

# Annual General Meeting

**Blackwood Uniting Church**  
**Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> November 2023**



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



# **Annual General Congregational Meeting Agenda**

**Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

**Blackwood Uniting Church**

- 1. Welcome, housekeeping and opening prayer** Wes Bray
- 2. Minutes of Meeting 21st May 2023**
- 3. Matters arising:**
- 4. Elections**
  - 4.1 Church Council
  - 4.2 Chair of Congregation (2 year term)
  - 4.3 Secretary of Congregation (1 year term)
  - 4.4 Deputy Chair of Congregation
  - 4.5 Presbytery representatives
- 5. Spoken (& written) Reports**

5.1 Minister	Michael Dowling
5.2 Church Council	Adrian Brown
5.3 Finance	Tony Miller
5.4 Office and Community Programme	Peta Workman
5.5 Welcome to Blackwood	
- 6. Written reports**
  - 6.1 Property
  - 6.2 Bike Shed
  - 6.3 Messy Church
  - 6.4 Mainly Music
  - 6.5 Playgroup
  - 6.6 Library
  - 6.7 Presbytery
  - 6.8 MHICC
- 7. Other Business**
- 8. Next Meeting**
- 9. Benediction**

## **2. Confirm minutes of last meeting**

### **Minutes of the Congregational Meeting**

**Blackwood Uniting Church**

**Sunday, 21st May 2022**

***Present:*        66**

***Apologies:*    15**

#### **10.    Welcome, Housekeeping and Opening Prayer                      Ewan Haseltine**

At 11.12 am, Chair Ewan Haseltine welcomed everyone.

Ewan explained that Wes Bray, Congregation Meeting Chair, is an apology as he is singing in a performance at Her Majesties Theatre this afternoon. Wes asked Ewan to deputise.

Ewan began the meeting with an Opening Prayer.

He explained the process of the cards which have been distributed: orange if warm to the idea, blue if cool to the idea and yellow to indicate a question or make comment.

The Congregation agreed to the card process

He asked for the Attendance Sheets to be circulated and to note any Apologies.

Wes also reminded the Congregation that this is a safe place and that we should be gentle with our comments.

#### **11.    Minutes of Meeting 13 November 2022**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2022 were circulated with the Agenda.

There were no questions.

There was Congregation consensus for acceptance of the Minutes.

#### **12.    Matters arising**

No matters arising.

#### **13.    Congregation Secretary**

The position of Congregation Secretary was extended for two years at the 13 November 2022 meeting. There is no need for an election.

#### **14.    Reports**

##### **4.1    Minister**

**Rev. Michael Dowling**

Rev. Michael Dowling gave a summary of what has been happening in his role as Minister since the AGM last November.

A week after the AGM, the Climate Expo took place, brilliantly organised by Peter Cranwell

Last year the Advent and Christmas theme: A World Reborn was cleverly brought to life by Alison Sutcliff 's artistic talents.

There was deep sadness to begin 2023 (Jan and early Feb) with the funerals of three special members of our Congregation: Rachel Williams, Ian Penny and John Whitbread.

And more recently the funeral for Jim Murton.

Michael has continued his involvement with the UniSA Human Research Ethics Committee.

He has been co-opted on the Joint Nominating Committee: The Corner.

Thelma Pike, Lynona Hawkins and Penny Harper have shared their spiritual journeys during the Progressive Christianity Study Series. All are invited to contribute.

In lieu of the 'Ordinary Time' during the 12 week period from 11 June in the Church calendar, Michael wants it to be an 'Extraordinary Time.' Michael and Alison Sutcliff are planning a community project and we are all invited to contribute.

The Study Series: 'How Jesus Became God' has been challenging and thought provoking.

'Journeying' events continue to be well attended.

BUC continues to be involved in the Anzac Day dawn service.

Michael continues to provide Pastoral care which has escalated of recent times mainly due to health issues.

Michael is retiring at end of his 5 years placement in March 2024.

The Church Council is working on a BUC Profile and Minister Job Specification in order to initiate a search for a replacement minister.

Michael will take Long Service Leave from early September to late November 2023. To replace Michael, we will welcome Supply Minister, Doug Hosking, followed by Adrian Brown, during this period.

There were no questions from the floor.

## **4.2 Finance**

### **Tony Miller**

Tony Miller provided us with a power point presentation of his Finance report.

## **2022 EOY results**

**EOY cash deficit: \$13,219**

**EOY operating profit\*: \$6,872**

**EOY cash balance: \$183,094**

\* Excludes Capital expenditure, external grants and internal transfers from Development Fund.

## **2022 Highlights**

- Offering income \$168,340
- Community Program income \$58,077 (incl. \$22,603 from Bike Workshop)
- Garage sale net income: \$4,779
- Facility hire income: \$14,195
- Staff salary expenses (all): \$157,657
- Property expenses: \$55,507
  
- Manse: loss (-\$9,687)

## **2023 results (to 30th April)**

**Cash balance (30/4/23) \$177,046**

- UC grant (\$16,821) for Bike Workshop fit out
- Facility hire income: \$6,002
- Offering income: \$53,558
- Bike Workshop build completed and paid for (\$57,154 over life of project)
  
- Bike Workshop income: \$6,200

Tony thanked his Finance Committee members, Brian Pickering, Ray Bown, Jan Furness and Mark Gill.

Ewan thanked Tony and his committee for keeping us on track.

There were no questions from the floor.

## **4.3 Forward with Purpose – Nov 22 to May 23**

**Peter Cranwell**

In Nov 2019, the “Forward with Purpose” presentation was made to this Congregation, which stated that:

“Blackwood Uniting Church is a progressive community of faith, right in the heart of Blackwood, wanting for itself and the local community to continue to flourish”.

The following report identifies some of the things done over the last 6 months as a consequence of that vision:

- The CARExpo was a great success with probably 300 people in attendance. Heaps of very positive comments were made. The success was largely due to a lot of work done by the committee made up of a mix of church and community representatives. It was paid for through grant funding.

- Nancy and I have continued to attend the “Community Connections” group every couple of months. Lots of sharing of ideas and events between congregations occur, in addition to exploring ways to enable congregations to connect better with their local communities. They are always interested in what we are doing here and likewise. We have seen things that will work to get established here as well.
- Regular mention continues to be made in Blackwood Times and social media of the things we are doing.
- 3 “Journeying...” events have been completed since the AGM last year. Attendance has averaged about 40. There have been a consistent group attend from outside this congregation, but most are from other local churches.
- The very popular Bike Shed is continuing to go extremely well, and have finally moved out of the main building into their new premise. We were successful in getting a grant of around \$17.000 to help fit it out with air conditioning, paving, shelving etc.
- Just last week the very first Uni SA funded Pedals programme started in the Hewett room! Under the direction of an exercise physiologist, selected participants spend 45 minutes on a proper bike, attached to a resistance trainer that records just what they do, as they follow the lead cyclist along a bike trail showing on the TV screen. Currently, it is designed to increase participation in bike riding for individuals living with cognitive impairment/disability. Once the teething problems are sorted out, it is anticipated the group will number six participants twice a week. Uni SA are thrilled with being able to help establish the programme in Blackwood and have already purchased nine bikes from the bike shed for use with the programme in other areas and paid their hire fee for the next six months!
- The Grow Mental Wellbeing programme has continued and we have invited the person that runs it to speak at one of our Journeying events this year. He is really looking forward to it.
- I met with the area manager of Maxima a couple of months ago. They were very happy with being able to work out of the church. They also see potential to work with both the Bike Shed and the Pedal projects as their area of expertise is finding employment for people with disabilities. We will look at ways we can help facilitate that.
- Lisa is developing plans for establishing an additional garden area which, once established, will become a community garden. Grant funding will be sought to do this.
- Finally, while I was on holidays a couple of weeks ago, I received the modified concept design for potential facility changes to make it a more welcoming, functional and flexible space. The Technical Committee will now make final recommendations for consideration of Council and the Congregation. So watch this space!
- Peter suggested that we provide community information sessions to increase awareness of The Voice Referendum.

There is a lot going on in this church which is just what the “Forward with Purpose” programme sought to encourage. Lots of different options for spiritual learning through study, philosophy, prayer, speakers etc occur. The Community Program continues to grow, there are lots of new facility users, and the Bike shed is now established. We have established good relationships with the current Government members and the Mitcham Council. In many respects we are an icon in the community.

This is happening because you wanted it to happen and have acted to support it.

Ewan asked for questions or comments from the floor.

- Lynona Hawkins heard that the Elizabeth Park Primary School would like some bikes for their families in need. She approached Peter Jones, Bike Shed Coordinator, who offered up to 50 bikes. The school was absolutely overwhelmed. Their intent is to offer one bike per family.
- Lynona also mentioned she attended a Yarning session on the Uluru Statement, led by Anne Hewitt, at Westbourne Park. Lynona believes that a lot of us don’t understand the Uluru Statement and wonders if we are equipped to make a decision at the Voice Referendum. She hopes we can plan some information sessions at BUC.
- Anne Magarey advised that the Synod Covenant Committee has been reconvened. They aim to increase awareness of the Voice Referendum. Anne offered to keep us informed.

Ewan asked the Congregation that the above three reports be accepted.

There was Congregation consensus for acceptance of all three reports.

Ewan thanked the presenters for their reports.

## **15. Other Business**

### **6.1 Mitcham Hills Interchurch Council**

Carys Penny and Bev Eccleston are members of the Mitcham Hills Interchurch Council which comprise of 11 churches and to which BUC contribute financially. Carys reported on their work with the Schools Ministry Group {SMG} which sends out pastoral care workers to schools. We have five local schools in our area which have been provided with workers. There are now two workers at the Blackwood Schools. However, Eden Hills and Bellevue Heights Schools don’t have a pastoral care worker.

Carys explained that it is up to the School Council to invite SMG. Carys invited anyone who sits on one of these School Councils to see if they can assist.

### **6.2 BUC Parking Space**

Bruce Marriott observed that when he arrived to assist with Playgroup last month, there was insufficient parking due to a hirer’s (Probus) meeting and spaces reserved for bikes. He suggested that some of these events be rescheduled.

Jane Jin suggested that on Mondays, the disabled parks be reserved for Playgroup use.

Ewan will pass on these concerns to the Property Committee.

### **6.3 Minister Replacement**

Adrian Brown reported that the Council were already preparing for the Minister's replacement. At the June Council meeting, the BUC Profile and Minister's Job Specification will be approved and forwarded to the Presbytery Relations Committee to begin the process of replacing Michael before he leaves.

## **16. Next Meeting**

Ewan advised that there may be a few extraordinary meetings before the AGM on 19 November 2023, as the Council, in searching for a new Minister, may need to report back to the Congregation.

Ewan thanked everyone who prepared for this meeting, and especially to Janet Taylor-Hughes, for recording the meeting Minutes.

## **17. Benediction**

Michael Dowling thanked Ewan and everyone involved with this meeting and closed with a Prayer.

Meeting closed at 12.05 pm.

## **3. Matters Arising**

## **4. Elections**

### **4.1 Church Council**

### **4.2 Chair of Congregation (2 Year Term)**

### **4.3 Secretary of Congregation (1 Year Term)**

### **4.4 Deputy Chair of Congregation**

### **4.5 Presbytery Representatives**

## 5. Reports that will be spoken to at the meeting

### 5.1 Minister

This is my annual minister's report, penned whilst holidaying, currently in Lancing, England. Apologies that I won't be there for the AGM on 19 November, being in Malta at the time!

2023 has been, like so many other years, a year of joy and sorrow, of highs and lows.

The year began with us sadly mourning the loss of three precious and dearly loved members of our faith community: Rachel Williams, Ian Penny and John Whitbread. In May, we also sadly farewelled the very gracious Jim Murton. During my long service leave, Jim's beloved wife Nina died, as did Judy Walkley's beloved husband John. Each of these people were known by us and will be remembered. Each of these people leave behind loved ones who mourn their loss and will forever carry them in their hearts.

This year, I have again enjoyed engaging and working with so many wonderful, creative and passionate members of our faith community, whether it has been in one-on-one pastoral encounters, in worship planning, projects, study groups, Messy Church, Mainly Music, Playgroup, Philosophers Lunch, and the like.

One highlight was again working with Alison Sutcliffe in our "Windows to the Kingdom of God" Easter theme, with Alison displaying her trademark creativity in a way that beautifully invited people's participation.



The provocatively titled study series *How Jesus became God* offered participants in our two small groups the opportunity to engage with some challenging material and concepts. I'm grateful to all participants for hanging in there and engaging so openly during the 24 lectures we watched and discussed together.

I have, once again, appreciated being part of the *Journeying* planning group, together with Lynona Hawkins, Malcolm McArthur, Peter Cranwell and Ashleigh Lower. This year's program, focussed upon the various stages of life, have offered some fascinating perspectives on life's journey.

This year, the BUC Church Council made the decision to support the Voice to Parliament, including the hosting of a forum on the Voice. For my part, I created a Discussion Paper on the Voice, which sought to invite people into an open conversation about the various dimensions of the subject. As we know, the Voice referendum was defeated, but it's my hope that we at least created a space where the subject could be respectfully

discussed. BUC remains committed to supporting our Indigenous brothers and sisters on the long journey of reconciliation.

This year, I have continued with various “extracurricular” activities, including my involvement with the Synod Ecumenical Relations Committee, the University of South Australia Human Research Ethics Committee and, for a time, membership of the Joint Nominating Committee for The Corner Uniting Church.

I have been supported and encouraged by so many in this last year, but particular thanks to Peta Workman, Adrian Brown, Tim Lee and Peter Cranwell for the immense support they have each provided in their own unique ways.

In March, I advised Adrian, Chris Bray and Peter Cranwell, and then later the congregation, of my intention to retire from ministry at the end of my 5-year placement at BUC, in March 2024. For Karen and me, this is absolutely the right decision, as we look forward to enjoying retirement together. It has been one of my life’s great honours to have been, for a time, the minister at Blackwood Uniting Church. I have never known a faith community like it, and I am so delighted that I will, together with Karen, continue to be a member of BUC, after my retirement.

**Rev Michael Dowling**  
**Minister**

## **5.2 Church Council**

This past year the church council has had a quiet time. Nonetheless, we have carefully and diligently gone about our role of guarding the church community. I would like to express my deep thanks to the members of the council for their diligence and their concern for the well-being of our faith community.

One issue, which the council took very seriously, was whether or not to join with the Assembly and the Synod of the Uniting church in supporting the Voice. After much discussion it was decided to do just that. From the outset Council was well aware that not everybody in the community of faith would be joining us in voting yes. We now know the outcome of the Referendum, and this means that we need to put that behind us, to spend more time and energy in supporting those things that will bring about reconciliation and opportunities and close the gap for our indigenous people. Connection with the Blackwood Reconciliation Group means that we will have plenty of opportunities to do just that. Council encourages everyone to join in supporting the leads of Indigenous Australians. As an interesting aside the electorate of Waite, in which most of us live, voted with a majority for the yes vote. Also, the voting pattern mirrored the pattern for the Referendum on the Republic – Australians do not like any changes to the Constitution.

One other, issue which took quite some time, was the development of a new profile necessary before we could call a new minister to replace Michael on his retirement. The Joint Nominating Committee has been appointed and this means that the process of getting a new minister has begun. Unfortunately, this process is all too elongated, and we hope that we might be able to complete the process before Michael retires.

Michael Dowling's retirement will come all too soon. At this stage we are anticipating Michael's closure of ministry service will be held on March 17<sup>th</sup> with his final service to be on March 31st.

In many ways this year has been one of maintenance for the Council as well as needing to respond to things as they come to hand. With a new minister arriving it is expected that Council's responsibilities will change somewhat.

It is important to acknowledge the significant work that is done by the various committees of the church. We express in particular our appreciation for the work of the Property Committee whose members quietly go about maintaining our church and tending to its physical needs. We recognise that so many people are involved in supporting the work of the church, in worship life, in the community classes, Mainly Music the Play Group, Friends' lunches, Bible studies and Messy Church. We also acknowledge those who serve beyond this community in ecumenical activities and the wider church. To each person involved Council expresses their thanks and the warm appreciation for their time and energy.

With this AGM we see the end of a number of years of service for Chris Bray on Council. She has served in many roles and her wisdom and support will be sadly missed. To each of the other members of Council I say thank you and confirm that you will be continuing on. Current Council members are Marnie Agnew, Alison Sutcliffe, Peter Cranwell, who serves as the Property Committee Representative, Bec English Secretary and Tony Miller Treasurer. We also value the mind and wisdom which Michael Dowling brings to Council. His leadership of this church have been of great benefit to all of us and we will miss him on his retirement. It is a smallish Council which works effectively and always has the wellbeing of the Blackwood Uniting Church in its heart and mind. We always welcome new people to Council and we hope that some will come forward for election at this AGM.

God's blessings

**The Rev Dr Adrian Brown**  
**Chair, Blackwood Uniting Church Council**

## **5.3 Finance**

*Reports to be provided at meeting*

**Tony Miller**  
**Treasurer, Property**

## **5.4 Office Management and Community Program**

Another year has flown past and I can't believe that we are nearly at the end of November. The speed of the year passing is a reflection of just how busy things are in the BUC church/community program office. I, and the team of volunteers have worked hard this year and it has been a joy working together, finding flexible solutions to problems and celebrating successes. Once again, just as last year, I cannot express how very much I love working in this role and am grateful to be a part of the BUC community.

As you will all know, there are two elements of my role here. One is running the church office and managing church business and the other is managing the community program which includes the bike shed. The longer I do this role the more I understand that whilst distinct roles exist, they constantly overlap and most importantly each role requires empathy, order, professionalism and the ability to manage change through flexibility.

In the BUC Church office a multitude of tasks occur. Front and centre is the management of the hiring of the venue. This element of the property business is steady and gradually increasing on an annual basis. Our traditional long term hirers are happy to remain with us for which I am grateful and we continue to convert new hirers to being a part of our old retinue. This year the State Zonta convention was a huge success as an example of a once off hire. We have expanded our public exposure through a joint venture with the Blackwood Green Dispensary and Catherine Hutchison MP to present community seminars that focus on health and wellbeing. These have been run on a monthly basis and bring over 100 attendees to each event. As have seminars run by Nicola Centofanti MP on various issues that bring people from further afield through our doors. Additionally, as Peter Cranwell has discussed, our partnering with UNI SA has been a great success and continues to bring potential future opportunities.

Our systems in the office have remained steady and I plan to spend my January 2024 really setting them in stone to continue to make our administrative backbone both reliable and transparent. This includes wedding, christening and funeral processes and revamping and sorting the memorial wall amongst other things.

To give you all an idea the things done for the church office, tasks include:

- Orders of service
- Copyright management
- Writing and sending newsletters
- Church event promotion
- Managing insurance, risk and accident processes
- Managing hiring comms, relevant paperwork, scheduling, hire invoicing and money collection and banking.
- Approving payments for each account, ensuring that payments are received and following up transfers required between certain accounts occur.
- Managing the square payment system for both church and Community program uses.
- Managing petty cash.
- Providing documentation collated for the AGM.
- Managing ordering and deliveries.
- Managing and providing worship resources to the BUC community.
- Creating monthly rosters for all areas of the church and weekly rosters for people managing church groups to outline relevant logistical concerns.
- Managing the BUC community Directory.
- Answering phones.
- Reviewing and answering emails.

- Providing administration and family support for church events (weddings, baptisms and funerals).
- Managing staff holiday, long service, sick and study leave.
- Managing the memorial wall, organising plaque proofs, final plaques, reservations and payments.
- Creation of the Office process manual (at this stage a future goal to aim for).
- Providing administrative support for minister, mainly music, messy church, playgroup and church committees as required.

The Community program is just as busy. I am happy that the number of students this year has been steady. Times are changing in the community and cost of living increases have touched many of us. We increased our rates successfully for 2023, but will keep them the same for 2024 in order to be as economically inclusive as possible. We use social media extensively to remain present in the community mind. Despite having a strong community presence we attract new students slowly as many of the traditional participants such as younger Mothers are now more commonly in the workforce than at home. Our demographic is most definitely in the retirement age group from 55 upwards.

In 2023 we have again hosted the biggest morning tea and raised over \$1000 for cancer research. Our newly started fabric stash sale made over \$900 for the community program and for a charity donation to Coolock House. Our Annual Christmas Craft Fair will be held next week and this year we have a total of well over 40 stalls (a record). This looks to be a huge success as well as being a fun day for all. Next year is our 50th anniversary of running the Community Program at the BUC and we are planning a year of events to celebrate, so watch this space. This program has provided support, companionship, skills via dedicated tutors and a plethora of other wonderful things to the Blackwood community and I am deeply proud to be its coordinator. That includes being a member of the bike shed team (I have my t-shirt to prove it). The mateship these chaps provide each other and the good they do for the community is immeasurable. It is a joy to have them as a part of the BUC family.

Some of the tasks carried out for the community program are as follows:

- Managing payments for classes and moneys for banking.
- Managing financial documentation, reporting and chronicling tutor payments.
- Organizing the Christmas craft fair, biggest morning tea and any other events.
- Managing and posting social media on Facebook and Instagram.
- Managing bike shed accounts, receipts, reimbursements and grant accountability.
- Attending bike shed external promotional events.
- Creating newsletters.
- Registrations and registration booklets.
- Movement of furniture to enable class setups.

None of this would be at all possible without a team of amazing volunteers that I cannot thank enough for their hard work, cheerful dispositions, wicked senses of humour, dedication, support,

occasional reminders and friendship. If it sounds like I go on, it's because all of these women deserve accolades and the two lunch events, I take them out on as thanks are seriously not enough.

This has definitely been a long and convoluted report and everyone who has met me knows I can talk, and by extension, write. However, this role is genuinely big. There is so much to do and so much I would like to do to make things even better for this whole community. Here's to an even better 2024 in the BUC office.

**Peta Workman**  
**BUC Office Manager & Community Program Coordinator**

## **5.5 Forward with Purpose**

**Nov 2022 to Oct 2023**

4 years ago, the "Forward with Purpose" presentation was made to this congregation, which stated that:

**"Blackwood Uniting Church is a progressive community of faith, right in the heart of Blackwood, wanting for *itself and the local community* to continue to flourish".**

The following report identifies some of the things done over the last year as a consequence of that vision:

- Nancy and I have continued to attend the "Community Connections" group every couple of months. Lots of sharing of ideas and events between congregations occur, in addition to exploring ways to enable congregations to connect better with their local communities.
- Regular mention has been made of the things we are doing through Blackwood Times and social media.
- "Journeying..." events have been completed so far this year. Attendance has averaged 30 - 40, which is lower than we hoped, but still a significant number. Planning for next year's programme is already under way.
- The very popular brand new Bike Shed is going from strength to strength. It probably receives more media interest than any other part of our Community Programme and gives a visible presence of what we stand for when we say we want the local community to flourish. A significant grant was received to allow fit out including air conditioning, shelving, and paving. Still more to spend yet. The fact we have been able to receive these grants is a clear indication that Local, State and Federal Governments value the work we are doing for the community.
- This year we partnered with UniSA to provide a programme under their direction, designed to increase participation in bike riding for individuals living with cognitive impairment/disability. The first programme has now been underway for 6 months and is proving to be really worthwhile, and a lot of fun for all involved. So much so that they have just signed up to start a second group on Tuesdays. The Project leader recently offered to pay for the sliding doors we have now installed in the room to contain the bikes and gear required (over \$2000!!). She said in her communication to us that *"The program and our connection with you and the Church community has been wonderful and is pivotal to the success and hopefully further expansion of the programme"*. She reminded me that

she hoped the congregation members would utilise the resources as well, so this is something we hope to get started next year. I would like to thank Mark Williams for the work he had put in to make this work as well as it does.

- As soon as the Bike Shed moved out of the Aldersgate room, we started the process of preparing it so that the Pedals programme could use it instead of the Hewett room. We have created a low cost multi-functional space as an example of how things could be done in future to make our facility look better. Have a look and let me know what you think?
- We have just received a grant for about \$3000 to assist us start up a new accessible, sensory Community Garden. This will be an extension of our existing gardens and will initially be set up by our new gardening team with the intention to invite community participation as soon as it is established.
- The Grow Mental Wellbeing programme has continued and we were blessed by the local leader who spoke at our most recent Journeying... event.
- We chose to get involved in a number of things happening in the community through the year to support Aboriginal people. This included quite a number of us being involved in the work done by the Blackwood Reconciliation Group. We also facilitated the Community Forum on the Voice to Parliament as well as our annual Reconciliation Sunday service and participation in the walk to Colebrook Reconciliation Park. The lectern for the new Congress Church at Oodnadatta was constructed earlier in the year. Recently I saw a photo of Julia Lennon, the Bush Chaplain, standing at the lectern when she came to meet Rod, Bruce, Mark and Ashley. She was thrilled to think that this congregation had put so much into thinking of and supporting them in this project.
- We have maintained close ties with Mitcham Council and both State and Federal Parliament reps.
- We facilitated several Mitcham and Hills Wellness Education seminars to be run in our facility. The organisers really appreciate how it works for them. They have had about 100 attend each of them and are hoping to continue to run them next year as well.
- Some other smaller but nevertheless important things have been started eg: each week there is a spreadsheet produced of what is happening at the church so that it is easier to see when areas need to be set up/down. This makes the whole process more efficient. Also the continued involvement of many members of this congregation and the wider community in giving to the Packing Day cause is appreciated. And not to forget our monthly food assistance provided at the Ukraine club
- Finally, a lot of work has been going on in the background regards the potential development of this facility. Unfortunately, after receiving building work estimations, we have come to a pause as we did not consider the cost could be warranted. The Technical Committee will continue to consider a way forward to still achieve our goal but for a significantly lower cost.

A lot has happened over the last 4 years. There have been some wonderful experiences and many stories of connections heard. The direction this church is taking to create new ways of seeing Christianity in action is something we should all appreciate.

I want to assure you that we are not going to stop here. This congregation gave clarity to how you wanted this church to act, including a long list of potential ideas that we haven't yet instigated. So stay tuned, as we endeavour to get more of these underway as we seek to follow the lead of Christ into the future.

**Peter Cranwell**

**Technical Committee**

## **6. Written Reports**

### **6.1 Property - Reporting Period: October 2022 – End of October 2023**

#### **1. Property Committee Team**

- 1.1.1 Total active members: 13
- 1.1.2 New members: 0
- 1.1.3 Member resignations: 0

#### **2. Church Structure & Grounds**

##### **2.1 Planned & Reactive Maintenance Works**

- 2.1.1 All monthly planned maintenance tasks completed
- 2.1.2 Weekly furniture set up for community classes completed
- 2.1.3 Gardens and grounds maintained
- 2.1.4 Various walls and doors repainted
- 2.1.5 New door locks fitted to external doors
- 2.1.6 Fabric chairs repaired, cleaned and missing rubber tips replaced
- 2.1.7 Major water leak in garden irrigation system repaired
- 2.1.8 Rain water system blockage and repair works completed
- 2.1.9 Carpark security lighting replaced with LED energy efficient fittings
- 2.1.10 Storage container graffiti painted over
- 2.1.11 Audio visual equipment repaired and upgraded
- 2.1.12 Various trees pruned around property after storm damage
- 2.1.13 Main hall rear door glazing replaced
- 2.1.14 Chapel external lighting fault repaired and rewired
- 2.1.15 Shed and storage container items cleared and removed
- 2.1.16 Aldersgate Room redecoration completed
- 2.1.17 Aldersgate Room floor polished and sealed
- 2.1.18 New storage cupboard in Aldersgate Room procured & installed

##### **2.2 Capital Project Works**

- 2.2.1 BUC Bike Workshop Community Outreach Programme Project completed
- 2.2.2 Additional grant funding secured for Bike Workshop fit out and works completed
- 2.2.3 Church/Manse Title Boundary realignment project completed
- 2.2.4 Welcome2Blackwood Project – Final option plans and costs completed

##### **2.3 Events**

- 2.3.1 Set up and delivery of Environmental Fair

- 2.3.2 Garage Sale held on Saturday 7 October 2023 – Income generated to date \$4,153 (still awaiting additional auction item payments)
- 2.3.3 New Pedals & Partners project with UniSA established and now fully operational in Aldersgate Room (Funding provided by UniSA)

### **3. Manse Structure & Grounds**

#### **3.1 Planned & Reactive Maintenance Works**

- 3.1.1 New lease rental agreement implemented
- 3.1.2 Gutters and drains cleaned
- 3.1.3 Minor repair works completed

### **4. Comments**

4.1 The Gardening Team have secured funding from Mitcham Council for a new sensory community garden to be established on the Coromandel Parade side of the Church property

4.2 We would welcome new volunteers to join the Property Committee Team  
Please contact me if you are interested or require any information on our operations

**Tony Otworowski**  
**Chairman, Property Committee**

## **6.2 The Bike Shed**

### **2023 Report for the Blackwood Uniting Church AGM. Life keeps getting better.**

As we approach the end of 2023 we look back at what has been another wonderful year for us all. The Mitcham council finally approved the plans for our new shed and construction began the week before Christmas. In fact the team that constructed were still there working on Christmas Eve. Our gratitude for such a speedy construction is offered but the addition of a roller door at the time would have been the icing on the cake. It appears that roller doors are ordered and fabricated after the floor is laid. Never prayed for concrete before and eventually it was laid (don't think the prayers made any difference though – nobody works in January and February is very busy).

The shed is fantastic. Way smaller in reality than it appeared on paper but it is as big as could possibly be fitted into the space available. Moving all the way across the car park was a challenge of another form. The old Aldersgate room was about 60 per cent the size of our shed but somehow in the unpacking, transport of 100 metres and repacking our bits and pieces increased and managed to fill the shed completely. I wonder how that happened? We have built shelving, benches, hanging racks and have utilised every inch of the building and are now looking at modifications to make things more efficient but as everybody knows the perfect house is only perfect until you start to live in it. Our container (which should have been fitted with wheels) has proven to be one of the best purchases we ever made. In fact the person who delivered it asked if we wanted to double our money - cash. Good thing we said no as it is a valuable asset to our storage needs. There is still a lot of work in organising and setting up required but we are constantly getting closer to finishing. The

members of the Bike Shed Team have reached master level in Tetris. To the wider church community: our combined thanks for the significant resources that you have invested in us.

Chaos continues to be the accepted norm for Monday with only the degree varying. Media attention is still helping spread our profile and the attention has increased the number of donations. It is very humbling to accept some of the bikes given as on the open market they would fetch quite a sum. We won't even talk about the bikes that are gratefully accepted to be consigned to the scrap metal pile almost immediately.

We continue to stand by our statement that our first priority is to help those in need. We have managed to deliver more bikes to various groups but still we can do more. Our list of recipients' increases and demand sets the pace. New to us this year is the Mitcham Railway Station 'Pit Stop Café'. Started by our local polly Catherine Hutchinson, a few of us gather at the Mitcham train station every six to eight weeks with the Blackwood Lions and a number of the SA Police. A free BBQ plus checks on bikes has given the downhill kids (dirt bikes go really fast downhill) an opportunity to stop and talk. They are respectful and friendly – even to the police. A bit of honey rather than a big stick is working well.

However there is never an end to need. All we can do is to keep trying.

### **Simple stats:**

Volunteer days - 508 individual sign on occurrences in the book - or 508 person days of labour.

Bikes in: 849 (just up on last year's total of 832 in and we thought it was way more!)

Bikes out : 397 (way down from last year's total of 495 out)

Difference : 452 bikes (have a look in the bone yard – up from last year's total of 337)

Donations, various primary schools, ARIA, private, etc 181

Unfortunately donations were down and Containers of Hope (we gave 100 bikes to them last year) have had their share of difficulties also but life goes on. The strong talk for next year is a recession so second hand bikes may be again in demand so watch this space.

Scrap steel : \$1,657 for 7840 kilograms (7.8 tonnes!)

Scrap aluminium : \$1437 for 720 kilograms (we were way more vigilant in separation this year)

Yes. We took in over \$3,000 (3094.75) in scrap metal. Much better than last year

### **Money banked Nov 22 to Nov 23 - \$15,000.**

But not everything that comes in stays in. We spent over \$6,300 in running the shed. Major expenses in no deliberate order included banners, business cards, T shirts, tools, WD40, Christmas lunch. A sizeable amount of funding comes in and also goes out. The office gets a monthly balance sheet and all receipts.

Nevertheless another fantastic result for us and has increased the sum total that we have been able to return to the church considerably. (A full total since 2018 of over \$%\*,000 since we started having a surplus to return.)

The straight bulk numbers do not reflect the individual donations (police, education department, St Vinnies, Uni SA, Beacon etc) along with the very modest individual donations for some bikes on a Monday must ask us to examine any numbers with caution. In fact anybody who has watched cars with trailers coming into the car park to unload can understand the statement that 'we think the numbers are about right' but who can keep up. Perhaps our saving grace is that the money we give

back will benefit others. In this I turn to Michael, Doug or somebody sitting in the front office and ask if we are still following a good path or is the story the path?

Storage problems. It has been said that we should be more discerning regarding donations we accept. Whilst we don't want rubbish even the junk bikes make good scrap metal (\$3,000 worth!) and I am very aware that when you start saying no to people they will stop giving - anything. Are we are better off getting some rubbish as well as the good stuff. When a single bike can return over a thousand dollars in a single donation – yes please. We still need a location to stage the large donations from. Help please.

We are starting to look to 2024 and planning things and I again, as I did last year, ask of you not to take the statistics of this year and use them as a basis for predicted performance for next year. We identify all incoming money (except scrap metal) as donations and we have minimal control over how much we can solicit from a person's wallet or purse. But give me a chance and I will take all I can get as long as they are still smiling.

**Peter Jones**  
**Team Leader, The Bike Shed**

## **6.3 Messy Church**

Messy Church has been working our way through the Fruits of the Spirit this year; Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self-control.

We have done many activities to practice acting out these skills and to help us understand what they are and how they make us feel, and have listened to some wonderful stories, told by Jesus and found in the Bible, to see these characteristics in action and reflect on them.

We've had fairly consistent attendance, as usual, with a group of 7-10 families, with children mostly preschool to middle primary ages.

We have struggled slightly in the area of volunteers this year, and have shifted our after-dinner cleanup routines to allow the parents to help, while we put a movie on for the kids. We've been doing the activities in the main hall this year again, and it seems to continue to work well for engagement of the attendees and for tidying up activities and setting up for the meal, prior to moving in for the celebration in the chapel.

We are so grateful for our continued volunteers and our parents who help make Messy Church continue to be possible.

**Bonnie MacLaine-Mills**  
**Messy Church Coordinator**

## **6.4 Mainly Music**

The attendance has been varied this year from 7 children to 19 and changes in number are usually due to sickness, bad weather or parental holidays. We have used a closed Facebook page for mainly music at Blackwood, this year as social media is the most popular way of promotion for young Mums.

Word of mouth is even better and we rely on church members to help with this by telling their younger relatives and friends about the group.

Thank you to the 20 volunteers who have supported mainly music this year. We are a cohesive team who have grown together and support each other through prayer. The volunteers are invited to a meeting once a term when we discuss deep questions about our faith and how we can reveal Jesus to the parents and children.

We have farewelled some volunteers, Bev Thomson, Joan Hazeldine and John Sladden. We thank them for their many years of service. Welcome to Val Austin, Sai White and Richard Stead who have joined us and whose help is invaluable.

The presentation of the data and music each Friday has been much easier since new sound equipment was bought earlier this year. It has been excellent to have reliable music as without it the whole session depends on the singing of the leaders.

Thank you to the church members for your prayer and financial support. We welcome anyone to call in on a Friday at 10.00am and participate. Fun and laughter are the main ingredients which make the time very enjoyable.

Thank you.

**Carys Penny**  
**Mainly Music Coordinator**

## **6.5 Playgroup**

2023 Has been a good year for Roundabout Playgroup. After an uncertain end to 2022 when a number of families moved on, our numbers have increased and we've welcomed both new families and returning grandparents with their next grandchild. During the year some of our young mums left to go back to work, and numbers do fluctuate from time to time. This term we once again seem to have a majority of grandparents in the group, along with two day-carers and a happy ethnic mix of young families. There is a good feeling of friendship and support in the group, and the different generations get on well.

Our themes for the year included Summer, Transport, Emergency and Community Services, and Australian animals. Incorporated into the themes were special days and celebrations for Harmony Day, Pancake Day, Easter, Mother's Day, Reconciliation Week, World Environment Day, Father's Day, and the coming of spring. We'll celebrate Christmas at the end of this term. We held special events for Book Week and Grandparents Day, and arranged visits from two SA Police officers from Darlington, and volunteers from Blackwood CFS. These events were well attended and much appreciated by the families. The kids had great fun as they learnt about people in our community.

I have been challenged to include stories and activities that reflect the ethnic mix of the group, and I've also included Indigenous stories to help raise awareness of Indigenous culture and presence in our country, as part of the Uniting Church's commitment to walking alongside the UAICC and our connection to our local Blackwood Reconciliation Group.

As always, I am extremely grateful to the volunteers who keep Playgroup functioning each week. Sadly we had to farewell Bruce Marriott in July as he decided at 87 it was time to admit age and health issues had caught up with him. We held a farewell party for him and all the families generously contributed to a well-deserved present of book vouchers and chocolates, to show their appreciation of his time spent with the children over the better part of 13 years. Thank you, Bruce, and you know we will never be able to replace you!

My grateful thanks to Judy Lower for providing songs every week, on the day's theme with actions and musical instruments, and she is always there talking to parents and providing back up for whatever needs to be done; to Jackie Otworowski who keeps our database up to date and welcomes families at the front desk each week; to Tony Otworowski who takes care of setting up each Sunday and clearing up on Mondays (when he's not 'Gone Fishing' ); to Penny Harper who fills in for Jackie, and Trevor Sutcliffe who fills in for Tony, when the Os have a trip away; and last but not least thanks to the morning tea team of Claudia, Helen J, Jackie, Penny, Cathy, Joan and Phil who between them provide hospitality to our families each week. Thanks also to those in the congregation who have stepped up to help with setting up and furniture moving after church whenever I've had to put out a plea. It takes a community to make Playgroup work. Thank you all.

At the end of this year we'll say farewell to at least three children, Ben and Natalie who've been with us for the better part of four years, and also Evie from one of our returning families, who will be moving on to kindergarten in 2024. As always, we will be sad to see them go but are excited for them as they are ready to move on to the next stage in their life journey.

We plan to continue in 2024 but will need to assess the viability of Playgroup at the end of this year, as it's not just the numbers of attendees but the availability of volunteers that will determine whether we can go on. If you'd like to join our team in any capacity, I'd love to hear from you.

**Marnie Agnew**  
**Coordinator**

## **6.6 Library**

*"We lose ourselves in books; we find ourselves there too"*

This year we have acquired thirty one new books and two CDs. We have also received a donation of One hundred and Fifty Dollars from the Australian Church Library Association.

"Pomegranate and fig" by Zaheda Ghani is a novel about refugees who moved from Afghanistan to Australia via India. This is a deeply moving novel about tradition, love, war, and the sorrow and hope exile will bring.

"When progressives gather together" by Rex Hunt provides hymns, prayers and liturgy especially written for progressive Christians to use in worship. As Rev. Wes Hartley writes "Rev. Hunt's creative work is designed to stimulate the senses, engage the mind and sign us up for a wonderful journey of (re)discovery."

Joan Chittister in her book "The gift of years" inspires the reader to look at the positive aspects of getting older.

Thank you to those who have donated books and CDs and those who have made suggestions for additions to the library.

**Joy Belling**  
**Librarian**

## **6.8 Presbytery**

*Reports to be provided at a later date.*

**Tim Lee**  
**BUC Presbytery Rep**

## **6.9 MHICC**

The churches which are represented are Church of England, Catholic, ClearVision, Church of Christ, Baptist, Hills Christian Family Centre, Lutheran and Uniting Church.

There are Pastoral Care workers in Blackwood Highschool, Blackwood Primary School, Belair P.S., Coromandel Valley P.S., St Peter's Lutheran P.S. and Eden Hills P.S.

The Schools Ministry Group Manager is also a member and she is responsible for the PCW's in this region.

We have three areas of mission.

1. To facilitate communication with the Word and the Work of Christ in the local community.
2. To support and encourage the work of the Pastoral Support Workers (formerly School chaplains)
3. To encourage interaction between congregations and facilitate communication between churches.

Formerly we supported Beacon which was emergency relief support for those in the community needing help. During 2023 Beacon was closed and the food which was left distributed to other organizations. This occurred as the number of clients had almost ceased and other agencies were able to cater better as they could operate every day unlike Beacon which was open on only one morning a week at the Church of Christ.

We meet bi monthly and the meetings are interesting and sociable. They are held in various churches which offer to host them. The PCW's give reports and every church may contribute information to be shared among the churches. The representatives from each congregation are encouraged to let their congregation know what is happening which we do through our news letter.

This year a conference was held in May for PCW's of the whole state and there were about 300 present. A dedication thanksgiving service is held each year for the PCW's of our area and this year it was held in the ST. John's Anglican Church Coromandel Valley. We were thrilled with the organ music played by Warren Bourne.

The Blue Christmas Service is another initiative of this group. This year it will be held in our church on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> December at 7.00pm. All those who are suffering grief, for whatever reason, are invited to come to this beautiful time of reflection and meditation to escape the frenzy of activity leading up to Christmas.

**Bev Eccleston & Carys Penny**  
**MHICC Representative for Blackwood Uniting Church**