



COLLINS STREET BAPTIST CHURCH

Hospitality, Justice & Growth

ANNUAL REPORT 2022

“He has told you,
O mortal, what is good, and
what does the Lord require of
you but to do justice and to love
kindness and to walk humbly
with your God?”

Micah 6.8

INTRODUCTION

In 2020 and 2021, we published annual reports from lockdown. We did so navigating our way through one of the most challenging seasons in the church's history. In the last twelve months we have taken tentative but determined steps to resume our life as a gathered community. Through continuing uncertainty, we have travelled in faith together confident in God's presence.

In June 2021, the challenge of this season was heightened as we agreed to accept a budget in significant deficit. We did so committing ourselves to a twelve-month process of discernment to (i) determine our most vital commitments in ministry, and (ii) ensure a more sustainable and targeted budget into the future.

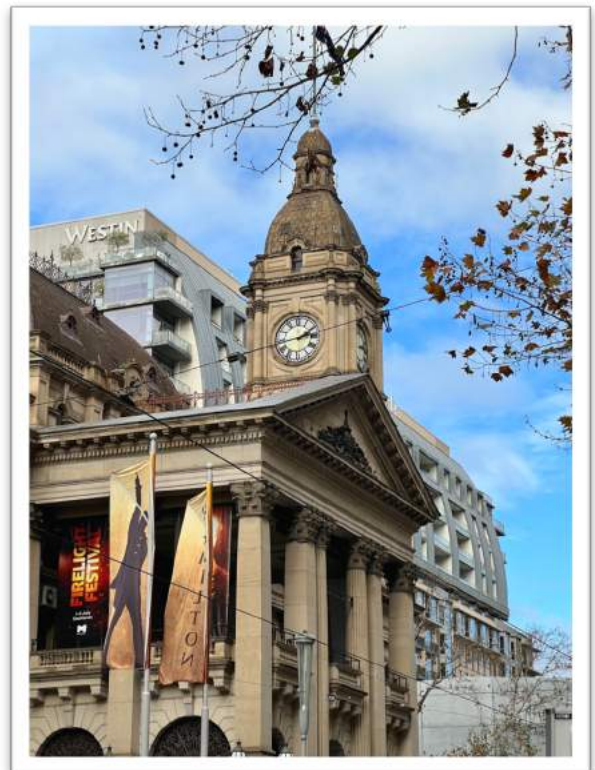
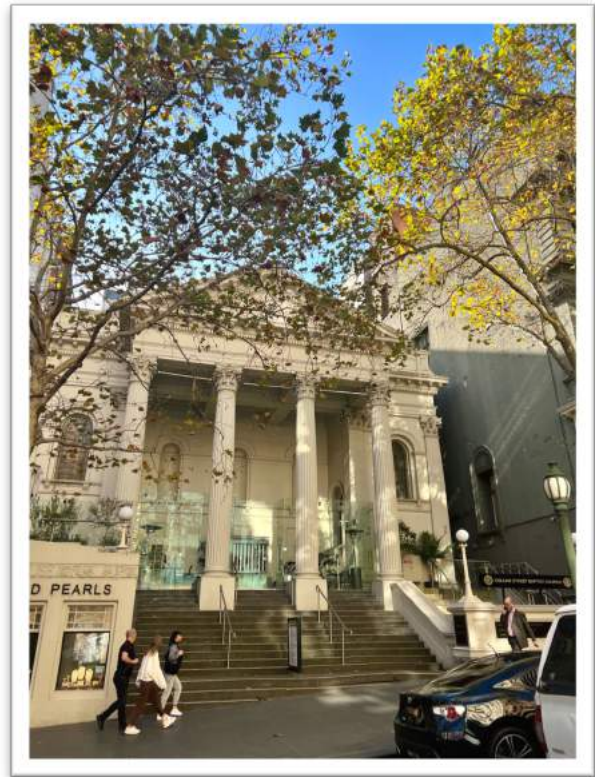
Through the remaining months of 2021, the members engaged diligently in a process of discernment. Though entirely online, we found our way to three central aspirations to inform the allocation of resources in future budgets:

#1 We aspire to be a Gospel-centred community

As a community of faith, we believe in the centrality of Christ and continue the church's tradition of life-giving engagement with the Bible, striving to discern God's will and deepening in faith through our worship together.

#2 We aspire to be a caring, inclusive community, growing in spirituality together

As a diverse community, we are committed to radical hospitality and care for all people regardless of culture, experience, tradition and sexuality. Our faith deepens through knowing one another and journeying together in ministry.



#3 We aspire to be a community working for the good of the city

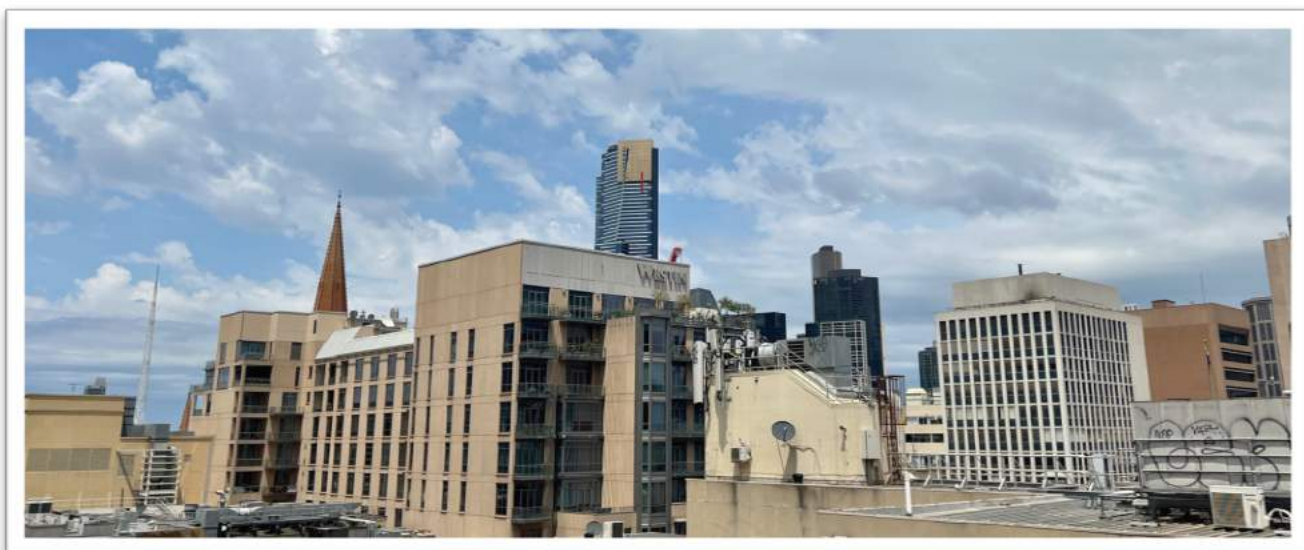
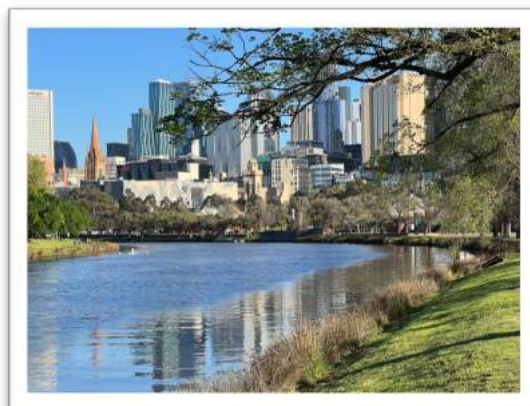
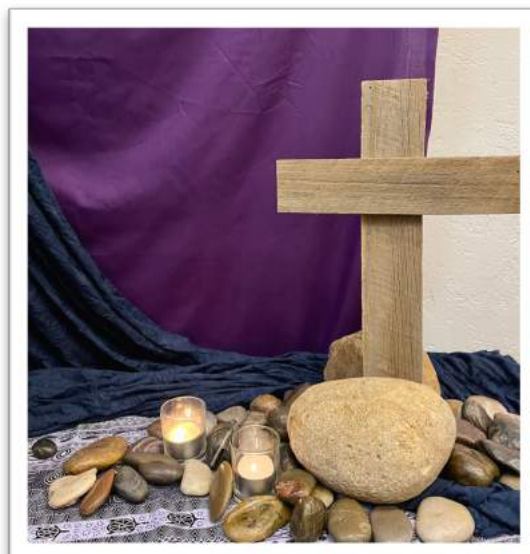
As a church in the CBD, we are committed to participating in the flourishing of Melbourne and the neighbourhoods in which we live. We work to see goodness, justice and love prevail in our world.

Through the early months of 2022 and with these aspirations in place, the church was able to make firm decisions about its staffing arrangements, its stewardship of Central House and its giving. Consequently, in June the church found its way to approving a balanced budget for the year ahead and a new resolve for its life and ministry.

In a season of such demand, these are notable achievements and we present this report with a deep sense of gratitude.

*You have tuned our mourning into dancing;
you have taken off our sackcloth
and clothed us with joy, so that our souls
may praise you and not be silent.*

Psalms 30



WORSHIP & COMMUNITY

Rev Dr Simon Carey Holt
Pastor

After sharing pastoral leadership for eleven years with my colleague and friend **Carolyn Francis**, I began this church year with an undeniable feeling of loss. It was coupled, however, with a continuing sense of privilege. Though our circumstances at Collins Street have shifted markedly, Brenda and I remain grateful for the work I do and the community we serve together.

Sunday Services

Our worship life has continued uninterrupted through numerous challenges. The beginning of November 2021 saw us regather in the sanctuary for in-person services. With masks, hand sanitizers, social distancing, proof of vaccination and adjustments to some of our rituals, we pressed forward, carefully but enthusiastically.

In the **Season of Advent** we were guided in our liturgy and preaching by the Advent candles of **hope, peace, joy and love**. I was joined in this by guest speakers **Mark & Val Holt**, **Sean Winter** and my partner **Brenda**. Our lead musician **David Cundy** (piano, organ and harp) was joined by guest musicians **Tash Atkins** (soprano), **Lilly Yang** (flute), **Tom Pepperell** (violin), **Dylan Casey** (tenor) and **Conner Jenkinson** (trumpet).

We were also accompanied through Advent by a booklet of daily readings and prayers that drew upon the same themes but in more personal ways. Thanks to the generosity of **Arlo & Co.**, we shared mementos of these themes to add to our own Christmas trees.



In January we enjoyed listening in to several **Faith Conversations** with **Peter & Rosalie Hearne** (faith and marriage), **Penny Mulvey** (faith and work), **Nigel Smith** (faith in the city) and **Sean Winter** (faith and the Bible).

The four weeks of February we spent with **The Greatest Commandment** — *you shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength* — and its meaning for today.

In the **Season of Lent** we focused on the healing stories of Luke's gospel guided by the theme **Choose Life!** Thanks to guest speakers **David Morgan**, **Marita Munro**, **Frank Rees**, **Chris Turner** and, visiting from the Baptist Union of Victoria, **Meewon Yang** and **Gayle Hill**.



● SUNDAY JANUARY 9

A conversation on **faith and marriage**

with Dr Peter Hearne (retired GP) & Rosalie Hearne (family therapist)

● SUNDAY JANUARY 16

A conversation on **faith and work**

with Penny Mulvey (Chief Communications Officer, Bible Society)

● SUNDAY JANUARY 23

A conversation on **faith and the city**

with Nigel Smith (Urban Strategist, Centre for Building Better Community)

● SUNDAY JANUARY 30

A conversation on **faith and the bible**

with Dr Sean Winter (Associate Professor of New Testament, Pilgrim College)

ALL SERVICES COMMENCE AT 10.30AM

Livestreaming is available.

Go to csbc.org.au and follow the link to CSBC ONLINE



THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

*"You shall love the Lord your God
with all your heart,
and with all your soul,
and with all your mind,
and with all your strength."*



EXPLORATIONS IN LOVE

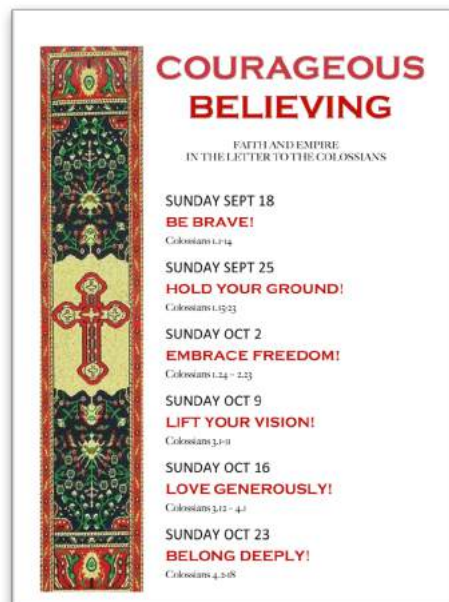
February @ Collins Street Baptist Church

In the months of May and June, we shared a series of Sundays on **Stories to Live By: How Our Stories Shape Our Faith**, assisted by **Sherry Maddock, Mark Holt** and **Brenda Holt**. We shared around themes including *When Stories Crumble*, *Stories that Disrupt* and *Stories that Ground Us*. Both **Ken Manley** and **Frank Rees** spoke of their published biographies of two leaders in our community, Mervyn Himbury and T.E. Ruth. Even more, we were gifted with personal stories of faith from **David Cundy, Robin Winter** and **Merilyn Hickson**.

During my absence in July and August (with my thanks to everyone who made it possible), we explored the psalms as **Songs of Faith**. Serving as Interim Pastor, **Marita Munro** took the lead assisted by **David Morgan, Sean Winter** and **Jonathan Stark** from the Baptist Union of Victoria.

For the final months of this church year, we are spending time with the New Testament letter of Colossians. Our theme is **Courageous Believing: Faith and Empire in the Letter to the Colossians**.

Through all of this and more, our lead musician **David Cundy** has served us with his usual style. We have been grateful for him and his part in our worship life. As well, **Tania Hurren** has kept our prayer space in the sanctuary set beautifully each week and often sensitive to the seasons of the church year.



Volunteer team

As we eased back into in-person services, we've depended heavily on a small team of volunteers to assist with the practical details of our Sunday gatherings. Our livestream team, our door stewards, those who provide and serve morning tea, those who do readings, those who open up the sanctuary and prepare it then stay behind to lock up ... all of these tasks and more have been done faithfully each week. With a diminished number of volunteers, these responsibilities have fallen to a smaller number of people serving more often, and we are very grateful.

Pastoral care

Though a difficult season we have continued to care for each other as best we can. Time and again I've been encouraged by the quiet and unheralded ways so many have provided support to those in need. Through experiences of grief and loss, sickness and surgery, financial hardship, the loss of jobs and homes, and seasons of fragile mental health, this community has loved well.

Simon Carey Holt



ADMINISTRATION AND LEADERSHIP

Dr Robert Iles
Honorary Secretary

Staff

The church has been well served by our Pastor **Rev Dr Simon Holt** during the past year, our first in recent times with a sole pastor. We thank him for his sacrificial commitment, loving pastoral oversight, stimulating and meaningful liturgy, challenging preaching and his attention to detail. It was pleasing to release him from regular duties to take annual leave in July and writing leave in August, much of which time was spent in the United Kingdom.

During Simon's absence we were delighted that **Rev Dr Marita Munro**, a member of the church, served as Interim Pastor. We give thanks for her calm, purposeful and effective leadership.

Our deacons – **Laurie Buchanan** (Treasurer), **Abi Chenoweth**, **Clair Cvjeticanin**, **Robert Iles** (Secretary), **Katherine Jones**, **Amanda Mao**, **Judy Morgan**, **Ros Otzen** (Minute Secretary) and **Nigel Smith** – continued to meet monthly via Zoom and in person. We thank them for the time, talents and expertise they contributed to the leadership of the church as we started to emerge from the difficult years of the Covid pandemic.

The employed staff continued to serve the church despite the residual challenges of Covid. **David Cundy's** music contributed much to the worship services, **Lyndelle** maintained the operation of the church office coping with the disruptions created by the move from level 6 to level 3 in Central House, **Tekeste Andemeskel** continued to conscientiously oversee our church property,



Setel Adem served as our cleaner and **Linda Cully** as our bookkeeper. We thank each one for their service.

Property Development

The year has seen the repair of the external emergency timber stairs on the eastern side of Central House. This project has been a serious challenge for the church for a number of years and it is pleasing that the repairs undertaken by Simbuilt Pty Ltd are almost completed. The work will be finished for significantly less than previously anticipated and less than the \$400,000 set aside by the Trust Fund for this purpose.

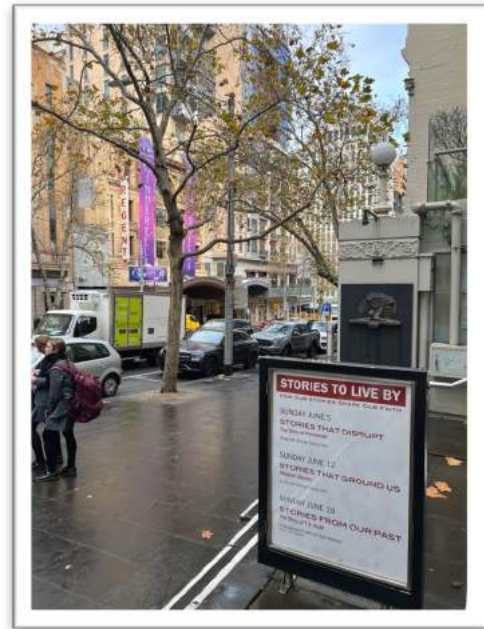
Despite the difficulties of the Melbourne CBD property market, it is pleasing that levels 6 and 7 of Central House have been leased to Wilkinson Publishing. The pressures on the church budget have been significantly reduced by the leasing of three floors of Central House. In preparing levels 6 and 7 for lease and the resultant move of the church office to level 3, a degree of unbudgeted expenditure was necessarily incurred. In this regard, we are grateful to **Peter Young** for the extensive work he contributed to the transfer of the church computer and security systems from level 6.

Trust Fund

After many years of faithful service, **Dr Peter Hearne** stood down as Secretary of the Fund at the Annual Meeting in October 2021. A very significant debt is owed to Peter for his diligent and conscientious service in helping to ensure the effective maintenance of the Fund despite the many challenges. **Dr Ros Otzen** has taken over the role, for which we are thankful. Throughout the year, the Fund has reported quarterly to its members.

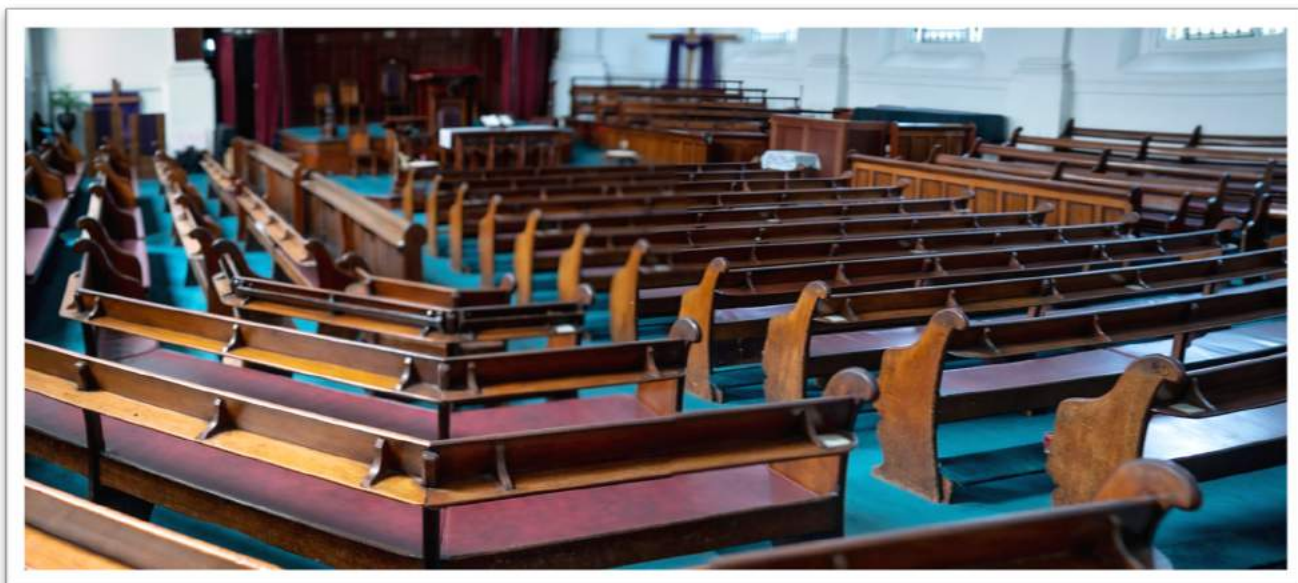
The Future

With the gradual ending of many of the Covid restrictions in the community, the repair of the



external stairs of Central House, the stabilization of the church budget through the leasing of three floors of Central House and the anticipated appointment of a new Coordinator of Neighbourhood Mission, there will be growing opportunity for increased focus on the core aspects of the church's life and ministry.

Robert Iles



MEMBERSHIP

At a members' meeting in March this year, three new applicants were received into the membership of the church:

Ben Verghese has been part of Collins Street for the last six years. He was raised in the Marthoma tradition in Malaysia. Ben came to a more personal experience of faith during his university days here in Australia. In the past Ben has been part of Uniting and Anglican communities and has now found a home at Collins Street.

Vivienne Pye was baptised as an infant in the Anglican church. She came to a personal faith and was baptised by immersion at the Camberwell Baptist church in the 1970s and has attended Baptist Churches ever since. Viv studied theology at Whitley College and began attending at Collins Street in 2020.

Merilyn Hickson was baptised as a teenager at North Balwyn Baptist Church where her parents were life deacons. A mother and grandmother, Merilyn spent many years in Benella in north eastern Victoria. On her move back to Melbourne, she has found her way to Collins Street.

Due to the disruption of the last two years, our formal welcome to new members has been delayed since 2019. Consequently, we had two occasions this year (Sundays April 3 and May 1) at which we welcomed Ben, Vivienne and Merilyn along with those approved for membership since late 2019: **Leigh & Cheryl Reeves, Robin & Marilyn Winter, Kate Eve & Chris Turner** and **David Cundy**.



FINANCES

Laurie Buchanan
Honorary Treasurer

At the conclusion of a year in which the role of treasurer passed from **Paulo Pereira** to me, I give thanks to God for his provision. Collins Street Baptist Church is blessed with abundant resources – both financial and physical – together with a generously giving church family.

The following table shows the changing nature of the share of income from major sources for CSBC:

| | 2019/20 * (Actual) | 2021/22 (Actual) | 2022/23 (Budget) |
|-----------------------|--------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Trust Fund grants | 52% | 46% | 30% |
| Rent | 16% | 22% | 36% |
| Congregational giving | 24% | 32% | 34% |

* Verandah & other income excluded & so does not total 100%

We can see from the chart that our finances are much more balanced – we have reduced our dependency on grants from the Trust Fund and in so doing will ensure its sustainability. We are utilising Central House more effectively to support the church financially thereby allowing us to continue ministry where it is most needed. And, for a church relatively small in number, I am continually amazed at the generosity of the members of CSBC.

For the 2021/22 year in review, some of the highlights include:

- Offerings exceeded budget by almost \$30,000. Thank you CSBC for your faithfulness to God's call for financial stewardship!
- Communion Fund offerings were \$5,665 against a budget of \$3,000 allowing CSBC to provide support to the most vulnerable in our community during a year of great need.



- Income from the Trust Fund was \$103,000 less than budget – enabled by the increase in offerings and also lower expenses following Carolyn’s resignation.
- Property maintenance was more than double the budgeted figure – due largely to preparatory works to rent Levels 6 & 7 of Central House and costs associated with moving the church office to Level 3. Further costs will appear in 2022/23 but the financial benefits will flow for years to come.
- Utility costs were kept well under budget despite increasing gas and electricity rate rises and increasing use with Central House tenancies – more advantageous rate plans were renegotiated with our energy providers.
- Ministry costs significantly less than budget due to our transition to a one-pastor church at the end of 2021.

It is interesting to note that 95% of offerings are now received electronically. This is a change clearly brought about through the pandemic but one which has benefits around the consistency of giving.

As we no longer have a retiring offering on Communion Sundays, the deacons made the decision that any cash offerings received on Communion Sundays will be directed towards the Communion Fund to assist those in our community who are experiencing need.

Several years ago, a Strategic Finance Committee was created to assist the Treasurer in framing the budget with a view to reducing dependence on the Trust Fund to ensure its sustainability. As that work has now largely been achieved, the Strategic Finance Committee has been disbanded. I would like to thank **Robert Iles**, **Stefanie Pearce** and **Ian Manning** for the work they did in providing the Treasurer with wise counsel over a number of years. Thank you for your service.



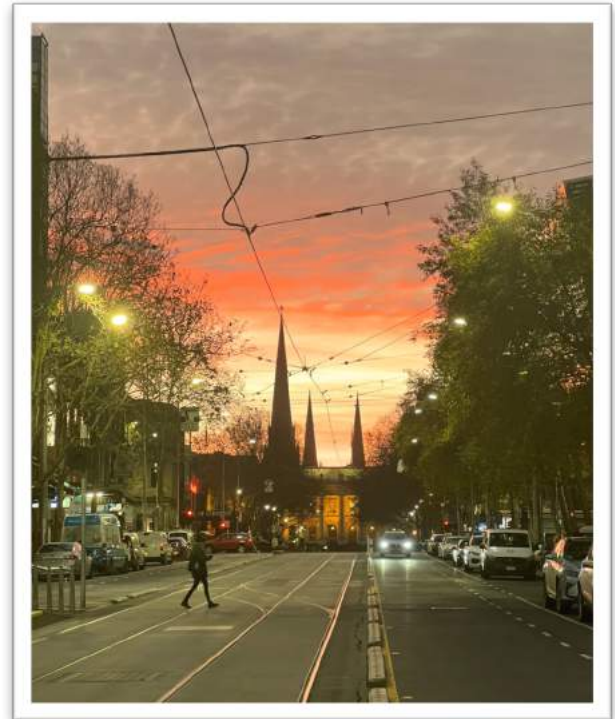
A thank you, too, for **Lyndelle** in the church office and **Linda Cully**, our accountant, for the often unseen work they do so efficiently.

And to **Paulo Pereira**, I give thanks to God for his service as Treasurer over these past several years. The pandemic made a couple of those years quite stressful but Paulo handled those stresses with grace and efficiency. He is one of the most gracious and honourable men I have come to know. Thank you Paulo, and God bless you.

Please continue to pray for the deacons. Each meeting we pray *'in matters of finance, give us wisdom and generosity.'* As stewards of what God has provided to CSBC, may this be so for us.

Finally, an apology. Detailed Financial Statements are available on request however, due to an oversight on my part in sending them to the auditor following the close of the financial year, the audit was not completed in time for the AGM. I am sorry for this.

Laurie Buchanan



FAREWELL TO SHERRY MADDOCK

In May 2022, Sherry Maddock's tenure as our Neighbourhood Engagement Coordinator came to an end. With gratitude we celebrated Sherry's six years of service, sending her into a new chapter of ministry with our prayers.

Sherry came into the life of Collins Street in November 2016. She relocated from the United States with her husband Geoff and son Isaac. They came to live in Central House and take up ministry with Urban Seed. Just a year later Urban Seed folded.

With great courage, Sherry and her family remained living in Central House while Sherry pioneered new expressions of ministry with and for our community. She established a non-profit, **Planted Places**, committed to ministries of place-making. She transformed what used to be called Credo Café into **The Green Room**, an oasis of plant life and community for the local neighborhood. She developed a particular ministry to asylum seekers and refugees in partnership with Baptcare. She forged new relationships with the City of Melbourne and city residents through Residents 3000. She fostered community within Central House and renewed the gardens that are part of the Verandah Café.

Sherry did all of this and so much more. She left behind of legacy that continues to enrich our lives, and upon which we will build into the future.

Since Sherry's departure, church members **Brenda Holt** and **Tania Hurren** have continued caring for the plant life in the Green Room as the church searches for a new member of staff to lead our neighbourhood ministry into the future.



GOSPEL HALL INC.

Stefanie Pearce
Secretary

Gospel Hall Inc, which manages the 176-year-old Gospel Hall Trust, owns a building at 116 Little Bourke Street known as Lion Garden. The building was redeveloped in the 1990s to provide long-term accommodation for young people at extreme risk of homelessness, in a program known as Youth Foyers run by Melbourne City Mission. Since opening in 2004, Lion Garden has provided supported accommodation to 99 young people to date.

In the last year there have been increased behavioural and maintenance issues. These have been mitigated with installation of CCTV in the common areas, and great care in choosing new participants in the program to restore a calmer, safer and more balanced community at the site. The new young people have come into the program with a strong set of talents and abilities and drive to advance through their studies and work goals. Five residents are currently studying and one is actively seeking employment.

The ground floor of Lion Garden is the operational centre for **The Intersection: Urban Learning**, which conducts city walks for high-school students to teach empathy, diversity and connection. Covid restrictions continued to severely impact The Intersection with group activities cancelled for most of the year. Bookings are now picking up. We congratulate **Evan Morgan** and his team on managing the program in very difficult circumstances.

The 10-member ecumenical GHI board may include up to five Baptists. Committee members familiar to CSBC are **Carol Geyer**, **Peter White** and **Stefanie Pearce**, as well as **Monica Lusardo** who retired from the board early in the year. The board grieved the death of **Ian Angus** this year. Ian was instrumental in the redevelopment of Lion Garden in the 1990s and maintained keen interest in its activities.



TRIBUTES

In the last year we've celebrated the lives of four members who passed away, each one having lived an extraordinary life of service. In each case we are poorer for their absence and richer for their faith and their contribution to our lives.

Ian Angus

A tribute by Simon Carey Holt

Ian Bamfield Angus was born on January 8, 1931, in St Georges Hospital, Kew. More than ninety years later, November 3, 2021, Ian passed away in the very same hospital surrounded by his two daughters, Caroline and Fiona and their families. He was a man deeply loved to the end.

Ian came into membership here at Collins Street back in 1983. It was after the loss of his dear wife Judith who died at just 39 years of age. Left to parent two pre-teenage daughters, Ian described those early years in his own words: *"I kept my head down. It was all I could do to attend to daily family needs and manage my responsible position at RMIT."* Indeed, that's what Ian always did. He got on with it, always with persistence and grace. Despite his commitments, he quickly found his way into service at Collins Street, serving as a deacon and as treasurer and playing a key role in the development of The Gospel Hall in Little Collins Street.

I have often described Ian Angus as a gentleman. The term 'gentleman' originates in Old French meaning a man of good and courteous conduct. Indeed, Ian was a good and courteous man, one of the finest I have known. Throughout his life and in all his endeavours he conducted himself with a mixture of determination and humility.

To describe Ian with the word 'gentle' is not to suggest that he was a timid man. He faced significant challenges in his life. As a widower, a devoted father, an educator, a senior administrator and a leader, he faced considerable responsibility from which he never resiled. He was a gentleman who persisted, but always with grace.

The same can be said of Ian's faith. Faced with the realities of life, Ian refused a head-in-the-sand or head-in-the-clouds sort of religion. In periods of significant change, Ian pressed into his faith for something that was real and durable. He was constantly curious, persistent, pressing at the edges of things, never afraid to question or interrogate a long-held belief. In the conservative world of Baptists in which his faith was nurtured, he was incredibly brave. But always with gentleness.



David Chen

A tribute by Peter Hearne

David Chen was 96 years of age when, in August of this year, he died following a short illness.

David came to Collins Street in 1958 having travelled on his own from Sydney to Melbourne. He found himself seeking out a Baptist congregation as being one with which he was familiar from earlier experiences. He related that the pastor of the church, the Rev. J. Arthur Lewis and his wife were extremely helpful in their care of this young man without a family in Melbourne. They met with him for meals at the Manse and assisted with his integration within the congregation.

David became a member of the church in that year, 1958, and remained so until his death in August — a total of 64 years of service. In 1961 he was nominated for a position on the diaconate and commenced a period of service as a deacon and later, on a vote of the church membership in December 1999, was appointed as a Life Deacon.

Shortly after settling in Melbourne David met and later married Julia, who also became a member at Collins Street. Later they become parents to two children, James and Annette. Sadly, Julia suffered a significant illness and died in the 1980's. David then married Suwai in the 1990's, herself a Baptist pastor by training, who remains now as his widow.

David made a considerable contribution to the life of Collins Street through his commitment and loyalty, together with his thoughtfulness and his generosity. He participated wholly in many activities over the years which are part of his life as a deacon. His generosity was notable in his gift to the church of a grand piano in 2001 for use in the sanctuary. Such gifts are rare in the life of any church and notable in coming from one whose association with Collins Street dated back so many years.

In speaking of David as a 'quiet man of God', many of his colleagues may remember him as one who was hard to fully know. However, those of his family who spoke about him at his funeral, revealed a different side to this man of reserve as many of us knew him. We, however, thank God for the man we did know — one of true generosity living out in his life and understanding the truth of his knowledge of, and love for, his God.



Graham Van Cooten

A tribute by Amanda Mao

It is my honour to pay tribute to our dear brother in Christ who died peacefully on 22 April 2022. Graham and Merle became CSBC members in 2004. Graham was passionate about teaching English as a second language to friends from overseas. He cared about international students and migrants like us. His loving care was never patronising but came from the bottom of his heart. How blessed I was, on behalf of all the international friends he cared for before me, to have the privilege of being at his side in the last years of his life.

Graham lived out the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion not just in words but in action. He not only cared about migrants but treated my same-sex marriage, including our daughter, as he would any other family. Graham's heart was pure like a child's and he was always eager for us to visit him. He liked to ask me: "Amanda, when will you visit me again?" We would sit in their sunny living room for a whole afternoon. Graham enjoyed telling us his life story but what he loved to talk about most was the Lord and Scripture. Before we left, he would pray for our family. When COVID hit we could only talk on the phone. No matter how sick or frail he became, he prayed faithfully for us.

Graham took the initiative to call us. Being brought up in Chinese culture where generational hierarchy was stressed, it was unfathomable to me for a senior person to call someone of a younger generation. This touched me very much. I once asked Graham his secret to a happy marriage. His answer was simple but powerful: he and Merle had daily devotions together. He gave Jun and me many issues of *Every Day with Jesus* to study. This is Graham's greatest spiritual legacy to us. Since then, Jun and I have been studying the Bible together every day. We discovered that as we grow closer to God we come closer to each other.

Graham cared about our daughter Lilith, too. Knowing she studied psychology, he recommended a book for her to read and specifically asked her to call him. They chatted on the phone for quite some time when Graham's health still allowed it. I would like to finish this tribute with Graham's own words of PRISM, the recipe that he lived by and that kept him joyous and hopeful throughout his life.

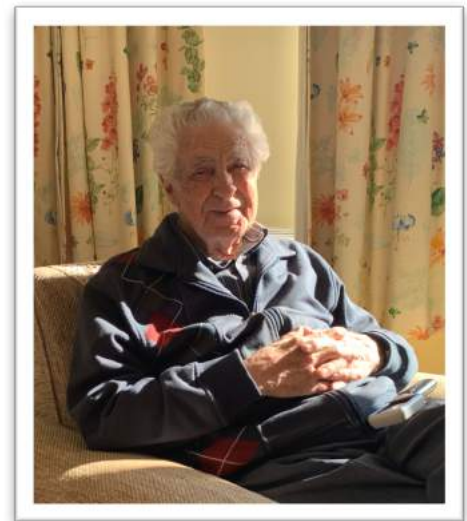
***P** is Preserve and Protect. God preserves and protects me.*

***R** is Renew and Restore. God renews and restores me.*

***I** is Intellect. I still have a sharp mind and I'm grateful.*

***S** is Sight. I have a little vision left in my eye and I'm not totally blind.*

***M** is mobility. I have some mobility and I'm not wheelchair bound. I can still walk. M also stands for Merle.*



Kathy Lewis

A tribute by Simon Carey Holt

Katherine Marjorie Lewis came into membership at Collins Street in 2000, transferring from Flinders Street Baptist Church in Adelaide. It was at the beginning of Rowena Curtis's ministry as Senior Pastor. Kathy's husband Len joined the pastoral team of the church and Kathy did as she had done in multiple contexts — she supported Len's ministry while investing in the church her own unique character and grace.

Kathy was born in Prahran in 1935. She was a gifted infant teacher and made significant contributions to childhood education in many places. Though her own advancement in teaching was sacrificed to follow Len's call in ministry, Kathy remained her own person. As Carolyn Francis said at her funeral service, *"Kathy was a woman of strong faith and strong convictions."* She was an avid reader, a woman of intellect and insight whose theological maturity was ahead of the curve.

Kathy's inclusive understanding of God informed her lifelong ministry of hospitality. Here at Collins Street she was often front-and-centre when it came to the church's provision of lunches and morning teas. She was ever on the lookout for the person on the edge or sitting alone. Her commitment to communicate welcome and to enfold others was consistent throughout her life.

As wife to Len and mother to Bronwyn, Andrew and Roslyn, as well as a grandmother and great grandmother, Kathy lived a life of service. Sadly, for the last eight years Kathy was in full-time care at the Bupa Aged Care Centre in Croydon where Len visited her daily. Regardless, the words of one of the hymns included in her memorial service speak beautifully of the life she lived from beginning to end and for which we give thanks:

*They loved their Lord, so good and dear,
And God's love made them strong,
And they followed the right for Jesus' sake,
The whole of their good lives long.*



GRATITUDE

At a Sunday service in September, we reflected back on the past year and wrote down things for which we are thankful in the life of our church. Here is a selection of those.

For the provision of on-line services during lockdowns

For open and honest sharing of faith journeys from 'up the front' — keeping it real!

For being able to meet in person again after such a long time apart

For the online ministry of Collins Street that sustained me during Covid

For the warm welcome I received when I moved back from Singapore to Melbourne in April

For the opportunity to participate in discernment on the church's future direction

For Simon's spiritual leadership

For being back to face-to-face gathering and being able and support one another

For solidarity and emotional and physical support

For inspiring and thoughtful preaching

For the sense of being held by God week by week

For Simon and his generosity of spirit and his ability to embrace us all

For providing worship services through the challenges of Covid

For getting the fire-stairs fixed at a much lower cost than expected

For such a wonderful community of people

For supporting each other through challenges and successes

For our commitment to meeting specific needs in practical ways and in prayer

For the people who are so welcoming, for being my home away from home and for being my family here in Melbourne

For each and every member, regulars or visitors, whose presence makes me so happy

For thought, devotion and the resonance of the word

For the community of this church who have welcomed and cared for our baby in so many generous and unexpected ways

For the wisdom and stories shared by a range of people this year from the lectern and chances to hear reflections and experiences

For the constancy of giving us knowledge of God's love and its reality

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| For the sense of family I have at Collins Street | For my partner accompanying me to church, for the friends I have made at CSBC, and for the peace I experience during the services | For the opportunity to connect regularly with a community of faithfulness ... |
| For a safe space, for LGBTQI+ Christians, for being included and treated with respect and love | For being welcomed, for God's presence and love, for teaching, for chances to reflect, for the psalms, hymns, music and time to worship | For this church being here and, though I live elsewhere, knowing I will always feel welcome here |
| For those who have been friendly, remembered my name and with whom I have enjoyed conversations | For the gentle, quiet and reflective nature of the services | For the music, especially during times of reflection |
| For Simon's humility and honesty and for his leadership and teaching | For the responsive prayers | For the willingness of all to follow God's imperative to love one another and work for the good of all |
| For navigating tricky waters regarding CSBC's finances, and for doing so sensibly, honestly and without acrimony | For our pastor who has led us so deeply and sensitively since Carolyn's departure and for the years of Carolyn's ministry | For the kindness of this precious gospel people |
| For Simon's gentle, thoughtful and reflective leadership | For the way our members have grappled with our financial situation and worked together on a clear vision going forward | For being welcomed so warmly, for new friends, for preaching and the opportunity to learn new things |
| For being challenged in my walk with God and following Jesus | For an inclusive church community | For the Zoom group we ran during Covid, talking with others and hearing people's stories |
| For the provision of rituals to help steady me — the lighting of candles, the songs, sitting together listening, singing and reading | For coming through lockdown with strong giving and attendance | For the engagement with the congregation in the discernment process and the ease with which the recommendations were accepted |
| For the new tenants in Central House | For the prayerful support of the congregation when hard things happen | For God's spirit on the diaconate |
| For a church that radiates warmth and welcomes everyone | For the music, for Simon, for preaching, for the weekly newsletter, for morning tea and marmalade | For friendly people, for the sanctuary and for leaders like Robert Iles and the other deacons |

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