

# BUC Strategic Plan 2018-21

## 1. Purpose of Strategic Plan

This Plan is intended to guide the work of Church Council as it leads Brunswick Uniting Church in 2018-21. It should help:

- Church Council to communicate its expectations and assumptions about our future more clearly with the congregation and all the various communities associated with BUC
- Members of the congregation, committees and groups to understand the “bigger picture” and support Church Council, other committees and groups in our shared mission
- Church Council to focus on what’s most important in the years to come.

Of course, the Plan will not be set in stone, but should be a “living document” that can be adapted over time.

## 2. Introduction

For some years BUC has had a Vision & Values statement, which has underpinned previous Strategic Plans including the most recent one (2015-16):

**Vision:** Brunswick Uniting Church strives to be a Christian community that loves God, seeks wisdom, cares for and engages with each other, the wider community and the earth, travelling with justice and love.

**Values:**

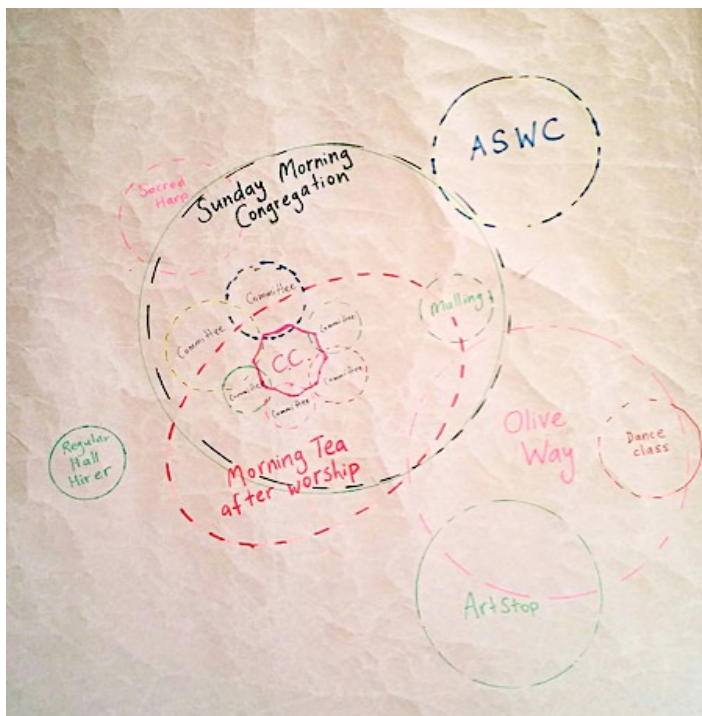
1. We worship
2. We welcome all
3. We care for each other and nurture our faith
4. We engage with the local and global community
5. We enable the ministries of our church.

During 2016 we engaged in an extensive Mission Planning Process, assisted by Steph Gesling, which led to the **Mission Planning Report** (November 2016). Without challenging the value of the existing Vision & Values statement, this report offered us some new ways of thinking about who we are and how we might live out God’s mission. The February 2017 BUC Leaders’ Retreat affirmed the main components of that report as the basis for our future planning. These were:

- The image of **BUC as a living Tree** (page 3 of the Mission Planning report), with its accompanying explanation of
  - the four Mission Principles that are our “**roots**”,
  - the layered “**strong trunk**” of our past and present with Christ at the centre,
  - the larger and smaller “**branches**” – our communities, programs, committees and other relationships that grow out from our trunk, and
  - the “**fruit**” that is produced in each of us through our relationships and experiences at BUC.



- The image of BUC as a “**Community of Communities**” (p.11) – a way of understanding how we relate to each other within the many overlapping and open-edged “circles” of BUC life.



- **6 Themes** that had arisen through the 3-track Mission Planning process (open workshops, committee/group reflections, and individual conversations/submissions). These were presented as a series of questions in the report (p.12), and have since been used in other ways to stimulate valuable reflection and discussion:
  - MISSION SHAPED CHURCH: God’s mission is both beyond and within the church. How can we continue to shape and reshape our community life toward serving the mission of God?
  - DEEPENING RELATIONSHIP: How do we help each other share our lives, with each other and with people we meet?
  - GROWTH: If we are growing, what are the implications of this for our community?
  - DEEPENING FAITH AND SPIRITUALITY: How are we deepening faith? How might we resource and nourish people in this? Where could we look for inspiration? What can we learn from the ways spirituality and prayer is practiced in other contexts?
  - INTENTIONALITY: Can we be more intentional about what we do? Will this help us to embody the practices of the reign of God – humility, justice, peace, liberation, compassion, forgiveness etc? If yes, how so, and what is the best way to invite more intentionality?
  - CELEBRATION: Our community is bearing much fruit! It is easy to forget how much we have or to forget how amazing it is. We can become complacent and take it all for granted. How do we keep sharing the stories of the wonderful ways we are engaging with the world and each other? Could this become more of a feature of our life together? Celebration is also important when it’s time to for a project to end.

Two further themes were added to this list during the drafting and adoption of this strategic plan:

- working ecumenically / in PARTNERSHIPS, and
- incorporating CREATIVITY of the spirit.

Another major step in our planning was the 2017 **Mission Appeal**. This appeal had a great response, with many members of the congregation responding generously – enough to meet our targets even though other members are not in a position to give more than they already do. Besides giving Church Council an improved and more reliable estimate of our income, the members’ response has been a tangible endorsement of the ways we seek to engage in God’s mission within and beyond the congregation.

Another development during 2017 was the redevelopment of our BUC website. A key decision in planning the site was to focus the main website on communicating with the public, in pictures and words that we hope will resonate with them – while information and resources for BUC members are available through a separate log-in section. For the main banner at the top of the home page and most other pages, the following summary statement was developed to suit the medium and the (public) audience:

***Brunswick Uniting Church:***

*An outward looking Christian community in the heart of Melbourne's inner north*

*We seek to be welcoming, open and inclusive*

*Our faith is searching, questioning, ever growing*

*We work for justice, peace and reconciliation*

Meanwhile, we have delighted in seeing many “**new shoots**” growing in the congregation. One striking example of this is the explosion of arts-related activity, including the expansion of the midweek Arts Access/BUC Arts program and the recent “What is Creativity?” exhibition. Another is the flowering of justice work including the marriage equality campaign and refugee advocacy. (Both of these have roots in the ABCD workshops in 2014.)

This Strategic Plan reflects, in different ways, each of the above ways of thinking about BUC.

### 3. Planning for 2018-21: Major commitments

With this background in mind, Church Council has discerned that it should make the following major commitments to guide our work in 2018-21.

- A. **Maintain Sunday morning worship as the “central branch” of our life together**, something that we invite and (as far as possible) enable everyone to participate in fully, and that should bear much “fruit”. To switch metaphors, it is a community that embraces or overlaps as many other BUC communities as possible, in the sense that all are invited in – and then sent out to engage with the world through other BUC communities and in our daily lives.
- B. **Continue the missional programs and activities (“branches”) that are underway**, so long as they continue to bear good “fruit” and other more pressing needs are not identified. These include the Olive Way, Student House, Children & Families ministry, and Pastoral Care **programs** as well as planning/hosting/promoting/attending **activities & events** relating to Discipleship & (Christian) Education and to Justice & Mission.
- C. **Continue reflecting on the 6 Themes** of the Mission Planning Report, and the two additional themes noted above (section 2), in all that we do.
- D. **Pilot, and then embed, cycles of goal-setting and reflection** (including both “celebration” and learning) in each of our major missional programs/groups
- E. **Manage “growth” intentionally, focusing on sustainability and celebration of growth over raw numbers**. Allow new “shoots” to grow – and see how vital they are, what fruits they might bear – but ensure that current members don’t get burnt out by “too much to do”.
- F. **Maintain a sustainable pattern of income and expenditure**, and continue to manage our properties (including any improvements as well as maintenance) in response to BUC’s missional priorities.

Most of these commitments are fairly self explanatory. C and D are illustrated further below.

Each of these broad commitments could potentially be the subject of specific measurable goals. Setting and monitoring these goals would be a task for the Church Council.

#### 3C. Reflecting on the 6 Themes

The 6 Themes (along with the Tree metaphor and the Community of Communities image) have already proven to be valuable for focusing our thinking about what we do, why and how. Some of this occurs within Council or Committee meetings, but is no less valuable for being less visible to others in the life of BUC.

During 2017 there have been a number of new or expanded initiatives that have been directly or indirectly inspired by one or more of these themes. We want to affirm and celebrate these! At the risk of oversimplifying, the following table gives a few examples of “new shoots” in the life of BUC in light of the 6 Themes.

<b>Theme</b>	<b>New “shoots” growing in 2017</b>
<b>Mission Shaped Church</b>	Website – design & content, focus on new and potential members BUC Arts (OW programs and recent Exhibition) Youth Group – vibrant and growing, supported by renovations to Youth Hall
<b>Deepening Relationships</b>	New format Church Council meetings Café Style Morning Tea
<b>Growth</b>	Website – as above Renewed focus on Pastoral Care teams Welcoming Ceremonies
<b>Deepening Faith &amp; Spirituality</b>	New meditation group (1 <sup>st</sup> Sundays) Increasing variety of D&E offerings
<b>Intentionality</b>	Reflections on Mission Planning report at Church Council meetings, BUC Leaders Retreat and Church Camp Committees meeting and working in new ways
<b>Celebration</b>	Olive Way 10-year celebration Smaller moments throughout the year

### **3D. Cycles of goal setting and review**

This idea grows out of our reflection on several themes – Mission Shaped Church, Intentionality and Celebration. The basic idea: each major missional program (identified above), and ideally each committee, should develop annual and longer term goals. They can then reflect regularly (at least annually) on their progress, with a view to celebrating the fruits and also learning lessons to inform future planning.

These goals might be inspired by reflection on the 6 Themes (including the missional church principles underlying the first theme) and any other relevant considerations. They might also include some “non-goals”, i.e. what are we not going to do! Each set of goals should be refined in consultation with Church Council, which will balance its co-ordinating role with the aim of delegating and empowering.

Each major missional program will be reviewed by Church Council every 5 years. These would ask “whether” as well as “how best” to continue each program. Ideally these should be on a rolling cycle to minimise the burden on CC and other key leaders.

Other new initiatives (shoots) that emerge in the life of the church should, when appropriate, also be encouraged to set goals and review progress.

The intention is not to “get corporate”, but to help us discern where to put our time and energy – and to celebrate together!

#### **Illustrative timeline**

The timeline on the next page gives an illustration of the rolling cycle of annual and major reviews.

	<b>Annual</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
<b>Church Council</b>	Each to set goals (annual and longer term), and to reflect, celebrate and learn	Strategic Plan or other doc to consolidate MP process	Review progress towards goals (TBC) for the major commitments. 5 year Review of Placement.			Planning for 2022-26
<b>Olive Way</b>		New OW Cttee. Urgent goals for end 2017, pilot goal setting for end 2018	Review progress. Recommend whether to extend OWC.		5 year Review	
<b>Student House</b>						5 year Review
<b>YUCY</b>			New leadership model?			
<b>SMP/children &amp; families</b>			New Pastor to be recruited	5 year Review		
<b>Pastoral Care</b>			Progress review/refresh		5 year Review	
<b>Other committees (to be developed)</b>						