

ST MICHAEL'S UNITING CHURCH



CHURCH COUNCIL UPDATE MAY 2021

It has been some time since the Church Council has updated members of the congregation on Church Council activities. However, you can be assured that the Council has been working diligently on your behalf and this report provides details about Council decisions and the important work of the Deaneries in 2021. Our goal is to provide monthly updates in the future.

COUNCIL MEMBERS

Last year we informed the congregation that we would not be able to hold the Council elections that would normally have been held in November. The Council was grateful to Councillors who were prepared to serve longer than their original terms.

This year we have accepted with regret and gratitude, the resignations of two long-serving members; Graeme Adamson and Wilf Sawatzky. We thank them both for their support and significant service to the church.

Graeme Adamson has been an outstanding Dean of Church Services, being in charge of the many activities relating to Sunday Services. He supported our previous minister Dr Francis Macnab for many years and ensured we had excellent supply ministers prior to the appointment of Rev Dr Mayman. He also assisted Dr Mayman in the beginning of her ministry, prior to and during lockdown.

Wilf Sawatzky has also had many duties during his tenure on Council including managing the Weekday Tours; Dean of Programs and Dean of Church Services; part of the security team; and a member of the committee involved in the purchase of the church's piano.

At our April meeting, **Cheryl Power** agreed to be the Dean of Church Services on an interim basis and her appointment was ratified by the Council.

KEY ACTIVITIES OF THE COUNCIL

Church Services

Since we were able to reopen the church building at the end of November, Dr Mayman has continued to work with videographer, Jackson Raine, music manager, Rhys Boak, and our office team to provide online services in addition to 'in person' services. This is a major undertaking and a significant investment of time for Dr Mayman. However, the online service has provided access to a regular cohort of approximately 400 people who may not otherwise be able to participate in a regular worship service with a progressive theological and spiritual focus, including many members of St Michael's who are unable to attend church in the city for a variety of reasons.

Conservation Management Plan

The work with Purcell architects on the Conservation Management Plan (CMP) began in earnest in 2021. Two working groups (Building Condition and Future Use) were formed to provide feedback to the architect.

The completed CMP will provide the church with a policy framework to make informed decisions on major projects, work on the future uses of the church, and to undertake a structured regular maintenance program. More detail is provided in the Household Deanery Report.

Mingary Counselling Service

As has recently been reported, the Council has restructured the Mingary Counselling Service in collaboration with the Cairnmillar Institute. The Mingary-Cairnmillar Counselling Service will result in significant savings to the church and will enable Mingary to continue its existing high standard of counselling, but at no cost to clients.

At the May Council Meeting, Professor Kathryn von Treuer, Executive Director of Cairnmillar, and Ms Elise Wald, Director of Clinical Services updated the Council on the transition of the counselling service to the management structures of Cairnmillar. The transition is proceeding well. Procedures are being reviewed, revised and integrated with Cairnmillar. At present, all counselling takes place via telehealth, however, Professor von Truer and Ms Wald hope that counsellors will soon be able to meet face-to-face with their clients. The possibility of the service running group programs will also be explored. The Council sees this as a significant opportunity for St Michael's to respond to the needs of the wider community.

The Memorandum of Understanding with Cairnmillar will soon be finalised and presented to the Council for approval. Following approval, the Council's Mingary Committee will manage the relationship between St Michael's and Cairnmillar. The Mingary Committee was set up during our governance review in 2019. The terms of reference will be revised by Council in light of the restructure.

In January, prior to the recent changes, the Council had appointed the following people to the Mingary Committee: Chairperson of Council, Laura Beckett; Council Representatives, Cheryl Power and Maree McDonald; and psychologists, Helen Bruckner and Gabrielle Buzatu (who is a member of St Michael's). As with all Council Committees, the minister is an ex-officio member. The Council will consider the need for additional representation given the recent changes to the service.

Risk Management Framework

The members of the Finance Committee have been working on the development of a Risk Management Framework for many months and at the May meeting the framework which included the following risk categories: environmental; property and financial; mission and operational; reputational; legal and compliance; people; and vulnerable persons risks was approved. The Register noted mitigation strategies, likelihood of occurrence and significance and responsibility for risk mitigation.

Keeping Children Safe

The Culture and Safety Officer Val Gill has ensured that the Council has maintained our commitment to the Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct. The Council passed a motion reaffirming St Michael's commitment to providing a safe place where people are cared for, nurtured, and sustained. We also reaffirmed the Keeping Safe Statement of Commitment through which we recommit ourselves to the care and protection and safety of all people, particularly those who are vulnerable.

COVID-Safe Food Handling Procedures

Val Gill reviewed the COVID-safe food handling regulations and procedures so that the appropriate procedures could be implemented in the church hall. Val developed a Food Safety Booklet and a Food Safety Policy. Both were approved by the Council. Food Safety Co-ordinators Margaret Dowsett, Susan Fleming, Val Gill and Catherine Jones were trained and appointed. The procedures developed by Val and the team have enabled members of the congregation to enjoy tea, coffee, and a biscuit in the hall. This is much better than meeting in, an often very cold, St Michael's Walk.

Community Covenants

Revised Community Covenants (formerly Behavioural Covenants) were agreed for Council and Deanery members. They refer to our Strategic Mission Plan for 2020-2024, specifically our goal of creating a culture that is caring, respectful and inclusive, and our commitment towards constructive and effective communication and decision making. The Covenants for Council and Contact and Care also include a commitment to maintaining appropriate confidentiality.

Presbytery of Yarra Yarra and Synod of Victoria and Tasmania

Lorraine Woolley represented St Michael's at the 2021 Synod Meeting that was held via Zoom from 25-28 February. Dr Mayman attended as a member of the Presbytery of Yarra Yarra. They reported back to the March meeting of Council, providing us with an understanding of the work of the Synod and the social justice initiatives of the Uniting Church.

St Michael's is represented at Presbytery by Lorraine Woolley, Margaret Lade, and Dr Mayman.

DEANERY REPORTS

The Deans and their committees have been extremely busy and have undertaken many tasks and activities on behalf of the congregation to ensure church activities and programs are well managed, safe, and follow COVID-safe regulations.

Deanery committees have been appointed to assist with the important work of each Deanery (Household, Church Services, Contact and Care, and Programs). These committees are one of the ways that members of the congregation become involved in the work of the church.

DEAN OF HOUSEHOLD - Peter Anderson

Deanery Committee

Jack Morgan (Deputy Dean), Neil Blood, Ken Gosbell, and Maree McDonald

General Maintenance

In November roof tiles were dislodged during wet and windy weather. Water entered the building causing part of the ceiling in the narthex to collapse and flooding the carpet. The damage was repaired in time for the re-opening of the church. Repairs to the garden sprinkler system were carried out. The refrigerator in the church vestry was replaced.

Electrical maintenance.

Improvements to assist the recording of church services were made. These include cabling from the control panel to the front of the church and the purchase of an additional hand-held recording device.

Quotes were received for the replacement of existing quartz halogen spotlights with LEDs. Further action was deferred pending receipt of architect's advice in the CMP.

Conservation Maintenance Plan (CMP)

Following the appointment last year of heritage architects Purcell, COVID-19 restrictions prevented any further work being carried out for the remainder of 2020. Purcell work commenced in January including a consultation process with St Michael's which was divided into two streams:

- (a) Strategic planning, including possible future uses of the church building – in consultation with a working group from members of Church Council.
- (b) Maintenance plan and building condition report in consultation with the Household Deanery Committee.

At the time of preparing this report, Purcell has presented a preliminary draft of the CMP. The completed draft is expected in the coming weeks.

Wesley Refurbishment

Some members of Church Council and the Deanery Committee inspected Wesley church in Lonsdale Street where extensive refurbishment of the church has been carried out.

120 Collins Street ground floor revitalisation project

Due to COVID-19 restrictions there were no further developments in the second half of 2020. Recently the building manager, Investa, contacted St Michael's seeking sign off on proposed changes to the paving levels of St Michael's Walk. This matter is proceeding with, hopefully minor, matters to be resolved. The revised timing of the

ground floor refurbishment of 120 Collins is currently October 2021 to the end of 2022, during which time there will be significant disturbance to St Michael's activities.

Insurance

St Michael's is in regular contact with Synod Risk & Insurance Services who arrange insurance on all Uniting Church properties and activities.

DEAN OF CHURCH SERVICES – Graeme Adamson (until late February)

Deanery Committee

Cheryl Power (Acting Dean), Albert Phillips (Deputy Dean), Steve Austin, Rosia Pasteur, and Carole Phillips.

Church Attendance

Attendance at the Church service continue to vary Sunday to Sunday with an average of 80 to 110 per week. In accord with Synod and government COVID-safe regulations, masks were required when the church re-opened, then only for hymn singing. After Easter they were made optional. The addition of a Cantor in church to lead the singing has been appreciated by the congregation. We ceased using Trybooking and have successfully transitioned to using the QR code system and manual recording of any persons who cannot access the QR code. This system is working very well.

While it is wonderful to see members and friends at St Michael's for church services, the Council is aware that many are not attending due to ongoing concerns regarding COVID-19. To ensure everyone has access, Dr Mayman continues to pre-record the service each week, so it is available online by Sunday morning. There are consistently 300 to 450 views per week.

Security

The Church currently operates with two security persons: Steve Austin and Robert Cleghorn. In discussion with them regarding recruiting further security, the view was formed that the duties and needs of the security person has changed from a "protection" role to an "assistance/facilitation role".

Steve and Robert are working on a position description for the new role of 'Concierge' prior to recruiting additional volunteers.

General Housekeeping

The cardboard offering boxes were replaced with lockable, timber boxes. These look more professional and are more secure.

Two Tap and Go credit machines have now been placed in the church. They are being used by many in the congregation. The machines are programmed at \$10.00 per tap. Larger amounts can be made by multiple taps after allowing the machine to show that each tap has been approved. Each tap should only take 3 to 5 seconds.

Vergers and AV Operators

We welcomed Kim Low, Phil Boase, Steve Austin and Marcus Matthews to the team who support church services and special events as vergers and audio-visual operators.

DEAN OF CONTACT AND CARE – Lyndell O’Brien

Deanery Committee

Joy Arnot (Deputy Dean), Jan Cox, Margaret Dowsett, Susan Fleming, John Foster, Sandra Foster, Val Gill, Catherine Jones, Peter Kahane, Albert Phillips, Carole Phillips, and Jeanette Noy.

Survey

In the latter months of 2020, a survey, ‘Dreams into Action’, was developed by the Church Council. The purpose of the survey was to determine the thoughts and ideas of the congregation in relation to the implementation of the St Michael’s Uniting Church Strategic Mission Plan for 2020-2024. The survey mainly focused on the areas of responsibility of the Contact & Care Deanery and the Programs Deanery.

The responses to the survey in relation to the Contact and Care Deanery indicated that the great majority of people in the church community felt they were being very well supported during the periods of ‘lockdown’, by the Contact Program which was put into place. Some people indicated they would like to explore ways to become more connected and these requests were all followed up and implemented, where possible.

Safe-Reopening, Reconnecting and Welcoming

Since late November it has been very gratifying for those who felt able to meet in person. With much assistance from our Minister, the office staff, the Dean of Church Services and the Dean of Contact and Care, measures were put into place to ensure social distancing in the pews, sanitising of hands, hands-free check-in processes and safe ‘traffic flow’. As the weeks progressed and changes were made by the Victorian Government, those changes were also put into practice.

We have a team of St Michael’s people who have been very willing to serve as Welcomers and Ushers to ensure we comply with COVID-safe requirements. Many members of the team have been ‘on duty’ almost every week and we thank them for their willingness to be involved in this way. We also gratefully thank the two people who have shared First Aid duties over this time.

There were many joyful times meeting with others in St Michael’s Walk, even though the weather wasn’t always kind.

When the time came that we were able to enjoy each other’s company and a hot tea or coffee in the hall, the meeting time became even more pleasurable. We sincerely thank Val Gill and Margaret Dowsett for their leadership and work in setting up all the procedures for serving the Morning Tea/Coffee, in a COVID-safe way and for their gracious and friendly ‘service’.

We have been very pleased to welcome so many of our St Michael's people back to the in-church services. We have also welcomed many people who are new to St Michael's.

To assist us all to get to know each other's names, we have asked people if they would indicate if they would like to have a name tag. Many people have requested to have one made. They are available the week after they are requested.

People have also been invited to fill in one of the white cards found in the pews if they wish to know more about St Michael's. Each request is followed up with a welcoming email from the Dean and an invitation to have a phone call, if that is of interest. Several people have been contacted in this way.

Together with the Programs Deanery, Contact & Care has been taking part in the weekly Zoom Connect on Monday afternoons.

The Deanery Committee has yet to meet, as we are working to update several processes, before some ideas can be put in place. When we can meet, it will initially be via Zoom. If you have any ideas as to how we might expand our contacting or caring, please have a chat with one of the members of the Deanery.

DEAN OF PROGRAMS – Lorraine Woolley

Deanery Committee

Neil Blood (Deputy Dean), Pamela Blood, Gabriele Buzatu, Peter Kahane, Chris Kelly, and. Simon McCall,

Aim

To establish programs that enhance the life of the St Michael's congregation; and to engage and involve members and friends in what is offered to support and build community.

St Michael's Zoom Cuppa & Chat

With the challenges of COVID-19, the newly formed committee came up with a new way for us to gather, to chat with old friends and meet new people. The idea was to replicate the congregation meeting in the hall after church. It was fitting that the inaugural Zoom Cuppa and Chat was on 27 September, St Michael's Day. There was excitement among the 50 of us as we gathered on Zoom after six months of separation, seeing and greeting each other and meeting new people in the breakout rooms. The zoom gatherings continued for around three months.

Recently we were thankful to be able to meet again after church in the hall for a hot drink and catch up. We realised how important this gathering is for our community. In 2021 we were aware that many of our congregation have not felt safe to return to church on Sundays. Zoom Connect was initiated on a Monday afternoon hosted by members of the congregation and Council. It will conclude at the end of May.

St Michael's Searchers

"Painting the Stars" (a Living the Questions Program) ran on Zoom for seven weeks on Wednesday evenings from mid-October last year (with over 40 registrations from around Victoria and beyond). Following the positive feedback received in response to this program, the Searchers will present "Beyond Belief: A Marcus Borg Retrospective." Each session will consist of a video presentation and breakout rooms for discussion. Dates will be announced soon.

After-Church Programs

The good news is that after church programs have recommenced with a Sunday session Mindfulness Meditation in May.

New programs starting 6 June:

- **A New Public Squares Project: Remaking the Public Good** to be held at St Michael's UCA. Presented by trained facilitators/hosts Yana Canteloupe and Neil Blood. Full details available on our website

- **Women's Poetry discussion Group:** Facilitated by Pamela Blood.
The aim is to combine the interest of women, spirituality, and poetry.

Thanks

At our December Council meeting, Val Gill stepped down from the position of Deputy Dean. Appreciation was recorded for her contribution and the leadership role she has exercised. We are fortunate that Neil Blood was willing to take up this leadership role and was elected Deputy Dean in March. Finally, I want to express how much we have valued the leadership, encouragement and support of our minister, Rev Dr Margaret Mayman.