 pm.

Minutes drafted by Michael Bull