

Church Council Update – November 2023

At the meeting of the Council, held on November 16, the following items were among those reported and discussed:

Uniting Church Transformation Project - Act2

As reported in July, the Uniting Church has embarked on an in-depth review and reimagining of its directions and structures. In June the UCA issued a major report in response to the societal and demographic changes facing the Church and invited engagement from councils, agencies and members. Church Council met in a special session to discuss its response to this document and, following that meeting, a draft response was prepared by Margaret and Chris Phillips which the Council strongly endorsed. Chris Phillips will prepare a Council Update paper on Act2 which will be shared through the eNews.

Engaging with our on-line community

Margaret raised the need for us to deepen our engagement with people who participate in our services on-line. The Council will seek the opinions of online viewers prior to undertaking any initiative. The YouTube videos continue to have approximately 200 views each week. Plans to livestream the services are progressing well.

Collection Plate

After cessation of the circulation of collection plates during services following Covid lockdowns, the Council deemed it would be safe to reintroduce the practice. This practice will be resumed from Sunday 10 December. Pay points, collection boxes, and online giving will continue to be provided as options.

Remuneration of Locum Ministers

The Council considered the remuneration of ministers occasionally standing in for Margaret on Sunday or wedding services and agreed to maintain the current rates which are significantly higher than the remuneration set by the Synod.

Finance Report

Our financial performance against budget year to date shows a surplus which in large part is due to not appointing a Ministry Assistant for which we had budgeted.

Project Control Group

Council noted the minutes of the 13 November meeting of the PCG, which identified a need to establish greater support from Synod Property Services and clarify communication with Trethowan, the lead consultant.

Property

A drone scan of the church roof will be undertaken on 25 November to map the areas of slate that may need to be replaced in the short to medium term.

Abode Restoration is scheduled to begin exploration of the ground condition associated with deterioration of the external stairs and balustrades to determine if the damage is caused by sidewalk tree roots and therefore the responsibility of the City of Melbourne.

[Since the meeting this work has been undertaken. We are now awaiting the results of DNA testing to determine if the tree roots that were uncovered are from the footpath trees.]

Church Services

Again, this year, a Christmas collection will be undertaken for Church of All Nations (CAN Community Support) Homework Club. Our congregation is encouraged to provide stationery items for the children.

A new St Michael's initiative 'Christmas Reimagined: carols and readings will occur on Thursday 21 December at 7.30pm. Greta Bradman will be the guest reader. Music will be provided by the St Michael's Singers and Brass Ensemble.

The Church Services Committee is working with Margaret on the liturgy and decorations for Christmas Day "Imagine Peace: Act for Peace."

The congregation is invited to support the Act for Peace Christmas Bowl to which the Christmas Day offering will be given. Giving envelopes will be available in the church through December.

Contact and Care

Team members have been in contact with members of the congregation. Flowers and cards have been sent, phone contact has been made and people have been visited.

It is planned to hold meetings for newcomers on two Sundays after church in February.

There will be special Christmas morning tea on Sunday 17 December.

Mission Co-ordinating

In 2024 the committee will work on the following priorities:

- Promote support for social and ecological justice through public events
- Opening the church during the week.
- Developing collaborative events with Cairnmillar
- Welcoming newcomers
- Further extend our public profile through partnerships with other organisations

Environmental Action

The EAG presented a report to Council which reviewed achievements in 2023 and suggested priorities for 2024. In summary, St Michael's has made considerable progress in reducing its carbon footprint and, whilst continuing to pursue that goal, can now turn its attention to linking with other organisations in taking actions to reduce the rate of climate change and assist those who are severely impacted.

Open and Affirming Working Group

Planning continues for the St Michael's Midsumma service which carries the theme 'Your people shall be my people'.

In 2024 the group will also give attention to welcoming and providing for those with disabilities.

Synod of Victoria and Tasmania

The 2023 meeting of the Synod will be held 18-21 November at Box Hill Town Hall. Four members of St Michael's will attend: Rev Dr Margaret Mayman, Lorraine Woolley and Chris Phillips were nominated by Presbytery of Yarra Yarra. Rev Clare Brockett will attend in her capacity as Director of Mission, Uniting AgeWell.