

# ***Congregational Meeting***

***7:30pm, Monday 11 November 2024***

## **1. Attendance:**

Nathan Nettleton (**chair**), Melissa Berends, Eliz Cook, Ian Cook, Margie Dahl, Jenny Davis, Rob Davis, Jill Edwards, Dom Filippi, Liesl Filippi, Tara Filippi, John Fowler, Merryl Gahan, Paul Gahan, Grant Hill, Felicity Jenkins, Gilbert Joyce, Yvonne Joyce, Mark Learmonth, Acacia Nettleton, Samara Pitt, Karen Quah, Sylvia Sandeman, Shelley Taylor, Margie Welsford, Jeff Wild, Glennys Williams.

## **Apologies:**

James Bennett, Audrey Kateena, John Sampson

**The meeting opened and closed with the SYCBC Liturgy for a Discernment Meeting.**

**Discussion took place within a Listening Circle for each decision. Voting was conducted online after discussion of each motion.**

## **2. Responding to the BUV decision to “stand seized and possessed” of our church property.**

*Under “Schedule B” (the trust document governing the BUV’s trusteeship of church properties), if public worship has not been held in a church for six months, the BUV can take outright possession of the property. They have decided to take that action in relation to our property with the exception of the manse. We could contest that decision, arguing that the Midweek Gathering is public worship, or we could accept the decision and relinquish the property. This decision does not directly affect the likelihood of the Earthen Vessels Church being able to take over the property; it just changes who they will be negotiating with to achieve that.*

*Motion:* That we do not contest the BUV’s decision to take possession of the church and car park from us, and do what we can to secure a good arrangement for our various tenants.

### **Discussion:**

Responses included: ownership of the property, likelihood of success in contesting the BUV decision, compensation/ ongoing support from BUV, respectful treatment of hall hirers, ongoing maintenance of site, sadness at loss of buildings and acknowledgment of that loss, presence in local community, SYCBC’s online presence, need for speedy conclusion, Earthen Vessels Church’s use of the site, communication of SYCBC’s values to BUV.

### **Outcome:**

Carried unanimously.

## **3. Deciding on our preferred direction for what to do with the manse (voting between 3 options).**

*There are currently three different proposals on what to do with the manse. We are voting on our preferred outcome, but in the case of the first two options, the decision would only trigger further research to confirm that the option is possible and feasible, and if so, a further meeting would be called to give final approval to proceed. The options are listed below with a brief description of their potential financial implications (some of which assume we have relinquished the church property to the BUV).*

*Option A:* That our preference for the future of the manse is to sell it as soon as possible with the proceeds to be invested with the BUV and the interest available for our

church use.

*Under "Schedule B", if we sell the manse, we cannot use the proceeds for anything other than another property purchase. However, we can invest the proceeds with the BUV and use the interest as we wish. In its current condition, the manse is likely to sell for somewhere between \$1.2 million and \$1.5 million. Assuming the lower figure and current interest rates, this option would generate an income of around \$62,000 per year, which is slightly more than the property income we would be losing in relinquishing the church and carpark. Thus our annual budget would be a bit better off without needing any additional compensation from the BUV.*

**Option B:** That our preference for the future of the manse is to give it away to an appropriate charity.

*It is unclear and possibly unlikely whether the BUV would approve giving the manse away to anyone other than them, but we can find out, if this is our preferred direction. If they did, based on our present budget, and without any compensation from the BUV, relinquishing the church property and giving away the manse would result in an annual loss of about \$40,000.*

**Option C:** That our preference for the future of the manse is to retain ownership of it and responsibility for its maintenance and management.

*Based on our present budget, and without any compensation from the BUV, relinquishing the church property and retaining the manse under its current lease arrangements would result in an annual loss of \$31,300. There is also a significant and growing risk that the manse will require costly major maintenance within the foreseeable future which hasn't currently been budgeted for. However, retaining the manse keeps options for future use open, and paying to restore and upgrade it may enable us to generate a larger rental income on the open market.*

### **Discussion:**

Responses included: Need to protect investments, as the manse was bequeathed to the congregation by previous generations of Baptists, use of money for mission purposes, effect on local community, amount set aside for Indigenous reparation, sale of whole block (church, carpark, manse), time frame for sale.

### **Outcome:**

Option A was carried unanimously.

It was agreed that a letter with these decisions would be drafted and circulated to the Host Group, John Fowler and Samara Pitt for input before sending to BUV.

**Action: Nathan, Host Group, John F, Samara P**

#### **4. Seeking compensation from the BUV**

The question of whether to request financial support from the BUV, to compensate for the loss of facilities hire income from the properties, arose during the meeting. The meeting decided to defer a decision, pending further discussion. The offer will be acknowledged in the letter to the BUV.

#### **5. The meeting closed at 9:15pm.**