

The 2016 Olive Harvest

Annual Reports
Brunswick
Uniting Church



Just like these olives each report is unique, contributing its own tantalizing flavour to our 2016 story.

Annual General Meeting - Sunday 26th February, 2017

The Olive Harvest

2016 Annual Reports of the Brunswick Uniting Church congregation.

The reports in this document give a detailed picture of the ministry, mission and life of the Brunswick Uniting Church congregation for the year 2016.

The Annual General Meeting of the congregation will be held after worship on **Sunday 26th February, 2017.**

The meeting will be chaired by Daniel Broadstock (Chair of the Congregation).

Minutes will be taken by Saide Cameron (Secretary of the Congregation)

Please take the time to read the reports prior to the meeting where they will be formally received by the congregation.

Minister of the Word	3
Children, Youth & Young Adult Co-ordinator	4
Olive Way Outreach Ministry Co-ordinator	5
Youth & Student House Support Worker	7
Mission Planning Co-ordinator	7
Church Council	11
Worship Committee.....	13
Christian Meditation	16
Table Church	17
Pastoral Care Committee.....	18
Children and Youth Committee.....	19
Culture of Safety.....	21
Justice & Mission Committee	22
FUNdraising.....	23
Art Stop program.....	25
Ministry with Stewart Lodge.....	26
Brunswick Uniting Food Co-Op	26
Discipleship & Education Committee	27
Mulling.....	28
Presbytery	29
Communications Team	30
Property Committee.....	32
Bookings Officer	34
Congregation Secretary	35
Sacred Harp Singing.....	36
Saturday Coffee Group.....	36
Book Group.....	37
Out & About.....	38
Finance Committee.....	38

Minister of the Word

It is a great privilege to minister with the congregation at BUC. I am fed by the energy and commitment of this community for faith and ministry.

I see my ministry primarily as one of theological reflection. For me theological reflection happens in the flow of reading and reflecting on the scriptures, prayer and meditation, worship and preaching, sharing in community life, upholding and being held in the give and take of life's joys and needs. I am thankful to know God at work in this church and to be able to reflect with its members on Christ's way among us and through us.

Here are some of the specific things that I gave priority to in 2016 in amongst the general flow of God's loving life with.

Worship and Preaching

- I rejoiced in the creativity of our worship through the festivals of our faith, especially Easter and Christmas.
- I worked with Julie on a mid week service, Nourish, primarily (but not exclusively) for children, with a focus on story telling, participation in prayer and Holy Communion.
- I conducted 1 child baptism and 2 adult baptisms at BUC and 1 infant baptism and 1 adult baptism for the Indonesian Congregation.

Pastoral Care

- I continued working with the Pastoral Care teams on our new three fold model – hospitality, compassion, community. I appreciate the way the members of our congregation show care for one another and hospitality towards newcomers and outsiders. Our Pastoral Care ministry and my role within it is to support and encourage the compassion, hospitality and community life of our church, not to do it on your behalf!
- I worked with Fi Botcher to write a discussion paper and ultimately make recommendations arising from it to address issues of challenging behaviour on our site. These behaviours include people sleeping rough, intoxication and abusive language and behaviour. We will continue to implement these recommendations during 2017.
- I performed 2 weddings and 3 funerals.

Asylum Seekers

- I continued a monthly service at the Maribyrnong Immigration Detention Centre.
- I lead a Sunday morning bible study for Persian speakers including baptism preparation for those requesting it.
- I wrote a number of letters of support and had a number of interviews with the Department of Immigration and Border Protection as many of the Asylum Seekers in our congregation had their applications processed.
- I worked with many other members of our congregation to respond to the Church Sanctuary movement and make our church available as a Sanctuary to those who may need it.

Discipleship and Education

- I ran the Deepening Faith group for a second year – this is a time of faith exploration and development for the newly baptised and for those contemplating baptism or confirmation.

Ministry Team

- With Carlynn's departure, our ministry team expanded with the addition of Anika as Student and Youth Support Worker and Fi as Olive Way Coordinator, and then later in the year Steph as our Mission Planning Facilitator. Working with this wonderful team is the highlight of my ministry. I feel very privileged to have such creative and committed colleagues.

Continuing Education and Self Care

- In 2016 I audited an intensive theology subject at Pilgrim College, Doctrine, Truth and Pluralism led by Geoff Thompson.
- I met monthly with my ministry supervisor and with a local group of UCA ministers for collegial support.
- I spent time in NZ with my family, got out into the bush, and took lots of photos.

Thanks

- Thank you to all who have helped and supported me in my ministry this year. In particular thanks to the Ministry Team Julie, Anika, Fi, and Steph, to Shawn for his leadership of the Church Council, to Saide for her work as Congregational Secretary and invaluable administrative support, to Church Counsellors, committee conveners and members, property booking and maintenance folk, liturgists, music co-ordinators and musicians, worship roster participants, and pastoral care volunteers.
- And thank you to God for calling us together into community as Christ's people, and for calling me to minister with you here.

Ian Ferguson

Children, Youth & Young Adult Co-ordinator

2016 was a year rich in both input and creative development and I am grateful to BUC for entrusting me with the role of Children's and Family worker for a further 12 months.

I have felt the benefit of a more sustainable work load as Anika Jensen has shouldered youth ministry. Hats off to a great and capable colleague. It has also been a delight to work alongside Fi Bottcher and Stephanie Gesling. The Ministry Team lead by Ian Ferguson, has as always, been a privilege to be a part of.

It is now four years since I came on board and researched and wrote Pathways to the River, a report about our congregational ministry with children and youth. For many of our highly motivated but time-poor young families the challenge is to keep finding creative ways to encourage people's unique gifts and channel or create shapes that fit those gifts. When people volunteer it gives a real boost to the sense that this is a shared journey and that we do have a whole congregation offering themselves to the ministry with children. I would like to particularly acknowledge the role of several of our volunteers who are no longer the parents of young children and who give out of their significant experience with generous hearts, thank you Ann Soo, Faye Findlay, Colin Hunter and Helen Burnham.

At BUC we still have lots of work to do to fully integrate children into the experience of worship. At present our families mostly sit up the back and the children are often at tables with their backs to the worship space. There are things we need to think through together.

On a personal note, trialling Nourish, co-creating Children's Addresses and planning participatory liturgies with Ian have been an ongoing joy. In all of these events, the theology matters, our relationship with the children matters, the spontaneity, accessibility and the timing matters. Many of you understand the complexity of this and respond graciously to the times when all the boxes can't be ticked.

I have appreciated the opportunity to audit two theology subjects at Pilgrim College this year as well as to attend several excellent opportunities for Professional Development offered at CTM. I also attended and was inspired by my first ever Synod.

I am keen to write and reflect more about children and worship and storytelling and faith and would love to hear from interested people in the congregation as to what they think the best and most accessible formats would be.

Finally, my heartfelt thanks to a great and growing CYYA committee, and to Anita Major, our new chairperson.

Julie Perrin

Olive Way Outreach Ministry Co-ordinator

In the beginning

The OW 2016 program began long before the doors opened on the 19th of January.

Important events that set the scene for the New Year include:

- The resignation of Carlynn Nunn, Olive Way Coordinator.
- The completion of the Olive Way review undertaken in October/November 2015 by Leanne Salau and Ann Soo titled: "The Olive Way The Journey So Far: the Road Ahead". Lots of great feedback and recommendations as well as affirmation of the wide community reach and value of our program.
- 2015 ended with a commitment to keep the art program alive in the New Year with Leanne Salau and Ann Soo offering to volunteer in the space - for which we are so very grateful.
- The appointment of Fiona Bottcher (that's me) as OW Coordinator.
- Changes to financial procedures for handling expenses and petty cash for the OW Coordinator and OW Community Lunch Coordinator.
- The installation of an Olive Way Steering Committee, an outcome of the above mentioned review, chaired by Leanne. The committee members in 2016 were:
 - Mal Rowe
 - Peter McKinnon
 - Andrea Alvis
 - Ian Ferguson
 - Leanne Salau (Committee Chair)
 - Peter Murphy (Lunch coordinator)
 - Fiona Bottcher (OW coordinator)

I would like to acknowledge the work and commitment of the BUC committee, Carlynn Nunn - who effectively provided me with on the job training as well as being a fabulous friend and inspiration – and the incredible work and support provided by the above-mentioned Steering Committee.

Facts and figures:

The total number of attendees per week increased noticeably from 2015 numbers.

Taking a sample of 15 weeks between April and October, the following is an average of weekly attendees:

Tuesdays: 22 (min 15, max 30)

Wednesdays: 29 (min 20, max 35)

Thursdays: 28, (min 20, max 35)

There were quite a few new faces, and old faces returned, and a notable increase in homeless and drug-affected attendees. A couple of incidents involving aggressive behavior prompted us, along with other volunteer areas of BUC, to seek further training in the handling of challenging/aggressive behaviours. The training day was run on September 9, through ReGen. A big thank-you to Andrea and Laurence for their help and advice.

Volunteers are the backbone of Olive Way.

I am incredibly grateful to these wonderful people who's commitment, patience, kindness and hard work are the life blood of Olive Way: Helen, Leanne, Olivia, Val, Lloyd, Abi, David, Linda, Caleb, Emily, Kimberley, Meysam, Kris, Jenny, Barry, Julie, Ann and Tim. And in the kitchen: Hannah, Sam, Roozbeh, Wendy, and a chap I only know as The German Chef.

Community activities:

The following activities were run throughout the year at Olive Way:

- Table tennis – thanks to Meysam and Lloyd
- Piano Lessons – thank to David and Abi
- SROC – thanks to Damien, the performances were wonderful!

- Artstop – thanks to George, Richard, Ailey, Leanne and Ann. The artists took part in three excellent exhibitions (see below)
- Writing workshops – thanks to Larissa
- Dance – Larissa and Ian planted the seed, Abi helped keep it alive, and Ezme gave it a whole bunch of phwoah!

Calendar of events:

- January – SROC begins, the artspace opens, the Jenga challenge is on!
- February – Larissa plants the dancing seed by doing a couple of rock n roll classes. Friends from The Salvation Army join in.
- March – Sydney Rd street festival on Sunday 5th, lots of scones and treats, teapots, arts, crafts, rainbows, a labyrinth and heaps of fun.
- April – The artists from the Artstop programme exhibit their work locally at the SOMA Gallery on Sydney Road between 18/4 & 22/4.
- May – SROC's first performance on the 5th: "If the Shoe Fits" – Olive Way regulars, BUC folk and friends from The Salvation Army join the audience with lots of great feedback. Our old couch gets some crafty love.
- June – Wednesday lunch moves into the hall because of consistently high numbers, Arstop excursion to NGV – thanks Leanne.
- July – Or new couch arrives! Ezme joins us for dance classes. Big thanks to our new friends from Karingal for joining in, donating beautiful gifts and breaking some moves with us. Special thanks to Alicia for her enthusiastic support and help.
- August – Some of our Artstop artists participate in the Exclusion and Embrace Art Exhibition. With sad hearts we say farewell to Helen's mum Claire. Some our regulars attend her funeral and share fond memories. Abi was well into the swing of piano lessons!
- September – ReGen training (see above).
- October – In2Art exhibition: a partnership project between Arts Access Victoria, Olive Way and BUC showcasing new works of inclusion, engagement and empowerment in honour of Mental Health Week 2016.
- November - Spring BBQ - it turns out the vegetarians can cook a decent burger! Thanks heaps to Barry, Abi and Hannah.
- December - SROC performs "Love and Food in Brunswick" on Thursday 1st. Wonderful! Rumour has it this fabulous performance may be seen again at the Sydney Road street party! Stay tuned. Chrissy lunch - 115 meals served! Awesome work in the kitchen by Pete and crew. And a big thanks for the wonderful presents and lovely messages on my last day as coordinator. I was really touched, it was a great day.

Future outlook:

We've started the year with the appointment of our new Olive Way Coordinator, Peter Blair, which is very exciting! Peter has wealth of experience in community outreach and centre management and it has been an absolute pleasure to work with, and learn from him in the opening weeks of 2017. Congratulations to the BUC council for making such a great choice.

Some focus points for 2017:

- To build a diverse volunteer team
- Further development of policies and procedures etc
- Networking with local agencies and services
- Encourage community feedback and involvement
- Commitment to further training especially in handling challenging/aggressive behaviours

In closing, I love Olive Way and it has been a great privilege to work in such a wonderful community space. Thank you to everyone who continues to show their love and support in so many ways. Oh, and do drop in, we'd love to see you there!

Fiona Bottcher

Youth & Student House Support Worker

Reflecting on the many happenings, joys and challenges of 2016, it's sometimes surprising that I only stated in the Student and Youth Support Worker role a year ago. It's been a true pleasure to be supported by my colleagues Julie Perrin, Fiona Bottcher, Ian Ferguson and temporarily Steph Gesling, in my adventures in trying new things with the younger generations of Brunswick Uniting.

There was certainly no lack in adventurousness in the YUCY crew of 2016, with many new faces joining the year 7 to 9 aged youth group, the leaders and myself were able to cultivate a distinct, open and safe social space for the teenagers to explore things happening in the world, their friendships and relationships, as well as spirituality in their context. Massive congratulations and thanks to YUCY leaders Brianna Bartley and Michael Cameron, and assistant leader Chantelle Matthews for their time, skill and willingness to try new things and work as a team to make YUCY a fun place to hang out every second Friday!

In a similar vein, the new, more ad-hoc, youth project YUCY OG for the teenagers in years 10 to 12 was an experiment in meeting the young people where they were at. Beginning with monthly meet-ups after church to talk through the liturgy, as well as monthly dinners at one of the teenager's houses, YUCY OG became a flexible space for the older teenagers to catch-up, socialise, debate and offer advice about the nature of the world, their personal lives and what it means to be a Christian teenager in Brunswick. We're truly privileged to have such mature and considerate young people and I'm excited to continue to explore and develop the YUCY OG crew this year! A million thank yous to Anita Major-Brown who co-facilitated these meet-ups.

Student House Support Work in 2016 saw its challenges and incredible triumphs. In retrospect, I came to this role quite close to the age group of many in the SH community and took time to find my boundaries and identify the way I would take on this facilitation role. Additionally, a substantial turn over of SH Committee members resulted in a strong reliance on the ministry team and Children, Youth, and Young Adults (CYAA) Committee for my supervision and support throughout the year. The community itself continues to thrive; it has been a privilege to bare witness to the friendships, generosity and respect shared among the students.

The year was marked by times of mediation and deep reflection between members, as well as support and hospitality. I'm very grateful for the help of Shawn Whelan, Ian Ferguson, Ann Soo, Anita Major-Brown, and many others for maintained support in establishing more in-depth lines of communication, conflict-management and pastoral care for students. By second semester 2016, I explored the idea of a review of the Student House Program to clarify the experience of the students and their relationship to BUC. Many thanks to Ann Soo and Anita Major-Brown for volunteering for the Student House Review team, as well as the new members of the Student House Committee.

I look forward to new journeys in faith, doubt and community in the year to come.

Anika Jensen

Mission Planning Co-ordinator

In July 2016, I was appointed by Church Council in a half-time position as Mission Planning Coordinator to assist the Church Council, the congregation, and the various groups and individuals within it, to pray, think, learn about and engage with our understanding of Mission in new ways, as we look to create our future vision for Brunswick Uniting Church.

Introducing the project and the Mission Planning Coordinator

After some orientation, research and conversations with key people, Ian Ferguson and I had a conversation in front of the congregation in worship on July 17.



Ian's sermon that day related to Mission in terms of our engagement with Jesus and with the world around us:

“The story of Mary and Martha reminds us that worship and service, love of God and neighbour, are like sisters who live together under the same roof - sisters seeking harmony, so that our love of God and our love of neighbour are intimately related flowing into and out of one another. As in the words of Hildegard of Bingen, we are like “feathers on the breath of God”, carried on the divine breath into our loving of God and neighbour” – Rev Ian Ferguson.

To further illustrate this idea, Ian invited me to teach a humorous song to the congregation. The gathering was split into two parts and the melodies we learned were weaved together gradually to illustrate that the two sisters and their ways of engaging with Jesus are like two contrasting melodies that can come together in harmony. We sang together “Church, hal-le-lu-jah... What is it good for? Must be good for something, Sing it again”.

Groups, committees and individuals

Throughout the project I met with representatives of more than 25 groups, activities or committees. I also met with about 15 individuals. These meetings helped the congregation and various groups to find ways to contribute to the mission planning that worked for them. This allowed people to share their knowledge and contributed to forming a more complete picture of the life of Brunswick Uniting Church. Groups and committees were asked to reflect on, record and celebrate their strengths, the impact they have on people outside BUC and their understanding of God's mission. The information collected was made available to the congregation via an online folder which people were encouraged to access. All the data is still available by request.

Finding space for the story wall and praying for vision

In early August Church Council found space for and envisioned the story wall with me. Council members walked through the worship space to find a suitable wall for the installation. We then stood together in the space and prayed for vision and for the Holy Spirit to move among us.

The story wall was an interactive art installation, a kind of map, showing the historical milestones of the Church, including a line to represent the Indonesian congregation, lines to represent the congregations of the past that united to become Brunswick Uniting Church and incorporating personal stories. The story wall also included a tree and “what if” box where people could add suggestions and ideas about the future of BUC.



The story wall installation evolved over the months and was incorporated in worship when Ian invited the congregation to write a ‘God breathed moment’ on a piece of coloured paper. People were invited to place these mini spiritual maps on the extension of the Mission Planning map / story wall as an offering of our lives, of our pilgrimage to God.

Congregational Workshops

Three congregational workshops were held offering people the invitation to participate in the mission planning project. Each took a different shape and had a lot of interest from the congregation. Numbers ranged from 12 - 25 participants.

Workshop #1

I began the first workshop by facilitating an outdoor activity on incremental change and celebrating milestones. This activity achieved its desired outcomes of introducing a playful approach to Mission

Planning, introducing and embodying ways of moving toward a destination with small steps and big leaps, practicing pausing to celebrate along the way, inviting personal reflection and sharing group wisdom.

Some wonderful feedback, written comments and drawings were shared in response to the Synod Vision and Mission principles. The principles were used in the workshop as a framework for thinking about what Mission might mean in our context. The responses were displayed in the hall for the next 4 months for people to read and reflect on.

At the end of the workshop people wrote down something they wanted to take away, a next step they'd like to take or made a commitment to listen for God in and around Brunswick Uniting Church.

Workshop #2

The second workshop began in the Olive Way. People who had attended the first workshop recalled insights from the previous month's workshop and Shawn Whelan offered some further explanation of the phrase 'First and Second peoples' from the Synod Vision and Mission principles.

Moving into the worship space the focus became connection and story sharing. Through an interactive game people swapped stories based on a given topic. Changing partners for each round meant we shared and listened to each other, taking time occasionally to share what we were experiencing with the group. The topics helped to deepen relationship between congregation members and develop our understanding of ourselves and each other. This led to exploring the purpose of the church and how we are part of God's mission. The group's thoughts about how we are part of God's mission were displayed in the worship space near the tower room for the next 3 months.

Following this workshop – a "mission question of the week", inspired by the conversation topics from this workshop, was emailed out each week for six weeks in the Olive Press so people could also respond in their own time via email.

Workshop #3

On Sunday October 16 the final workshop was held in the worship space. In the first activity people were invited to walk around the gathering space, to stop still for a time and to "run" (at a comfortable pace) and then to make their own choices about when to walk, stop and run for the length of a short piece of music.

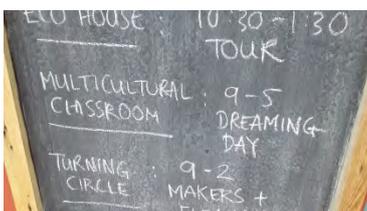
Practices that begin with body bring thought, feeling and spirit back into harmony. The purpose of this activity was to explore the mystery of finding grace and connections to self, other and the space through simple movement.

After sharing observations and praying together, the group sat in a circle and responded to a slightly adapted version of the 'questions of the week' from the Olive Press. Each set of questions was on a different coloured card and people were invited to write their responses on paper of the same colour. In the following month's Olive Branch, Saide Cameron wrote, "I found this to be a really helpful exercise as it gave me the opportunity to reflect on our congregation in a variety of ways".

Meditation

During the project period an 'Introduction to Christian Meditation' day was held. It was advertised to the public and Clare Boyd McCrae was invited to speak. This event was included in the Mission Planning program to invite contemplation and silence to be entered into and valued alongside conversation and action.

Dreaming Day



A 'Dreaming Day' was held at Ceres Environmental Park on September 3. The Children Youth and Young Adult (CY&YA) Committee members organised and attended the day and invited me to facilitate with the intention to reflect on key events, important decisions and conversations from the previous 12 months and to do some brainstorming and planning for the future.

In the planning for this, Ann Soo suggested using a tree as an analogy for responding to the three mission planning questions for groups and committees. The tree drawing used on Dreaming Day later became part of the story wall installation in the church.

Bible study

At the end of September on the Thursday before the long weekend, Ian and I led an evening Bible study exploring how the understanding of Mission in the church has changed and some of the current thinking about mission...

“There was a time when the church did mission, sent people out on mission and established missions. Mission was part of the colonial project of empires... A new way of understanding (which like most new ideas draws on some very old ideas), with implications for the way Christians see their place and purpose in the world, has emerged in recent decades... usually talked about under the banner of the “Missional Church” or the “Mission Shaped Church.”

We explored four key theological principles that shape a contemporary understanding of Mission (based on *The Missional Church in Perspective* by Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J. Zscheile).

We looked at ...

1. Whose Mission?

Jesus said, “As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (John 20:21).

God calls and sends Abraham and Sarah, Moses and the people of Israel, the prophets, and of course, Jesus Holy Wisdom in the Spirit. All are sent for the world transforming purposes of love. Jesus calls and sends his followers (the church) to continue this mission. So the agent of mission is not the church, but God.

2. What Mission?

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near...”(Mark 1:15)

God’s mission is nothing less than the saving transformation of the whole creation in love. The Gospels name this transformation the Reign (Kingdom) of God, the new creation of grace, justice, peace and love. This reign has broken in and come near in Jesus, but has not yet reached completion. As Jesus is sent to represent, proclaim and embody the Reign of God in its incompleteness, so the church is called to do the same.

3. How?

And the Word became flesh and lived among us (John 1:14)

Our call as church is to “be missional” rather than to “do mission”. The role of the church is not to attract people to be part of it (although this may happen), but to engage with the world as God does, through incarnation (divinity and humanity coming together). This means simultaneously participating in the life of the world and in the life of God in the world. It means embodying the practices of the reign of God – humility, justice, peace, liberation, compassion, forgiveness etc.

4. Surely not me!?

Then I said, “Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a child.” (Jeremiah 1:6)

This understanding makes every member a minister and all the different ministries of the church a part of God’s mission. Our spiritual growth in relationship with God and each other, the development of our faith and discipleship, our worship in which we are gathered to be nourished and renewed before being sent out in service, our pastoral care for one another – all these and more strengthen and equip us to participate more fully in God’s mission in the world, to live as disciples of Christ, to be a mission shaped church.

During the evening, people were also invited to choose a photo card to reflect on and wrote and discussed our responses to the question ‘why did God send Jesus?’ Reflecting on Jesus words “As the Father has sent me, so I send you”.

The presentation of the report at the congregational meeting

A group of more than people received [the final report](#) of the Mission Planning project at the congregational meeting in November.

The final report picked up six key themes from this season of missional planning and offered two visual representations of who we are: the tree and the community of communities illustrations. These themes arose from reflection on the data collected and from Council members sharing what they had witnessed, discerned and heard. This conversation took place at a special dinner and discernment meeting of the Church Council.



To enable reflection on the report, Ann Soo illustrated Brunswick Uniting as a missional church by painting a tree – its roots (God’s Mission), trunk (our foundational stories), branches (our communities, with the Sunday morning congregation as a large central branch growing up from the trunk), and fruit (stuff to celebrate e.g. community collaborations, relationships, vibrant aspects of our life, something as simple as a parent seeing their child experiencing joy and inclusion through participation in the Christmas Pageant, prayer, worship, spirituality or anywhere that members of the congregation are giving something a go, be it a role on a committee that stretches them, a small or large initiative or exploration of a way of being). I spoke about the parts of the tree as Ann painted each one.

Finally we considered the diagram depicting BUC as a ‘Community of Communities’. I drew a diagram and invited people to draw their own diagram of overlapping circles representing different communities related to BUC. Ian and I described how this concept had challenged us to think differently about the church, about the ways we may or may not be connected to each other and what that might mean for BUC as a missional church.

Before the conclusion of the meeting the link to the National Church Life Survey (NCLS) was shared and paper copies distributed. The NCLS is the world’s largest longitudinal study of church life. NCLS will provide Brunswick Uniting with summary results of our church’s core qualities of vitality. BUC will receive information based on our results and the results of the wider study of church life across Australia, focussing on: Who Goes to Church, Healthy Churches, Leadership, Spirituality, Wider Community & Wellbeing.

Both the final Mission Planning Report and the National Church Life Survey results are designed to aid conversations about mission in and around BUC and to inform the goals we set and the plans we make. At the Leaders Retreat in February a range of people engaged in the life of BUC will plan for the next few years, drawing on the final report and the data that’s been collected throughout the project.

As we continue on the journey we remember the love of God (represented by Mary) and the love of neighbour (represented by Martha) working intimately together and each of us meeting Martha & Mary in ourselves and in one another so that the fullness of God’s love and God’s mission can be done. May we have the courage to imagine ourselves as a mission shaped church, celebrating along the way and encouraging one another in witness and service to Christ in the world.

Steph Gesling

Church Council

Dear Friends,

It is, once again, my enviable duty to report to you the activities of Church Council over the preceding year.

They have been, needless to say, industrious and beyond reproach. Your Church Councillors have toiled incessantly, practically bathing in blood, sweat and tears for the welfare of the congregation.

The company of heroes that have made up Church Council in 2016 are as follows:

- Shawn Whelan (Chairperson) who has led Church Council with the masterful fortitude of a Theodore Roosevelt, the tactical instincts of a Napoleon Bonaparte, and the prodigious work capacity of a Saide Cameron.

- Ray Cameron, whose practical sagacity and Chifley-esque command of infrastructure and property have sustained church buildings in an impeccable state of repair.
- Linda Wannan (Treasurer) whose executive proficiency has illuminated the murky tangle of church finances with the clarity of a renaissance masterpiece.
- Kate Scull, whose Machiavellian diplomacy has kept Brunswick at the very heart of the decision-making councils of the Uniting Church, and therefore, of the world.
- The visionary Steph Gesling, who has led our Mission Planning process with a saintly combination of patience, artistry, spirituality and inclusivity.
- Ann Soo, who has advocated for the youth and children of the congregation with persistence, wisdom and compassion, whilst working with CYYA to mastermind a new generation of super-Christians.
- Meredith Budge and Andrea Alvis, who have maintained Brunswick Uniting at the very vanguard of social justice movements around the world.
- Ian Ferguson, whose theological eloquence, ecclesiastical dignity, spiritual wisdom and indomitable head of hair have kept Church Council on the straight path of the Lord.
- Daniel Broadstock, (Secretary) humble record-keeper and minute-taker.

In 2016 Church Council has:

- Instigated and overseen the first stage of the Mission Planning process, and begun to plan its future stages. We employed Steph Gesling as our Mission Coordinator on a six-month contract, and her report was presented to the Annual General Meeting on the 20th of November, 2016.
- Instigated and overseen the Student House program review.
- Employed Anika Jensen as Youth Worker and Student House Coordinator, and Fiona Bottcher as Olive Way Coordinator. Church Council has since employed Peter Blair as Olive Way Coordinator since Fi's departure.
- Formally joined the Sanctuary movement to offer protection to asylum seekers under threat of deportation.
- Continued to consolidate and enact Safe Church policies in line with Synod regulations and State and Federal Law (thanks to Helen Rowe).
- Approved and overseen important building works, most significantly the renovation of the Youth Hall and the Church Roof.
- Established a Keep Cup Library.
- Increased its commitment to the Artstop Program.
- Created a church asset register.
- Overseen the NCLS Survey (thanks to Saide Cameron).
- Participated prominently in public actions for Asylum Seekers, climate change and other social justice causes.
- Continued to steward the finances of the congregation. These remain in comparatively excellent health, but a consistent financial theme of 2016 has been congregational offerings falling below forecast. Our fiscal position was significantly buttressed in 2016 by a series of extremely generous anonymous donations.

This brief list does not do justice to the complexity of the many of the issues involved nor to the enormous work that has been invested in them, in which Church Councillors have been generously supported by the hard work of many members of the wider congregation. We offer our dearest thanks to everyone who has participated in and upheld the leadership of BUC in 2016.

If you would like more information about any of the actions listed above, please speak to a Council member or consult past editions of the Olive Branch, in which they are all described in detail.

In 2017 Church Council will retain its current membership, with the exception of Meredith Budge and Andrea Alvis, who have retired with honours.

Daniel Broadstock

Worship Committee

During 2016 our worship was shaped by the abundant and creative gifts of our congregation through preaching, liturgies, sculptures, prayers, music, visual arts and craft. These gifts are offered from a place of thankfulness for God's love and blessing and with joy as we contribute to life of our community.

Liturgical Seasons

We moved through the liturgical seasons beginning with Epiphany in January during which we were privileged to receive the reflections of five different preachers concluding with Ian after his return from leave.

The season of Lent began with Ash Wednesday (10/2). The theme for the season 'What shall we lay down and what shall we take up' was developed from the Lenten Prayer from the Book of Common Order of the Church of Scotland. Michael Cameron made small crosses for everyone to take home to use as a focus for praying during Lent. We also highlighted the projects for the Lenten Appeal during Prayers of the People.

Worship during Holy Week (20/3-27/3) began with our traditional ecumenical service at St. Ambrose Catholic Church and continued on Maundy Thursday (24/3) with a series of stations in the Gathering Space (foot washing, prayer writing and boat making) designed to allow us to engage with the stories followed by Holy Communion and concluding with a litany to take us out into Good Friday (25/3). The story of Jesus' passion was told through readings, reproaches and images accompanied by actions leading to the creation of a Good Friday garden. On Easter Day (27/3) we offered a Dawn Service with breakfast followed by the traditional Easter Day Holy Communion service during which we engaged with all the symbols representing the ways we had prayed together during Lent and Holy Week. The Good Friday Garden was transformed into an Easter Garden with the addition of flowers. Ian's sermon reminded us that this story of our faith is all about the reconciling power of hope and the remembrance of love, the love which proclaims that nothing is lost forever.

During the Easter season Sarah Tomilson, Ian Ferguson and Ian David invited us to explore what it means to be a people of faith.

On Pentecost Sunday (15/5) we celebrated the gift of the Holy Spirit with the creation of a beautiful felt 'Fabric of our Community in Pentecost colours, thank you to Ann Soo for her inspiration for this project.

We offered a Season of Creation across September and October incorporating events offered by the Discipleship & Education and Justice & Mission committees. Themes explored were Creating welcome (11/9), Creating justice, creating peace (18/9), Creating connections with the more than human world (9/10), Creating care for the environment (23/10) and Creating harmony with all creation (30/10).

The liturgical year concluded with the Reign of Christ (20/11) during which we launched the Christmas Bowl Appeal which, this year, was a beautiful prayer bowl that we rang as a bell throughout the seasons of Advent and Christmas.

The season of Advent was shaped by the liturgies written by Saide Cameron for the Act for Peace Christmas Bowl Worship resources, the beautiful sculptures designed by Simone Alesich and created with the Sunday Morning Program and Julie Perrin's original song 'Flame of Love'.

Planning for the Christmas Eve Pageant commenced in August and picked up on the Advent theme of being called. The script 'A call through time' was written by Caitlin Mullen with assistance from the YUCY groups and Saide Cameron and directed by Caitlin Mullen & Rachel Beagley. The story invited the congregation to journey with two children as they helped the characters of the nativity rediscover peace, joy and love.

The traditional Blue Christmas and the later Christmas Eve service responded to the SMP sculpture and themes of Journey, Village, Gifts and Cradle. Christmas Day was a joyful celebration of the birth of Christ.

Preachers

Ian continued to challenge & inspire us with his preaching: sharing stories, songs, video clips, highlighting current events, offering insights into the world that shaped the Scriptures and inviting us to consider what we might learn for our own journeys of faith. During the year we reflected on acceptance,

love, transformation, forgiveness, prayer, peace, healing, freedom, grace, hope, trust, radical equality, wisdom, hospitality, faithfulness, compassion. Again and again Ian reminded us that we are all called to be part of God's work of reshaping the world with love.

From his background as a professional dancer Ian offered us an embodied prayer (24/7) inviting us to breathe deep and be open to the various movements of the Spirit among us.

The Ministry Team led worship together (16/10) bringing forward and naming symbols of ministry, reflecting on holiness with the children followed by an invitation to contribute to the mission planning process.

We appreciated the preaching of Ian David (3/1, 24/4, 22/5), Beth Donnelly (10/1), Sunny Chen (17/1, 4/9), Geoff Thompson (24/1), Kirsten Parris (21/2), Sarah Tomilson (3/4, 9/10), Peter Beale (12/6), Graeme Garrett (19/6, 30/10), Tim Budge (18/9).

Special Events

On the first Sunday of each month we both celebrate Holy Communion and offer All Age Worship, which sees the children engage in wonderfully creative activities in the Gathering Space.

As always the year began with Commissioning & Blessing of the Sunday School Program (31/1) followed by residents of the Student House program (28/2). Newly elected (Ann Soo and Mikul Denison) and re-elected (Daniel Broadstock and Kate Scull) Elders were commissioned for their role (14/2) and later Steph Gesling and Linda Wannan were commissioned as Elders on (10/4). Steph Gesling was commissioned as our Mission Planning Co-ordinator (17/7). Much later in the year (16/10) we belatedly commissioned Anika Jensen and Fiona Bottcher as our YUCY Co-ordinator & Student House Support Worker and Olive Way Co-ordinator respectively.

We acknowledge Nowruz, the Persian New Year (20/3) with Prayers of the People written by Ian Ferguson in response to the symbols that shape the celebration of the New Year.

We welcomed Moderator Dan Wootton on 17th April who joined us to acknowledge our achievement as a Safe Church and present the certificate.

We worshipped with our ecumenical neighbours on Palm Sunday (20/3) and for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity on Pentecost Sunday (15/5) at St. Ambrose Catholic Church and Christ Church Anglican respectively.

We worshipped with the Brunswick Indonesian UC congregation on the fifth Sundays in May (29/5) & July (31/7). Many of us also joined BIUC for their Christmas celebration (4/12).

Worship Planning Teams including members of the worship committee together with other members of the congregation planned worship on a number of occasions including Holy Week, Pentecost Sunday, worship at camp (22/5) with the theme 'Love no Strings attached', World Environment Day (5/6), a Reflective service (31/7), Refugee Sunday (28/8), Creating Peace, Creating Justice (18/9), Blessing of the Animals (9/10). These services often included stations that invited people to engage with and respond directly to particular themes.

Children in Worship

Our conversation with the Children & Youth Committee primarily through Julie Perrin, Children & Youth Worker, continued paying attention to All Age Worship, engaging children in the experience of worship, secondary school students offering readings and leading prayers.

Children's Times during worship throughout the year were engaging and creative using drama, story telling, role playing, songs, action, gestural prayers and rituals. With the children we explored many topics including Jesus' ministry, living prayerfully, loving your neighbour, fruits of the spirit, journeying with God, being part of an upside down church, lament, blessing, the Kingdom of God and the Christmas Bowl stories.

Julie Perrin was liturgist for the majority of the All Age Worship services this year allowing for a closer connection between worship and the activities provided in the Gathering Space.

We explored ways of engaging young people in worship planning teams in the second half of the year for the reflective service (31/7) and Blessing of the Animals (9/10).

Meetings

We begin each of our meetings with a time of worship provided by the host of the meeting. Over the year we read from the Bible, responded to questions, reflected and prayed together. Themes included the journey to the Cross, rituals that ground us in our faith, Trinity Sunday, we are all 'one in Christ', Mary & Martha, the Sabbath, the Beatitudes, significant people in our faith journeys and finding joy. Our focus was always on the privilege that we share in shaping and guiding the worship life of our congregation.

Meditation & Prayer

Meditation groups were hosted by Andrea Alvis and Richard Arnold at church and in Richard's home respectively. We hosted a Meditation Day on 20th August at which Clare Boyd-Macrae, experienced meditator and writer on spiritual matters, was the guest speaker.

We continue to provide a sand bowl located in the west side alcove for people to light tapers for personal prayer during the last hymn, after worship or during distribution of Holy Communion on 1st Sundays.

Membership

During 2016 we celebrated with, welcomed, farewelled and prayer for a number of people.

We welcomed new Student House residents Rose Byrne (28/1) and Tabitha Robert (29/5). A Welcoming Ceremony (10/4) gave us the opportunity to formally welcome Sarah Curnow, Anthony Hinds, Emily Evans, Kimberly Fraser and Mitchell Valentine and another later (11/11) we welcomed Tess Alston, Joel and Rafael Hallinan, Athena Loutas, Josephine Ntiri, James Balsillie, Theo, Jacquie, Thomas & Elizabeth Byard, Jenne Perlstein, Dani & Frank Chamberlin, Ruth, Lillian & Ruby Sandy.

We rejoiced with Nagma & Emanuel Datt as they welcomed their third child Marielle (10/9f).

We celebrated the infant baptism of Joshua Wells (10/1), second son of Laura & Nick Wells and nephew of Beth Donnelly who officiated. We also celebrated the baptism of Joey Cassis (10/7), son of Rouada Elhajja. We celebrated the baptisms and confirmations of Jacky Magessa and Saeed Lashgari (14/8).

We acknowledged Wesley & Una Trigg's 62nd Wedding Anniversary on Easter Sunday (27/3).

We celebrated the marriage of Matthew Cameron & Lydia Jacka (26/11).

We rejoiced in the engagement of James Balsille and Courtney Rohde (27/11).

We sang Happy Birthday to Peter Middleton the occasion of his 70th birthday. Peter has been worshipping at the Sydney Rd. site (formerly St. Andrews) since he was 7 years old.

We prayed for Tim Hoffmann, Helen Burnham, Christine & Peter Hornby, Cathryn Goode and their families as they grieved the loss of a much loved parent and Peter Middleton at the loss of his brother.

Many of us travelled to Nunawading UC for the Ordination of Ian David (19/6) as he prepared to begin his ministry with the Cowes congregation on Philip Island.

We acknowledged and thanked Sarah Tomilson for her contributions as our Student Minister (6/11).

We rejoiced with Fiona Bottcher following her acceptance as Candidate for the Ministry of Deacon in September and acknowledged the conclusion of her 13 months as Olive Way Co-ordinator (18/12).

We farewelled Maggie Haines (3/2) as she prepared to return to the USA to work at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Beth Donnelly (10/2) as she prepared to begin her ministry as a Chaplain at the Scots School in Albury, Giordana Featherstone (17/7) returning home to New Zealand, Mikul Denison & Deb Blackmore (24/7) as they prepared for their next overseas missions and finally we farewelled David Stephens, Abi Benham-Bannon, Caleb Pratt and Lloyd Pendergast from their involvement with the Student House Program (27/11).

Music Ministry

The new batch of 30+ BUC songs have been sung a number of times during worship in 2016. We are moving towards recording them and making them available on our website to the wider church.

Natalie continued her support of the music ministry with her Lectionary Singer blog spot and launched a funding campaign to rebuild the website to enable greater efficiency in the delivery of this amazing resource. Elaine Potter supported the musicians throughout the year and organized and conducted the Advent choir.

Other highlights

We reviewed the guidelines for Prayers of the People and made them available to prayer leaders. We began the process of collecting stories about objects of significance in our worship space and on our site. The presentation of white text on black slides was introduced mid-year and received positive responses from a number of people. A Dropbox folder was set up to allow for easier collaboration with worship planning and preparation. We are very grateful to Wayne Matthews and his helpers for the creation of six pieces of stage and four steps, they were amazing to use for the pageant and will be so helpful on other occasions into the future.

Saide Cameron and Steph Gesling accepted an invitation to write the liturgies for the Christmas Bowl Worship resources. These worship resources are made available to 19 Christian denominations. Almost 2,000 churches every year take part in the Christmas Bowl appeal. It has been quite a privilege to contribute in this way. The liturgies invited people to explore week by week how and what we are called to by God. They were used particularly during Advent with our congregation.

Hopes for 2017

At our final meeting we reflected on hopes and dreams for 2016 and turned our attention to 2017. In 2017 we hope to complete the song collection project, nurture new liturgist and prayer leaders, provide more reflective services, continue our exploration of ways to engage young people in worship, keep exploring ways of acknowledging First Peoples, engage with the multi-faith community and most importantly continue to pay attention to the 'rhythm of life'.

Conclusion

The worship committee (Ian Ferguson, Saide Cameron, Natalie Sims, Kirsty Bennett, Olivia Potter, Helen Burnham, David Stephens) enjoys meeting together, reflecting on and planning worship and seeking new ways to engage the congregation in active participation in worship. Olivia has concluded her time on the committee after four years during which she has contributed creatively and with great insight to the worshipping life of the congregation. Thank you Olivia, we will miss you. We always enjoy welcoming new members to the committee; please let us know if you are interested.

The Sunday morning worship roster provides approximately 40 people with the opportunity to participate in the leadership of worship both up front and behind the scenes. Throughout any year people join and leave the roster. All these contributions enrich our worship of God and breathe new life into the 'who we are' as a community.

In 2016 as a committee we have supported the congregation to explore and reflect on what it means to be the people of God in our congregation, the Brunswick community and beyond – loving our neighbours as ourselves, welcoming all, nurturing one another in faith and upholding one another in prayer.

Saide Cameron

Christian Meditation

Christian meditation groups at Brunswick Uniting are open to new and experienced meditators and include a time of silence (usually 15 to 20 minutes). The teaching we follow is that of the World Community For Christian Meditation, founded by Benedictine monk Fr John Main.

During the year meditation groups met on Tuesday mornings (lead by Andrea Alvis) and Wednesdays (8am and 5.30pm and lead by Richard Arnold).

A highlight for the year was an "Introduction to Christian Meditation" forum in August with keynote speaker Clare Boyd-Macrae. Around 40 people attended from various parts of Melbourne, including a good number from Brunswick Uniting. Clare shared her own experiences as a long-term meditator and some of her own reflections on meditation which have appeared in The Age Faith Column. There were also a number of opportunities to actually practice meditating.

During 2017 we hope to share the gift of Christian Meditation with more interested people.

Richard Arnold

Table Church

Come, everything is ready! God welcomes us and so we welcome one another.

This is usually the way we start Table Church, based on a liturgy handed down from other groups. Over the last year, 30 people have joined our table and we alternate between Friday and Sunday evenings, to allow for those who can't always make it. Some come just once or twice, some from time to time and some more frequently. Regardless of how often someone comes, we hope they feel welcome. Apart from BUC regulars, we have been joined by others just looking for a different way of getting together, who found out about table church from the BUC website.

While they were at the table Jesus took a loaf of bread and after giving thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying "Take; this is my body". Then he took a cup of wine, and gave it to them. "This is my blood – which is poured out for many."

The bread and wine means different things to each of us, but the act of sharing bread and wine opens the opportunity for greater sharing. We share delicious but simple food such as yummy soup and sometimes savoury muffins, cheese, cake or fruit. We also share the highs and lows of our weeks, what's gone well, what's hurt or been a struggle. These are moments of healing for some of us.

Lord God, as we bring our prayers, we thank you that we can share in your Kingdom of justice and peace. We come in our poverty, not in our wealth, in our blindness, not with great faith, in our weakness, not in our strength. You welcome all people, so now we bring to you those who need love, light and peace.

We light candles and name individuals and situations which are on minds and hearts, mindfully committing our thoughts and each other in prayer for the week ahead. Sometimes there are only a few candles lit, other times there is a pool of tea lights. Difficult decisions, places in the world, friends with health problems and absent table-churchers are all remembered.

It is night after a long day. What has been done has been done. What has not been done has not been done; let it be.

We clean up! We are grateful to the six different households who have hosted sometime in the last twelve months. Sometimes we gather around long trestle tables, or in lounge rooms, sometimes it's just a handful of us, other times it can be twelve people or more.

God of all people, our God: take what we have and what we hope for, to make this a world where all people find good news. We come Lord, to share in the work of your Kingdom, until the new earth is created among us.

Here are some comments about Table Church from others:

- *I appreciate the fellowship opportunity with members of the congregation that you might not normally have much time to talk and connect with.*
- *My particular moment would be sharing the highs and lows of the week. I feel like this a good opportunity for personal reflection and also an opportunity to hear from and encourage the other members of the group.*
- *I enjoyed sharing a meal and then talking about highs and lows.*
- *I appreciated sharing the highs and lows of the week past, others and mine over a meal together.*
- *Meeting around food and wine is quite symbolic but yet very simple to do.*
- *I found the kind fellowship the best part of the table talk meetings.*
- *I enjoyed getting to know members of our church community better.*
- *And I liked everyone's cooking!*

Tim Budge

Pastoral Care Committee

As a church we value welcoming all, caring for each other and nurturing faith and community of our members. During 2016 Pastoral Care has continued to consolidate the new model of offering pastoral care in these ways, to the individuals and groups who make up the congregation at Brunswick Uniting Church (BUC). It comprises four teams of people in the Ministries of Hospitality, Compassion and Community and additionally, the oversight Pastoral Care Committee.

Hospitality Ministry

Lucy Hardman, Peter McKinnon, Sheila Calwell, Jane Allardice, Ian Ferguson and Steph Gesling (whom we welcomed during 2016), have looked out for newcomers to BUC and helped them feel welcome, provided them with information about BUC and its activities, chatted with them at morning tea after the service and assisted them find pathways into belonging if that is their wish. This is usually done in the background to the rostered Welcome people at the front door on a Sunday. There has been the usual steady trickle of newcomers as well as visitors this past year and it has been a privilege to chat with them, hear some of their stories and help them connect with others at BUC and any activities in which they may be interested. We have been really pleased to know that the congregation as a whole has a welcoming culture and people can often be found talking with newcomers and visitors at morning tea after worship and providing all sorts of further connections.

The newcomers card has been useful in obtaining details of new people to ensure amongst other things, that the information is passed on to the Communications team for email lists, name tags and so on. Ian has met up with individual newcomers in 2016 for a chat over coffee, a telephone call or a visit. One of the more formal ways we welcome newcomers who wish to make BUC their home, is with the Welcoming Ceremony. Two were held in 2016 during worship and we feel blessed that we can welcome these people into the faith community at BUC in this way.

At the end of the year we farewelled Peter McKinnon from the team and we thank him for the energy he put into this important Ministry.

During the latter half of 2016, the Hospitality team struggled to find common meeting times and to find a user-friendly shared document system for note making. So in 2017 with renewed energy we will be looking forward to follow up on these issues, to be in touch with newcomers over a longer period of time and to find more volunteers for this ministry.

Compassion Ministry

The Compassion Ministry of Pastoral Care, consisting of Ian Ferguson, Leanne Salau, Gwen Arnold and Glenice Cook, endeavours to respond to members of the congregation who are experiencing difficulties. This can mean arranging visits, transport, food, prayers or a listening ear. The Committee has met very regularly each month with email and phone contact throughout the month as the need arises.

The new initiative of inviting members to pray on a daily basis for members who have requested it, has met a real need and we are extremely grateful to the faithful folk who have volunteered to pray on behalf of others. We also feel humbled that so many have shared their stressful times with us. This pastoral service is carried out in a confidential manner.

The stocks of frozen meals in the Church freezer were much called for by congregation members in 2016 and so a big cookup to restock the freezer will be organised in 2017. We also plan on working to complete our data base of volunteers to enable a prompt response to any need which arises.

Community Ministry

The Community team of Rachel Beagley, Kirsty Bennett, Saide Cameron, Sarah Curnow and Ian Ferguson met throughout the year maintaining a level of oversight of all the ways in which our congregation gathers. This was done with a view to providing connection points for the whole congregation, building community and developing relationships, growing faith and responding to interests and needs. Many of these areas are hosted and facilitated by other committees and groups and include regular weekly and monthly events and other special one-off events such as FUNdraising.

The Community team has particular oversight for the following activities and we have highlighted all the different ways we gather through monthly contributions to the Olive Branch.

- Cafe Style morning teas were held once a term and included the BUC Expo, a Pastoral Care themed conversation and poetry readings from members of the ArtStop community
- Congregation Lunches were held on four occasions after worship
- Triple letter dinners were hosted over a weekend in April attended by 51 people and over a weekend in September attended by 62 people
- The Church Camp with the theme 'Love No Strings Attached' was held at the very familiar Adekate Campsite over the weekend of 20th-22nd May. Seventy people attended many of whom were relative newcomers to BUC. As always it was a wonderful weekend away sharing excellent company, having the opportunity of getting to know others in the congregation and delicious food in a beautiful bush setting
- The BUC Facebook page had 121 members by the end of 2016. It has been used for a wide variety of purposes including promoting events, highlighting sermon themes, celebrating special moments and encouraging the congregation to participate in actions.

In 2017 we plan to explore the Community of Communities concept described in the Mission Planning Report in order to discern how we can continue to support our congregation as we gather and meet in a wide variety of ways.

The Pastoral Care Committee

Ian Ferguson, Meg Orton, Jane Allardice, Glenice Cook, Leanne Salau and Steph Gesling (whom we welcomed to the committee during 2016) had oversight of all the threads of Pastoral Care. The committee met every 6 weeks and reported to the Church Council. In 2016 we conducted an internal review of how the teams thought the new model of Pastoral Care was going and what changes if any, were needed to improve it; we developed a "quick contact" card for the congregation to easily identify who to contact for various pastoral concerns; discussed the BUC Mission Review and the ways Pastoral Care could commit to and incorporate the review outcomes; attended and encouraged others involved in Pastoral Care to attend the Culture of Safety workshop. At the last meeting for the year we held a renew and revitalise discussion for the pastoral care area for the year ahead. In 2017 we plan to gather all pastoral teams together at least twice a year to review and share as a whole and to find innovative ways to bring pastoral care into the spotlight at BUC.

Pastoral care touches all aspects of our life together at BUC and we continue to delight in the rich and varied life of our community of all ages and cultures and in our relationships with each other.

Jane Allardice, Glenice Cook and Saide Cameron

Children and Youth Committee

2016 has seen CYYA with sleeves rolled up working across a wide age range of children and families and youth. With the appointment of Anika Jensen as Student House and Youth Support Worker Julie Perrin's role is now described as Children and Families Worker.

Our work could not have happened without the faithful volunteering and attention of Anita Major, Ann Soo, David Moorhouse and Darren White. Due to work commitments Darren stepped aside as Chair, but continues to offer his skills in design. Anita Major has undertaken the role of Chairperson for two years to the end of 2018. In November CYYA welcomed Catherine Drimmel and in December Rachel U'Ren joined us as the Culture of Safety representative. During her appointment as Mission Planner, we appreciated the perspective and presence of Stephanie Gesling at our meetings - which are generally enjoyed for their high levels of motivation and collaboration.

As a group, the CYYA Committee has continued to reflect on how we best support our paid and volunteer staff and give voice to our young people in our congregation. We have invited young people and other key individuals to attend the start of our meetings to provide reflection on the programs and suggestions on how we move forward.

We are grateful for the support of Shawn Whelan with his time on managing all the HR issues of employing new staff and the assistance of Church Council to supported paid supervision for both Julie and Anika.

Anika has breathed new life and energy into our young persons program and we would like to thank the Church Council and congregation for committing to this new role and additional hours. Anika took over the Student House role at a time when two Student House support committee members, Meg Moorhouse and Sheila Calwell took a well-earned rest. An enormous thanks to these two amazing women for their unseen time and commitment to the role. Thanks also to Dan Broadstock and Ian Ferguson and for Tim Hoffman who stepped up in the short term. The change of committee members' availability resulted in Anika shouldering the major workload of the Student House program. Once this was highlighted to the CYYA committee it was decided that Anita and Ann Soo would provide support and complete a review of the program. Please see attached student house report.

The addition hours of Anika's role allowed for the creation of a senior youth group (yr 10-12) or "OG" to help support those leaving the younger youth group, provide peer support and foster future leaders in our youth program. YUCY continued to gain strength with the support of leaders Brianna Bartley and Michael Cameron, and assistant leader Chantelle Matthews.

Early in the year the alterations to and re-painting of the Youth Hall gave new energy, light and delight to the use of this space. Warm thanks to Adrian Brown's company *Switch* for donating labour at below cost prices. 2017 will see CYYA looking to the outdoor shared space and location of play equipment in line with Culture of Safety awareness.

Aligning our practices with Safe Church requirements from the Victorian Government and the Uniting Church Synod of VicTas has been a major focus in 2016. We are gradually shifting gears and educating the committee and volunteers about our responsibilities in this realm. SMP briefings raised awareness of this and we have further written guidelines and policies that Helen Rowe has brought to our attention. A well-attended Safe Church Training in May increased awareness among volunteers. There are new regulations that we are addressing ourselves to in 2017 and Rachel U'Ren has stepped up to be the CYYA committee representative. Culture of Safety is a standing agenda item in our meetings.

There are things we look forward to doing that will be enabled by the development of a new website platform for the BUC website – thanks to Shawn Whelan and Saide Cameron. Fiona MacDowall has been giving steady attention to some of the Culture of Safety administration and we look forward to integrating some of our documentation in a compatible data base.

We have needed a short-term focus for projects in order to align with the commitment load of our volunteers. Highlighted below are some events that captured our imaginations and kept us motivated

- Term 1 *Easter Storytelling* brought a high level of response and great joy as we hosted guest storytellers and offered storytelling events for 70 adults and children.
- Term 2 Ian David was SMP artist-in-residence and his *Games Workshop* still brings a smile to the faces of the 16 people who attended. We also enjoyed the presence of student minister Sarah Tomilson across the academic year.
- In Term 3 our young people prepared for and participated in three services, the *Reflective* service in July which was beautifully shaped around Hosea and the movie the Lion King, the *Refugee* service in August and the *Creating Justice, Creating Peace* service in September
- Term 4 *Nourish* offered a steady group 17 children and adults the opportunity to listen to biblical and contemporary stories and share communion for a series of three mid-week gatherings. In October *Blessing of the Animals* saw beautiful liturgical leadership and thoughtful presentations by children and youth, demonstrating some of the learnings that have arisen in our focus on participatory worship for all. The end of the year saw us enjoying Simone Alesich's Advent Sculpture which the children in SMP and youth group and secondary SMP helped create.

Pre-school Play groups met each term and we are delighted that Nagma Datt has offered to be a new host. An SMP meeting in December saw commitments from parents who will assist with the 3-6 SMP age-group continuing to run. All Age Worship continues to be a regular feature of our congregational life.

In the pre-school, Prep to Grade 2 years, attendance of children and families at church has been strong and consistent. Attendance of the 3-6 group tapers in rough approximation to sporting seasons. The demands on parents to be available to have their children participate in sporting teams often make church and SMP attendance a bridge too far. CYYA is well aware that it is not our role to burden but to enable people. There were things we could not do due to the insufficient availability of volunteer time – our Mentoring program is on hold until there is new energy for this.

As a committee we look forward to 2017 with good humour and cheers and we are excited by the strong collaboration amongst the CYYA committee and numerous supports around our group.

Yours in faith;

Julie Perrin, Anita Major and Anika Jensen

Culture of Safety

In April 2016 the Moderator of the Synod presented BUC with a Certificate of Recognition for our Safe Church Program. After two years of development we have a strong foundation for our ongoing program. Support from Church Council, CY&YA Committee and the Children and Families (C&F) Co-ordinator have been invaluable in implementing and maintaining the program. Helen Rowe led the project and in 2016 members of the CY&YA Committee took on aspects of the program to support the C&F Co-ordinator. All staff and volunteer leaders in the Sunday Morning Program and Youth Group have a current Working With Children Check. We have procedures for recruitment, annual review and regular training for leaders. Leaders conduct risk assessments for off-site or higher risk activities.

Church Council accepted updated Synod policies that align with new government legislation and standards. The Keeping Children Safe Policy and linked procedures form the basis of the BUC program. This includes a statement of commitment to the protection of children from child sexual abuse and a code of conduct for key leaders and all leaders in activities involving children and young people. The Church Council-appointed role of Safe Church Contact Person is filled by Helen Rowe. Members of the congregations are able to discuss any concerns or issues affecting the safety and wellbeing of children or vulnerable adults. Council approved a flow chart and process for responding to and reporting suspected or actual child sexual abuse. The CY&YA Committee began planning a child-accessible version of the process and awareness training for parents and children.

The State government has introduced new Child Safe Standards that all religious organisations must comply with from 1 January 2017. We are reviewing our program to meet new requirements. Synod is collecting data from all congregations to present to the Royal Commission in March 2017. Synod has provided a resource person in each Presbytery to assist with this work.

In 2016 we fine-tuned our supervision and dismissal procedures for SMP activities. Two major safety concerns were addressed including the relocation of the main entrance of the Youth Hall so that children are now dismissed into the fenced play area. Thanks go to the Property Committee and others for making this possible. The introduction of a Mind-the-Door roster on Sundays helps to monitor child safety at the Olive Way automatic door. Thanks to the people who faithfully fill this roster each Sunday. An ongoing issue is the need for parents to supervise their own children once they are dismissed from the structured SMP activities. Vigilance is always required as doors and gates may be inadvertently left unattended or unlocked at times. Our children are precious; the physical and social environment around the Church property does present some dangers and risks to children. Our collective efforts to care for and protect our children and young people are appreciated.

Particular thanks go to Julie and the CY&YA Committee and volunteer leaders for the child safe developments achieved in 2016. The Church Council through the Chair has provided valuable support and guidance.

Helen Rowe BUC Project Worker Culture of Safety

Justice & Mission Committee

Members of the Justice & Mission Committee (Meredith Budge, Kirsty Bennett, Leanne Salau, Abi Benham-Bannon, David Stephens and Saide Cameron) enjoyed meeting together in each other's homes over shared meals during the year. Our primary focus has been to seek out and provide the congregation with ways in which to promote and work for justice for all God's people and all creation.

During 2016 we:

- participated in the Sydney Rd. Street Party
- promoted and participated in rallies carrying our now well recognized Brunswick UC banner
- supported installations in the Tower Room Window
- hosted the inaugural BUC Expo
- supported Leanne Salau in her membership on the Olive Way Steering Committee
- engaged in conversations with the Children, Youth & Young Adult committee re play spaces
- welcomed Jeff Wild (Act for Peace), Steph Gesling (Mission Planning Co-ordinator) and Jeff Jones (Lentara), Tim Budge (Permaculture) and Helen Rowe (Food Co-op) to our meetings.
- hosted a pre-election forum
- hosted a workshop for the Moreland Energy Foundation
- discussed and developed a vision for the gardens on the BUC property
- contributed to worship services for Refugee Sunday and World Week for Peace
- encouraged the congregation to participate in 'Plastic Free July'

The theme for our congregation's contribution to the **Sydney Rd. Street Party** (6/3) was 'Love, no strings attached' (thanks Fiona for such an inspired theme). Our congregation provided a range of ways to engage including heart focused craft activities in the west end of the hall, a Love Makes a Way photo display on the fence, an invitation to write messages of support for asylum seekers and the LGBT community on hearts and attach them to our rainbow, Devonshire Tea in the Olive Way, the labyrinth in the hall and a welcome in the worship space.

The **BUC Expo** (17/4) was an opportunity for committees and groups to share their story with the whole congregation. A number of them also set up displays to further engage the congregation. We learnt a lot from this experience and hope to offer the opportunity again over two Sundays in 2017

During the year we attended the **Palm Sunday Peace March** (22/3), **Refugee Week** (18/6), ...

The **Tower Room Window displays** continued to offer the wider community insights into who we are and what we care about as a congregation. In 2016 this included a Lenten installation, display of our Pentecost felt (Fabric of our community – Celebrating Diversity), Love Makes a Way, Art Stop and Advent installations.

Jeff Wild shared good news stories about the work of **Act for Peace** (7/6) including the Christmas Bowl Appeal, Ration Challenge and relationships between different agencies. He also thanked our congregation for our active support for Act for Peace.

The **Pre-election forum** (21/6) offered five candidates the opportunity to respond to three set questions, as well as a number of questions from the floor. The forum was very well attended by the wider community. Thanks to our MC Tim Budge and key organizer Kirsty Bennett.

Steph Gesling provided an overview of the **Mission Planning Proposal** (16/8) inviting our responses to the three key questions (at our next meeting). We found this to be an enlightening experience as we reflected on the various ways in which we are engaging in the mission of our congregation.

Jeff Jones shared his vision and passion for the work of **Lentara** (6/9). We were inspired by the possibilities for ways in which we could work more closely with Lentara with respect to the Asylum Seeker Welcome Centre.

We led worship on Refugee **Sunday** (28/8) and **Peace Sunday** (18/9) with a particular focus on journeys and breaking down the barriers to peace respectively. Worship on both occasions offered interactive stations allowing the congregation to engage with and respond to the themes being explored.

Lucy Best from the **Moreland Energy Foundation** facilitated a workshop (19/10) to help us explore ways to create 'Cooler homes for Summer' as part of the Season of Creation calendar.

Tim Budge (17/11) invited us to support a **Permaculture workshop** to be hosted by Cath James (Synod Environmental Officer) and Joel Meadows in 2017, date set 4/3.

Helen Rowe (17/11) shared the issues and changes in direction being explored in relation to the **Food Co-op**. We agreed that our committee is the appropriate one from which to seek active support.

David Stephens is consulting with Mohamed Isah (Manager of Lentara's Asylum Seeker Program) and Jeff Jones (Lentara's Corporate Partnerships Manager) to develop a **Community Garden** on our site. The garden will be developed in consultation with Lentara and the local community.

We acknowledged our direct relationships with other committees and groups in the congregation and agreed that it is appropriate that these groups report to council separately, in particular – Olive Way, Food Co-op and Love Makes a Way.

In 2017 we will be focusing our energy and passion for justice towards

- promoting congregation participation in public rallies
- development of a Community Garden,
- hosting community forums including civil dialogues
- co-ordinating the Tower Room Window Displays
- supporting linked committees/groups
- supporting specific projects arising from the congregation, eg the Permaculture workshop

Saide Cameron

FUNdraising

The FUNdraising – putting the FUN back into FUNdraising – committee (Saide Cameron, Glenice Cook and Linda Fisher) has been delighted with the enthusiastic response to FUNdraising efforts in 2016.

The 2016 plan

Saide and Glenice met in February to prepare an integrated calendar for consideration by Church Council. The calendar mapped worship, community and FUNdraising events and gatherings across the year in order to give a clear picture of events and to ensure that there were lots of opportunities for the congregation to gather beyond Sunday morning worship. Not everything included in the calendar ended up happening but it did give us an excellent place to start from.

Olive Way

Our FUNdraising activities started with a completely unique & spontaneous event – The Great Envelope Stuffing Challenge. Peter Allan (Sustainable Resource Use) invited us to stuff envelopes to introduce flexible plastic recycling across 160,000 households in Melbourne, the first time in Australia that this was done. Each householder was given a pack which we stuffed and they were enthusiastically received. Across those households in the first year 25,000,000 items of plastic packaging will be recycled as a result of the mailout. A solid team of people stuffed 25,0000 envelopes over a 24 hour period and we received a donation of **\$4,000** for the work of the Olive Way in return.

Lenten Appeal

Stalls were offered after worship on 20th March raising approximately **\$500** through sale of preserves, Easter treats, plants, clothes & aprons.

Share Appeal

We offered a similar range of preserves, baked goods, plants, clothes and aprons after worship on 15th May resulting in **\$442.50** being raised for the Share Winter Appeal.

Asylum Seeker Welcome Centre

Our big event for the year was the Dinner & Auction held on 18th June to raise money for the Asylum Seeker Welcome Centre. Our target of \$5,000 was more than doubled (**\$10,170.35**) as a result of collaboration with Lentara and the establishment of a fundraising page through the Lentara website. Approximately 80 people attended the dinner enjoying a 3 course meal prepared by Peter Murphy, our Olive Way chef. The total was made up of the following amounts

- \$3,620.00 – dinner
- \$2,880.00 – auction
- \$1,735.00 – silent auction
- \$446.50 – preserves
- \$50.00.00 – plants
- \$2,130.00 – donations

Act for Peace – Syria Appeal

We tried another new initiative, this time a BBQ outside Safeway on 6th August. Although it was a pleasant day it was not a particularly effective use of time with respect to fundraising as we only raised **\$359.70** over an 8 hour period.

Ecumenical Accompaniment Program – Israel & Palestine

We offered stalls and a second hand clothing bazaar after worship in 11th & 18th September and raised **\$931.55** for this important program. The stalls coincided with World Week for Peace

- \$332.85 – Clothing Bazaar
- \$528.70 – Preserves & Baked goods
- \$70.00 – Plants

Share Appeal Christmas Cards

Eleven people bought 35 packs of these beautiful Christmas cards contributing to Share's fundraising efforts.

Stewart Lodge Gift Bags Appeal

Another new initiative in a year trying new things! Richard Arnold accepted the invitation to organise Stewart Lodge Carols and preparation of the gift bags. He presented a challenge to our congregation and our ecumenical neighbours to raise \$1750 to enable gift bags to be prepared for the 70 residents of Stewart Lodge. The generosity of our congregation once again was in evidence with **\$2,436.75** being raised. The excess money was set aside for future use.

ReGen

Six households responded to the invitation to provide Christmas Hampers for clients of ReGen. Hampers have an approximate value of \$60.

Christmas Bowl

The work of the Christmas Bowl was promoted with the support of the Worship and Communication committees. A variety of opportunities to contribute to this work was offered. Another new event involved Glenice Cook and Ann Soo hosting a Crafternoon on 12th November enabling a diverse group of people to help prepare items for the Christmas Craft Stall.

- \$1,600.80 Christmas Bake & Craft Stall (4&11/12)
- \$400.00 Preserves Stall (4&11/12)
- \$110.00 Carols at the Manse (18/12)
- \$7,601.05 Advent worship (*this includes credit card donations*)
- \$1,160.80 Christmas worship (\$617.80, \$167.50, 375.50)

A total of **\$10,872.65** was raised for the Christmas Bowl.

This is a significant increase on previous years. The Finance and FUNdraising committees are unsure whether or not credit card donations have been specifically included in the past.

Conclusion

A couple of planned events (Street Stall and Jumble Sale) did not go ahead due to the logistical challenges involved. Other events and projects to support emerged during the year contributing to a very enjoyable and successful year of FUNdraising. We raised a total of **\$29,713.50** across the year.

Plans for 2017 are underway with a comprehensive calendar of events to be presented at the Leaders' Retreat in February and to the congregation at the Annual General Meeting.

Saide Cameron

Art Stop program

The Artstop program is funded by Arts Access and supported by Brunswick Uniting Church which creates amazing works of art in the West End of the Hall on Wednesdays between 10 am and 12 p.m. 2016 started with Richard Keville as Lead Artist and George Akl as Support Artist. These guys made a great team, and the support and encouragement given to the artists with their work, and their lives is enriching and inspiring.

For the Sydney Road Street Party in March we had the Art Stop area open with activities for children and adults co-ordinated by Ann.

The artists have been very appreciative of the Artstop space being open over the summer before the Artstop term begins formally. The artists would like to thank the BUC Council and community for their very generous donation to pay the Arts Access staff for six weeks during the winter which meant they didn't have a long break. The six week break decreases motivation and it then takes a while to get the momentum back. Arts Access and their staff were also very appreciative of this donation. Ann and Leanne feel that the relationship between Arts Access and BUC was enhanced and flourished during 2016 so we are looking forward to it continuing to grow in 2017. Arts Access staff, artists, Ian Ferguson, Fiona Bottcher, Ann Soo and Leanne Salau met regularly throughout the year to discuss the Artstop Program, plan exhibitions etc.

Highlights of our year would be watching our artists work develop, the encouragement our artists offer to each other, the friendships that have developed and of course the exhibitions that our artists work featured in.

SOMA Gallery in Brunswick 18th – 22nd April.

Exclusion and Embrace Exhibition – “Disability, Justice and Spirituality” Conference 21st – 23rd August. In2Art Exhibition in Youth Hall at Brunswick Uniting Church in October. This exhibition was opened by the Mayor of Brunswick, Samantha Ratnam. An amazing array of works of art exhibited by all our artists for us to enjoy. A thought provoking play confronting mental health was presented by Damien Coleridge, Larissa, Gus and Frank. It was very inspiring to watch them perform and was enjoyed by everyone. The relationship between Brunswick Uniting and Arts Access continues to evolve and we appreciate very much the support of Ailey Ball and other Arts Access staff.

George Akl, Lead Artist and Eleanor Purseglove, Support Artist through Arts Access co-ordinate the weekly Art Stop program. They nurture and encourage our artists, sometimes challenging them while building a special rapport with them, and under their guidance beautiful art work evolves which we are able to exhibit.

There has been a lot of thought and discussion about how we can get our artists work out into the community and sell it. There was a Fiesta Day in November run by Pepper Tree Nursery in Coburg which for the first time were offering stalls. Richard Phelan and Leanne took some art works and displayed them. There were no sales but many interesting conversations with people who were interested to know about the project and/or artists themselves were had. It was a learning experience and we know we could do it better in the future. Many thanks to Colin Hunter for his patience in setting up a marquee for us in what were extreme wind conditions.

We have been very fortunate to have Geoff Falk, a talented artist with a keen interest in indigenous art and architect (introduced to Art Stop by Tim and Meredith Budge) join us and work with our artists. It is a privilege to have Geoff sharing his talent and skills so generously with us.

Colin Hunter, also has an artist friend who is very interested in being involved with Art Stop.

There have been art works displayed in the Tower Window at different times and works hung in the Olive Way. It is hoped that the Olive Way display will become a rotating display changing frequently. These works are for sale so if interested at any time please speak with Ann or I.

Ann and I feel very privileged to be supporters of Art Stop and share this special space with these amazingly creative, talented, intellectual artists who have forged friendships with us and each other. It is an extremely supportive and encouraging environment between and for the artists.

Thank you all once again for including the Art Stop program as part of the Brunswick Uniting Church community and for your continued interest and support of this fantastic program.

Art Stop is looking forward to an interesting, exciting and fulfilling 2017 which we look forward to sharing with you.

Leanne Salau and Ann Soo – Volunteers with the Art Stop Program.

Ministry with Stewart Lodge

During 2016 a number of members of Brunswick Uniting have continued to visit Stewart Lodge and meet with residents.

We have also continued to have the Stewart Lodge Pick-up Roster to enable residents to attend Sunday worship. Thanks to all who have helped with this. A number of Stewart Lodge residents have also regularly attended the Olive Way and the Art Stop program.

Toward the end of the year there was a fabulous response to the Stewart Lodge carols. Around 20 people attended and helped with the singing and supper. Together with the Anglican and Catholic Churches, over \$2000 was raised to purchase gift bags for the 70 residents.

We look forward to continuing and strengthening our link with Stewart Lodge during 2017.

Richard Arnold

Brunswick Uniting Food Co-Op

The Food Co-op was co-ordinated by a small committee in 2016 year with Christine Hornby handling the mammoth job of stock ordering, then pickup and delivery of goods to the Co-op room. We farewelled Annette Buckley from the Committee during the year thanking her for oversight of the monthly rosters. Some changes in member availability required others to increase commitment to rosters.

Our AGM in September produced some new ideas for member participation in running the Co-op. The role of monthly anchor person on pick up day will be shared around members and two people have taken on the rostering role. A Facebook Group was started. We again thank Stephen Hutton for looking after the computer maintenance, Catherine Mullen continuing as Treasurer and Barry Cook as auditor. For 2017 Shannon Regan will help with stock take and computer maintenance while Sheryl Coulson and Kathleen Kemp will take over the rostering role. Committee membership will change in 2017 and volunteers are still needed to cover some regular tasks.

Food Co-op follows our mission of caring for our environment and our community. We stock a wide range of dry foods and environmentally friendly cleaning products, buying in bulk to reduce packaging and sourcing local (or at least Australian) products where possible to reduce food miles. Distribution day is usually on the third Saturday of each month and continues with a relaxed atmosphere, morning tea and time for a chat. Again we sold Fair Trade Easter eggs donating profits to TEAR, and donated hampers to the fundraising trivia night for the Indigenous Hospitality House in June. During 2016 we welcomed 16 new members and by the end of the year we had 50 active member households. About one third of our members are from the community.

Thanks are extended to all our Members for their support and for volunteering throughout the year, helping with product distribution, computer and other tasks.

2016 Committee – Annette Buckley, Christine Hornby and Nicole Lowe (all retiring), and Sheryl Ashley and Helen Rowe (both continuing with new Committee members).

Nicole Lowe

Discipleship & Education Committee

With the D&E Committee at the helm, BUC in 2016 has been filled with a bunch of discipleship and even more education!

The Discipleship and Education Committee aims to create opportunities for theological growth and learning, questioning and understanding of Christian belief and doctrine, spiritual dialogue and exploration, and reflection upon the role and practise of Christian discipleship in the world today. The company of heroes making up the D&E Committee in 2016 were Ian Ferguson, Meg Orton, Jenne Perlstein, Daniel Broadstock and Janet Watson Kruse.

This year, in addition to several ongoing activities and groups, the D&E program has been built around three big events:

- In February-March we hosted **Sunny Chen**, Uniting Church minister and chaplain at Melbourne University, to lead a series of seminar sessions on the book of Revelation. One of the least-understood and misused books of the Bible, Sunny helped us to unlock the meaning of this incredible biblical literature by introducing us to its structure, political context and theological themes. Sunny is one of our most engaging speakers, and a good time was had by all.
- In May we hosted a series of sessions with our favourite son of the Emerald Isle, **Padraig O'Tuama**. Padraig is an Irish poet, theologian and activist with a long history of working for ecumenical peace in Northern Ireland and a wonderful gift for language and wisdom. Padraig led us in a series of sessions reflecting upon stories from the Book of Genesis called *Once upon a time in Eden: raw stories of the women and men of Genesis*. Padraig helped to think more deeply about tales like the Noah narrative and how the Hebrew language informs the meaning and theology of the text. Padraig also facilitated a session with the Student House and youth of the congregation, in which he led us in sharing our stories with each other. He encouraged us to wonder what questions we would ask Jesus, if we got the chance, and what questions he might ask us.

Revelations

The most misunderstood book of the New Testament

"The Book of Revelation usually invites negative responses... but it is a book intended to bring comfort to God's suffering people.... to bring hope and encouragement to believers"

Led by Rev Dr Sunny Chen

Rev. Dr Sunny Chen is currently a chaplain and the Chaplaincy Coordinator at the University of Melbourne.

29th Feb Deconstruct the Structural Maze (Pretend it is March)
7th March Decipher the Symbol of Babylon
14th March Demystify the Motif of Evil Trinity (Public Holiday)

JESUS AND THE FEMALE DIVINE

Rev Dr Sally Douglas
- Minister at Richmond Uniting Church

In the early church, Jesus was celebrated in the language and imagery of the female divine, Woman Wisdom. Biblical scholars increasingly recognise the evidence of this in the New Testament. However, this startling reality is often not discussed beyond academic circles. Within our culture, that so often focuses only on male imagery for God, something rich is offered to us by re-engaging with this ancient early church understanding.

Thursday 8th, September
7:30-9pm @ BUC
212 Sydney Rd, Brunswick



CULTURE, BELIEFS AND THEOLOGY

Rev Dr Geoff Thompson
- Professor of Systematic Theology
at Pilgrim College

We will explore some of the conversations happening in Australian society but at the edge of or outside the church about such topics as God, Jesus, and the Bible. This will include eavesdropping on academics, comedians, politicians and social commentators.

Thursday 15th, September
7:30-9pm @ BUC
212 Sydney Rd, Brunswick



- In September we hosted sessions with two eminent Uniting Church theologians, **Geoff Thompson** and **Sally Douglas**.

Sally introduced us to the theology of her recent book, *Early Church Understandings of Jesus as the Female Divine* which charts and revives the early Christian practise of speaking of Jesus as the female divine of Woman Wisdom.

Geoff led us in reflecting upon the place of Christianity in contemporary Australian culture. We explored some different approaches and attitudes with which God is discussed in the public square and how the church interacts with our post-Christian culture.

In addition to these headline events, Ian continued to lead the Persian Bible Study and the Deepening Faith group.

Stay tuned for more Discipleship and Education in 2017!

Daniel Broadstock

Mulling

2016 has been a great year of growth & development for Mulling.

I took over the running of Mulling from Carlynn Nunn at the beginning of 2016. This created quite a change for the group as previously Carlynn had performed this role as part of her ministry work, which gave her a greater time & pastoral capacity. However, the group responded well to the change and it gave people within the group more opportunity to be involved in the planning & development of the group.

We met regularly once a month on a Tuesday evening. The previous format continued, with everyone bringing something to share for a meal together, followed by a guest conversationalist. Different people within the group hosted each event, allowing various individuals to extend hospitality and openness. Sharing a meal together each month brought the group together in community & friendship which allowed deeper, more open and more honest sharing during the subsequent discussion.

At the beginning of the year, we decided on an overarching theme for the year of “living out our faith in the world”. We had a number of guest speakers address different aspects of this concept, ranging from sharing our faith stories, to thinking about how our faith plays out in our work, to considering ethics & social justice. Many of the speakers were older Brunswick Uniting Church members, which gave the group opportunity to interact and learn from people they may not otherwise have the opportunity to, which was very valuable.

The members of the group changed quite significantly at the beginning of the year with a number of people leaving BUC/Mulling at the end of 2015 and a number of new people joining. There was an initial adjustment period associated with this however, as the year went on, the group became more cohesive and strong friendships developed. This led to a number of spontaneous & planned social events outside of the formal Mulling meetings, which really added to the community aspect of the group. This also allowed for young people new to the church to connect quickly with other people their age and therefore to settle more quickly into the church community at large.

Looking towards the coming year, further changes are afoot as I will be stepping down from the role of Mulling co-ordinator. A recent group meeting was held to discuss the plan for 2017 and it was a joy to see how enthusiastic all the members were about the importance of Mulling continuing and how they could make that happen. A decision was made to create a roster to assign each person within the group a month where they are responsible for organising & facilitating the Mulling event. There were a number of ideas for how the sessions could be run, with the concept established of alternating between having a guest conversationalist and an “internal conversationalist” each month. This would allow for people within the group to share their own ideas & thoughts and thus allow for more open discussions & sharing.

It has been a pleasure & joy to be involved in Mulling for the past two years and especially in the role of co-ordinator in 2016. I will continue to pray that God would sustain, grow and be at work in & through the group into the years to come.

Sarah Curnow

Presbytery

Presbytery in 2016 turned out rather differently than I had expected. Firstly, I started the year with happy expectations of congenial car-pooling to Hopper's Crossing on Presbytery-in-Council days with up to four BUC people: Ian Ferguson, Carlynne Nunn (as a candidate for ministry), Helen Rowe (our second Presbytery rep) and me. Sadly, the dates conspired against us and I mostly drove alone. In the end, Helen and I never managed to attend a meeting together; but, between the two of us, BUC always sent a rep.

More importantly, life in the Presbytery moved to a different rhythm than in the previous time I've been involved. I've mentioned before that the business of Presbytery-in-Council meetings generally divides into three categories: education/discipleship, mission/communication, and discernment/decision-making. However, 2016 wasn't business-as-usual, and that impacted the structure and focus of our meetings. Three words spring to mind to describe 2016: reflection, discernment, and transition. These three tangled processes regarded three interwoven issues (well, we all love a good trinity, right?): staffing, culture, and strategy. I'll try to tease the strands apart in the following paragraphs to reflect on each issue.

Firstly, it was a year of great change in terms of Presbytery staffing, with both Ann Key, the Presbytery Minister-Pastoral Care, and Robert Renton, the Presbytery Minister-Administration (who also acted as Presbytery Secretary) finishing their terms. There have been a few hiccups as we reorganise ourselves to fill their shoes, but we are fortunate in our supply Presbytery Ministers, Jenny Trehwella (PM-PC) and John Evans (PM-A), who bring fresh ideas and perspectives. However, the situation is made more complicated by the heads-up from Synod, as a result of the Major Strategic Review, that from 2018 Synod might provide less funding for presbytery ministers. We won't know the level of funding until after Synod meets in 2017, which is why we engaged supply ministers for the interim. Nonetheless, Standing Committee put a lot of energy into re-thinking presbytery staffing in 2016, asking 'What does Presbytery need done to help it thrive?' and trying to think creatively about how to make it happen. This was exciting for me for two reasons. Firstly, we were discerning what roles we'd fund ourselves if necessary, because we agreed it was important, not just because it had 'always' been done that way. Secondly, in reconsidering the 'big picture' stuff, we actually came up with new ways that Presbytery could help congregations, responding to difficulties we'd observed or issues reps raised in brainstorming sessions during Presbytery-in-Council. So even if Synod provides less money, we might end up achieving more. Cool, eh?

Secondly, a tricky one: culture. In my 2015 report, I acknowledged with regret that Standing Committee 'didn't finish up in a happy place'. Ultimately, what I've come to think of as 'the Standing Committee blue' acted as a catalyst for a cultural audit – a reflection on how Presbytery functions as a whole, and how we relate to each other, facilitated by some outside help. The tensions in Standing Committee itself resolved fairly quickly. Partly this was due to personnel changes – which is not to say that particular people were to blame for everything; changing the mix of people in any team inevitably alters how the team works together. It was also because we intentionally refocussed on important things like worshipping together, community-building, and communication. The cultural audit provided an opportunity for everyone in the Presbytery to air grievances, highlight difficulties, and suggest solutions. It began late in the year, and the auditor will present his report early this year.

Thirdly, a joyful topic: our Presbytery missional strategy. 2016 was a scheduled year of transition in this respect; the original 'Regenerating the church' strategy had run its term and was reviewed. Much of 2016's Presbytery-in-Council meetings were spent discussing the outcomes, discerning where to go next, drafting and accepting our Strategy 2021. I've written about the Strategy at length in other reports, so I'll just recap here that it is all about the Presbytery finding ways to help congregations participate in God's mission in their local context – encouraging them to 'have a go', and supporting them in the long term. The new Strategy introduces a focus on cross-cultural aspects, aiming to integrate and hear diverse voices. On this note, our Presbytery's Cross-Cultural Committee recently disbanded itself. In line with our strategy, rather than forming a separate group to look out for the interests of 'ethnic' congregations, we aim to include diverse people on all Presbytery committees.

In and around all this momentous upheaval, the normal work of the Presbytery continued, arranging placements, celebrating inductions, supporting students. Presbytery celebrated Bruce Crowle's ordination, and affirmed a number of candidate applicants for consideration at the Selection conference, including Fiona Bottcher. The Education Day provided a 'taster' workshop from an excellent course on natural, respectful faith-sharing called 'Makes You Wonder'. In November, Helen Rowe was appointed Child Safe Presbytery Co-ordinator and Worker, so she stepped down as a Pres Rep for BUC, and Jane Allardice has agreed to fill the role. I have finished my term on Standing Committee and didn't get renominated because I need to get a job this year. But I look forward to driving to Presbytery-in-Council with Jane – if we manage to attend on the same day!

Kate Scull

Communications Team

Newsletters

The primary responsibility of Communications team continues to be the production of the congregation's newsletters: the Olive Press (weekly e-newsletter by email & at worship), the Olive Leaf (weekly worship sheet printed and on screen), the Olive Branch (monthly newsletter by email and printed).

The Olive Branch is a substantial document providing the congregation with an important means to share and receive information about the ministry and mission that we offer. The Olive Branch has three key sections – Meditations, Sharing our Faith and News. Other sections include Worship Calendar, Special & Regular Events, Congregation, Discipleship & Education, Mission & Outreach and Children & Youth News, Reports & Notices.

Meditations have been offered by members of the congregation:

- Seeing the face of Jesus, An Easter Reflection, A Theology of Inclusiveness, Festival of Hope, A mission shaped church, The beloved child, by Ian Ferguson
- Greeting and Parting by Julie Perrin
- Imagination by Ian David
- What I believe prayer is and isn't by Clare Boyd-Macrae
- Spreading the rumour of peace by Tim Budge
- St. Oran speaks by Fiona Bottcher

A number of people 'Shared their Faith' in this regular & often inspiring section:

- Sharing our Faith in committee work by Saide Cameron
- Tribute to Dennis Shead (24/12/46-18/1/2016) by Richard Arnold, Leanne Salau and Barry Cook
- Love Makes a Way by Richard & Gwen Arnold
- Offering Sanctuary by Shawn Whelan
- Transform: "The Bible and Sexuality" by Anka Jensen
- Student House Blessing
- Sydney Rd. Street Party by Fiona Bottcher
- Lenten Living Sculpture by Simone Alesich
- Welcome to Sarah Tomilson (Student Minister for 2016)
- Welcoming Ceremonies 10th April and 11th September
- A Year in Nepal by Jacquie Tolhurst
- Synod 2016 reflections with Ian Ferguson, Julie Perrin, Laurence Alvis, Geoff Thompson and Shawn Whelan
- A trip to Latin America by Jenne Perlstein
- Exclusion & Embrace Conference with Julie Perrin, Ann Soo and Leanne Salau
- Journeys & After the Camino by Ray Cameron
- Flame of love by Julie Perrin

Each month members of the Student Household (David Stephens, Abi Benham-Bannon, Lloyd Pendergast, Rose Byrne, Tabitha Robert, Samuel Rauert, Brianna Bartley, Caleb Pratt, Emily Kidd) shared their stories in a 'Student Faith Spot'.

Special News stories (mostly written by Saide Cameron) have included:

- Beth Donnelly's Ordination
- It's a Wonder (2015 pageant)
- Farewells: Carlynne Nunn, Maggie Haines, Beth Donnelly
- Lent and Holy Week
- Culture of Safety
- Pentecost Sunday – Fabric of our Community
- Church Camp – Love no Strings Attached
- Synod 2016 including the installation of Rev. Sharon Hollis as Moderator
- Mission Planning Co-ordinator & Mission Planning News by Steph Gesling
- ArtStop featuring Yveanne and Cathy Lim by Ann Soo and Leanne Salau
- Farewell Paul Boyd, ASWC Co-ordinator
- Nourish by Julie Perrin
- In2Art Exhibition by Ann Soo and Leanne Salau
- A farewell (to Matthew Cameron) of sorts
- Farewell to Sarah Tomilson

Publications

Annual publications – the Olive Harvest (collection of Annual Reports) and Directory were produced and distributed on 14th February and 6th March respectively.

The Olive Press (weekly newsletter) continued to be offered as an e-newsletter and in printed form.

Other regular publications are the Olive Bite – a monthly welcome leaflet for newcomers & visitors, a Community Map prepared by the Community arm of the Pastoral Care Ministry – a bright and colourful document provides information about the groups and activities of the congregation together with contact information and bi-monthly Rosters which organize the participation of up to 40 families and individuals in leading, organizing & contributing to Sunday morning worship. Guidelines for these roles are produced on behalf of the Worship Committee and made available by email and on the website in pdf files.

BUC Website

The updating of the BUC website is still underway. A number of consultative meetings were held earlier in the year and then the project was put on hold. Shawn Whelan and Saide Cameron have since picked up the task (January 2017) and we hope to launch the website on a WordPress platform early in 2017.

Many thanks to Matthew Cameron for his dedication to the programming work required to keep the current website up to date. Visit the website today -

<http://www.brunswick.unitingchurch.org.au/index.php>

Leadership Photoboard

David Cameron has continued to support the provision of photos for the photoboard which includes Ministry Team, Elders, Congregation leaders and First Aid Officers. It is updated in February and throughout the year as required.

Working Together

The Working Together package includes 5 levels of guidelines describing how we function as a congregation through the organization of relationships between the council, committees and individuals. The documents are reviewed bi-annually and as required. For more information go to

<http://www.brunswick.unitingchurch.org.au/aboutus/cc.php>

Membership

Databases (dates of birth and membership details) continue to be maintained and details are provided on request for specific purposes, most often for the work of the Children, Youth & Young Adult ministry. The database has been expanded to include information about roster participation and the wide-ranging roles & responsibilities that people commit to.

Photocopier, Bookmarks, Postcards & more

Our fabulous photocopier/printer continues to be a great resource for all sorts of printing needs. It has been a delight to work with Samuel Rauert (Student House Program member) on the design for the majority of the publications listed below.

Postcards and bookmarks have been produced to publicize, invite & engage people in a wide range of aspects of our community life including:

- Postcards & bookmarks for Worship: Lent, Advent and Christmas
- FUNdraising events,
- Children, Youth & Young Adult events & activities (including Sunday Morning Program & YUCY)
- Discipleship & Education events

Posters and fliers were created and/or printed for Worship, Sunday Morning Program, Discipleship & Education, Justice & Mission, FUNdraising and Community events (Church Camp, Triple Letter dinners, In2Art Exhibition).

Real Estate Boards were commissioned for Holy Week worship, FUNdraising Events, the Pre-election forum and Christmas worship.

Other tasks

Documents (eg Mission Planning report), Synod mailings, invitations to church events and other information was distributed via the church email group system. Christmas Bowl stories were included with the Olive Press mailing each week from 20th November 2016 – 1st January 2017.

Three laptops were purchased, one for use in worship and the other two for the Olive Way program.

The team is also responsible for maintaining & buying consumables for the photocopier, maintaining & managing copyright licences, registry of dates of birth, providing name tags, organizing and managing email groups.

The Communications Team (Saide Cameron, Christine Hornby, Shawn Whelan) enjoys contributing to and participating in the communications ministry of our congregation. We also appreciate input from Jane Allardice, Meg Orton and Lauren Reader (preparing worship slides), Matthew Cameron (website). If you have any feedback or comments please speak to one of the team members by email or after worship.

Saide Cameron

Property Committee

Property Committee Profile

The Property Committee has responsibilities similar to those of a landlord for the Congregation's properties. These include the buildings on the Church site (Church, Hall, Youth Hall, ASWC), 4 Merri St (rental property), Manse and the student houses and unit at Bucknall Court.

The Congregation's properties are to enable us to live out our vision and mission as outlined in the working together set of documents.

The Property Committee undertakes the maintenance of the properties through a program of planned activities (as identified through periodic building reports), as well as unplanned items that arise that require short to medium term attention.

The Committee is represented by Andrew Moorhouse (convenor), Ray Cameron, Jenny Hunter, James Clough & Fiona Bottcher.

The major project for this year was the replacement of the slate roof and flashing of the 1880s church.

2016 was another busy year, with works continuing on addressing maintenance items identified in the formal 2015 inspection reports, along with all the unplanned rectifications and changes that occur with the active use of the church properties.

We say farewell to Fiona Bottcher, who is resigning from the property committee as she commences her candidacy in 2017. A big thankyou to her valued contributions throughout the year. The property committee is seeking another member to fill the resulting vacancy.

Having Laurie Bonney as the “go to” hands on handyman continues to work well. He is able to carry out repairs and maintenance, or organises quotes/ contractors, and this arrangement has enabled much work to be undertaken over the past year.

The church property is subject to break-ins and theft, and at least 2 occurred in 2016. The storeroom has been hardened to become a strong room.

The property committee generally meets monthly. Invoices are forwarded to the Finance group for payments.

Particular thanks to Ray Cameron who has done the minute taking, agenda preparations and monthly reports.

Listed below are the more significant jobs completed, (the many minor ones omitted), and at the end, the list of current activities.

Worship Space

Replacement of the slates and flashing of the 1880 church; completed Nov 2016. New controller for heater, which will allow air circulation in summer. Dimmer light switch temporary repairs. Solution to replace the pendant downlights from the floor proven; suction cup on extendable pole.

Hall, Kitchen and Olive Way

Water tank overflow pipe re-plumbed to prevent blockages (south tank). Sump pump fixed and pit cleaned out. Ovens: professionally cleaned. Arrangements have been made to share future oven cleaning costs between BUC, BIUC & ASWC. Water tank (ASWC) inlet filter replaced, and overflow pipe fixed. Storeroom: bars on window, privacy film on window, door strengthened, 2nd lock installed, self-closer installed on the door. Rising damp being monitored. Wireless router installed. Arranged NBN connection. New microwave oven for kitchen. Replaced hand dryer in ladies toilets. Broken stained-glass window in Food Coop repaired. Repairs to doors and locks after break-ins, and lodged insurance claims. A cleaning contract has been arranged and entered into with Lentara.

Youth Hall & Ministry office

Worked with Children and Youth Committee to facilitate revamp. Gutters over office replaced. Stones from stone pit removed (promoting window glass damage). New windows for office. Vacuum cleaner purchased. Gate latches installed. Colin Hunter and Geoff Thomson have been mowing the lawn (thanks). Key safe replaced (easier to operate).

ASWC

Side gate replaced. BBQ repaired. BBQ cage cleaned out.

Merri St Cottage

Gas heater replaced. Bathroom fan replaced, Window repaired. Roof repaired.

Manse

Sewerage and Stormwater pipes fixed. Rangehood replaced. Cracks in Laundry filled and painted.

Bucknall Court (student houses and unit)

Hot water unit replaced in Units 1 and 2. (gas) New dishwasher.

General:

Working bees held in Feb and Oct. No smoking signs near entrances produced. (to be installed). Emergency Exit signs and lights inspected.

Current activities

- Assess rising damp damage at a number of locations, including at the apse inside the church.
- Finalise the church roof project; synod report, slate tiles.
- Determine action to be taken in relation to the church spire. Awaiting a quote to paint the spire.
- Obtained a quote to have the faulty down light dimmer replaced as required. The work is not urgent and is to be scheduled as a planned item in 2017. Operational dimmer is currently set up to operate both sets of lights.
- Remeasure the moisture in the soil under the church.
- Continuing Investigating childproof locking arrangements for the gates on the youth hall front yard. Self-closing arrangements can't be installed; "Please Close the Gate" signs have being obtained, to be installed.
- Finalise the insurance claim associated with the break-in.
- David Stephen and Nick Burnham have developed a proposal for the lighting arrangements for the tower room to complement the displays. The proposal has been approved by church council.
- Repair the heater on the south wall in the west end of the hall. Initially the gas is ignited, however it won't maintain the gas flow.
- Investigate cigarette bins for the front of the church near the indigenous recognition sculpture garden.
- The shed in front of the youth hall will be replaced with a new shed on a concrete slab to house the rostra's (stage platforms utilised for the pageant) that Wayne Matthew (and others) has built.
- A community garden is to commence on the church's property.
- Olive Way automatic door to be repaired.
- Hall kitchen oven to be repaired, a number of faulty components exists, including the display.
- Down lights in the church to be replaced.
- Synod Annual Child Safety Check to be assessed and actions taken to conform.

Andrew Moorhouse

Bookings Officer

Firstly, let me say, that it is lucky we are not Baptists, for there has been a lot of dancing in our church this year. Belly dancing, Highland dancing, modern dancing and even the Olive Way folks have tried their hand at Swing Dancing.

The Brunswick Uniting Church property continues to be a bustling space on both Sundays and during the week, being fully used by both the Uniting Church and Indonesian Uniting Church congregations. Our Urdu community continue to meet once a month and have at last been able to implement a fortnightly bible study.

The Asylum Seeker Welcome Centre once again operated from the ASWC building and made frequent use of the hall and youth centre. Lentara has expanded its use of our premises this year, using our facilities to run community awareness programs around "Managing Money", women's health and different community programs, including a recent seminar on CPR.

There were a large number and variety of bookings for one off and short term events. A myriad of concerts were held in the worship space, including gigs for the Brunswick Music Festival, choirs and the very popular Beethoven Music Festival. A lot of drama has happened in our church over the last year - would we expect anything else from Brunswick!!

The Olive Way and all of its offshoots continue to use our space for meeting together, creative writing, singing, Arts Access and the occasional heated game of ping pong.

And finally, our church is full of our own congregation booking our premises to do exciting, faithful things. Once again, I want to thank Alistair Hunter who is incredibly generous with his time and his talents.

Julie McKinnon, Property Booking Officer

Congregation Secretary

Two meetings were held during the year – the Annual General Meeting in February and the Congregational Meeting in December. Chair (Daniel Broadstock) and Secretary (Saide Cameron) of the Congregation attended to various other tasks throughout the year.

Annual General Meeting

The AGM, chaired by Shawn Whelan was held after worship in the church on 28th February. Fifty four people attended with twenty-three apologies offered. The five main agenda items were presentation of the Olive Harvest (collection of Annual Reports), presentation of the Budget for 2016, follow-up election of Elders, election of Office Bearers for 2016 and updates from the Church Council.

Twenty-four **reports** were presented with opportunity for questions and comments.

In presenting the Finance report Mikul Denison moved the following motion, which was passed by consensus.

- *'That Financial Statements for the Year to 31 December 2015, namely Income and Expenditure Statement, Balance Sheet and Movements in Accumulated Funds be received and adopted, **subject to Audit.***

Thanks were offered to Mikul Denison (as he retires from the role of Treasurer), the Finance Committee and Barry Cook for their work in this area.

Council provided updates on: Ministry Team roles, Strategic Plans, Mission Planning Co-ordinator role and Sanctuary.

The outcome of the election of elders was that the two nominees were elected: Steph Gesling (1 year) and Linda Wannan taking on the role of Treasurer (2 years).

The outcome of the election of office bearers for the congregation (February 2016 – February 2017) was as follows:

- Congregation Chair – Nominees: Daniel Broadstock
- Congregation Secretary – Nominees: Saide Cameron
- Presbytery Representatives (2) – Kate Scull, Helen Rowe

Congregational Meeting

The annual Congregational Meeting held after worship on 20th November was chaired by Daniel Broadstock in the hall. Thirty-two people attended with twenty-four apologies offered. The agenda included Election of Elders, presentation of the Mission Planning Report, National Church Life Survey and finally Recognition and Thanks.

The Agenda was sent out prior to the meeting accompanied by profiles of nominees for Elders.

Election: There were seven vacancies on Council with four nominations received. After votes were scrutineered by Natalie Sims and Meg Orton all four nominees were declared elected: Daniel Broadstock, Kate Scull and Shawn Whelan (returning for one year) and Steph Gesling (returning for two years). Three vacancies remain.

Mission Planning Report: Steph Gesling presented the previously distributed report. See Mission Planning Report, p8 for details. The recommendations contained within the report are for the ongoing work of our life as a community and congregation with individuals, groups and committees invited to further reflect on the report into and beyond 2017.

Council confirmed that Julie Perrin's role as Children & Family worker and Anika Jensen's role as Youth & Student House Worker will continue. Also that the role of Olive Way Co-ordinator will continue with increased hours pending a replacement for Fiona Bottcher.

National Church Life Survey: The survey was made available in paper form and via a link for people to complete either at the meeting or at their leisure. Church leaders filled out an additional Leaders' survey. Shawn Whelan (Council Chair) and myself (Congregation Secretary) completed the Operational survey.

Thank you: Words of appreciation were offered to the following people:

- Concluding Elders: Meredith Budge, Andrea Alvis
- Presbytery Representative: Jane Allardice

Other tasks

Secretary – maintaining the official roll of Baptized and Confirmed members and Members-in-Association, maintaining the record (including lengths of terms) of Council members, organizing the election of Council members (including preparation of & receiving nomination forms).

Chairperson – offering words of farewell, thanks and recognition as appropriate in the life of the congregation.

Saide Cameron

Sacred Harp Singing

We continue to meet each month (1st Sundays) in the hall for singing and fellowship over a shared afternoon tea. The Sacred Harp singings welcome people from across Victoria, coming both from the local area and as far away as Mildura to sing when they are in town. While we have a few singers from our own congregation, most of our singers come from elsewhere. Many are not church-goers, but find meaning in the music and community among the gathered singers.

Our group this year has been larger than usual, with some of our singings attracting >25 singers. The enthusiasm of singers has also increased, and a second monthly singing is now hosted in the home of one of the singers on the 3rd Sunday of the month.

Highlights of the year:

- Our 1st singing convention, held over two days in January 2016. This was the first Sacred Harp Convention in Australia, and we had singers come from both Sydney and the UK to join us. The next convention will be held in Sydney in January 2017.
- Our 4th Annual All-Day Singing in July, which included more than 30 singers, including singers from Sydney, the USA and the UK. The Memorial Lesson (a reflection on those who have died in the past year) was led by Natalie Sims.
- Introductory workshops for the Sydney Road Street Party, the Blackwood Music and Culture Festival, the Brunswick Women's Choir, and for Laneway Learning (including a Carol Singing workshop).
- Daniel Whelan taking a strong leadership role, especially after our "pilgrimage" to Alabama & Georgia for some large traditional Sacred Harp singings and Camp FaSoLa.

Visitors and newcomers are always welcome.

Natalie Sims and Shawn Whelan

Saturday Coffee Group

On the first Saturday of the month a group of dedicated, coffee drinking women meet at Manakish café, south of the church on the opposite side of Sydney Road.

Each month the numbers vary as there are often other activities happening that win out. We have a wide range of ages and interests such as reading, walking, cooking, gardening, travelling, grand children, pets, art exhibitions etc.

If you are free on the first Saturday of the month come along to Manakish at 2:30pm and enjoy a coffee and chat and hopefully the company.

Love to welcome who ever is free on the day. It is extremely informal and there is no need to commit to attending. If you are interested please chat to me at morning tea or give me a call on 9386.1484.

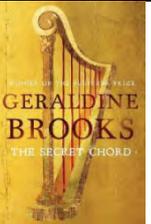
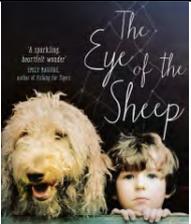
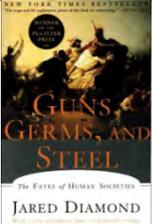
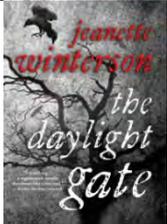
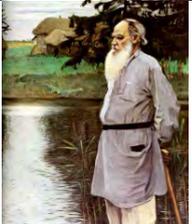
Leanne Salau

Book Group

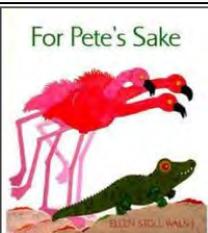
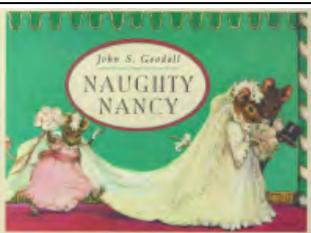
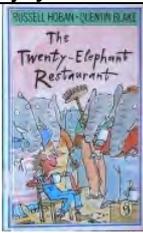
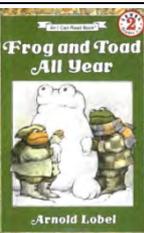
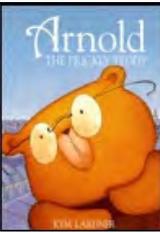
The book group met monthly from February to November (except September) on Wednesday evenings in the Youth Hall in 2016. Each month 6 – 7 people gathered to discuss the nominated book/s, led by our facilitator, Jeanette Acland.

The strength of our book club is that all members have the opportunity to suggest books for us to read and, as a result, there has been a great diversity of subject matter. Of course, we have loved some and struggled with others, agreed and disagreed, laughed and cried, and in the process we have come to know each other a little better.

The books we read in 2016 are:

 <p><i>The angel's game</i> by Carlos Ruiz</p>	 <p><i>The Night Guest</i> by Fiona McFarlane</p>	 <p><i>The maker of heavenly trousers</i> by Daniele Varè</p>	 <p><i>The secret chord</i> by Geraldine Brooks</p>	 <p><i>The eye of the sheep</i> by Sofie Laguna</p>
 <p><i>Guns, germs and steel</i> by Jared Diamond</p>	 <p><i>The storyteller</i> by Jodi Picoult</p>	 <p><i>The daylight gate</i> by Jeanette Winterson</p>	 <p><i>Three short stories</i> by Leo Tolstoy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much land does a man need? • Three hermits, and • Two old men 	 <p><i>Flowers for Mrs Harris</i> by Paul Gallico</p>

A lighter, and very enjoyable, highlight this year has been the sharing of children's books. Here are some of the children's books we have enjoyed:

 <p><i>For Pete's sake</i> by Ellen Stoll Walsh</p>	 <p><i>Naughty Nancy</i> by John S Goodall</p>	 <p><i>The twenty elephant restaurant</i> by Russell Hoban</p>	 <p><i>Frog and toad all year</i> by Arnold Lobel</p>	 <p><i>Arnold the prickly teddy</i> by Kym Lardner</p>
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We are looking forward to another year of enjoyable, and sometimes challenging, reading in 2017.

Christine Hornby

Out & About

The O&A Group continued to offer monthly social activities for mature age active adults in 2016. Attendances ranged from six to sixteen people with an average attendance of eleven. This year we welcomed three recently retired people and also neighbours of participants.

Activities included gallery and cinema visits, outdoor excursions and enjoying table games or a meal or coffee together. The most popular activities in 2016 were a visit to the Woodlands Homestead with a guided bird walk by Richard and our annual end-of-year luncheon. Other events of high interest were a tour of the State Library archives and a visit to the Saigon Market in Footscray. We have a consensual decision-making approach to planning activities. This means that all participants feel their interests are being catered for. Participants have a wide variety of interests, reflected in the range of activities.

Although we did not receive an award, compiling our entry to the Victorian Age Friendly Awards enabled people to express their positive feelings about the O&A Group.

- “The group is fluid; it is constantly being created and recreated. If you are not interested on one occasion, you can go the next time and it gets better.”
- “I love the companionship.”
- And an affirmation from a BUC leader - “This is a group of people that has acquired a lifetime of skills, knowledge and wisdom, and we need to think of creative ways of harnessing and sharing this precious resource. Active mature-age people are welcome to participate and to invite friends and neighbours.

Helen Rowe, (Convenor)

Finance Committee

Finance Committee focus for 2016

The Finance Committee continued its focus on improving processes and access to useful finance information for committees. The 2016 outcomes include:

- Reporting to Council on a monthly basis of actual against budget, with commentary.
- Supporting Committee leaders with
 - regular revenue and expenditure reports, with transaction detail, plus
 - advice to ensure speedy payment of creditors, and
 - advice on accounting for donations and fund-raising
- Establishment of an HR (human resources) admin system, to ensure correct HR paperwork is set-up and maintained. Note: this service does not include HR advice.
- Set-up of a prototype of an Asset Register for non-building assets, whether purchased or donated.
- Expanding use of the MYOB accounting software to more people on the Finance Committee and using more functionality of the system.
- Continuing with employment of a bookkeeper to pay bills and record all receipts and payments, working at BUC on three Fridays each month.
- Financial management of property income, UCA Funds income and donations
- Participation in a Giving Strategy Planning group, and the Mission Planning process

Changes and task anticipated for 2017 include

- Improving assistance to Council and Committees with their decision-making and eliciting external funding, by spreading of income and expenses across cost-centres to reflect the associated costs and revenues of each activity. The six centres proposed are: 1. Enabling (Admin), 2. Worship, 3. CYYA, 4. Discipleship & Education, 5. Pastoral Care and 6. Olive Way Mission & Service (Olive Way, Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, ArtStop, BU Indonesian Congregation). This is planned with an upgrade of MYOB Essentials to MYOB Account Right.
- Developing the asset register past prototype stage.
- Participation in a Giving Program. Also, assisting Council and Committees submit for external funds

Income and Expenditure 2016

The Council approved a 2016 budget at the AGM 28 February 2016.

One unanticipated outcome in 2016 was the continuation of receipts of anonymous donations to the church, in 2016 totalling \$30,000. There were also frequent, smaller but not insubstantial donations for specific use where no fundraising was in progress e.g. the Olive Way. While all donations are of course welcome, donations that are tagged for a specific project can sometimes result in more money for popular programs than is actually needed, which can raise small issues for Church Council.

The review of the 2016 accounts is now complete, and the Income and Expenditure Report, Accumulated Funds Report and the Balance Sheet will be presented at the AGM in February 2017. In addition, these reports will be submitted to the external auditor.

Outlook for 2017

The church manages large and diverse programs that require significant human and financial resources.

The church is in a strong position to continue delivering its programs, and potentially growing them. It has reserves which ensure maintenance of property can be completed as required and it has a growing income from giving to support its programs. The Finance Committee will continue to manage the accounts and to report back to Council and Committees regularly about how the church is performing against budget.

Each of the Finance Committee members and Book-keeper Austin Byard are thanked for their commitment and time. Caleb Pratt has provided his voice. Process specialists Mal Rowe and Tim Budge have assisted greatly, and with Ray Hardman have contributed to accounting for and banking the Sunday offerings, plus bank and UCA Funds authorisations. In addition, I acknowledge and thank Barry Cook for his continuing efforts to support the Finance Committee, and recent past Treasurers Mikul Denison and Ray Hardman for their support.

Linda Wannan

NB – Financial Statements will be made shortly before or at the AGM.

