



AGM Agenda

1:00pm 17 September 2023

1. Attendance and Apologies

- 1.1. Attending Jenny Davis, Rob Davis, Ruth Rawlings, Samara Pitt, Jill Edwards, Sylvia Sandeman, Eliz Cook, Ian Cook, Merryl Gahan, Paul Gahan, Shelley Taylor, Margie Welsford, Jeff Wild, Nathan Nettleton, Robert Toseland, John Fowler, John Sampson, Acacia Nettleton, Karen Quah. For listening circle only: Glennys Williams, Uncle Dennis Fisher, Suzanne Peart
- 1.2. Apologies from Gilbert Joyce, Yvonne Joyce, Dom Filippi, Liesl Filippi, Vincent Hodge, Chris Walsh, Audrey Kateena, Clare Gogerly, Margie Dahl, Jonny Spoor, James Bennett

2. Minutes of Previous Meetings

- 2.1. **Motion:** *That we now approve as an accurate record the minutes of the congregational AGM held on 18 September 2022. **Carried***
- 2.2. **Motion:** *That we now approve as an accurate record the minutes of the congregational vote held on 5 April 2023 (voting on acceptance of 3 new members). **Carried***
- 2.3. **Motion:** *That we now approve as an accurate record the minutes of the congregational vote held on 14 June 2023 (voting to affirm the covenants and host group). **Carried***

3. Reports

- 3.1. **Host Group Report** (pages 4-5)
Motion: That the congregation accept the Host Group report as tabled and thank the Hosts for their ministry among us. **Carried**
- 3.2. **Pastor's Report** (pages 5-7)
Motion: That the congregation accept the Pastor's report as tabled and thank Nathan for his ministry among us. **Carried**
- 3.3. **Membership Report** (page 8)
Motion: That the congregation accept the Membership report as presented with the changes noted, and thank Shelley for maintaining these records for us. **Carried**
- 3.4. **Report from the Mid-week Gathering** (page 9)
Motion: That the congregation accept the report as presented, and commend John for this important ministry. **Carried**

4. Financial Reports

- 4.1. **Financial Report for the 2022-2023 financial year** (page 10)
Motion: That the Church accept the financial reports for the past year as presented.
Carried
- 4.2. **Budget for the 2023-2024 financial year** (page 11)
Motion: That the church endorse the budget for the 2023-2024 financial year as presented. **Carried**

4.3. Thanks

Motion: That we thank Ian for faithfully overseeing our finances and preparing the records and reports for us, noting that he has generously continued to serve us in this way despite having expressed the wish that we might find someone to replace him many years ago. **Carried**

5. Matters for Voting

5.1. Recipients of our Annual Giving

Background: Each year, the church gives away 10% of its facility hire income to ministries elsewhere. This is split between three or four recipients: with a mix of localities and missions. The first one listed below is new and has arisen through Jeff Wild's contacts while working in East Timor. The other two are ones we have supported for several years.

Motion: That we give away 10% of our facility hire income for the past year and split it between the following three recipients:

- *Theological College of the Protestant Church in Timor-Leste* to support their program of providing computer training for theological students;
- the *Indigenous Hospitality House*; and
- *RISE* (Refugees, Survivors and Ex-detainees), the first refugee and asylum seeker organisation in Australia to be run and governed by refugees, asylum seekers and ex-detainees. **Carried**

5.2. Electing BUV Delegates

Motion: That the congregation endorse John Fowler and Ian Cook as our delegates to the BUV Assembly Gatherings, and Shelley Taylor as a back-up delegate.

Carried

6. Necessary Tasks

Explanation: There are numerous people who contribute their time and labour to carry out the various tasks necessary to the ongoing operation of our common life, prayer and ministry. Many of these tasks are largely invisible, and are barely noticed unless they are not done. There are always some that are overlooked when we make up the list, so we add to the list in the meeting. These are not elected positions, and the fact that people are named as doing them does not mean that no one else can express interest in taking on the tasks. In most cases, the people doing them would welcome help, and in some cases they would love to hand the tasks over completely. There are some people who are doing too many of these tasks, and we would love to see them shared around more equally. So if this list prompts you to think, "I could do that one day," don't be afraid to communicate that thought to the Hosts or the person presently in the role.

- Treasurer: Ian Cook
- Bank Account Signatories: Nathan Nettleton, Shelley Taylor, Samara Pitt
- Correspondence secretary: Shelley Taylor
- Bill payments: Shelley Taylor
- Hall Hire Bookings and Invoicing: Eliz Cook
- Host Group Agenda Preparation: Eliz Cook
- Minute Taker for Meetings: Samara Pitt
- Music Copyright reporting: Samara Pitt
- Building maintenance: Ian Cook
- Grounds, Lawns and Garden Maintenance: John Fowler and Jen & Rob Davis
- Rubbish bins: Ruth Rawlings

- Hosting Daily Prayer Liturgies: Nathan Nettleton, Samara Pitt, Acacia Nettleton, Ian Cook, Eliz Cook, Shelley Taylor, Jeff Wild, Suzanne Peart, Merryl Gahan (more welcome)
- Weekly update of the slides for the daily prayer services: Jeff Wild & Nathan Nettleton
- Hosting Sunday Liturgies: Nathan Nettleton, Acacia Nettleton, Ian Cook, Shelley Taylor, and Jeff Wild
- Updating the allocation of parts for the Sunday liturgy and emailing it out to the congregation during the day on Sunday: Nathan Nettleton, Samara Pitt and Eliz Cook
- Singers for Recordings: Shelley Taylor, Samara Pitt, Acacia Nettleton, Nathan Nettleton, Margie Welsford, Merryl Gahan, Jen Davis (more welcome)
- Compiling and posting the weekly notice sheet: Jen Davis
- Editing the recordings of sermons and liturgies and uploading them to our websites: Shelley Taylor and Nathan Nettleton

Any of the following tasks could be taken on by others

- Sourcing and collating the readings for Compline: Nathan Nettleton
- Preparing, coordinating and mixing of the sung response recordings for our worship services: Nathan Nettleton

Motion: That the congregation endorse all those who do the necessary tasks for our Church and thank them for their service during the past year. ***Carried***

7. Listening Circle - How are we feeling about online worship after three and a half years?

This week, it is exactly three and a half years since our last physically gathered Sunday worship service in our church building before the covid pandemic forced us online. Fifteen months after that, we voted unanimously to approve the following motion:

That the SYCBaps congregation ... commit itself for the foreseeable future (knowing that any aspect of church life can be reviewed and reconsidered at any time) to a pattern of church life that involves all principal worship services and governance meetings being conducted in an online or hybrid form, and builds community life through a multitude of other activities, both physically gathered and online.

That's now more than two years ago. How do we feel about that decision now? How well have we fulfilled it? Has time and experience shed new light on what has been lost or what has been gained? What's been positive? What's been hard? What have you noticed?

During Alison Sampson's recent time pastoring among us, she reported that many of us seem to feel quite conflicted within ourselves about this, as though we affirm it in our heads while something deep inside rebels against it. Perhaps that is not surprising, but perhaps now is a good time to listen carefully to one another and see where we are really at with this.

We will not be aiming to make any decisions about this in this meeting, but of course, the things that emerge as we listen deeply to one another may set us on a path to significant decisions down the track.

8. Next AGM: 15 September 2024

Host group report for AGM 2023

The **Host Group in 2022 – 2023** has consisted of Eliz Cook, Ian Cook, Liesl Filippi, Uncle Dennis Fisher, Samara Pitt and Shelley Taylor, with Nathan Nettleton as pastor and chair. Alison Sampson joined us in a temporary pastoral role for 2 months in July and August during Nathan's leave.

The past 12 months have seen us settle in to our practice as an online worshipping community, alongside emerging questions and experiments about what this means for our identity in the physical world.

Our **online liturgies** continue to take centre stage. We have continued to enjoy occasional preachers and attendees joining us from overseas and interstate. **Daily prayers** have continued to be a place of significant relationship building for a segment of the congregation. Nathan took 8 weeks of leave in July and August, and Alison Sampson took on a temporary pastoral care and leadership role for this period. Various congregation members put their hand up to run the services and take on admin tasks, which was all done admirably. Thanks to everyone for pulling together!

The Advent and Lenten **retreat days** were run as hybrid events. The services that used to be ecumenical services (eg. Epiphany, All Saints etc) have now become our own services. We missed out on the Herring Island boat trip, brunch and liturgy this year due to wet weather, but had a meal at Fed Square instead. **Church camp** is about to happen at Airey's Inlet in its new form where people book their own accommodation and gather for meals and other activities.

We have had occasional **activities organised by congregation** members, although this seems to have dropped off since last year. A weekly bible study group 'Wayfinders' was started by Rob and Jen Davis as a hybrid activity and is going strong!

In **building matters**, the manse has continued to be leased to asylum seekers through the Baptcare 'Houses of Hope' asylum seeker housing project. We are grateful to John Fowler for his continued work with gardening and caretaker tasks around the church property. Hall hire has included being booked as a regional centre for the State election. We gratefully acknowledge Eliz Cook for her faithful work in managing the complex task of hall hire.

In light of our congregational life shifting online for worship services, and our subsequent minimal use of the church property, we have made initial inquiries with Baptcare to ask if our **property** would be suitable for redevelopment as a social housing property. We continue to welcome other ideas and suggestions.

We hosted an online **Open Space event** for churches interested in forging a new Baptist identity. This was directed to Victorian Baptist churches who are concerned about changes to the BUV constitution that require all churches to agree to a Doctrinal statement in their individual constitutions, and to have all congregation members subscribe to that statement. It was also for some churches from ACT/NSW who are being evicted from their membership of their state Union due to their support for same-sex marriage. The '**Open Baptists Association**' has been set up and at some stage in the coming months we will consider whether our congregation wants to join, in addition to our BUV membership.

We have had some flurries of discussion about attracting new people to our congregation, and how our name reflects our current and ongoing identity, but nothing has been decided.

The host group exists to facilitate the life and prayer of this congregation. We do not lead it, and we are not appointed for life! Each year each of us discerns whether this is something we feel is ours to do for another year, and becoming a host is open to every congregation member. If you feel you can contribute, do not hesitate to discuss this with us. In all, may God's will be done, and God's love be shown.

Samara Pitt, on behalf of the Host Group
September 2023

Nathan's Pastoral Report - AGM 17 September 2023

The recent opportunity I was given to be away overseas for eight weeks was much needed and appreciated, not having had much more than a week off at a time since before the pandemic. Such a long break also enabled me to come back and see things through slightly different eyes. I also received the gift of Alison's observations and insights, a more thoroughly fresh set of pastoral eyes. So what am I seeing?

There are two very positive things that I am seeing. One of them is something that I was probably taking for granted, almost unnoticed, until Alison pointed it out, and that is a significant growth in faith and prayerfulness in the congregation, particularly among those who are regularly participating in our daily prayer gatherings. There are a couple of quite noticeable changes in this. People are engaging with the Bible and its stories more because they are hearing a lot more of it read than ever before, and they are often sharing and discussing observations on what they have heard. Secondly, lots of people have become more ready and able to pray out loud about various issues of concern. We used to be quite poor at this, and the liturgical structures of our Sunday liturgy didn't invite much free prayer, but there has been significant growth here. One of the most pleasing aspects of this is that it has continued strongly. Our daily prayer gatherings began during the lockdowns of 2020 when they were a desperately needed way of breaching the social isolation we were all experiencing. At that time, I thought the numbers would drop off once the lockdowns were over, but they haven't. I suspect that we partly have the length of the lockdowns to thank for that. They were long enough for regular participation in gathered daily prayer to become an entrenched habit in our lives, and for us to really experience the longer term benefits of that. The good fruits of that growth are now very apparent.

The second very positive thing that I'm seeing became clear precisely because I went away for 8 weeks, and that is that nothing significant went wrong or had to stop during my absence. This is significant because one of the fears that many of us expressed when we were first considering continuing with online worship only was that it would make everything we do even more dependent on me. That was certainly true for a while, but it clearly isn't any longer. More and more people have learned to take on the responsibility for the facilitating of our online life, and it is now possible for me to start freely taking my accumulated leave confident that doing so won't cause anything to collapse. Furthermore, there are several tasks that I was doing until recently that I haven't had to take back on my return. They are now regularly done by others which frees me to devote more time to pastoral care.

Another thing I'm seeing, which is neither a negative nor a positive but just a clear emerging trend is our increasing contact with dementia. Paul Gahan's openness about his diagnosis is a precious gift to us, inviting us to learn and understand and care as we journey with him through the progress of his illness. There are others among us who are beginning to think that they are experiencing early signs of something similar. And the much bigger trend is the number of us who are caring for relatives or close friends who have dementia. Margie and I both lost our mothers in the last few months, both with different forms of dementia. Perhaps there is an invitation here to us as a congregation to intentionally learn and to develop skills and structures to support one another through these challenging and painful journeys. Alison has written more extensively to us on this.

There are also some things I am seeing since my return from leave that cause me a bit of concern. When I came to write this pastoral report, I read the one I wrote last year, and it was a bit disturbing. The thing that was disturbing was that I could have written almost the exact same report this year. In last year's report, I set out a number of issues that I thought we needed to be giving attention to and working on, and as I look back over that list now, there are very few on which we seem to have made any progress at all. So, what were they?

- Activities other than worship

I reminded us that with online worship gatherings depriving us of the casual interactions that happen around a church building, we have recognised from the start that growing a pattern of other activities would be very important. I also pointed out that with a growing chunk of our congregation living outside Melbourne, we would need to think creatively about how to avoid always leaving them out. The formation of the WayFinders study group, run in a hybrid format, is one very positive thing that emerged this year, but apart from that I don't think there has been any noticeable growth since last year.

- Local identity

By this time last year it was clear that none of us were foreseeing a meaningful future connection with the South Yarra/Prahran community, and I was encouraging us to think more about whether we have, or should have, a clear sense of identity rooted in a particular place (Inner City? Melbourne? Victoria? Asia-Pacific?) or whether that no longer has relevance to the way we do church. I've not noticed any progress in our thinking about that.

- Our Church Name

I suggested that since we no longer have, nor anticipate having, a meaningful connection with the South Yarra community, continuing to use its name was probably anachronistic, confusing, and a deterrent to people who might otherwise be looking for us. There have been a couple of bursts of conversation around a possible change of name, but the conversation has not been sustained and has not yet thrown up a new name that generated widespread enthusiasm.

- Outreach & growth

I pointed out that although we had identified several groups of people who are positively advantaged by our present online style of gathering, we hadn't done much to let any of those groups know what we have to offer. That still seems to be the case.

- Property

The question about what we do with the substantial property asset we own in South Yarra is becoming more urgent, because we could become subject to crippling land tax if we continue to only use it the way we presently are. The responsibility for addressing that doesn't seem to be being shared among us, even though we are all the owners.

I don't want to overstate my concern about the inertia on these issues, because I have no doubt that there is a health, vitality, and integrity in our congregation that many of my pastoral peers would give anything to see in their congregations. But I do wonder whether the lack of progress on any of these issues, especially the outreach and growth one, is a sign of a complacency. Complacency is a funny thing, because its emergence is a sign that things are pretty good – no one gets complacent in a bad place – but its emergence is usually a warning that the goodness may not be sustainable. The major thing that cause churches to decline is when they just complacently enjoy what they have without ever thinking about how to share that with others, how to attract, welcome and integrate others.

Perhaps the opportunity in this AGM to listen deeply to each other about the fruits and frustrations of our new way of being church will produce some seeds of new creative thinking about how we read and embrace the possibilities that lie before us.

I remain grateful to be pastoring this congregation of wonderful people. Thank you for the privilege and for your continued support of me. God's richest blessings to you all.

Nathan Nettleton

MEMBERSHIP REPORT – South Yarra Community Baptist Church
- As at AGM on 17 September 2023

Over the last 12 months, our overall membership has increased by one. Clare Gogerly, Audrey Kateena and Jonny Spoor joined us as Members at the Easter Vigil on 8 April 2023. Di Shearer has taken leave from her covenant membership with us whilst currently giving priority to her local commitments in South Australia. Cameron Cutts and John Stanshall have not participated in the life of this church for over 3 years, so have now been removed from the reserve roll.

2022 Statistics (AGM)
 32 Members Total

2023 Statistics (AGM)
 33 Members Total

These changes leave the following as the Membership Roll proposed for approval by the meeting:

Members Covenanted for the Current Year - 27

Eliz Cook	John Fowler	Nathan Nettleton
Ian Cook	Merryl Gahan	Samara Pitt
Margie Dahl	Paul Gahan	John Sampson
Jen Davis	Clare Gogerly	Sylvia Sandeman
Rob Davis	Gilbert Joyce	Jonny Spoor
Jill Edwards	Yvonne Joyce	Shelley Taylor
Dom Filippi	Audrey Kateena	Rita Wang
Liesl Filippi	Mark Learmonth	Margaret Welsford
Dennis Fisher	Acacia Nettleton	Glennys Williams

Members on the Reserve Roll - 6

Paul Holdway	Suzanne Peart	Di Shearer
Mark Moroney	Alison Sampson	Robert Toseland

We currently have four Junior Catechumens:

Junior Catechumens - 4

Lior Filippi	Tara Filippi	Elijah Gogerly
Ethan Wong		

Shelley Taylor,
 Membership Secretary
 13 September 2023



South Yarra
Community
Baptist Church

REPORT OF “MID-WEEK GATHERING” presented to AGM 17 September 2023.

After Metropolitan Community Church of Melbourne (a church with a specific outreach to people whose sexual orientations are at odds with the societal norm, and their friends and families) closed about 18 months ago, several people approached me to see if I was willing to form a group to provide them with a spiritual faith community.

As an octogenarian, I was rather reluctant to do so, and made several suggestions to them: attend Collins Street or Ashburton Baptist Churches, attend St Michael's Uniting Church or join SYCBC Cyber Chapel each Sunday.

As none of these suggestions seemed to cater for their needs/desires, I agreed – with the blessing and support of Nathan and the Host Group – to undertake a survey to consider the possibility of setting up an exploratory GLBTIQA+ Spirituality Group.

Especially, they wanted to meet face-to-face!

The result was that we held our first meeting on Thursday evening 10 November 2022, at 6:30pm, in the front room at the church with 10 people in attendance. We also decided to meet on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month, thereafter. We have a set Liturgy, discussion on a Reading(s) and Holy Communion, followed by a shared meal and meaningful conversation.

To date our lowest attendance has been 6 and the highest 15.

Earlier this year some folks from SYCBC said that they wanted to support us and also asked if they could attend as they missed face-to-face worship. Of course we said yes – and they continue to regularly gather with us. We now call our worship service “Mid-Week Gathering”.

Now that we are fairly well established our “Mid-Week Gatherings” are open to everyone. To really savour the full experience please try to attend both the Liturgy and the shared meal and conversation afterwards. We will begin posting a notice in the SYCBC Weekly Notices Sheet.

**Please consider joining us some time:
“Mid-Week Gathering” - 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month.
6:30pm – front room – SYCBC.**

Financial Report for the 2022-2023 financial year

Profit & Loss [Budget Analysis]

July 2022 To June 2023

ABN: 15 739 517 700

	Selected Period	Budgeted
Income		
Offerings	\$59,860	\$71,670
Car Park Rental	\$26,897	\$24,600
Hall Hire	\$16,199	\$10,376
Hall Lease Electoral Commission	\$33,273	\$0
Manse Rental (Nett)	\$13,044	\$13,044
Camp Surplus/deficit	-\$819	\$0
Laughingbird Gifts	\$1,517	\$2,159
Interest Received	\$2,685	\$1,200
Total Income	\$152,655	\$123,048
Gross Profit	\$152,655	\$123,048
Expenses		
Employment Expenses		
Wages & Salaries	\$71,042	\$69,816
Superannuation	\$8,803	\$8,766
Long Service Leave	\$1,156	\$1,170
Workers' Compensation	\$641	\$560
Pastoral supervision	\$0	\$1,200
Conference Expense- Travel	\$1,046	\$2,100
Insurance	\$5,188	\$4,600
Gifts	\$4,666	\$4,666
Dues & Subscriptions	\$892	\$328
Signs & Marketing	\$0	\$110
Legal & Accounting	\$3,000	\$3,000
Maintenance Church	\$229	\$2,400
Maintenance Manse	\$0	\$2,400
BUV Contributions	\$2,946	\$4,100
National Abuse Redress Scheme	\$590	\$579
Cleaning	\$2,640	\$3,000
Utilities Manse	\$259	\$416
Utilities Church	\$1,846	\$1,379
Worship Resources	\$1,310	\$2,400
Office Expense	\$0	\$240
BUV Dinners & functions	\$300	\$300
Kitchen Supplies	\$0	\$120
Website Expenses	\$92	\$300
Property Taxes	\$1,301	\$1,200
Total Expenses	\$107,947	\$115,150
Operating Profit	\$44,708	\$7,898
Net Profit/(Loss)	\$44,708	\$7,898

The remarkable surplus for the past year of \$44,708 was achieved through leasing the church building to the Australian Electoral Commission for a month, for the Federal elections, for just over \$33,000. The down side (which we anticipated) was losing a couple of our long term Hall Hirers because of this disruption.

At our Annual Meeting we shall be gifting 10% of last year's Hall Hire and Car Park income,(including the Australian electoral Commission income) to a mix of local and international mission groups. This will be for \$7,600

Available funds at 30 June 2023 were \$138,083. These are held in current account and short term fixed funds with our bank - Baptist Financial Services.

Budget for the 2023-2024 financial year

July 2023 To June 2024

ABN: 15 739 517 700

	Budgeted
Income	
Offerings	\$64,000.00
Car Park Rental	\$29,000.00
Hall Hire	\$26,000.00
Manse Rental (Nett)	\$13,044.00
Laughingbird Gifts	\$1,500.00
Interest Received	\$5,000.00
Total Income	\$138,544.00
Gross Profit	\$138,544.00
Expenses	
Employment Expenses	
Wages & Salaries	\$75,204.00
Superannuation	\$10,265.40
Long Service Leave	\$1,200.00
Workers' Compensation	\$650.00
Pastor Spiritual Direct./Retr.	\$2,000.00
Pastoral supervision	\$1,500.00
Conference Expense- Travel	\$1,500.00
Insurance	\$6,000.00
Gifts	\$7,600.00
Dues & Subscriptions	\$1,000.00
Maintenance Church	\$5,000.00
Maintenance Manse	\$2,000.00
BUV Contributions	\$3,400.00
National Abuse Redress Scheme	\$600.00
Cleaning	\$3,000.00
Utilities Manse	\$300.00
Utilities Church	\$3,000.00
Worship Resources	\$2,000.00
BUV Dinners & functions	\$350.00
Website Expenses	\$200.00
Property Taxes	\$1,500.00
Total Expenses	\$128,269.40
Operating Profit	\$10,274.60
Net Profit/(Loss)	\$10,274.60

The budget for the coming year anticipates some further recovery in Hall Hire both from the negative effects of the pandemic as well as the election.

For the past year we have paid nothing for electricity, as the solar panels and associated rebates have covered all electricity consumed.

As the rebates drop for electricity returned to the grid, we shall have some costs in the coming year. We disconnected gas from the property several years ago.

The higher level of both interest rates and invested funds will produce a significant interest income this year of about \$5,000

Employment expenses (Nathan) are based on Baptist Union recommendations and Nathan's level of employment – 4/5 effective full time.

Financially, the elephant in the room is Land Tax.

We have property with a rateable value of \$8,000,000 (likely market value north of \$10million). Land Tax on a property rated at \$8 million is around \$165,000 annually.

We are exempt Land Tax if the property is held and used for charitable purposes. The concessional lease of the manse to Baptcare for accommodation for asylum seekers will almost certainly meet that test. When the primary use of the church buildings/car park was for worship they would also meet that test. The present use of the church buildings and car park may no longer satisfy that test.

Our choices are: use for worship, or sell, or change use to meet the test, or pay the tax.