

# Annual General Meeting

**Blackwood Uniting Church**  
**Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2020**



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 15<sup>th</sup> 2020

### Blackwood Uniting Church

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c. Audio-recording of meeting for BUC website		
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<b>11. Closing Prayer</b>		

### **3. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting**

#### **Congregational Meeting Minutes**

**Sunday, 17 November 2019**

**Blackwood Uniting Church**

**Attendance: 77**

**Apologies: 19**

The meeting opened at 11.20 am.

#### **1. Welcome & Opening Prayer**

Chair Michael Bull welcomed everyone and offered an Opening Prayer. He acknowledged and thanked Ewan Hazeldine for filling in for him for the last two Congregational meetings.

#### **2. Overview of Meeting Items**

Michael thanked Jacqui Harrison for preparing and circulating the reports for this meeting. He explained the process of the orange and blue cards; orange to show support and blue to question – and asked for the Attendance Sheets to be circulated and to note any Apologies.

The Chair assured the assembly that although the meeting will be audio recorded, the recording was for the purpose of reviewing the Minutes and will not appear on the website. Michael noted the meeting took place under the Uniting Church's Safe Church Policy.

#### **3. Approval of Minutes of Congregational Meeting**

The Minutes of the General Meeting held on 19 May 2019, plus the Special Congregational Meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2019 and the AGM Minutes from 18<sup>th</sup> November 2018, were all circulated prior to the meeting and put to be formally accepted.

There being no questions, acceptance of the Minutes were expressed with a show of orange cards.

#### **4. Matters Arising**

There were no specific matters arising which will not be addressed in Reports.

#### **5. Voting for Church Council Members**

The meeting approved the Chair's proposal of Ray Pentland and Jean Potter as scrutineers for the Church Council voting.

Voting by ballot unanimously approved the nominations of Marnie Agnew & Ian Penny for an additional 5-year term on Church Council.

#### **6. Spoken Reports**

##### **6.1 Church Council Report – Chris Bray**

This year's report is relatively short, after the longer 2018 report associated with the search for a Minister. This year it was a joy to have invited Michael and for him to have been so pleased to accept our invitation – it has been a really steep learning curve for Michael but I want to thank him for all the effort he has put into that and getting to know us all. Anybody that he doesn't know by name

you obviously must have only come this week! Also a special thanks to Jacqui for helping Michael fit in and get to know the ropes here and the induction and try and get rid of some of the lumpy bits along the way especially as I wasn't able to assist as much. A big thank you to all the Council Members and I'm really pleased that both Marnie & Ian have re-nominated. Thank you. (See Chris' full written report in the circulated documents.)

The Chair expressed thanks on behalf of the Congregation to Chris for her leadership over the past year, one with many challenges for Chris. Despite all of those challenges Chris has continued to stay involved, and provide wisdom, guidance and enthusiasm for the work of the church and Church Council. Council has met every month in the past year rather than bi-monthly in order to address all the work that was required. The Chair thanked the Council members for their dedication to all its work, including the invitation to Michael and some of the things to be presented later in the meeting regarding future directions for the Church.

The Chair also thanked Wes for his steadfast support of Chris over the year.

## **6.2 Minister's Report – Michael Dowling**

I've been doing all many things since arriving at Blackwood, coming up to speed with what it is to be a Congregational Minister. Learning as I go and being helped by you as I go. So, I have to say thank you to each and every one of you, especially to Chris & Jacqui and to so many of you who have made this path much easier for me. I feel overwhelmingly grateful to be here. What have I been doing? Many things as you can see from the report but I think in summary doing many and varied versions of coming to know and love you, which I am coming to do. I just thank you for being able to be here with you. Thank you. (See Michael's full written report in the circulated documents.)

The Chair urged members to read Michael's report, if they hadn't already, as it is another example of Michael's creative written expression and his enthusiasm for being at Blackwood. He finishes his report by saying what a magnificent community of people! What a privilege to be the Minister here! Michael's report mentions people coming and going over the last year. We always rejoice in the new people who decide to make Blackwood their Church home and we are always saddened when we have people leave not only through moving, such as Duncan & Wendy Norris, but through their deaths. This year some significant members of our congregation died – Eva Holmes & Doris Young (11 am Community), Merri Stoddard & David Agnew (9:15 Community). Their spirit and presence remain with us.

Rev Dr Adrian Brown said a prayer of remembrance for those who have died this year.

## **6.3 Finance & Budget for 2019/2020 – Tony Miller**

Apologies for no written report – the details of this report was only put together in the last few days. An electronic copy will be distributed to everyone shortly. (A copy of Tony's report was available on the BUC website after the meeting.)

### **2019 in review**

After a tumultuous year financially, we anticipate a surplus of \$3800. We usually budget offerings on a business-as-usual model which assumes that we generally lose a few people each year and that normally translates to about a \$2,000 or \$3,000 decrease in offering. In fact, this year we had an

\$8,000 increase over our business-as-usual estimate. There has been an increase in giving by our existing giving community, and there's been a few new people who have either joined the church and started giving or have started giving for other reasons. So that's a very positive thing and it certainly helped us to come up with the surplus.

We've also had savings in terms of our Ministers costs, our major financial expenditure. In the beginning of the year we had various fill-in and supply ministers before Michael joined us. The net effect was that we were actually without a minister for a few weeks at the beginning of the year which translated into a saving of about \$4,500.

Since the buy-out agreement was agreed with the other churches who had shares in the Manse, Blackwood now has sole control of the Manse and we have decided that the Manse account should be integrated with all other accounts. From now on we'll refer to the integrated accounts, meaning our Main Account, our Property Account, the Community Program Account and now the Manse Account. Eden Hills Uniting Church closed and we are no longer are obliged to pay them a contribution as per the original buy-out agreement between ourselves, Eden Hills, Upper Sturt and Belair. This generates a saving of almost \$8,000 per annum. For this and other reasons, we are going to end up with a surplus of about \$3,800. This could vary by plus or minus \$1,000 over the remaining 2 months of 2019. We project an end of year cash balance of \$180,000 in our account.

### **Plans for 2020**

We estimate our main source of income, Offerings, to be \$166,000.

We estimate the Community Program income will roughly be the same as this year.

Our next major item is facilities rental, which was down this year because long-term hirers of our facilities decided to no longer come here. We budgeted in 2020 for a return to what we were getting before 2019 as we seek to fill the spot of those vacated long-term hirers. We estimate approx. \$16,000 in rental.

The Manse rental income this year was a bit over \$23,000 and we anticipate the same next year.

Fundraising – we had some good fundraising events this year, quiz night, jazz high tea afternoon, the garage sale and together with a few other smaller fundraising events they brought in \$11,500 and we anticipate something similar again next year.

We anticipate, on the basis of the business-as-usual assumption for offerings, an income of \$274,000, a couple of thousand dollars less than 2019.

Council would like to set a bit of a challenge to the community this year – to include provision for an additional paid person to enhance the Ministry Team and better support the Family Ministry program. We propose a provision of up to \$20,000 in our budget (equivalent of a 0.2 Full Time Minister) with the understanding that this extra paid position may not be an Ordained Minister. Council intends to work out details of this proposal during 2020; this may include reappropriating some of Michael's time. Building up the Family Ministry program will probably require more time than Michael can give to it, so there might be some substitution of Michael's time in some category by this provision. So, this is the challenge for the 2020 Budget.

## **Expenditure 2020**

Our major cost is Minister costs; this year we paid \$97,000, next year we expect it to be \$103,000 as Michael is now Full Time for the full year and Ministerial expenses have increased by about 2%.

We also have the proposal for an additional Ministry Provision which is \$20,000.

Other payroll expenditures include Jacqui in the office and the tutors in the Community Program, who are paid staff. Some of the tutors have been underpaid, so there will be an increase in our salary costs on that side of the ledger.

Those three top salary items are significant increases for 2020.

Property Maintenance and the Cleaning of the facilities will be roughly the same. Utilities bills we anticipate to increase somewhat.

Since the Manse is now included in our budget there are expenses related to the Manse – paying utilities, maintenance and various other related activities. We expect them to go up by a 2-3 percent.

Our payment to Belair and Upper Sturt it will go up slightly to \$10,000. That payment has been now been made for 2 years; 2020 will be the first of the remaining 6 years. For the 5 years after 2020 we will continue to have to pay those churches \$10,000.

We have to pay Synod, Presbytery and various other Councils based on our medium sized Congregation income. These expenses have been about \$20,000 and that will go up slightly.

Various other expenses, such as office related expenses, worship expenses including music copyright, will all be the same.

In summary, we anticipate a significant expenditure increase in 2020 to \$300,000 compared to about \$270,000 this year.

Overall, income has gone down slightly, expenditure has gone up considerably and so we anticipate a deficit next year of about \$30,000. That deficit is reduced to about \$9,500 if we exclude the additional Ministry provision. A \$9,500 deficit corresponds to about 6% of our giving income. If we include the additional Ministry position, the projected deficit of \$30,000 is an increase of about 18% of our giving income. This year we had an increase of giving of about \$8,000 which corresponds to about 5%.

To summarise, we have a challenging 2020 budget and the challenge is for us to consider increasing our giving. For people who would like to sign up to E-give there are forms available here. For people who are already E-givers you can easily update the figures by either going to the UC Invest website or you can speak to Ray Bown who is our local representative.

Thanks to Brian Pickering and Jan Furness - both of them do the day-to-day work and put all the details into the accounting framework. Brian & Jan deserve a round of support.

Questions?

Heather Lee – A comment that's been made before - that we don't take for granted the massive amount of goodwill that goes into the Family Ministry, especially from Marnie Agnew and others too. They give so much time and energy and we cannot continue to just expect huge amounts of time and energy to be given without further support.

The Chair then followed up on Heather's question. The Family Ministry position is still alive in Council. There has been a number of important issues to be worked through this year, part of which was to allow for Michael to get settled in and for Michael to part of the review of where things go in terms of Family Ministry and what that 0.2 position might be.

The Chair thanked Tony Miller. Tony's report was accepted unanimously.

#### **6.4 Forward with Purpose – Peter Cranwell**

Firstly, I would like to thank Michael Dowling, Anne Magarey and Tony Miller. All of us worked together in a small group requested by council to put forward what I'm about to talk about.

For some time the Council have been considering the future of BUC. And this includes both the **regeneration** of our community of faith and the **rejuvenation** of the asset – the facilities, the building that we're in. How can we move forward with purpose? So, today I'm going to talk briefly about where we have been, where are we now and more importantly where are we going? It's not in minute detail but it will give some direction to this way forward.

First, some history ... in 1881 the first Wesleyan Church opened just down the road, 40 years later the foundation of this sanctuary was laid, 50 years later the major extensions that we are sitting in here and the rest of it were opened and today almost 50 years on where are we now?

Well, we have 3 worshipping communities – 9:15, 11:00 and Messy Church with 150 regular members. We have Mainly Music – over 25 families regularly attending. We run an Occasional Series with over 60 people attending each time this year from around the local district and wider. And of course, the Community Classes are still operating after over 45 years and have around 350 members at the moment – amazing. Playgroup – each week there are 15-20 or so regular families that get together. Plus the community service to individuals that you all do. Kids Hope, Beacon and so many other contributions to the community through Probus, Lions, Resthaven programs, the list would go on. Our congregation is diverse, gifted, well-grounded and very generous and compassionate to many. It's a progressive thinking community that has consistently acted out its faith in the world around us. So, if we are going along very nicely, we need to understand why council are recommending any changes, right? So, where are we going?

In 20 years, we could be like this (slide of hands gripping a cliff edge) if we don't change, the world is continuing to change more rapidly than ever before. The church worldwide has not responded accordingly. It is perceived by many to no longer speak to the complexities and needs of the world around us and indeed is often seen to be an impediment to solutions. Unfortunately, people who are unfamiliar with our church are very likely to assume incorrectly that we have the same disconnect. Never the less, without a plan to do something different we will likely go the way of many, mainly declining membership through attrition and exhaustion, on the edge of the precipice. The end result being that we would end up being focussed purely on our own survival. And at that point we will have failed in our mission to share God's love with the wider community around us. So, instead of clinging on to the edge of the cliff waiting for the inevitable, we are saying "no". Let's be a flourishing, engaged and connected community at Blackwood symbolised by this Blackwood tree (slide) connected not just with each other - the black trunk - but also with the wider local community – the leaves.



Our basis of union says the Uniting Church prays that it may be ready when occasion demands to confess the Lord in fresh words and deeds. So, what could these “fresh words and deeds” or fresh expression of church comprise of today right here at Blackwood with the local community? We must start by looking again at who we are. How do we want to be defined? We are a broad church, a community of faith with different experiences and expression of the faith. No single theological position is likely for us today as there will be a variety of positions among individual members. But, we are a people of the way, wanting to be able to learn more and acting upon it through the leading of the spirit. Michael Dowling has suggested that the depth and the quality with the connection of the community that we are aspiring to can be compared to today’s society’s uptake to computer technology. Let me explain ... in the early days of PC’s it was seen as a helpful device for a few that understood how it worked but billions of “computers” are now in use in the form of smartphones, smart TV’s, laptops, you name it. It’s true success occurred when users no longer recognised they were using a computer. The focus was no longer on understanding the embedded technology that made it work – but rather the power of its application. So, too, we may truly succeed as a church when we are no longer recognised as a church. It is at this stage we will be defined by the transformative community activities and encounters that we create for all, not the embedded technology of God’s spirit even though we know that’s what’s behind it.

Michael recently prepared a discussion paper expressing our faith. It is intended to review our options for a new narrative, a new theology, indeed a fresh expression of Church for a new time. It gives insight to how our beliefs have been constructed over time and thoughts about how our construction will be driven into the future to motivate us to action. This paper has already been considered within and outside of this community. It defines broadly the things in which we believe in this 21<sup>st</sup> century and it reveals what we want our core identity to be as we seek to be faithful to Jesus. We believe this core identity has already been expressed in the new sign in front of our building – it says we are a “Centre for community”. To truly be this, we will need to be involved with the local community in all the joys, messiness and complexities and difficulties of life and by doing so bring a fresh expression of church that demonstrates how we can relate to each other and indeed the whole of creation with justice in all its forms. Simply put, we see Blackwood Uniting as being a centre for community, a place for all, a place of love, of safety, of integrity, of compassion, to listen, to connect, to ask hard questions and to contemplate God.

So, how do we put this into practice?

We quite obviously are already doing lots in this domain, but we are suggesting that we need to seek ways of expanding this to touch and relate to more people. Not by us telling them what they need but by serving their needs, not by doing it all by ourselves but by partnering or collaborating with others outside of our congregation eg. Allied Health providers, Government Agencies or other service providers that may want to run suitable tailored programs for locals from our facility – training courses, expo’s, business functions.

Making full utilisation of our people and our place in new ways. This will require us to be brave and maybe vulnerable as we seek ways we can do this without exhausting ourselves. Making sure everyone, not just a few, who wants involvement to share or utilise their skills is given the opportunity to do so. This will involve deliberately seeking out people’s desires, not waiting for it to happen – we know what that’s like. We will have to touch people on the shoulder, we will have to

talk with and encourage, etc. By opening up potential that may be different to our previous norm e.g., using more user-pay principles where appropriate (we already do some of that), introducing a permanently leased commercial precinct within this facility, perhaps with hot-seat offices or for a single business that may want 2 or 3 rooms. And seeking even more facility use by community organisations. Part of what we do will require better understanding of our neighbours' needs from where they are at, not from where we might want them to be.

And hence, by educating ourselves about our community, what are their needs? How can we increase our relevance to them? We want to be a church that in 50 years time continues to be a dynamic source of life and a contribution to this community as we have throughout history. It's only by understanding their needs that we can appropriately modify what we can do better. And, we need to communicate better with this community - that will be a key. We need to demonstrate more effectively what we stand for, what motivates our behaviour and how we seek to enrich and be enriched by them. This will mean for instance by providing good succinct engaging information in all forms of media, ie not just on a webpage and a Facebook page but potentially developing relationships with editors of local papers so that we become a point of call for them when they want to have a comment or something to fill a vacant spot, etc. This is something that Sandy Boyce at Pilgrim Church spoke to me about. She has been "in the face" of media in a roundabout way but now the editors of papers contact her when they want to fill their space or when they want an opinion on something.

To headline this change, we recommend adopting a new logo that would appear on everything we produce and in all media etc. It needs to be catchy, something that rolls off the tongue, that causes people to want to ask, "what's that all about?" In particular it needs to be something that the wider community can relate to. One suggestion is "the buc" (slide). Those within the church will see the cross and Blackwood Uniting Church. But those outside the church might see something totally different – something catchy, something that's welcoming, different and on the roundabout. It's simple and it lends itself to being a prime promotional tool. The actual logo we end up with is up for discussion but we believe the need for such a logo is very real if we are to better engage with our neighbours. So, what's next?

Council are planning a series of planning workshops, bible studies, discussions to enable everyone's involvement in the next steps. Your involvement in the planning will make the whole process much richer. So far what's here is the thoughts of a few but when we incorporate everyone and get your opinions and your thoughts and ideas things will change. Part of this will be to further explore our expression of what we actually believe and how we want to be defined. So, there will be theological, philosophical, scientific and reflective thinking opportunities. But others may prefer to get involved in the strategic, creative, practical thinking, including partnering and commercial possibilities. Still others might want to assist in pastoral thinking as we seek to care for those within this community of faith and the wider community. There will be avenues for all to contribute to this process, utilising your individual gifts and talents. Finally, we believe a community survey needs to be done. So, we are planning this survey initially for this community of faith, then in the wider community. It will be available to you in the very near future. It's been done to better understand the needs of both communities. The results will help us to finalise many of the nuts and bolts of what we do as we progress along the path of *regeneration*.

In addition, we recognise our facility will need to be **rejuvenated** to incorporate a number of the considerations above. A committee has been meeting for the last 12 months thinking this through carefully. They have prepared the survey mentioned above, but we will wait until after the survey results are known before finalising some of the building options for you to consider further. However, today, we can share some of the basic principles which we believe will form the basis of whatever we do to make the facility more welcoming, functioning and flexible. So, here is a rough picture of the church (slide). First of all, let's start with the carpark – vehicle flow could be improved with allowance for a drop-off area and chevron parking or herringbone parking which makes it easier to get in and out of parks rather than 90 degree parks. There needs to be a new building entry so that instead of walking past the toilets coming from the carpark, there's a dedicated proper entry to the facility that's welcoming and gives access to the rest of the facility without interruption to others. The redline (through the existing coffee lounge space) indicates the main entry and how you can feed off a passage into other areas. An entry there needs an admin section next to it – one to control entry and monitor security. The toilets currently don't meet the requirements for a building of this size and need to be improved. The kitchen needs to remain, and there are some functional requirements that need to be considered and upgraded. The play area has been sectioned off a little bit. The secure section may need enlarging and the gardening crew could give it a more welcoming aesthetic. The green section (current foyer and offices) could be a commercial precinct. It has good access direct from Main Road and it can be easily sectioned off as needed. A commercial precinct would give us a way of financing the operations and ongoing maintenance. Then there's the largest area (purple section) for use by our congregation as we do now i.e., for worship, meetings, etc but also for more utilisation for our local community. For that to occur the spaces may need to be flexed up and down in size with more moveable walls. The gardens surround all of this and we need to continue/develop that especially in the Memorial wall section. So, there are many things that could be considered. There has been 12 months of work going on already and very soon we hope to give these ideas to you to start having your input.

So, in summary, a survey needs to be made of our community and the wider community to better understand everyone's needs. Your involvement in deciding a new logo will be sought pretty urgently. Earlier in the new year, your engagement will be sought for the workshop studies, discussions etc as we move forward with purpose into the future. Blackwood Uniting is a progressive community of faith in the heart of Blackwood, wanting for itself and the local community to continue to flourish. We believe that we can build on who we are at this moment, so that we may become a church that is much more relevant to that community. A centre for community, a place for all, a place of safety, of love, of integrity, of compassion, to listen, to connect, to ask hard questions, to contemplate God. We invite you all on that journey. Thank you.

The Chair advised that copies of the presentation will be distributed. Thanks to Peter for putting together today's presentation. Peter's presentation and all the work that he and the planning group have done were unanimously accepted by the meeting.

## **7 Tabled Reports**

The Chair commended the following reports to the meeting.

### **7.1 Church Council Report – Chris Bray**

### **7.2 Community Classes – Jacqui Harrison**

The Chair commented about how dynamic and important this program is to our church, to the wider community and to the many people that the program touches. He noted Jacqui's passion for community-related work and referenced Jacqui's comment that she loves her job here. We love having her here too! And for the record, many orange cards have gone up in the air. This program also is more than Wednesday and Thursday – in many ways, it reaches out beyond this physical building. E.g., Lynona's work with the Bike Shed at Belair and also how the Community Program does a lot of fundraising, thereby making donations to charities such as Frontier Services and the Cancer Council.

### **7.3 Property – Bob Lyon**

The Chair commended Bob Lyons and the Property Committee for their representation of BUC during the roundabout renovations. Bob was our lead person in dealing with the State Govt about that project and how it was going to impact on the Church and what we needed to be able to do our work here as they made changes. Bob mentioned that State Govt appreciated how Blackwood liaised with them throughout the project and as a result made some installations that benefited the Church in terms of the gardening, bollards, parking area etc. Clearly the government recognised and appreciated how respectfully Bob handled negotiations with them. The meeting acknowledged Bob Lyon for his work.

### **7.4 Family Ministries – Marnie Agnew**

It is hard not to be struck at how much the Family Ministries team has achieved. Marnie's report notes that the program is going into its second decade. It is a very dynamic and successful Family Ministry with a team of highly dedicated people. Carys Penny also who has carried the banner for Family Ministries. The Family Ministry team was acknowledged, and thanks expressed to Marnie for all she have done in keeping things going, raising issues in Council and identifying the needs and directions of the program.

### **7.5 Mainly Music – Carys Penny**

### **7.6 Library – Joy Belling**

Thanks was expressed to Joy for her longstanding service and the activity of the Book Club.

### **7.7 Kids Hope – Ian Penny**

The Chair noted Ian's passionate report which highlighted that the number of people involved in Kids Hope has reduced. Ian is hoping people seriously consider whether they can contribute one hour a week to meet with a child at Blackwood Primary and help that child get through things in their life that may be a bit difficult, give them a time of support and fun.

### **7.8 MHICC / Beacon – Bev Eccleston / Gloria McArthur**

Thanks were expressed to Bev & Gloria. We ask that you continue to keep Beacon in your thoughts and donate when you can.

## **8. Reflection on Tabled Reports**

The Chair noted that these reports clearly capture much of what takes place at BUC but there are many other things that we don't see written in an annual report that reflect the work and the dedication and the faith of all of member. The meeting was asked to remain mindful of all the contributions throughout the year so that we can continue our programming, our worship, our pastoral care. Thanks was expressed to all. The tabled reports, as circulated, were unanimously accepted.

## **9. Other Business**

Tim Lee, Anne Magarey and Michael Dowling attended the past 4 days of Synod on our behalf. Anne and Tim were invited to share key highlights.

Anne Magarey – We now have 3 new presbyteries – the Generate Presbytery (non-geographical conservative churches) and the A & B presbyteries. We are in B which is primarily South of the city and the State. Presbytery A is in the North. Presbyteries will be renamed at the next meeting. We elected a standing committee for the presbytery, a chairperson and a secretary. Tim Lee has been elected onto the standing committee of the presbytery.

Because the Presbytery and Synod is no more, congregations now have representatives to Presbytery but not representatives to Synod. Anne and Tim's role with Synod no longer exists. Anne noted that she and Tim are interesting in continuing as Presbytery reps but that the congregation may want to appoint others. Anne and Tim's continuation as Presbytery reps was unanimously approved.

Anne commended the Presbyteries' transitional committee on its brilliant work in a short period of time. She saw this transition as an exciting time with yet-unknown outcomes to be shaped by member congregations.

Tim welcomed any suggestions for what our Presbytery should be called or what we should do.

Anne noted that the congress (the aboriginal part of the church) are working towards becoming a presbytery in their own right. There is some concern that that might isolate them but that is not the intention.

Our own Rev Dr Adrian Brown was acknowledged at Synod for his 50 years of ministry, as was Rev Dr Roger Bassham, Jane's father (and former minister at BUC). Anne expressed sadness that another former minister, Rev Coral (Cogs), has retired for health reasons. Anne asked that we hold Cogs in our prayers. It was noted that Carol Chambers has also retired.

Tim reported all proposals at Synod were passed on consensus except for one that passed with a vote – related to standing with the First nations people in their opposition to having nuclear waste dumps on their land. Another significant proposal related to supporting the Uluru Statement from the heart, which seek a voice to the parliament for indigenous people. Some documents about sovereignty for aboriginal people will be circulated. Aboriginal sovereignty is more of a spiritual attachment to the land than an ownership like it is for us.

Tim commended the excellent bible studies each day which relate to what we do next at Blackwood in the looking forward process.

The Chair thanked Anne Magarey, Tim Lee and Michael Dowling for representing us at Synod.

**10. Next Meeting – Sunday, 17<sup>th</sup> May 2020** (to be confirmed)

**11. Closing Prayer**

Michael Dowling closed with a Prayer & thanks to Michael Bull.

**Janet Taylor-Hughes**  
**Secretary to the Congregation**

## Special Congregational Meeting

Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2020

**Attendees: 73**

**Apologies: 4**

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

### **6. Welcome & Opening Prayer**

Chair Michael Bull welcomed everyone and offered an Opening Prayer.

### **7. Overview of Meeting Items**

The Chair introduced the single agenda item, i.e. 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.

### **8. 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 (e.g., 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, e.g. 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](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.

**Michael Bull**  
**Chair of the Congregation**

## 6.1 Minister's Report

*Hmmm...what's been happening during this last year?*

Now, let me think???

*Not much, I guess...*

Oh, I just *remembered*!

...I got married!

...and the world has been caught in the grip of the coronavirus pandemic!

I'm sure *other* things have happened, but we'll cover these two first.

Yes, on July 4<sup>th</sup> Karen Collins and I exchanged our marriage vows in a private ceremony, presided over by Jenski and Les Underwood, in the Belair National Park. So, yes, I am now, officially, the luckiest man in the world! 😊

As we all know, the COVID-19 pandemic has dominated the world's attention this year, and the residents of Adelaide, and the members of the Blackwood Uniting Church faith community, have not been 'immune' from the effects of this global health crisis. In late March, the BUC church council made the decision, pre-empting by a couple of days government and Uniting Church synod advice, to discontinue live worship, and instead to pre-record services for online viewing. This necessitated a massive learning curve, as we grappled with the multi-faceted logistics of bringing a pre-recorded service together. I am so grateful to the many, many individuals who stepped courageously and generously into this unknown and slightly scary space (a year ago, how many worship leaders would have thought they'd be watching themselves on YouTube on a Sunday morning, followed by a Zoom Coffee catch-up?!). A sincere vote of thanks to Jacqui Harrison who did so much extra work during the lock-down period, and a special vote of thanks to Tim Lee, without whom we simply could not have done what we did. Tim's technical expertise was recognised by the church council, who engaged Tim in a 0.2 FTE paid capacity as a technical facilitator. Not everybody may be aware of just how much time and effort Tim has put into this role, vastly in excess of the hours for which he is paid. Tim has encountered, again and again, complex technical challenges and, again and again, he has solved them, with the end result being that the overall technical quality of pre-recorded worship was exceptional. Thanks so much for your efforts, Tim!

This unusual period of pre-recording worship catalysed a new development at BUC: the advent of *live-streaming*. We noticed that quite a number of churches (e.g. Upper Sturt, Newland, etc) and individuals were logging onto the BUC pre-recorded worship. This seeded the idea of whether this online worship experience might actually represent a future outreach direction for BUC? With this in mind, Jacqui and Tim applied for, and won, a Uniting Church technology grant for the purchase of equipment to enable live-streaming of worship. Since then, the equipment has been installed and Tim has, step by step, been working through and solving a whole new set of technical challenges! Both 9.15am and 11am services are now live-streamed over the internet! This continues as we delight in being, once more, able to worship in person, albeit in a more socially distanced manner. Presently, Tim is in the process of training live-streaming operators, with a view that the two services will offer an outreach ministry, including possibly into residential aged care facilities. A lot has happened since late March!

It is fair to say that the necessary changes we implemented, in response to COVID-19, dominated my time for quite a period, what with the much greater time demands of pre-recording worship, the requirements of keeping up with ever-changing government guidelines, and in keeping the congregational abreast of our response. I am extremely grateful for the wonderful support of so many people within the church during this time, and for the patience and graciousness of our members in coping with unending change. Bravo!

During this last year, in addition to my involvement in our response to the COVID-19 shutdown, my work as a minister has continued. I have conducted a number of baptisms, both infant and adult. Sadly, I have conducted a number of funerals, as people have tearfully said goodbye to loved ones. Worship has been conducted, worship planning and planning for major festivals such as Advent and Christmas has been conducted, meetings have been held (some via Zoom), pastoral conversations have been had. One significant difference that COVID has made is in limiting my face-to-face pastoral visitation. The last thing I have wanted to do is visit people and potentially endanger them through the risk of viral transmission. I have found this limitation challenging, as pastoral ministry is so important.

A very significant project has been ongoing this year, although COVID resulted in it being put on something of a back-burner for a time: our *Forward with Purpose* project. Prior to the shut-down in March, we ran a series of workshops seeking to discern future directions for BUC. These workshops were very well attended and resulted in a vast number of suggestions, suggestions that are still being analysed. A significant and recurring theme from the Forward with Purpose workshops was the perceived importance of “story.” The Forward with Purpose working group, upon looking at the many inputs from workshops and surveys, seemed to discern the likely importance of BUC becoming a centre for people to share and express their story in a variety of ways. Our first foray into this area was the *My Life Story* 3-session workshop, conducted by Rhonda Smedley. The workshop was a great success and represents what we hope will be the first of many such expressions of story at BUC. I wish to thank the members of the Forward with Purpose working group for their hard work and discernment: Anne Magarey, Tony Miller and, in particular, Peter Cranwell.

Another working group, of which I’ve been part, has been working on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the present BUC building. More on this in a separate report.

The Occasional Series which BUC has run for many years sadly needed to be cancelled in 2020 due to COVID. We have been continuing to plan for 2021 in the expectation that we will indeed be able to once again run these terrific events.

Our monthly Philosophers’ lunches have continued, with one of them being a Zoom event, and excellent and wide-ranging discussions have been had. Also notable have been a significant number of 1:1 conversations with people outside the church. Many of these have been conversations of depth and significance, some on matters of faith, others on the painful experiences of life, and some on seeking to bridge the divide between those of very differing views.

I continue to be extremely grateful to be your minister!

**Michael Dowling**  
**Minister**

## 6.2 Church Council Report

Looking back over the last couple of reports both 2018 & 2019 were described as “interesting” . . .

While we hope that the Church is always interesting - I was hoping that 2020 would be less challenging than the previous years but the world had other plans!

Council meetings started “normally” with finance, property, community engagement and safe church high on our Agenda. By March everything had changed - the COVID-19 pandemic had started. Pre-empting Government and Uniting Church Synod advice Council agreed to ***“Cancel everything, shut church down, then look to find alternative ways to do things.”*** While this was difficult to contemplate and many people expressed hurt, others were supportive and an amazing number of people came up with a variety of creative solutions to continue the work of the church without being in the building.

**Worship:** One of the first flow-on decisions was to pre-record Worship and make it available via links on our website. CDs & DVDs were also burned for those who preferred. There were some immediate technology costs to make it happen and Council agreed to fund this. Tim Lee stepped in to share his expertise and while services took a lot longer than an hour to record (often over several days) they were well received and were viewed much wider than our local congregation. As we have been able to return to worship the decision was made to livestream & record the 9:15 service initially and the 11:00 service has now been added – this provides the opportunity to reach out to people who may not want to come to a church.

**Building:** The church is more than the building we meet in and this was beautifully demonstrated for Easter Sunday with Alison Sutcliffe and her team of helpers decorating with butterflies and flowers. Many in the wider community commented on the display and the feeling of hope it engendered. The large butterfly facing the roundabout was replaced in time with a Dove & multi-coloured hands (Pentecost & Reconciliation), the Heart Project, World Environment Day and most recently a line of music (who’s worked out it is?) to celebrate the return of singing in worship.

***The building may have been closed but the church was alive and visible to our community.***

**Finances:** The Finance Report will provide more detail but Job Keeper enabled us to maintain Jacqui’s position and support the Community Class Tutors. Special thanks to our regular congregation for maintaining and even increasing their giving during this difficult time. We were able to employ Tim Lee on a 0.2FTE Contract, keep up maintenance on our property and maintain our Synod & Mission commitments.

The work of the church continues: the **Forward with Purpose** team continue to look at how we engage with the community; a small group are planning how to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our current building; the Community Classes returned with enthusiasm; and some of our External Hirers have returned

Thanks to everyone who helps BUC to function – worship leaders, furniture movers, gardeners, musicians, floor polishers, greeters, money-counters, children’s ministry volunteers and many many more.

Jacqui Harrison as always has been the backbone of the Office and the Community Classes. It’s been a pleasure to have Tim Lee join the team and share his technology journey. Michael Dowling has been a blessing to us all – we made a wise decision to call him to ministry in Blackwood back in 2018!

After 6 years as Chair of the BUC Council I’m stepping down (I’ll continue on Council for now.) Thanks to everyone in the congregation for the support I’ve been given. Special thanks to all the members of Council (Adrian Brown, Bec English, Tony Miller, Anne Magarey, Alison Sutcliffe, Ashleigh Lower, Bob Lyon, Ian Penny, Marnie Agnew, Michael Dowling) for their support and encouragement over the past 6 years

My hope is that 2021 will be another 'interesting year'! As we move into the new year and plan for both the short and long term, we take confidence in moving forward as a Church which is ***called by God to be an inclusive Christian Community committed to justice, learning, service and care.***

**Chris Bray**  
**Chair, Blackwood Uniting Church Council**

## **6.3 Finance & Budget 2020**

Report to be tabled and spoken to at meeting.

**Tony Miller**  
**Chair of Finance**

## 7.1 Community Classes

I was reading a book the other day by Julia Baird, called “Phosphorescence”. In it, she talks about *community* and the different studies that have been undertaken by researchers about the decline of social organisations such as churches, unions and community groups. The studies indicate that the number of people who say they have very few or no confidants or close friends has rocketed, with worrying implications for our well-being, greater isolation and loneliness have been linked to increased risk of chronic illness and dementia, alcohol abuse, sleep problems, obesity, diabetes, hypertension, poor hearing and depression. She goes on to say that a *community* can also make us more resilient, not only improving our current state of mind but also protecting our mental health in the future. And that social connection and relationships are the single greatest predictor of health happiness throughout your life.

Well, I can certainly attest to the above findings. The day that the students came back to their first class after COVID was the best! Everyone was on a high and were so happy to see each other. We were all obviously craving that human contact with each other – the old- fashioned face-to-face kind of way.

Due to the massive upheaval of COVID, the Community Classes decided to shut-down classes quite early with the last class being the 13<sup>th</sup> March due to the age demographic of our students. It was a hard decision to make but an important one to protect everyone involved. There was a period of 7 months with no classes run.

During this time, I kept in contact with my tutors continuously who in turn kept in contact with their class members. I am so very thankful that we were able to offer our tutors job-keeper payments which was quite a substantial amount more than what they were used to getting paid from us, but it has been great to be able to show them how much we appreciate them (even though the money has come from the Govt). This has now finished as we are back to making our normal budgeted figures.

Surprisingly, our bank account is looking healthy, thanks to the Govt COVID “Cash Flow Boost” money which we received – a total of \$27,696 to be exact. We have approximately \$45,000 in the bank account. On that note, thank you and welcome to Tony Miller who has taken over from Brian Pickering as the Treasurer of the Community Classes. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Brian for his faithful service to the Community Classes over many years – your commitment and guidance has been very much appreciated (not to mention your sense of humour!)

The only fundraiser we had for the year was the Mother’s Day flowers in March which made a profit of a couple hundred dollars as predicted. Due to COVID restrictions it was decided that there will not be a Craft Fair this year. Thankfully the Govt “Cash Flow Boost” has meant that the urgency to fundraise has not been in the forefront of my mind which has been a relief with the restrictions that COVID has presented.

Also, due to COVID Restrictions, we will not have an end of year Christmas Celebration with food as per normal. Instead, I will be asking every student to donate an item for Beacon. Due to businesses and schools not being able to do any fundraising, Beacon are struggling with their stocks so this will hopefully keep them going through the Christmas season and also help with their Christmas Hampers.

Class Numbers are going well and I seem to be getting new students every week which is encouraging. Unfortunately, we lost one of our fabulous Tutors this year, Nancy Williams who taught 3 classes a week – Knitting & Crochet and Needlework & Embroidery. But, we have gained 2 new teachers through Nancy in Beverley Cairns who is an exquisite Embroiderer and Belinda Norman who is a whiz with Knitting &



Crochet. Both of these new teachers were students of Nancy's so we are so very grateful that they have stepped up and filled these teaching positions and for Nancy's mentorship.

We also have a new Art Class on Thursday Afternoon with a new teacher, David Kemp. Numbers are down at the moment for his class, but I am expecting them to grow in the future. David is young and enthusiastic and a wonderful artist and we welcome him to our team.

Next year will be more of the same – why change when it's working so well? I will be running workshops on Tatting and Smocking plus possibly Photography. I will need to do some more targeted advertising to try and entice some more young mums in to get the numbers up in the creche again as we will lose our children next year due to school enrolments.

The other success this year is the increase of awareness of the The Bike Shed at Belair. They now have their own Facebook page and have many followers. They are a committed group of people that are dedicated and work tirelessly to improve the life of many by supplying them with bikes. With the help of David & Lynona Hawkins many students at schools in the North of Adelaide have received bikes this year for free along with many homeless people. The group have also sold many bikes for a profit to many people as well. The number of people donating and buying bikes from The Shed have increased substantially due to the increased awareness and advertising and also word of mouth which is an absolute credit to the group. They also have a student from St Johns Senior School doing his Volunteering Component towards his Duke of Edinburgh Award which is a very prestigious award. As always, we thank Belair Uniting Church for their hospitality in allowing The Bike at Belair to operate on their premises.

Thanks, as always to my wonderful tutors and volunteers. And, the support I get from the Church – Bev Eccleston, Lynona Hawkins, Doff & Bob Lyon, Russell Grear, Tony O, Trevor Sutcliffe, Bob Potter and lastly a massive thank you to Penny who keeps me in check and tries to protect me from taking on too much work – I appreciate you more than you know. I'd also like to thank Janet Paull, Judith Terrell, Sue Fisher, Nancy Cranwell and Jan Furness for their help and support.

I am so very lucky I have so many volunteers, I almost need someone just to manage the volunteers!

On a personal note, I have really enjoyed playing in the band this year and am really loving my flute. As you all know I have a new puppy who drives me crazy but she is just so gorgeous! And my 3 children and family including my parents whom which I have a very close relationship with keep me very busy outside of work. I'm so very proud of my children and their achievements this past year and thankful that I can spend so much time with them in these formative years.

Lastly, I want to thank Chris Bray and Michael Dowling. It is a great feeling when you know you have the faithful support of these two people behind you. I feel very blessed to be in this position and love what I'm doing. I look forward to next year with gusto!

**Jacqui Harrison**  
**Community Program Coordinator**

## 7.2 Property

**Property Committee Membership** Graham Brown, Peter Cranwell, Irma Eckersley (Secretary), Russell Gear, Lisa Haddrick, David Hawkins, John Hewitt, Bob Lyon, Geoff McLean, Tony Miller (Treasurer), Phil and Jane Marlow, Tony Otworowski (Chair) Ray & Meg Pentland, Brian Pickering, Bob and Jean Potter, Peter Smith and Mark Williams. The committee has two new members - Tony Miller has accepted the role of treasurer and Irma Eckersley as secretary.

**Funding** for property activities has traditionally relied on income from room hire and the Garage Sale but Covid-19 has meant that for several months there were no groups using the Church and the Garage Sale was cancelled. These losses have been partly recouped by reduced cleaning costs, the recent plant sale and some Government support.

**Maintenance** has continued with the ongoing need for gutter cleaning, painting, repairs to furniture and equipment, maintaining and checking fire extinguishers and electrical equipment, and much more. Covid-19 has also meant on-going changes to cleaning requirements. Prior to the new tenants moving into the manse the bathroom was repainted, and the side fence and external woodwork repaired. A small group of gardeners continue to ensure that the gardens provide an attractive setting for our Church.

**The report from the 2019 Synod Property inspection** was finally received in June this year. The inspection aimed to identify safety and legal issues and provide information on the condition of the 264 church properties around the state. The only issue for Blackwood was the need to change most of the external door locks. An article on pages 10 and 11 of the current October – November New Times entitled “God’s Church and its buildings... *fit for mission?*” explains the reason for this review. Unfortunately, there were a number of obvious errors in the Blackwood report including statements like the need for Blackwood to provide wheelchair access and a handicapped toilet. However, it was useful in confirming that our property management procedures are effective.

**No Major projects** have been undertaken over the past 12 months as we wait for the final “Moving Ahead” committee recommendations for the future needs of the Church. However there is a need to replace the straw ceilings in the hall, the ‘Dene room and adjacent toy store with gyprock, to extend the Memorial Wall (which is almost full) and provide air conditioning in the kitchen.

**The role of the committee** is changing. We have been fortunate that the members of the committee have been willing to freely give of their wide range of skills but as the group ages and the restrictions on what can be done increase it is inevitable that we may need to employ more paid operators to do some tasks in the future.

**Bob Lyon**  
**For Property Committee**

## **7.3 Messy Church**

Messy Church started the year in February with 24 families - 40 children attending. MC was only held twice before it went into recess due to COVID 19.

During that time, the MC families received weekly emails with children's craft activities and links to our pre-recorded church services. Thank you to Marnie, Alison and Carys for the work they did preparing activities and to Marnie for keeping in touch with our MC families by email. Craft activities are still uploaded to our web site each week for families to access.

We returned with a modified MC in September and currently we are not serving a meal but we will look at how we can reintroduce the meal in 2021. September saw 8 families return and 10 families at November MC.

Our theme for this year was children in the bible and the important role they play in many of the stories. We focus on a different bible story each time we meet, sharing the story in 2 short worship times through drama, video, action, prayer and song. Then the children explore the story further through craft, painting, science and active play. The older children (10+ years) join Peter for age related activities.

Thank you to the MC team and our willing helpers including musicians, craft helpers, data & sound operators and cooks.

**Judy Adami**

## **7.4 Mainly Music**

Mainly music is in the eighth year of operation and continues to have a faithful team including leaders, Bev Eccleston, Judy Lower and Carys Penny. There are 16 other team members who help on a roster system. We have recently welcomed Jane Jin to the team. The cakes for morning tea have been provided each week by six church members and are much appreciated by the grandparents and parents who attend.

This year has been different because of Covid 19. In Term 1 we only had seven sessions instead of 9 and we resumed on August 14<sup>th</sup> which was the 4<sup>th</sup> week of term 3, so we did not operate for five months. Before the virus caused the closing we had an average attendance of 16 families but this has now reduced to 12 families. Numbers of children vary but is usually about 20. The break in the year has meant that some families are just beginning to return and several have not come back at all. We continue to pray for their return and also for new families to join us. The year ends on December 4<sup>th</sup> 2020 with Christmas celebrations.

Communication throughout the five months in lockdown was by email and a regular music session provided by the mainly music team in Melbourne on Youtube. We also visited families, sent Easter and Mother's Day presents and birthday cards by post.

It is great that Rev. Michael Dowling attends and gives our families some deeper insights in the think spots, which are a regular part of each session. The families are given an opportunity to talk about issues with him in an informal way.

We were thrilled recently when two families came back after a long absence and expressed how much they had missed mainly music. We will never know the impact we have had but believe that this community outreach has changed attitudes towards Christianity and builds friendship. We sow the seeds and God changes lives.

**Carys Penny**

## 7.5 Playgroup

What a year! When we started in February we had no idea what changes the year had in store for us. We began with the theme 'Summer', but by mid-March we had to close down because of COVID19. We wanted to keep in regular contact with the families and let them know we hadn't forgotten or abandoned them, so each week we sent an email with ideas that the families could do with their pre-schoolers at home – including a story book or online story, a craft activity and songs on the theme.

In second term we didn't stick to a theme but sent activities connected to current events or what was happening in society at the time, e.g. Mother's Day, ANZAC Day, International Nurses Day, Reconciliation Week, World Environment Day, World Oceans Day, Refugee Week, Black Lives Matter, World Music Day, and we also connected them to what Alison was doing at the church to involve the community, e.g. butterflies at Easter, the hearts around Mother's Day, and the hands for Reconciliation Week. In term 3 we picked up the music theme and were able to find stories and songs and other musical activities on line to steer the families to, as well as provide a craft activity.

With the easing of restrictions in August we consulted with the mainly music, Sunday morning 9.15, Community Classes crèche and Messy Church teams to come up with a consistent COVID-safe approach for all Family Ministry activities. We resumed at the end of August for 4 weeks before the end of term 3. Numbers were low to start with but numbers are picking up, with some enquires from new families as well as the gradual return of already registered families. We found it wasn't too difficult to run playgroup within the COVID restrictions, including social distancing, cleaning of toys and other equipment, and providing morning tea within the COVID guidelines.

In term 4 the team has worked together with some extra volunteers to cover the absences of several of the team, particularly for cleaning up, and in my absence as I recover from a knee replacement operation. My grateful thanks to Carys Penny, Jean Potter, Jackie Otworowski and Judy Lower for being there to make sure everything has gone ahead as usual, and to all the other volunteers who have provided morning tea, setting up, cleaning up and all the other small but important tasks that ensure that Playgroup happens. My special thanks to Carys for stepping into the coordinator's role this term, and for her leadership role in the process by which we were able to come up with a consistent COVID strategy for running all our Family Ministry activities. Her vision, persistence, drive and commitment have been fundamental to the success of our return to our Family Ministry activities.

**Marnie Agnew**

## **7.6 Library**

“Books are a staircase to unknown worlds” Jason Ellis.

Thirty four books have been added to the library collection of which three have been purchased.

In “The Bible in Australia: a cultural history” Meredith Lake brings the Bible’s presence in Australia’s past alive. She includes topics such as Indigenous Australians, Politics, War and the Bible in the new Millennium.

Tim Costello in his book “A lot with a little” explores the people and experiences that have shaped him into a socially active fighter for the world’s most challenging issues. It is also a book about faith and its power to sustain him in the face of these big issues.

One of the donated books, “The Children’s Illustrated Bible” has stunning illustrations on every page, colour photographs of plants and animals, people and places of the bible lands which set the bible stories in context.

Suggestions of books, DVDs and CDs for the church library are always welcome.

**Joy Belling**

## **7.7 Kid's Hope**

2020 has been a different year for Kids Hope as a consequence of COVID-19. Our seven mentors from Blackwood Uniting Church have been busy in spite of the restrictions that the school and the Department have put in place. The restrictions have involved the school and Education authority stopping older people going into the school during March this year until we resumed in mid August. This was to protect us, not necessarily the children as they have been more resilient to the virus.

The 7 children for which we have been responsible have progressed in spite of the break forced upon us over the year. Most of the children we monitor have grown and developed during the year which pleases us even if this has meant they have a diminishing need of our involvement.

Our mentoring of the children is different with each child as we need to work out what they like and what is the most effective way to work with them. We have a varying approach with the children, some of us play games like chess, draughts, scrabble, cards, and through this get to talk about what the children are interested in or what is affecting their lives. Other mentors talk to students about their interests, concerns, make things like Father's Day or Mother's Day cards, make models or we might help them with their school work if this is necessary. It is a pleasure when they go back to class with a smile on their faces when they may have initially come to a sessions with a frown.

Blackwood Primary School is a productive place to work and we are welcomed each time we come from engaging staff and polite children. Kids Hope is one of our community services where we show staff, parents and the school that even if we are from a "Church" we do have skills which are useful and do help improve children's well being. We in turn learn that the school is well run and an engaging place to learn.

We always welcome others to inquire about working within the Kids Hope Program and urge every church member to consider giving of their time and skills in this program. There is a training program to help equip you with some knowledge about working with children and confidence. Come and talk to me about it, as it is wonderful when people volunteer, it's good for the children, the parents and teachers as we show that people from the church really care about what happens in their community school and want to help children who may be having a hard time for one reason or another. It's our church being active in our community.

**Ian Penny**  
**Kids Hope Convenor**

## 7.8 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Group

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2021 will mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of laying the foundation stone for the present Blackwood Uniting Church building. A small group has been working on the planning for this historic event. Some things we have been considering are outlined below.

- A special combined service of worship at 10am on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2021 which will feature, among other things, Rev. David Houston as a guest speaker.
- The possibility of commissioning a piece of artwork(s) to mark the occasion. This might include a mural and/or sculpture. These artworks would be community-focused, rather than narrowly religiously-focused. This will be the focus of a council grant application.
- We have been laboriously working through the historical archives (alright, if you want to be picky, *Ian Penny* has been laboriously working through the historical archives!). The intent is to include a timeline of events and happenings in the 100-year life of our church, a timeline that will be shared in a variety of ways, including via electronic and social media means.
- We intend to interview a range of people about their recollections of life at BUC over the years. These interviews will be video recorded and made available for viewing as part of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration.

We will keep you posted on happenings!

Ian Penny

Jacqui Harrison

Alison Sutcliffe

Peter Cranwell

Michael Dowling

**Michael Dowling**  
**Minister**



## 7.9 Forward with Purpose

A Subgroup was formed at the Council meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2 to report on “who are we?/who do we want to be?/what do we believe?/where should we be heading”. The initial outcome of this group was a presentation titled “Forward with Purpose” to this congregation at last year’s AGM. This report is to bring everyone up to date with progress since then.

The initial report presented to the AGM was accepted by Council as a guiding document. Since then, quite a bit of data gathering and sorting has been going on mostly through the online survey of the congregation and 6 workshops on Faith, Connecting and Other stuff. On the 8<sup>th</sup> March, a combined congregation meeting was held to bring everyone up to date with the outcomes.

A list was prepared of about 60 “low hanging fruit” items that could be considered for action soon and already a number have been instigated.

Just 3 days before the church essentially closed its doors due to Covid, discussions were being held over a number of strategic ideas to implement. But unfortunately, Covid put an enormous handbreak on most of what was being discussed.

What has happened since that time though are detailed below:

- More work on on-line services was suggested during the Workshops. We did not know how quickly we would have to put that into operation! It has proven to be well worth the effort with quite a number of people logging on to participate and a number of personal responses made.
- The Community Classes on-line survey was implemented. There were responses representing over 70 people, but the results have not been collated yet. The one for the wider community was put on hold as we were uncertain of the influence Covid would have on our ability to act on any outcomes. I think we will be ready soon to release it after making a few relevant adjustments as a consequence.
- Met with the Blackwood Times editor again and have had 2 articles published so far which also highlighted our website, email and Facebook addresses. He has actually invited us to run a community Class workshop demonstrating how to make “Boomerang Bags” which is being organised now.
- A suggestion from the Workshops was to look at the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the sanctuary building coming up next year. A team has been formed to manage this and will report separately.
- Another Workshop suggestion was to produce more Public Art around our facility. Thanks to Alison in particular, quite a bit has already happened with changing themes on the front external wall including “Amazing Grace” and the beautiful butterflies. Now we are canvassing a large mural and or a sculpture to celebrate next years 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Sanctuary building.
- A new 5 year Strategic Plan drawn up for Council reflects the “Forward with Purpose” document.
- In May, BUC became a participant in the “Community Connections” group facilitated by Pilgrim Uniting. It is focussed less on programs run within a church and more about making connections in the neighbourhood, and building networks so that when a crisis like COVID-19 comes along we already have established relationships based on trust and mutual understanding with the community. This is an on-going process of sharing.
- In June we established a small group of people prepared to write grant applications for projects. None have needed to be prepared just yet but a number will be required soon.
- A Building Fund has been set up as part of BUC's " Forward with Purpose" planning to provide funds specifically for major capital projects related to building and property enhancements.
- One of the new things done was the running of the first “My Story” workshop. 13 attendees from the congregation and the community produced some remarkable little books! Quite a bit of interest has been shown to run another one which will be in next year’s plan.

- A number of new community classes programmes have been started or are being planned for next year. They include:
  - An art class using oils
  - A needlework workshops on Tatting
  - A needle work workshop on Smocking
  - A workshop on making face masks
  - Various photography workshops
- Also the Community Class members have decided to submit Stobie pole art designs to the Blackwood Action Group for consideration of their project along Shepherds Hill rd.
- They have also decided to do a Christmas Food Drive for Beacon over next few weeks.
- We have just started the Angel Project which is another way that people in the community can have involvement in what we do.

So whilst there are still a lot of things to do as a consequence of the data gathering, quite a number of new initiatives have been started. We anticipate next year will be even more fruitful.

**Peter Cranwell**

## 7.10 Online & Pre-recorded Worship

### The Blackwood Pandemic response.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> March as the COVID-19 pandemic meant meeting together for worship was not considered safe, a group of Blackwood members gathered spread thinly across the worship space to attempt pre-recording worship. None of us really knew what we were doing, but we had a go at it anyhow. I had initially assumed our local video expert Ray Bown would be taking control as my speciality has been stills photography with more limited experience in video. However Ray's circumstances were not to allow the level of involvement required so I had to put my video skills to the test. Being one of those weird people who stay in the cinema until the end of the credits I knew in theory what was involved.

In the early stages of the pandemic response we really didn't know how bad things were likely to get, and couldn't assume that anyone was not going to be affected. So in the early stages of online worship my goal was to keep it as simple as possible so that anyone could take over. The first few weeks were edited with the simple Windows Video editor that anyone with a Windows 10 computer would have.

Eventually I realised I was spending as much time working around the limitations of the simple software as anything else so I switched to a professional grade program – DaVinci Resolve. The company that produces this manufacture a range of specialist consoles so they make the software available for free as a means of attracting people to their gear.

As the weeks of isolation went by the worship leaders became more comfortable with the process & "Can we do that again" became the catch cry, plus "I'm glad that's over". The standards were raised & I'd like to think that each week was a little better than the previous one. People became a little more adventurous to explore the possibilities and a highlight would be the service recorded at Colebrook Reconciliation Park which remains one of the most watched.

I was surprised and deeply humbled to be offered a paid position to develop the online services. The recognition is appreciated. And it's meant I've upgraded my equipment to improve the results further.

The isolation proved effective and eventually restrictions were relaxed enough to allow a limited number of people to return to gather in person, and the pre-recorded services gave way to live streaming the services.

### Uniting Foundation Grant

Uniting Foundation offered a wider scope of grants this year to aid Churches in addressing needs in a time of isolation. Jacqui put together an excellent application and Blackwood was successful. This has been put toward a computer with the capacity for live video and a couple of remote operated cameras. The choice of camera was largely dictated by the fact that the next best thing is three times the price. The ones we have (Logitech PTX Pro 2) provide good quality video, adequate connectivity (USB) and although a little clunky at times the ability to manoeuvre under remote control. This means that one person can run the streaming from a single location. This arrived just in time to begin live streaming.

### What it is, and what it isn't.

In the beginning I was writing a lot of emails regarding the services and became increasingly aware of differentiating between church and Church. We still had Church, but it wasn't in the church. Except that a few of us were in the church, and we were not merely producing a video, but engaging in worship. I've sought to keep this in mind at all times. I've tried to keep the videos relatively simple, avoiding the

temptation to do something fancy just because I can, but done what I thought would contribute to the worshipfulness of the experience. There's a difference between a worship experience and a theatrical performance, but elements of theatricality can contribute to the worship experience as long as they don't become the goal.

During the live stream period some pre-recorded material has allowed members unable to be present on Sunday to participate meaningfully.

#### Where we are now

Since the 5<sup>th</sup> July we have not been pre-recording, but live streaming worship from the church on Sunday morning. From the 30<sup>th</sup> August we have also streamed the 11am service. While the 9:15 has usually had the larger viewing numbers, the feedback on the 11am has been quite heartfelt.

A growing group of operators are being trained. Jacqui has run a couple of 11am services singlehandedly, Peter Stead & Jerry Ye have run 11am services with assistance and should be ready to fly solo soon, hopefully joined by others in the near future. The training has included watching closely one session, hands on practice with the system offline and running one streaming session with assistance. With the system set up and running it's reasonably straightforward and easy to learn.

Thanks also to Jacqui for setting up the YouTube links each week ready for the services and posting them on the BUC webpage at [blackwooduc.org.au](http://blackwooduc.org.au). We have looked at alternatives to YouTube, but they either provide little advantage or cost much more, so, for now, YouTube it is. YouTube is very good at offering each end viewer the best experience possible on their network connection and device.

There are privacy issues considered. As a general policy we try not to show members of the congregation who are not involved in leadership activities. There are members of the congregation who have specifically asked not to be shown and every effort is made to accommodate their wishes. It is intended that the children are not shown in any identifying manner during the children's talk, just the tops of backs of heads enough to indicate the presence of children, but some are not always cooperative with this endeavour.

As well as Sunday morning worship it is possible to include other activities and so far we have live streamed one funeral. The computer desk has been set up as a mobile system so it can be run anywhere in the building. One camera is built into the desk, one is permanently mounted but additional sources can be added when it's not in the sanctuary.

As well as the video the live stream includes sound and adequately capturing the sound has been more of a challenge than was originally anticipated. What sounds ok live in person can be rather more critically reviewed away and later. Additional microphones and sound input has enabled sound not usually amplified such as the piano and organ to be captured.

#### Where are we going

A year ago we were discussing how the Church could be more involved with the community. There were people who were isolated before the pandemic, and this has created an opportunity to include them in the worship life of the Blackwood congregation in some way.

Blackwood Uniting Church has had a long history of providing recordings of the Sunday morning services, initially on cassette, then later on CD, and more recently digital files online. In some ways this is merely bringing a well established ministry up to date.

It is not the intention that this is limited to times of the pandemic related lockdown. There are members of the Blackwood community who are not easily able to make it each week. This is expected to be an ongoing part of the Blackwood Uniting Church ministry.

To facilitate this I'd like to see some more active promotion of the live stream service. I've also suggested the possibility of people I've referred to as streaming ambassadors to assist people in accessing it. I'm sure there are a significant number of people who have a tablet, iPad or smart TV who don't utilise it to the best. Perhaps people who have been given a tablet to facilitate video calls to family in isolation or who just use one for limited purposes. Accessing the Live Stream needs be no more complex than being able to access the Blackwood web page at <http://www.blackwooduc.org.au> and following the prompts to the live stream.

So far there are a small number of individuals who have accepted the challenge of being involved in running the live stream operation. We hope to have a few more to reach the point of having each person on just once a month, there would be 8-10 sessions a month.

There remains some scope to improve the sound, and a great deal of potential to improve the lighting. Scene lighting would not only improve the video quality but make it easier for people in the church to see facial expressions of the leaders which would improve the live worship experience.

Thanks to Michael and all the worship leaders and lay preachers who have participated in this adventure with enthusiastic spirit. Special thanks to Alison and her creative endeavours. A very deep thankyou to Pat and all the musicians who have worked hard at adapting to new demands. Thanks also to Jacqui for the successful grant documentation, being the first apprentice

**Tim Lee**  
**Technical Facilitator**

## 7.10 Presbytery

Firstly, some background. What is a Presbytery and why do we get a report?

The UCA regulations state “The Uniting Church is governed by a series of inter-related councils, each of which has its tasks and responsibilities in relation both to the Church and the world.” It lists the councils to include the Congregation, The Elders or Leader’s meeting (now the Church Council in Blackwood), the Presbytery as “the district council”, the Synod as the “regional council” that amounts to the state, and the Assembly being the national council.

When the UCA was founded, SA had seven Presbyteries, with Blackwood falling in the Fleurieu Presbytery. This was considered excessive duplication of efforts so SA became one Presbytery in 2005. Unsurprisingly this didn’t fix all the perceived problems. In 2018 the Assembly decision that Uniting Church members and ministers were grownups who could make their own decisions was too much for some people so from July 2019 The Synod of SA split into the non geographical regional council Generate Presbytery and the geographical Transitional Presbytery, which became Presbytery A covering roughly the northern half of the state and Presbytery B the southern half, dividing by church population. Presbytery B became “Presbytery of Southern SA” (PoSSA) as of the March 2020 meeting. Presbytery A became Wimala Presbytery, Wimala being an Adnyamathanha word for gathering.

I was nominated for the Presbytery Standing Committee & we have met more or less twice a month.

In March this year, for those who can remember that far back, we had the first meeting of the Presbytery of Southern SA at Mount Barker, where the music provided by Blackwood musicians was much appreciated.

Much of the work of the Presbytery so far has been focussed around working out what the work of the Presbytery is in the present time. Some of the duties referred to in the regulations such as legislative compliance relating to workers have been delegated to the Synod due to the increased complexity since the regulations were devised.

As the PoSSA covers the area roughly south of the Torrens to the southernmost reaches of the state congregations are invited to meet in ‘Clusters’ of similar Churches. In rural areas these are mostly geographic in nature, in suburban areas it’s often Churches of a similar flavour and Blackwood is grouped with larger churches including Adelaide West, City View, Malvern, Pilgrim, and The Corner. Unfortunately in the period of lockdown the Clusters have been more of a future idea than incredibly active.

The meeting of the Presbytery on September 12<sup>th</sup> included the ordination of Hadyn Lush and November 22<sup>nd</sup> will see the Ordination of Cyrus Kung at City View Uniting Church. These are important moments in the Presbytery. PoSSA will employ a Presbytery Minister, Ian Dow will fill this position as a supply minister until formal applications are processed.

The presbyteries send representatives to Synod. This would seem different to the past where the Congregation elected a representative to both, but in essence it’s no different other than the Presbytery had 100% of it’s members as Synod reps. The Annual meeting, usually in November is now in February and each Presbytery sends 30 representatives. I will be among them.

The next meeting of the Presbytery will be on the morning of Saturday 5th December at Newland Memorial Uniting Church, Victor Harbor. If you’re interested in attending, either as an observer or congregational representative please let Tim or Michael know.

**Tim Lee**

## 7.10 MHICC

The Mitcham Hills Inter-church Council is operated by a few members from the involved Churches in the Blackwood Hills area.

The two significant functions of the Council include

1. **Beacon.** Which supports people and families with problems, including homelessness, mental health issues, unemployment, financial concerns, domestic violence etc.
2. **Pastoral Care Workers.** There are five PCWs in our local schools:-  
Blackwood High, Belair Primary, Blackwood Primary, Coromandel Primary and Hawthorndene Primary.

These excellent chaplains provide fantastic support and care to those students who need encouragement, guidance, lunchtime activities, understanding and a listening ear.

During this past year the MHICC has dealt with the huge challenge presented with an announcement that 4 of our 5 PCWs would cease to receive Government funding in favour of Rural schools. Fortunately, this decision was rescinded early in the year. However, to prepare for a possible future loss of funding, special meetings, wide discussions, huge efforts and much prayer determined a new approach to provide more financial security in the future.

Due to COVID 19, the Council has met in March and September only, with our next meeting on November 17th, when there will be determination regarding our wonderful Christmas Pageant involvement, our Blue Christmas Service, etc.

Thanks for your interest.

**Bev Eccleston**