

COLLINS STREET BAPTIST CHURCH ANNUAL REPORT 2020

HOSPITALITY

JUSTICE

GROWTH

With thanks to Geoff Maddock
for his photography

A CHALLENGING SEASON

It began so well.

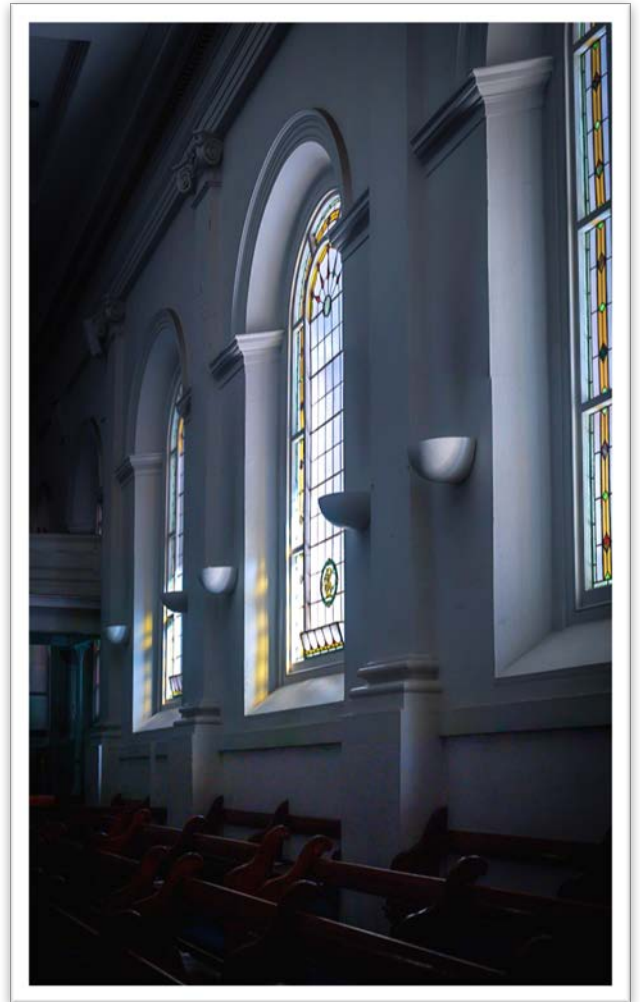
With our new co-pastoring model bedded down and two new deacons in place, we left our 2019 AGM with gratitude and optimism. This was picked up by our deacons in early February as they met in Pipers Creek to envision the year ahead.

We identified aspects of our community that we cherished: intelligent and grace-filled theology; a spirit of diversity and acceptance; a place of thoughtful preaching and worship; and our location in the heart of Melbourne. What's more, we committed ourselves to the 2020 priorities of spiritual growth, greater public engagement and nurturing deeper connections within our church family.

Then, just as we entered the season of Lent, things began to change. In a matter of weeks we went from rumours of a pandemic creeping closer to our shores to having the doors of our beloved sanctuary closed behind us.

Since Sunday March 22 those doors have remained shut. We could never have imagined the circumstances of 2020 and the ways our lives and livelihoods have been impacted. Nor could we have anticipated the challenges churches like ours have faced. Together we have struggled with the questions of what it means to be a community of faith in lockdown, what it means to live faithfully in isolation, and what God requires of us as a people of gospel hope.

This annual report is one way of reminding ourselves where we have been together through this season and of the commitments that continue shaping us as we move forward. Our future may be uncertain, but the assuredness of God's grace and God's calling remain.



“The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”

Lamentations 3.22-23

ADMINISTRATION AND LEADERSHIP

Dr Robert Iles
Honourary Secretary



DEACONS

At our last AGM (October 2019) the church appointed two new deacons, **Amanda Mao** and **Abi Chenoweth**, to join me and our continuing deacons **Paulo Pereira**, **Nigel Smith**, **Ros Otzen**, **Katherine Jones**, **Neil Wright**, **Lynne Chapman** and **Stefanie Pearce**. Since that time we have continued to meet monthly with our pastors — albeit since April via Zoom — to provide leadership to our community. With the advent of the pandemic restrictions, the team has learned to undertake its responsibilities in new ways and for this we are very grateful. This particularly applies to our treasurer, **Paulo Pereira**, who has been required to give many hours to the oversight of church finances. I also thank **Ros Otzen** for her meticulous recording of the minutes of deacons' and members' meetings.



STAFF

The church has continued to be well served by our co-pastors, **Rev Carolyn Francis** (Teaching and Worship) and **Rev Dr Simon Carey Holt** (Care and Community). We are very grateful to them for their mastery of new skills and leading us in new ways of worship and fellowship as a result of the church's closure to public gatherings since March. In February this year, prior to the closing of our sanctuary, we were able to celebrate Simon's ten years of pastoral leadership at Collins Street.



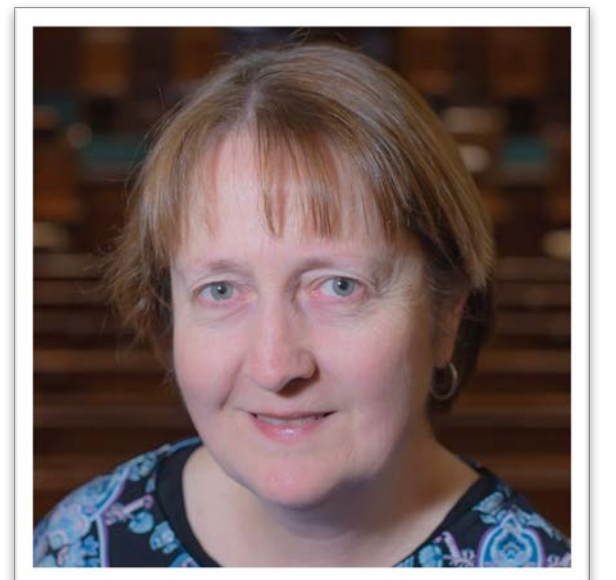
Sherry Maddock has continued to provide excellent leadership in the area of neighbourhood engagement, again under difficult circumstances due to COVID-19 restrictions.

We are also very grateful for the service of our ancillary staff:

Anne Junor (office)
Tekeste Andemeskel (property)
Setel Adem (cleaning)
Linda Cully (finance)
David Cundy (music)

Of necessity, changed employment arrangements were required during the second half of the year for all of our staff and these have been accepted in good grace.

I make particular mention of **Anne Junor** who, after 21 years of service at Collins Street, will retire at the end of this year. Anne joined the staff in 1999 as the church's office manager and personal assistant to its pastors. In that time Anne has supported the work of Revs Jim Barr, Tim Costello, Rowena Curtis and Len Lewis and, for the last decade, our current pastors Simon and Carolyn. She has done so with consistent grace and an unwavering commitment to the welfare of this church. We are indebted to her.



MEMBERSHIP

Since our last AGM, we have welcomed five new members into the fellowship of the church.

Robin and Marilyn Winter came to us by letter of transfer from the Uniting Church of Bairnsdale where they lived and worked for more than 40 years. Now resident in East Melbourne, they have become valued members of our church family.

Kate Eve and Chris Turner have been travelling all the way from rural Gippsland to be part of our community. Kate grew up in the Eltham Baptist Church, trained as a pastoral care worker, and is a past president of Spiritual Care Australia. Chris is ordained to the Baptist ministry and teaches pastoral theology at Stirling College in Mulgrave.

David Cundy came to us initially on an interim basis to assist with music. A gifted organist, he has now found a spiritual home at Collins Street and a place to exercise his gifts more fully. David was baptised in the Presbyterian church but chose confirmation in the Anglican tradition as a teenager. He is partnered with Inácio and lives in Coburg.

We look forward to the contribution these people will make to our church life and ministry.

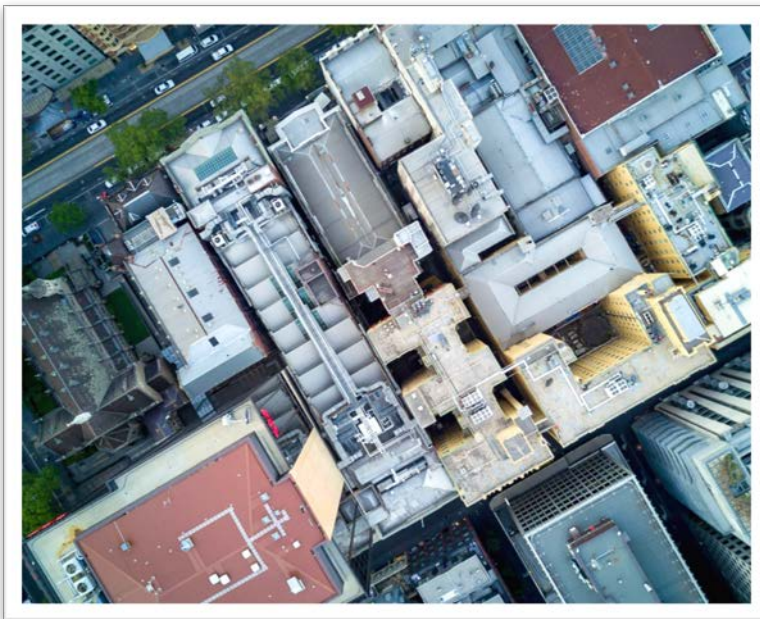
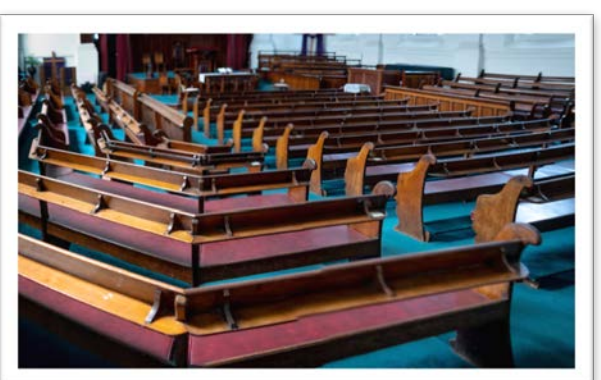
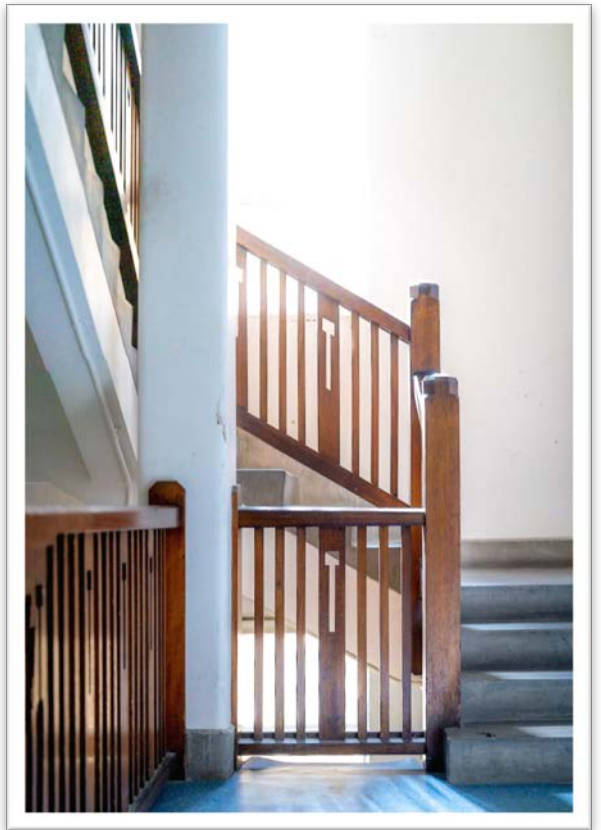
PROPERTY AND MAINTENANCE

During the year we continued to seek a cost-effective solution for the replacement of the 1928 timber emergency stairs for Central House. After much inquiry, a replacement cost in excess of \$1m was rejected. (The excessive cost is a function of the location of the stairs in proximity to other buildings and therefore with very limited external access.) In the latter months of the year, we continued to explore with our Fire Engineer alternatives to replacing the stairs that would satisfy relevant authorities.



CSBC TRUST FUND

Over the past 18 months the Trust Fund Committee has engaged upon the task of seeking a new firm of Advisors and in September came to an Agreement with such a firm. During this time, the Committee developed a Comprehensive Investment Policy which included the delineation of an acceptable level of risk, a clear understanding of our investment goals, and decided upon investment patterns which will meet the budgetary needs of the Church while also allowing the value of the fund to grow in the longer term. In the past few weeks a detailed Agreement has been signed, but there remains considerable implementation work to be completed.



TEACHING AND WORSHIP

Carolyn Francis

Pastor for Teaching and Worship

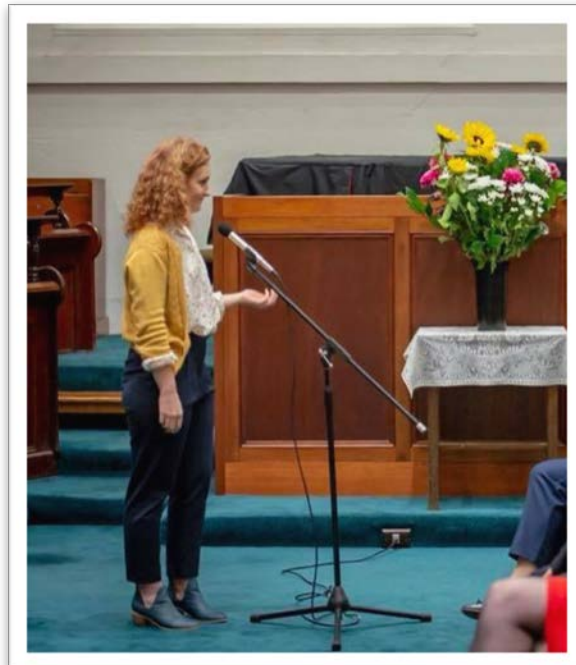
The traditions and practices of worship, bible study and preaching have always been deeply valued within the CSBC community. Our commitment to excellence and participation in these areas has continued, with added emphasis on storytelling, the inclusion of a wide range of voices and perspectives and an expansion of our musical repertoire.

In late 2019 our gifted biblical storytellers **Katherine Jones** and **Jess Holt** had the congregation enthralled with their recounting of the story of Jonah, while **Frank Rees**, **Sean Winter** and **David Morgan** preached and led communion. **Nigel Smith**, **Megan Williams** and **Chris Turner** shared stories and perspectives, and **Kenny Ong**, **David Cundy** and **Christopher Parsons** enhanced our worship with their musical gifts.

We entered the season of Advent, and a new liturgical year with our customary pillars and advent candles adorning the front of the sanctuary as we explored advent Hope, Peace, Love and Joy and the broader theme of "God With Us". Under the leadership of **David Cundy**, a Christmas choir, comprising more than 20 members and friends of CSBC, rehearsed together to lead some joyous and heartfelt singing during our service of carols and readings.

During Lent, in early 2020, we began a teaching series focussing on the parables told by Jesus.

It was during this season that conversations began to canvass the possibility of pausing our gatherings to protect the health and wellbeing of the community during the emerging pandemic. No-



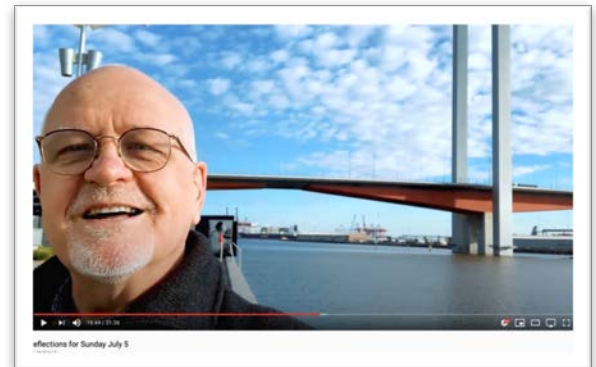
one imagined that we were about to enter such an extended or intense period of lockdowns, restrictions, closed buildings and an empty CBD.

Like many worshipping communities, CSBC pivoted immediately to offering videos online via the church website to continue the ministries of worship and teaching, and to allow us to continue our rhythm of gathering weekly. With no particular experience or video editing capabilities, **Simon** and **Carolyn** both began producing weekly content including prayers and liturgy, music, scripture readings, sermons and reflections. Over the months a vibrant collection of online resources has nourished an entirely new experience of “virtual church” known as CBSC Online.

The weekly videos which form the backbone of CSBC Online have included a broad range of voices from the church community. A wonderful series on “Some Words that Have Changed My Life” included more than a dozen people from the congregation detailing parts of scripture, works of fiction and theology, and words of advice that changed the trajectory of their lives and their faith. Videos featuring conversations between our pastors have tackled questions of freedom, prayer and hope. A series on the vocabulary of our faith considered words like mission, belief, doubt and salvation and how they might be best understood in this cultural moment.

Over time much of the content has, quite rightly, turned to reflections upon the challenges of the unprecedented experiences of life in Melbourne during the pandemic with teaching on lament and struggle and flourishing within limitations. These online services have been beautifully enhanced by the significant musical contributions of **David Cundy** each week. **Kenny Ong’s** vocals and musical arrangements have also been deeply appreciated.

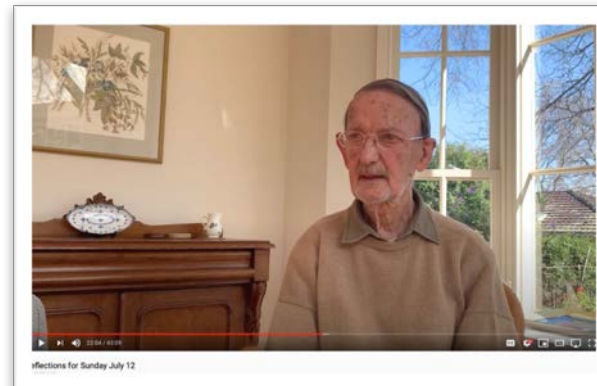
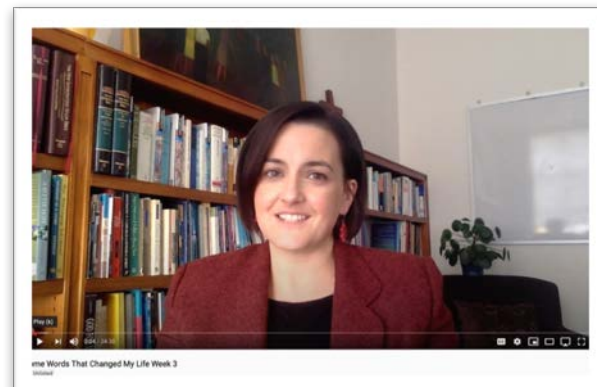
After several months of online worship we made the decision to resume the practice of sharing communion. Meeting online via Zoom, we have



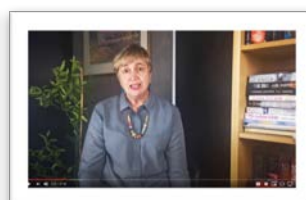
been sharing a short communion liturgy together, with each household preparing their own bread and cup. The delight of seeing 70 or more people on our screens during these gatherings has been extraordinary. Following communion we have been gathering in small online groups to share news and conversation.

Mid-week discussion groups have provided an opportunity for extra engagement and learning in 2020. From April – June, **Sean Winter** and **Katherine Jones** hosted a bible study on Paul's letter to the Galatians. A large group gathered via Zoom to discuss a chapter each week, informed by a video presented by Sean during the preceding week. In August and September **Frank Rees** hosted a discussion group considering the lives of some prominent Christians: Oscar Romero, Jurgen Moltmann, Dorothy Day, Jimmy Carter and former CSBC member Mervyn Himbury. Robust discussion via Zoom considered the wonderful and varied resources provided by Frank each week. Whilst the online format has some limitations, it has also enabled participation by a wide range of people who are geographically dispersed. This has been immensely valuable.

The resilience of the CSBC worshipping community during these unprecedented times has been profoundly encouraging. Each week there are more than 100, and sometimes more than 200 views of our online services. Many of these individual views represent 2 or more people watching one screen together. As people share these resources with others we have become aware of people joining us who have not attended CSBC in person previously. We hold the strong conviction that our messages of goodness, hope and grace make a crucial contribution to life of the city and beyond.



Click [HERE](#) for a listing of all CSBC videos



CARE AND COMMUNITY

Simon Carey Holt

Pastor for Care and Community

with deacons Lynne Chapman, Neil Wright
& Abi Chenoweth

In our ministries of care, the past year has come in two parts: before and after COVID-19. Prior to the pandemic, the year began with a focus on keeping regular contact with the more isolated members of the church community. For this we depended on a small but dedicated group of volunteers. After March this program of support quickly expanded to a team of twenty pastoral carers, each having two to four people to keep in touch with on a regular basis. Utilizing telephone, email and online networking programs like Zoom and Facetime, this has kept us connected with more than 140 people.

Since March we have seen eight online connect groups develop, providing participants with a regular venue for support and friendship. One of those groups has provided this insight:

"The 'Westies' connect group has met fortnightly since mid-May, under the leadership of Shirley Mortimer and Neil Wright. Over that time the seven members have shared their experiences, reflected on how the church is going and discussed topics of interest. A real sense of mutual support has developed."

Many of those participating in such groups have testified to feeling more connected to our community than ever before.

At the beginning of this year **Abi Chenoweth** worked alongside **Jess Holt** and **Tania Hurren** to set up an online group with some of the younger people of our church. This connection has continued during lockdown with online afternoon



COLLINS STREET BAPTIST CHURCH, 174 COLLINS STREET, MELBOURNE

[View this email in your browser](#)



Dear friends,

Common wisdom is that you should never begin with an apology. But I am sorry. While Carolyn is away on leave I've not been able to keep up the great tradition of mid-week resources. I know we are all grateful for these. After a well-deserved break, Carolyn will be back with us next week and your inbox will, in time, be the richer for it!

With six months now passed since we last gathered at Collins Street, the way forward remains unclear. Amidst the constantly changing menu of restrictions, we do not yet have a definite timeline for churches. According to advice from the BUV, it is likely that larger indoor gatherings like ours are still a way off. Be assured that we will continue to do all we can to provide meaningful connections and encouragement for the weeks and months ahead.



In the meantime, important milestones continue to accumulate. This Sunday our dear friend **Merle Van Cooten** celebrates her 90th birthday. Just a few months behind Graham, Merle will be celebrated by her family on the weekend in 'virtual' style! We wish you the happiest birthday, Merle. We are so grateful for the years you and Graham have been part of our church family.



teas and games. Creative packs were dropped to the homes of the participants prior to the gatherings.

Thanks to the generosity of our church community, we came into the pandemic with a very healthy Communion Fund. This has enabled us to respond generously to those connected with our church who have been adversely affected by the pandemic, especially those with limited access to government funded support. Since March we have distributed approximately \$15,000 to assist with rent, utilities, groceries, medical bills and educational fees.

Our favourite artist **John Puli** has continued his artwork through this year, mostly in isolation, and we have celebrated his gifts from afar. John has given us permission to include these three images of his work.



Members of our community have been writing in lockdown.

Click [HERE](#) to read Sherry Maddock's thoughts on *Next Year's Promise*.

Click [HERE](#) to read Penny Mulvey's article on *Life in a Melbourne Lockdown*.

Click [HERE](#) to read Simon's reflection on *Ministry in Isolation*.

NEIGHBOURHOOD ENGAGEMENT

Sherry Maddock

Neighbourhood Engagement Coordinator

Despite this strange and difficult year, we made significant steps with people, plants and place, serving the neighbourhood and people seeking asylum.

House of Hope: Central House is a sanctuary for two women seeking asylum. They receive no form of government support so the housing is essential. Throughout the year, I liaised with Baptcare's case workers, provided supplies and food, helped with documents and employment applications, and connected the CSBC volunteers. In addition, I assisted a former resident with access to a pilot project for affordable housing where she is now happily residing. In December 2019, we hosted two fundraisers to support the needs of people seeking asylum: a plant sale and a food drive.

During the summer, I maintained the expanding garden on the **Verandah**. The city's program, *Gardens for Wildlife*, provided a detailed plan for converting the garden into a blooming habitat of native plants.

Weekly, until mid-March, the **Green Room** hosted Tuesday lunches for staff, residents and people seeking asylum.

In March 2020, CSBC/Planted Places was awarded a second round of **grant funding** from Baptcare, receiving \$10,000 to support our joint work.

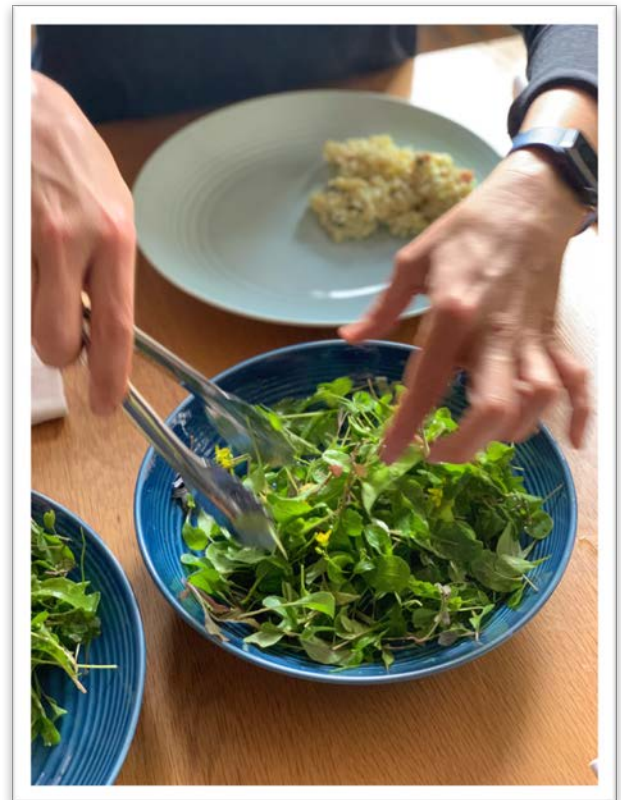
From April to August 2020, throughout the lockdown, we sent substantial deliveries of houseplants to *Baptcare* residents across the city. When seeds were impossible to find, we shared dozens of packets with gardeners in need. In June, we partnered with *Cultivating Community* to host a



Living Food Box project that distributed 100 small-space garden boxes. This project included residents of Central House and now everyone in the building is gardening.

Over the last eight months, I participated in bi-weekly *Residents 3000* committee meetings, remaining connected to the immediate neighbourhood and businesses. Geoff and I served as facilitators with BUUV's *Parish Collective Learning Community* (gatherings in Feb, July and Nov), a mission-oriented, neighbourhood-based initiative.

Level 1 improvements funded by *Planted Places* included new electrical wiring, a much-improved new light fixture in the toilets and NBN.



Click [HERE](#) to an article in CBD NEWS on the *Living Food Boxes*.

Click [HERE](#) to listen to the 7AM podcast featuring the work of *Planted Places*.



THE VERANDAH CAFÉ

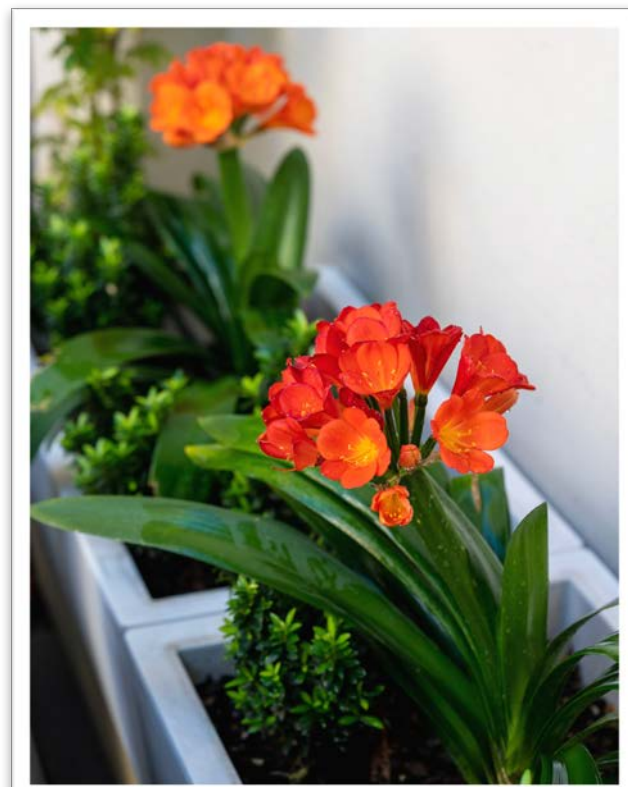
Lesley Iles

Convenor

To quote Charles Dickens in *A Tale of Two Cities*:
“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.”
This quotation is a good summation of the operation of the Café for this financial year. The Annual Report for the period 1st July 2019 – 30th June 2020 has been a ‘tale of two cafes’.

The last day of trading at the Café was 13th March 2020. For the period 1st July 2019 – 13th March 2020, the takings were \$28,241.50, which exceeded the annual budgeted income by \$1241.50. Expenses for the corresponding period were \$34,903.70. The shortfall of \$6662.20 is a remarkable achievement. The Café was trending well to reach ‘break-even’ point and not reliant on the subsidy assistance from the Church.

The mission of the Verandah Café to be a place of welcome and hospitality in Melbourne’s CBD has been embraced by our committed team of volunteers, namely: **Setel Adem, Glenda Brown, Robin Calder, Theresa Cheok, Abi Chenoweth, Jessie He, Peter Hearne, Judy Henson, Hirute, Robert Iles, Colette Kavangh, Stefanie Pearce, Barbara Martin, Peter Rademaker, Abdel Tariq (Taz), Mardea Tachee, Ben Verghese, Marilyn Winter, YaYa and Yelena Young.**

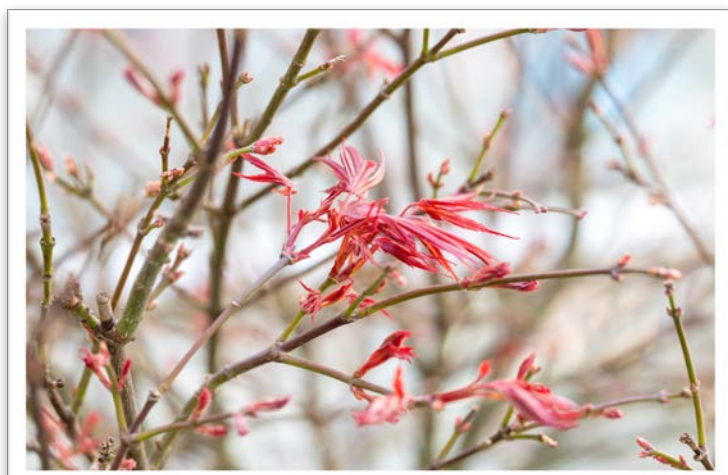


Vicki Gomes Pereira dos Santos has been our wonderful barista since August 2018. Working with a different team of volunteers each day is a challenging task and Vicki has the ability to work in a friendly, collaborative and co-operative manner, even when there were last minute changes to the roster. During Vicki's vacation in Brazil, **David Echeverria** was employed as our barista. David too adapted well to the Café's style and operational procedures and his contribution is appreciated.

The ambience of the Café has been enhanced by the installation of flowering plants, shrubs and herbs provided by **Sherry Maddock**. Sherry's knowledge of plantings in an urban environment has been crucial in selecting and placing plants that were compatible to a city setting. **Robin Winter** has provided expertise in the refurbishment of the coffee cart and also the refitting of the cupboards.

The Café has provided refreshments for performances of the Victoria Chorale, Flinders Quartet, Australian Baptist Archivist Association, and other groups who have hired the Church's facilities on Level 4.

The contribution to the efficient operation of the Café by **Anne Junor, Paulo Pereira, Linda Cully** and **Tekeste Andemeskel** is appreciated, thank you.



GOSPEL HALL INC.

Stefanie Pearce
Secretary

HOUSING

Gospel Hall provides accommodation in 'Lion Garden', Little Bourke Street, for eight young people (ages 16–26) at high risk of homelessness. Residents are provided with a live-in mentor under a program managed by Melbourne City Mission. Residents have coped remarkably well this year with the difficult conditions of isolation. The program and property managers have been innovative in finding ways to support the residents throughout this challenging period.

THE INTERSECTION

The ground floor of Lion Garden is occupied by The Intersection Urban Learning, a program conducting city walks to high-school students to teach empathy and neighbourhood concepts. While 2019 saw a total of 466 group walks conducted during the school year, in 2020 almost all bookings were cancelled. The team had to pivot to virtual tours. Council, State and Federal funding has enabled The Intersection to retain five part-time staff, and to stay close to break-even. However, the future is very uncertain.

If any CSBC-ers are interested in a virtual walk, do let me know and we can arrange a group booking.



Click [HERE](#) to find more information about *The Intersection* and its mission.



COMMITTEE

The Gospel Hall committee of management farewelled **Susan Frykberg** in February. For most of 2020, the committee comprised: **Noel Williams** (Chair), **Stefanie Pearce** (Secretary), **Monica Lusardo** (Treasurer), **Ken Dusting**, **Carol Geyer**, **Ian Hughes**, **Frank Rees**, **Peter White**, **Lynlee Williams**. At the August meeting, we welcomed **Rev Dr Mark Burton** (St Paul's Anglican Cathedral) to the committee, which must comprise ten members, no more than five of whom may be Baptist.



FINANCES

Paulo Pereira

Honourary Treasurer

We all know that with the COVID-19 restrictions, so many things have changed for us and our community. Through this year we have been unable to worship together in our sanctuary, we have been restricted to online gatherings, our movements have been limited, and many individuals and businesses have struggled with financial hardship.

CSBC have also faced financial difficulties. We lost some income, including from our Verandah Café, the Pearl Shop rent and the renting of our facilities. Regardless, this community has responded to the church's financial needs and has done so beyond our expectations. All I can say is thank you, and may God bless you!

The church successfully applied for the Government funded *Job Keeper* programme and we are currently receiving those benefits. This means there has been minimal impact on our valued staff. Our online offerings have significantly improved and as a community we have all contributed to ensure our ministry continues.

We are effectively living the church's mission. Your contributions to the Communion Fund have allowed our pastors to provide support, helping members and friends of our church who have faced particular need.

Unfortunately, due to Victoria's lockdown, we are unable to present our financial and audit reports in the usual way. We apologise for this but we can guarantee we are working with our auditors to have an appropriate report completed as soon as possible and, as it becomes available, we will send it to all our church members.

I have worked closely this year with the members of the church's Strategic Finance Committee: **Robert Iles, Stefanie Pearce, Laurie Buchanan** and **Ian Manning**. I ask you to keep my work and the work of this committee in your prayers so that with the help of God we may continue to provide good service for our church.



IN MEMORY

Ian Ronald Pawsey (1932 – 2020)

This past year, amidst the restrictions of a pandemic, we grieved the death of our dear friend and Life Deacon, Ian Pawsey. Following their marriage in the church, Ian and Barbara came into the membership of Collins Street in 1959. Through six decades of service, Ian left his mark on the ministry of Collins Street and upon our lives. We remember him with affection and a deep sense of gratitude.



*"Oh mortal folk, you may behold and see
How I lie here, sometimes a mighty knight."*

Stephen Hawes

When I think of Ian, I think of him in those terms. However, a mighty knight would not be his phrase for himself, for he was, to us who shared his life in Collins Street, a most effacing man. Is it not good that we who lived in the experience of his Church life are able, at his death, to reflect upon the nobility of much that he did throughout that life?

My observations here are personal as all who will mourn in our loss of Ian will, on reflection, have as their own. We met in the late 1950's shortly after his marriage to Barbara. Even those last words call up memories that matter. They were a handsome couple in every way, he the knight, with his lovely partner.

Soon came his invitation to the Diaconate, and not long after his appointment as our Church Treasurer. His life in the Diaconate then lasted, as was his life, long, allowing years of opportunity for this person of noble grace to exercise his calming and sensible presence, to speak to periods of anxious concern when tempers rose and moods ranged contrary. In all this time we shared in that role, his contribution was notable, well thought out, and helpful. We needed and benefitted from this 'knight' and his noble presence.

Ian was also very wise. When the Church required a Chairperson for the Incorporated Fund, Ian with his wealth of experience in public life was an obvious choice and a notable guide in our early days. Meetings at the Pawsey's also carried the added benefit of supper through the good graces of his ever ready Barbara.

Throughout our years together, I do not believe that there was ever an opportunity to assist with the smooth running of the Church that Ian declined. This quiet man was however not at his most comfortable when occupying the welcoming lectern for Sunday services, a role which was in those years the usual role for the Church Secretary. From time to time over my Secretary years when I craved a weekend away, it was from Ian that largely I sought assistance. Never did I meet a decline for this role despite his reluctance to be front and centre in this part of Church life. The reality of this grace from Ian was emphasised around the time of his 80th birthday when he declared his unavailability for this particular task from that time onwards. Where he was happier was behind the camera lens, which provided an outlet for his creative spirit and for the Church to benefit from the recording of numbers of events, both notable and often very personal.

Especially now however, our thoughts are with Barbara, his partner of more than 60 years and the one who provided such wonderful support to Ian over those many years, in so many ways.

We will miss Ian, our 'sometimes knight'. A man who more often than we could count extended himself as a symbol of generous grace over more than one half of a century, on behalf of the Church that he loved, and the God he sought to serve.

Dr Peter Hearne
October 14, 2020

