

# > Congregation News

## Annual General Meeting

Our AGM and Election of Elders and Congregation Leaders will be held after worship on **Sunday 5th June**.

The Olive Harvest (collection of Annual Reports) will be distributed to the same email group as for distribution of the Olive Branch (monthly newsletter) and in printed form to everyone else on 29th May. Please note that if you usually receive the Olive Branch by email and would prefer a printed copy of this much larger document you simply need to request one, email [saide.cameron@bigpond.com](mailto:saide.cameron@bigpond.com).

Our current Elders are: James Balsillie, Claire Foley, Joel Hallinan, Jessica Kvensakul, Maxine Loynd, Kenna Morrison, Helen Rowe, Semisi Tapueluelu, Amelia Ware, Shawn Whelan. Nominations for the role of Elder and member of the Church Council open on Thursday 12th May and close on Sunday 22nd May. [Nomination forms are available here](#).

- The Church Council is made of 10 Elders (confirmed members or members-in-association of the congregation) together with the Minister of the Word, Olive Way and Children, Youth & Young Adult Pastors.
- The Council has oversight of the ministry and mission of the congregation and is served in this work by an extensive committee structure.
- Maxine and Shawn's terms are continuing. The remaining Elders terms will conclude. A number of them will be renominating. Further details will be provided in the Olive Press.

Full details of the process and timeline will be included later in the month in the Olive Press.

Please call if you have any questions.

**Saide Cameron**, Congregation Secretary, 0407 096 743

## Why become a Church Councillor? - An interview with Claire Foley

I recently had the privilege of walking for three days in the High Country of Victoria. During that time I saw Bunjil, the wedge-tailed eagle, soaring above our group. First Nations People believe that Bunjil brought the world and life into existence.

It seemed to me that Bunjil formed a bridge connecting the First Nations Country on which I walked, with the vastness of the sky and universe made by our Creator.

Wonderful time to ponder and I was looking for some inspiration to write this article.



(Photos used with kind permission of Babak Davvand)

My thoughts went to my past years as a member of the Church Council and I found myself asking the following questions.

**Question:** Why did you join Church Council ?

**Answer:** Someone with wisdom and insight tapped me on the shoulder twelve months earlier and said 'Why don't you think about joining Church Council? You have a lot to offer as someone with a different perspective.'

**Conclusion:** The 'different perspective' really means that all views and opinions are valued on BUC Council. Council is

supportive and encouraging of anyone wanting to share their opinions, thoughts and talents.

The important bit was having someone encourage me to think about this invitation.

**Question:** Once you joined Church Council how did you find the processes and protocols?

**Answer:** It took a while to get my head around Uniting Church systems – and that was fine. Then I realised what a great blessing it is to be able to be involved in the workings of a Church congregation and extended community. To be in a position to have an idea and present it: to hear other ideas and think about them and tease them out to find a good or better solution.

**Conclusion:** All at BUC can have a say in how our Church looks; and how it behaves and what sort of a global citizen we are.

**Question:** Patriarchy and Power – can you talk about this?

**Answer:** Not all churches operate with the type of framework that is used at BUC. Church Council is constantly reviewing questions of gender balance and, more recently, diversity balance. Not all churches are willing to share power. I have found that BUC is willing and encouraging to share power and they have proactively put protocols in place to allow this.

I love the way BUC seeks to review our mission and our goals. Council strives to reflect on these goals as an on-going process – holding true to our call.

**Conclusion:** I would like to personally acknowledge the privilege it is to be a member of BUC Church Council.

I would encourage:

- All of us to look around and seek someone upon whose shoulder we may tap: that is – talk to others about Church Council and encourage them to picture themselves on Council offering their unique self: and
- For those whose shoulders are tapped: think of Mary when the Angel Gabriel appeared to her telling her of God's plans that she should be the Mother of God. 'But she was greatly troubled at what was said' and 'Then, Mary said, "here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.'" (Luke 1:29, 38)
- Or as I would paraphrase this, 'I don't think I have the talent but I will give it a go if that is what the Lord asks of me...'

**Question:** What about personal benefit from being on Church Council? Are there any?

**Answer:** Oh yes! I wrote about this in July's edition of the Olive Branch. I am referring to all BUC groups and committees and it speaks well to, specifically, Church Council also. Here 'tis:

**Conclusion:** Some of the positives of being involved in one or more of the various groups or committees in the Church.

- There is a closer social connection and opportunity to get to know people better when involved in a group.
- Many groups share a theological story, witness or prayer each month which is enriching to all those who attend.

- There is the social aspect – breaking bread and sharing wine, tea or coffee together (not to mention Alistair's ice cream).
- The joy of connecting with people of a like mind.
- Being able to have conversations about spirituality, politics, climate change without fear.
- Following one of your passions, be it music, singing, craft or social justice issues.

These are the 'add-ons' while being involved in a group that is doing great work at BUC.

Please prayerfully consider how you can contribute to Brunswick Uniting Church's call for nominations to Church Council.



**Claire Foley**, CC Secretary on Wurundjeri Country  
[foleyclairep@icloud.com](mailto:foleyclairep@icloud.com)

## Serving as an Elder

I feel privileged to serve as an Elder at BUC. As a congregation we are enriched by the representation of a wide range of experiences and backgrounds. Its very important to me that our Elders group also includes older and younger voices as well as people representing diverse life situations and experience. I learn from others, through their gifts of spiritual wisdom as well as decision-making and particular skills in different ministry areas.

As a group of ten people, with the Ministry Team, Elders comes together each month to worship, and to prayerfully discern the way ahead on various issues presented to the group or emerging from within Church Council. Sometimes an issue might be of a practical nature, easily resolved or handed back to one of the Committees of the church. Much of the time though, we are privileged to allow the discernment process to be slow and deliberate, listening to each other, being open to hearing each other's thoughts and experiences and waiting patiently for a vision to take shape. Silence is important, silence is not unproductive. God often speaks from within the silence and it is in these moments that as Elders we see the vision God provides and can focus ourselves around it.

We certainly have our share of practical and financial matters to deal with. We take seriously our responsibility to use wisely the resources the congregation has inherited from previous generations and to not burden future generations unduly.

Its important to me as an Elder that we continue, as we have been, to prayerfully discern together around the following questions - Who are we now?, What is God calling us to be?, and Who is our neighbour? The Initiatives set up after the 2020 Retreat focus on aspects of our life together. I value this 'slow-cook' opportunity to look carefully at the current state of the congregation, our capacity to do all the things we aspire to do, and to ask the question Jesus asked – Who is my neighbour? To me, this is the question that will guide the congregation in its ministry. By identifying our neighbour we will know where and to whom God is calling us to serve. Then we will focus around that concern with prayer and practical response.

Its an honour to serve as and Elder. Thank you for your continuing prayer and support for your Elders and Ministry Team.

**Helen Rowe**