



Gordon-Pymble Uniting Church

Annual Report

2022

A Congregation of The Uniting Church in Australia

1 Livingstone Avenue, Pymble, NSW 2073

www.gpuc.org.au

ABN 83 664 228 893

ANNUAL REPORT 2022

MINISTER'S REPORT

I always start these reports by looking back over my diary to familiarise myself with events and what was happening. What a mess! Meetings crossed out, events moved to Zoom, baptisms postponed, cautious returns to face-to-face worship, and memories of restricted numbers at funerals, as we went in and out of lockdowns over this last 12 to 18 months. What a journey for us all.

Covid is still with us, and its effects will be felt for a long time even if we are not resuming enforced lockdowns. In the Church, 'Covid is still with us' means:

- the actual virus continues to be present and impact people's health
- some people, for their own health's sake, choose to join us only online
- some have drifted away altogether from church
- congregational finances are impacted, both property income and individual giving
- groups and programs need extra work to keep them flourishing

Perhaps you can add to the list.

Silver linings have appeared in the development of an ongoing online presence and in the fresh realisation that church is primarily experienced in community. It has been a good reminder that our personal relationships and connections are sustained by meeting together. Hopefully, we live out the truth of the saying that "you are always welcome online, but you'll enjoy a deeper experience in person." And sometimes even scones.

So, the realities of the virus have meant more complexity, additional meetings, and a new layer of 'Covid consideration' for just about everything we have done as a church community. And that has needed to go alongside seeking to maintain all the regular input and activities as well. Little wonder many of us have felt more tired than usual.

Even with all that, there has been a growing return to (a new) normal after the final resumption of face-to-face worship at the end of February. And our move to hold worship together on one site is increasingly growing us together as our amalgamation was always intended to do. I appreciate people's graciousness in moving between the two sites on the month-by-month basis.

Moves towards a second minister were frustrated during this year as we came to terms with our present financial situation and missed out on a grant, after much work. But those efforts towards an additional minister have put us in a better position now to find a replacement minister. (One colleague wondered incredulously how our Joint Nominating Committee was already meeting before I have concluded.) We are well-placed in the search for my replacement.

We have welcomed new members and farewelled too many old ones through funeral services. We 'bon voyaged' Rick into the Pacific and were glad to have him back again (and we look forward to following his kayak dot on our screens again shortly.) We celebrated Barbara's 100th birthday and got creative with panel sermons. We flirted with Carlotta (Ave) but decided she wasn't for us. We decided we didn't like some words in the draft Vision Statement but didn't lose the vision of faith and community.

In worship, we sought to keep our services connected with our mission partners such as UnitingWorld, Margaret Jurd College, and MADOW initiatives out west, as well as wider events like Senior’s Week and Harmony Day. This keeps our faith from becoming too abstract and helps us link Biblical stories to what we are doing as a congregation. Messy Church and Friday Fun Connections continued strongly and creatively in the experienced hands of Nicola and Courtney, and Nativity and Palm Sunday services were times of special celebration among young and old.

Ultimately, through the ups and downs of the pandemic-disrupted months and beyond, we did what churches are asked to do – wrestle with what the Scriptures mean for us, listen for God’s call on our collective lives, worship God in ways that connect with us deeply, support one another in practical acts of love and kindness, reach out beyond our walls, and look forward in hope.

As I conclude my ministry with GPUC, may I say my time here has been a great blessing. But probably more of that later.

Rev Steve Aynsley

CHURCH COUNCIL

We started 2022 with the removal of COVID restrictions. That seems an age ago. We spent a huge amount of time considering each group, considering Synod and State medical advice, and defining our current plan the proposed restrictions. The extract of the table below went for over two pages of tiny little font. Much thanks to Brian.

Activity	Safeguard	Public Health Order requirements from 25 February	Current GPUC Plan	Proposed restrictions from 25 February
Worship services indoors	Full vaccination	Not required	Not required	Not required
	Density limit	Not required	1 person / 4m ²	1 person / 4m ²
	Masks > 12 years indoors	Not required but encouraged if safe-distancing impossible	Required	Hybrid - exclusive area for masked congregants and persons conducting communion
	Singing	Allowed	Not allowed	Allowed
	Physical distancing	Recommended	Required	Required
	Check-in	Not required	Pre-registration required	Not required

By March, we were working on the search for an additional minister. This has been a theme for the year. We have searched for funding, have written and adjusted our profile, had meetings with the Synod Pulse group, UME and Presbytery. In the end, it become clear that we needed to find a replacement for Steve and that would happen before anything else. As we speak, we are engaged in conversation with a possible minister.

By April, we were seeking to finalise the opportunity to build on Carlotta Street Uniting site. This was completed in July after a couple of meetings with Presbytery, Synod and Uniting. We are not progressing with a joint development; this took us 4-5 months of this year to complete conversations. We have remained open and consultative, but in the end, there was no sensible path to follow.

By May, we had welcomed Presbytery into our offices, commenced the Life and Witness review that was overdue and needed to be done before we called a new minister and were considering some of the learnings from the Lower North Shore Life and Witness review brought back by Lloyd. Council committed to meeting people on their edge once per month. We then challenged the congregation to form community with others over a coffee. Meet once per month with someone you have not met before.

In June, we sat back and considered the big issues in front of us that we need to move on. We built a list including: worship patterns, school relationships, property, ministry resources, communications and governance. All these issues are being progressed by members of the Council and the teams.

In July, Sue Cripwell brought us this devotion:

We have an opportunity in this moment of our great transformation. We can approach this time as survivors, desperately clinging to our structures and ways of being. Or, we can see ourselves as pioneers, setting out in the face of the unknown to discover new ways to live faith-filled lives. The inevitable decline of our structures gives us the chance to let go of what might hold us back from that adventure. Nothing today will be the same ten years from now. Why not architect the kind of faith movement we want to see twenty-to-fifty years from now? What do we have to lose?
Cameron Trimble (Piloting Church: Helping your congregation take flight).

In August, we received an internal review of our Safe Church requirements (Synod had been busy generating massive quantities of paperwork). We also considered other documents that teams and groups had started to write on governance, people resources and property.

By September, we were considering the Life and Witness review. The recommendations were:

- a. Priority needs to be given to the preparation of a profile expressing the GPUC Mission Plan as well as a JNC being selected. Steve's replacement will be significant in building on the existing foundation around the Gordon-Pymble Mission Plan and in particular the commitment to be active in the communities of Gordon and Pymble. The L&W Team, having read the Ministry Profile being forwarded to the SCCP Pastoral Relations Committee, believes the balance in the profile towards community engagement is vital for the Gordon-Pymble long-term direction in living out their Mission Plan. With Steve's placement to conclude six months earlier than expected, the L&W Team believe the current staff are both gifted and unified as a team and, along with the Church Council, Gordon-Pymble will continue to be well resourced. It will however be an advantage soon for "the right" person to take up the Call at Gordon-Pymble.
- b. Maintain and develop existing staff and reconsider the second minister at some point in the future if warranted and have capacity to support.
- c. Support emphasis and direction of the profile. Ensure clarity of trade-offs by congregation, lay preaching development to augment minister on Sunday worship.

- d. Continue to bring the two congregations together, both in terms of physical accessibility (transport), as well as mindset (them to us).
- e. We recommend GPUC alternate combined worship services.
- f. Review property portfolio and options as the cost to maintain two large locations is prohibitive and unsustainable in the medium to long term.

In October, we approved a number of Safe Church procedures, agreed to a joint Carols in the Park event with Turramurra Uniting and considered giving. The Council confirmed the Joint Nominating Committee representatives, and we received a first list of names from the Synod committee.

In November, we hope to welcome several new Council members and continue to refresh the membership. And is it Christmas already!

Our congregation works because much of the work of Council is done by teams and committees. Our work with MADOW, MJC, Kiribati, Ukraine, community engagements, Lifeline, Exodus is planned, organised, and done by groups within the congregation. Our property and finance is largely handled by the Business team. There are 30-40 people actively contributing to the leadership of our congregation and that is fantastic. Much of our community comes from the motivation of individuals and groups to make a better world.

As we enter Advent, let us remember that hope is the bedrock of our faith. We wish to bring Heaven to Earth (not the other way round!).

Lloyd Robinson, Chair

GPUC FAMILIES

Our Family Workers have had a successful year in and out of Covid lockdowns and restrictions. We continue to connect with our young families to make them feel part of our community, whether it be for connections, for the kids, community projects or understanding living God's way. We hope all of the above.

Playgroup

Playgroup continued online during restrictions and lockdown and returned face to face in term 4 2021. Our numbers haven't return to pre-covid numbers however we are thankful for the connections we have made and know the families that come, really enjoy their time here. Our craft has been enjoyed since most sessions seem to be indoors, due to the rain, a big thanks to Judy Gill. Our holiday programs are successful and always appreciated. They especially enjoyed our ballet dancing event with one of our teens.

Messy Church

We continue to have our core Messy Church families attend each month. The highlight was connecting with the community through Lego Robotics, and while online creating scenes on Minecraft (computer game) whilst exploring faith. Some of the topics and stories we covered were Noah, refugees, Creation, prayer, the wise and foolish builder, Olympics and Interfaith. We offered breath prayers and cheat church for those to hear God's word in 5 minutes on YouTube.

Friday Fun Connections

This returned in person, early 2022. On average we have 5-7 families each month to support communities through meaningful projects. We know the projects that are hands on for the kids are most successful. These include making Anzac biscuits, packing breakfast packs for the homeless, clean up Australia Day, sending Christmas presents overseas, writing letters to Horton House residents, learning to knit for wrap with love and supporting our Ukraine families through our fundraiser, raising \$4025. We made videos for Kiribati, donated food for Lifeline, and giving pocket money to purchase a pair of school shoes for Margaret Jurd College pupils.

Pastoral Care

This is growing as we build stronger connections to our families and those who need our support. We often receive toy donations for playgroup. Families who move away still keep in contact and look forward to visiting when they return. We loved seeing some of our families at the last two pamper days and come along for some pancakes on Pancake Day. Reaching out has been welcomed.

Overall, we are seeing an increase with our families at special services of worship. This includes our Christmas Nativity Play, Singing at the Community Christmas lunch, Stir-Up and our Palm Sunday Services. Our Messy Church families now come to Friday Fun Connections, which means they are fully welcomed into our community more than once a month. We thank our Prayer partners who have prayed for our community and young people and our volunteers who help with our GPUC events.

We thank especially Sue Cripwell and Di Wilkinson who have committed to come to each Messy and FFC.

Courtney Heyden and Nicola Robinson

TEAMS AND GROUPS OF GORDON-PYMBLE UNITING CHURCH

JUSTICE & SERVICE TEAM

In spite of the restrictions and regulations imposed by COVID-19 during 2022, the Justice and Service Team can report that many of the activities were able to proceed.

First Sunday of the Month

In the past we have been able to dedicate at least one Sunday each year to financially support the work of a variety of groups including Rural Connections Mudgee/Rylstone, MADOW, Lifeline etc. This year, we again supported UnitingWorld (1 May), Margaret Jurd College (5 Jun) and MADOW.

We have also had Sundays featuring Interfaith and Children's Ministry.

Lifeline & Exodus

GPUC has continued to provide regular donations of food to both these organisations who have played such a vital role during the extra demands placed on these essential services by Covid. We thank the congregation for its generosity and the members of GPUC for transporting the donations.

Human Rights 4 All

Alison Battisson no longer has an office at GPUC but spoke of her continuing work at a special Sunday service.

Community

We particularly acknowledge the work of our Community Coordinator Lesley Burt and her team of GPUC supporters, raising our profile in the local community, for example Carers Week.

Committee

We encourage more members of the congregation to join this group!

In 2023 what contribution can GPUC make to care for the people and the environment around us?

Yvonne Barber
Justice & Service Team Leader

MADOW Committee

Most communities have some sort of positive hub where there is busyness and purpose. Supporting these hubs in rural areas is vital. MADOW likes to think of the people we connect with as partners. These partners are at the hub of their towns' concern for social well-being.

In Broken Hill

Pastor David Shrimpton (2014 – current)

Pastor Shrimpton has held his private pilot's licence since 2002 and is now the ninth Flying Padre in the Far West.

The Broken Hill Flying Patrol is a joint project of the Uniting Church Macquarie Darling Presbytery and the Synod of NSW and ACT. The patrol is funded by the Uniting Church through donations from churches and individuals.

The Area

The area covered by the patrol is approximately 200,000 sq km, stretching north and south to the borders of Queensland and Victoria, west 200 km into South Australia and east to Emmdale Roadhouse and Ivanhoe.

The 'Padre'

The Flying Padre is a Uniting Church Minister and available for all religious services including baptisms, weddings and funerals. Padre David is an active member of the Broken Hill community. He is involved in Rotary, School of the Air, Broken Hill Aero Club, Police Chaplaincy, Disaster Recovery Chaplaincy, Prison Chaplaincy and is also a Justice of the Peace. David helps at the combined events of the remote schools in the far north and west. Padre David is also an awesome donut maker!

The Motivation

So, what is it that motivates the BHFP in what they do?

“We believe that through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God brings us into right relationship with God, whereby in faith we can:

- live in a close, loving, personal, dynamic relationship with the living God;
- participate in the worshipping, caring and serving community of Christians;
- receive God's gifts so that life can be what God means it to be – loving, purposeful, joyful, eternal; and



- tell others of this good news and live it out in acts of compassion, service and justice in the community.” *

*Taken from <https://nswact.uca.org.au/about-us/our-history/>

In June 2022, MADOW donated \$2,000 to the Broken Hill Flying Patrol.

In Griffith

Since 2017 MADOW has partnered with Michelle Bordignon. As a retired Social Worker, she has compassionate insight to see and meet the community’s needs.

Our main contact in Griffith is Michelle. She has included MADOW as a resource in her “Helping Hands” commitment to disadvantaged individuals and groups in the town. Michelle has received community awards for her donations of goods, and her time and support at Griffith Public School, the Griffith Hospital and the Yambil Hub.

For several years Michelle has received, sorted and delivered good quality, clean, second-hand clothes, bedding and other items. She has sewn toiletry bags and filled them with soaps and pamper items. These domestic goods have been donated to students from disadvantaged homes, to Aboriginal Aged Care, to communities in crisis, to patients in hospital and to specific individuals referred by social workers and teaching staff.



MADOW sent \$500 to assist with her work. She was very appreciative as she had just purchased nappies and wipes for an impoverished mum. She had been receiving call-outs from community groups almost every day for people doing it tough. As you know, this last winter has been very cold and wet.

The Principal of Griffith Public School suggested to Michelle that she use a cottage on the school's site to give focus to the social welfare work being undertaken at the school.

The school has organized 'The Wellness Cottage.' Lauren Brain is the main organiser and shares the cottage with other Islander and Aboriginal Liaison Officers. Together, they have cleaned out a room which will become a clothing/shoe room for disadvantaged students at the school.

The lockable room will be valuable for the school, as it will house spare school uniforms, donations of clothing, shoes, new underwear and socks, plus sanitary items etc.

Michelle asked MADOW to help. They needed 3 lots of shelves and 10 large tubs with lids costing \$766.60. MADOW was pleased to be able to assist. Michelle responded, "Just wanted to send out a massive big thank you to MADOW for the kind donations."

In addition to the donations mentioned above, MADOW has this year organised for several loads of clothing to be sent to Griffith.

We continue to be grateful to Pittari Transport who make no charge to MADOW for transport from Chipping Norton to Griffith. And to Pam and Margo for delivering all the goods to Chipping Norton.

In Bathurst



In June -

It was lovely to hear that Rosemary and Bruce Watson had taken out a big load of GPUC donated blankets and sleeping bags to Bathurst Uniting Support Services (BUSS). This is an initiative of Julie Fry as she continues to find ways to support the community. GPUC's connection to Julie goes back many years. It was Julie who suggested that MADOW consider supporting the Canowindra Connection project. Read on...

In Canowindra

We are testing the waters. The Canowindra Connection is a new project for MADOW. Canowindra is 320 km west of Sydney, between Orange and Cowra, built beside the Belabula River. It has a population of 2,300 and is a mixed farming community, with tourism also in the mix – hot air ballooning, wineries, historic streetscapes and the Ages of Fishes Museum.



In 2004 the Canowindra Uniting Church formalised an agreement with the Anglican Parish of Canowindra which resulted in a Joint Church Council. The agreement takes in Canowindra, Cranbury, Cudal, Woodstock and Eugowra. The Church currently has an Anglican Priest (Rev Joy Harris) in placement who is recognised as a full member of the Macquarie Darling Presbytery. In 2014 planning began to develop the Uniting Church property in a way that better enabled the Gospel to be actioned through worship and service. It will be launched on Saturday, 26th November 2022.

The hope is to provide a community facility that would not only offer essential healthy life activities and services to the community but also a local connection point for services coming into Canowindra to connect with people in need of support. Currently there is no place in Canowindra which provides a holistic approach to community wellbeing.

The Community Connection is to be an ecumenical and community collaboration. This has been evidenced in the formation and membership of a Reference Group which will oversee the Connection. The Reference Group consists of members from the Anglicans, Catholics, the Cornerstone Community and the broader community, including the local school and health services. There is a strong push for community involvement, and this is constantly communicated. This model may encourage other congregations in their future endeavours.

The Canowindra Connection sparked MADOW's interest because it aims to make the most of the community's resources in a combined program. Although different from us in many ways, what the Canowindra Connection hopes to achieve could be seen as a potential model for the way our own Church and community consider their future.

We have been in contact with both Marion Wilson, Co-Chairperson of the Joint Church Council and Corrina Alchin, Church and Community Engagement Lead with Uniting.

In October 2022 MADOW sent \$1,000 to support the Canowindra Connection project. Some of us hope to visit the town in late November and return with more news.

The Christmas Stall 2022

The Stall will be held on Sunday, 11 December 2022, after worship at Gordon. In addition to all the goodies that GPUC members may wish to buy, you might also like to make donations for the toys MADOW will purchase for distribution by Michelle in Griffith.

Funds

Funds raised or contributed but not expended as at 1 November 2022 amount to \$2,319.45.

Conclusion and thanks

Again COVID curtailed much travel. This has been a problem for our connection with Enngonia in particular, but we are trying to maintain our links.

I sincerely acknowledge and thank the MADOW committee – Margi Abraham, Yvonne Barber, Margo Lowder, Anne Neilsen, Jane Simpson, Pam Stewart, Pru Tout, Wendy Wallin and Rosemary Watson. Their thoughtful commitment, hard work and good humour make for a happy team.

GPUC folk have continued to be regular and generous supporters. GPUC enables MADOW, on behalf of the congregation, to continue to Make A Difference Out West. Thank you.

Diane Willis
Convenor, MADOW Committee

Margaret Jurd College Working Group

1 Introduction

In 2020 Gordon Pymble Uniting Church (**GPUC**) entered into a partnership with Margaret Jurd College (**MJC**), a Uniting Church Special School located in Shortland, Newcastle. On 7 December 2020 the then GPUC Mission Team, now the Justice and Service Team (**J&S Team**), established the Gordon Pymble Uniting Church – Margaret Jurd College Working Group (**Working Group**). The purpose of the Working Group is to co-ordinate the GPUC congregation's contribution to the development and maintenance of our partnership with MJC.

2 Meetings of the GPUC - MJC Working Group

The Working Group met formally on three occasions during the Reporting Period: on 1 February; 29 March; and 3 May. Records of these formal meetings have been prepared and copies of these records are available for perusal by the J&S Team on request. In addition, on a number of occasions two or more members of the Working Group engaged in informal, ad hoc discussions relating to projects then being developed, or then being undertaken, by the Working Group.

3 Summary of principal activities undertaken during the Reporting Period

The principal activities undertaken by the Working Group during the Reporting Period are described below:

- (i) In May 2022 various "consciousness raising" initiatives were undertaken (including a variety of speakers presenting at Sunday services at both the Pymble and Gordon sites and the inclusion of apposite articles in the congregation's weekly newsletter) alerting the congregation to the mission of MJC. In addition, an invitation to visit a June Sunday service was extended to Jim Knowles, the Chair of the Board of MJC, and Darren Twist,

the Principal of MJC. On 5 June 2022 Jim and Darren (and members of their respective families) attended the joint Sunday service held at the Gordon site. During that service Jim and Darren spoke of, respectively, the governance and operations of MJC. Darren, in particular, also took the opportunity to share some of his vision for the future of MJC. Those presentations were augmented by brief remarks by David Hodges (in his capacity as convenor of the Working Group). Jim's and Darren's presentations appeared to be well received by the congregation.

Members of the Working Group were able to entertain our MJC visitors over lunch following the Sunday service. The provision of this hospitality provided an opportunity for the members of the Working Group (and some associates) and the MJC representatives become better acquainted and was much appreciated by all who attended. The Working Group takes this opportunity to express its appreciation of Judy Elmslie's generosity in making her home available for this function.

- (ii) Following the service on 5 June the congregation was given the opportunity to donate moneys to MJC by way of a "shoebox" retiring offering. It is understood that a total of \$945.00 was donated to MJC by this means. Over the course of the weeks immediately following the service on 5 June several members of the congregation donated funds to MJC by way of direct bank transfer. As is appropriate, the members of the Working Group do not know who among the members of the congregation made such donations nor the quantum of those donations. It is understood further that a donation to MJC by the congregation as a whole was not forthcoming.
- (iii) Following consultation with the Principal of MJC, a "BBQ Crew" comprising several members of the congregation attended the Shortland campus of MJC in July 2022. That "BBQ Crew" assisted the staff of MJC to prepare, cook and / or serve food and drink to the students, staff and invitees to MJC's Mid-Year Celebration of Student Achievement (an equivalent to a mid-year speech day and student award ceremony).
Feedback received from the Principal of MJC indicated that this visit was very much appreciated as an expression of the congregation's contribution to the partnership between GPUC and MJC.
- (iv) The Working Group had previously co-ordinated the production of two banners which represent the essence of the partnership between the congregation and MJC. One of these banners had been delivered to MJC for display at its campus. Early in the Reporting Period the second banner was installed at GPUC's Gordon site. In the view of the Working Group, over time this banner should be rotated between the Pymble and Gordon sites.

4 Membership

The Working Group has previously reported that, at its final meeting in 2021, Kerry Blight submitted her resignation from the Working Group. Early during the Reporting Period Judy Elmslie also resigned from the Working Group.

Options were canvassed regarding replacements for Kerry and Judy. In due course the Working Group recommended to the J&S Team that Jane Simpson and Deborah Fox be appointed as members of the Working Group. The J&S Team subsequently made those appointments.

Later in the Reporting Period the Working Group requested the J&S Team to amend the Working Group's Charter so that, rather than the membership of the Working Group being restricted to four or five members, up to six people should make up that membership. The J&S Team approved

that requested amendment. Subsequently, the Working Group recommended to the J&S Team that Di Wilkinson be appointed as a member of the Working Group and the J&S Team made that appointment.

5 Acknowledgment and thanks

The Working Group takes this opportunity to acknowledge all members of the congregation, and all groups associated with the congregation, who have contributed to the provision of financial and practical support for the students of MJC and their families, and the staff of MJC, during the Reporting Period. We express our thanks to those people and groups.

**David Hodges
Convenor**

Lifeline And Exodus Report 2022

The delivery of food to Lifeline on such a regular basis this past 12 months has only been possible because of the extraordinary generosity of the congregation and friends of GPUC. The staff at Lifeline are very grateful for each delivery we make as they are never sure just what the demand will be for the week.

Just a couple of weeks ago, the Emergency Relief Coordinator was quite emotional as she commented on how she had arrived at work knowing there were clients coming that day and the cupboard was nearly bare and so she had mentally prepared herself of the need to go shopping but then arrived at Lifeline to find GPUC had made a delivery of food which removed the pressure from her so that she could focus solely on her clients - saving not just her time that would be spent in shopping but also in the saving of Lifeline resources.

In the time that GPUC has been providing food to Lifeline, there has been a constant growing demand from people and families seeking support in this way. It is such a practical and much needed offering of love that we are giving.

We look forward to hearing the new CEO of Lifeline speak at the church service on 13 November.

Although Exodus does not have a regular driver at this time, we have been able to arrange a collection for them on a monthly basis. Again, like Lifeline, they appreciate our contribution to their work with those in need.

It is a great credit to our congregation that we are able to support both these organisations on such a regular basis. Andrew and I would like to express our gratitude for your continual and generous support.

Andrew Cripwell and Wendy Wallin

FAITH DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Due to the Covid lockdown last year, SRE classes in all schools were cancelled during Term 3 and many classes were still not operating in Term 4. Steve was able to teach a few Year 5 lessons at Gordon West and West Pymble in Term 4.

As there was a staggered timetable with different bell times at Pymble, [to avoid year groups mixing], Courtney and I were not able to teach for the rest of the year. We returned the students' books to the school office so that they could be distributed and taken home. [Semester 1 work had been completed].

This year all classes commenced in Term 1. We are using the new Godspace Manual - a contemporary teaching resource for students aged 4 - 12 years.

Each week there are lessons clearly set out for

Adventurers: Ages 6 - 8 - My Year 1 class at Pymble

Voyagers: Ages 10 - 12 - Courtney's Year 5 class at Pymble

Steve's Year 5 classes at Gordon West and West Pymble

Each child is given a workbook that has a page of engaging activities to be completed for every lesson presented during the year.

The SRE teachers completed training modules and attended an SRE Conference in February to comply with requirements for authorisation to teach in schools. Applications for authorisation to teach SRE need to be completed every second year and forwarded to the Uniting Church Synod Office.

Requirements are

Module 1 - Safe Church Awareness Training

Module 2 - Teaching & Learning

Module 3 - Preparing & Delivering Lessons

Module 4 - Communicating in the Classroom

Module 5 - Teaching with the Bible / Bible & Worldview

Module 6 - Observed Lesson & Self Reflection

Module 7 - Duty of Care

Robyn Joyce
SRE Coordinator

P.Un.Ch Discussion Report

P.Un.Ch Discussion has had an enjoyable and productive year. We survived lockdowns, moving to Zoom pretty painlessly, welcomed some new members and really enjoy being back meeting in person. Our purpose is to provide a venue where matters of life and faith can be explored in a supportive environment. Our numbers seem to have been more consistent, indicating that perhaps we are being relevant to what people are after.

Topics are wide and varied – from reflections on podcasts to discussion on TED Talks, but all with an eye to discuss how we are called to live faithfully in our contemporary world. We each bring a different perspective which only enriches our time together. The discussion is preceded by an informal catch-up and we enjoy the occasional dinner out.

For many, P.Un.Ch is their church – an example of the ongoing need for the church to offer a range of ways to connect with faith and community.

Rev Steve Aynsley

Heart And Mind

Heart & Mind is an informal discussion group that meets at 6 pm on the third Sunday of each month at my home in West Pymble. This year we were back around the large table on our back patio, weathering the winter cold with warm clothing and Graham's soups.

Our book for most of this year, *Wholehearted Faith*, was recommended by Steve. This time, our book's author was an American columnist and blogger, Rachel Held Evans. While acknowledging her loving evangelical family, she wrestled with her faith. She tried to end the church's culture wars by building a community of faith among 'wanderers, wonderers and the church's refugees' on Twitter. She died suddenly, at age 37, with the book incomplete, so it was finished by her friend Jeff Chu, who drew on her unpublished research, her tweets, her sermons, her blog posts, and their correspondence.

Rachel challenges the idea that genuine faith "requires nothing less than absolute allegiance", proposing instead that "faith teaches us to live *without* certainty and to hope *without* guarantee". Here are a couple of the questions we thought about, that were raised from our reading of the book:

"Faith is marked by the humility to let yourself question—which is not a shortcoming but an acknowledgment of one's humanity," Evans writes (p. 56). When you've been afraid or reluctant to let yourself question, what do you feel stirring in you? What has stopped you from wholeheartedly asking questions?

Evans wrestles with the concept of truth, and she says that she has glimpsed it when reading the psalms or "*a particularly lovely verse of Rilke,*" the German poet. She also spots it "*in the irrepressible honesty of my kids, in the gorgeous lilt of my singer-songwriter sister Amanda's voice, in the candid company of a few dear friends*" (p. 51). Where do you find glimmers of truth?

This year we welcomed Nicola and Linda to our group. Please let me know if you would like to join us in 2023. Also, we have copies of this year's book, *Wholehearted Faith*, if you would like one.

Heather McMaster



Thursday Morning Bible Study Group

Thursday Morning Bible Study group has been meeting for more than 20 years. The basis of our weekly studies generally centres around the week's lectionary readings, commentaries and questions, set out in 'With Love to the World'. This year we have continued to meet by Zoom, and this has worked very well for our group. There are many things we appreciate about our weekly meetings, including having a preview of what Steve may be preaching about on Sunday. Having Steve as a member of the group, when possible, enriches our learning, and we thank him for his faithful participation in the group, and we will miss him! We value the quality of the theology in WLTW from the contributors. The change of editor for WLTW this year has challenged us with new themes and contributors.

We welcome you to join our group on Thursday mornings from 10-11 am by our Zoom link. A weekly email is sent out with passages for our study, and you are very welcome to join our email list.

David & Sue Conde

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS TEAM

The Team plays a key role in the provision of fellowship opportunities through the development of GPUC Community Connection groups, festivals and activities, for those within the church and the wider community.

The purpose of these groups is to build belonging, provide friendship and support, and to meet the fellowship expectations of GPUC in a safe and caring environment. We aim to inform, advise and assist the Church Council in managing Community Connections opportunities and groups within GPUC and beyond.

We record our appreciation of the contribution that Lesley Burt, Community Coordinator, makes to help us achieve these objectives, and for all her work during a year which has again been significantly affected by the effects of Covid in our community.

We also record our thanks and appreciation to Kerry Blight who stepped down as Team Convenor at the beginning of 2022 because of her move to Queensland. Kerry's leadership since the establishment of the Community Connections Team has resulted in significant growth in the activities and outreach for the GPUC community.

Sue Conde, Team Convenor

Community Coordinator Report

Despite the challenges of weather trends and COVID uncertainty we've continued to look outwardly into the community and exploring how we can strengthen relationships and work with other likeminded organisations.

Community activities got off to a tentative start in 2022 and we induced some innovative ways of keeping people safe. This included a staggered resumption for some groups such as Friday BBQ lunch and Mah-jong whilst other groups had a hybrid model of people meeting online and face to face. One group has discovered that meeting on zoom is preferable as they have a greater number of participants from a wider catchment area.

Another way to stop any potential spread was to make greater use of our outdoor areas by having morning teas in courtyards and backyards such as a special Pancake Day event on the Pymble la Porte. We were fortunate to receive another Ku-ring-gai Council grant to purchase outdoor café tables and chairs. These have been a wonderful addition to the Gordon Courtyard.

This year one of our aims was to make our community areas more inviting. During January and May the Gordon venue have had two major clean ups and revamping of offices and stage areas. Currently, the SCC Presbytery rents one of these newly revamped offices.

We've had some challenges scheduling events around the rainiest winter season that I can remember. On some days the weather was so bad it was challenging to venture out into the wider community. Soggy grounds and the forecast of further rain compelled us change our GPUC Community Picnic into one of our two 2022 Sunday Games afternoons.

Some of our most attended events were Celebratory Weeks of

- Christmas lunch
- Seniors Festival -a variety of Seniors Workshops
- Pancake Tuesday
- Biggest Morning Tea
- Carers Week Pamper Day

Gordon-Pymble Uniting held and participated in some events with the Ku-ring-gai Council this year and we hope to nurture this relationship into the future. Uniting Partners with NDIS in the Community have been another organisation we've been collaborating with. They have been regularly attending our Friday Morning Help Desk Initiative and Uniting NDIS is currently talking with us about further upcoming events in 2023.

As mentioned above we have been fortunate in obtaining some community grants to help fund the work we do. Some of the 2022 grants received were:

- Ku-ring-gai Council – outdoor tables and chairs
- Stockland – funding for another raised garden bed for Gordon Community Garden
- Carers Week – funds to purchase food for Pamper Day event
- Powering Communities Program– partial funding of the Pymble Solar Battery

I would like to thank all the members of the Church Council and various teams especially the Community Connections team for all the work they do and so many other people that have supported our community endeavours. I would especially like to thank our wonderful Minister Steve, who is sadly leaving us, the wonderfully supportive Sue Conde and the other staff members- Nicola, Courtney and Sonja. I think we make a great team, and it's a pleasure to come work each day.

Lesley Burt, Community Coordinator

UGCC Community Centre

The Community Centre has been negatively affected by Covid. It was closed during the lockdown and, after reopening, people were slow to return. Parts of it are picking up now. Current Affairs and Conversations have had good numbers. Mah-jong was not operating for quite a while after the lockdown due to close contact but it has returned now, albeit with a relatively small number.

After nine years as art tutor and mentor, Jeanie Atkinson retired and, on the 9th April, she was offered the thanks of grateful students and group participants. The numbers in the art group have remained low. Lesley Burt is looking for a new tutor.

Numbers in the computer group have not picked up. Bruce Kwong has found that the group classes have dwindled and he is mostly helping people with particular problems. Bruce has decided to retire from his role next year.

Lesley Burt has taken over from Sue Conde as the Director of the Community Centre. During the lockdown, Lesley acquired several grants. One of these provided us with a large screen by which people could attend Current Affairs and Conversations via Zoom. More recently, another has provided a large umbrella for the courtyard, enabling pleasant outdoor lunches on fine Fridays.

The return of bbq lunches on Fridays, thanks to Bruce and Rosemary, has been greatly appreciated. The Community Centre hasn't been the same without its sausage sanga climax.

Lesley has also arranged for us to promote the Community Centre. For example, several of us spoke about our various programs at a morning tea at the Gordon Quarter, an Anglicare retirement village in Edward Street. Lesley has more promotional opportunities up her sleeve.

For further information about the Community Centre, please contact Paul Swadling on 0418 964044 or swaddlerpaul@gmail.com or Lesley Burt on Lesley.burt@gpuc.org.au or 0480 223981.

Coffee 'n' Craft group

I have had the privilege, with Pru Tout, to be part of this group which goes from strength to strength.

The Friendship Circle at Pymble began a new group in April this year. Coffee'n'Craft, or as it is better known the Coffee'n'Chat group, meets on Mondays during school terms from 10am - 12pm. Attendance averages around 8 - 10 and we enjoy morning tea, knitting squares and having a chat!

Highlights during the reporting period are :

- The Combined Christmas Lunch of all the GPUC Monday groups, Coffee'n'Chat, Craft Group and the Friendship Group. 24 ladies from the 3 groups celebrated a lovely Christmas lunch at the Greengate Hotel.
- The Combined group celebrated Christmas in August at Pymble as we missed July! Chicken noodle soup, pumpkin soup and steamed puddings were on the festive menu.
- One project was polar fleece beanies and rugs for Wayside with generously donated fabric from Gregory and Carr.

The challenge has been to try to integrate the groups more with a monthly combined group. The group has been encouraged with two new ladies joining in recent weeks and the group electing to run during school holidays.

Lyn Kwong

Men-U Mob Men's Lunches

Last year (at the suggestion of some women) some of us thought it would be a good idea to have an occasional men's lunch. The first of these lunches was held on the 9th December last year at the Terrey Hills Tavern. A name was needed for the lunching group. It soon became known as the Men-U Mob.

Lunches are held bi-monthly. Since the first one, another four have been enjoyed by a growing number of men. This year, thanks to David Conde, lunches have been held at the Killara Golf Club, an ideal venue for chaps to get together and enjoy one another's company.

Lunches are usually filled with blokey chat. However, at the lunch in July, Richard Barnes spoke about his efforts to reach New Zealand by kayak. A fascinating talk. Thank you, Richard.

All men are warmly invited to these lunches. Please book in with Andrew Cripwell at andrewdcripwell@gmail.com or Paul Swadling at swaddlerpaul@gmail.com .

The Luncheon Group

The Luncheon Group was very pleased to resume late in 2022, with our informal gatherings over sandwiches, cake and coffee. We were delighted to welcome Rick Barnes to our September meeting at Judy Elmslie's home, to hear more about his upcoming kayak adventure to New Zealand in December. In November, Wendy Wallin hosted us at her home, and we learnt about her recent time on Badu Island in the Torres Strait, where her son and daughter-in-law are working as medics in the community there. A highlight was the FaceTime conversation that we shared with her son.

We hope to continue meeting regularly in the coming year, and all are welcome to come along and share in a time of fellowship and conversation. Thank you to our hosts in 2022.

Sue Conde and Judy Elmslie

Social Golf Group 2022

This year was another good year for our social golf group. All those participating had lots of fun as always. There were even a number of good shots. As always, we scheduled four games for the year.

Unfortunately with all the wet weather this year, Turramurra Golf Course was closed on 9 April so that event had to be cancelled.

This year we played as follows:-

12/2/22 Gordon Golf Club 16/7/22 Turramurra Golf Club 24/9/22 Gordon Golf Club

We are always looking for new participants so a reminder that the golf is only social, the aim is to have fun, most players play less than 6 times each year so the standard is generally not too high and the participants are all very friendly so beginners and infrequent players are encouraged to come along.

If you don't want to miss out on all the fun in 2023, including celebrating 30 years since the group started on 13 March 1993, the provisional dates for your new diary are the following Saturdays: -

11 February 2023 at 6.50 am at Gordon
15 April 2023 at 10.30 am at Turramurra
15 July 2023 at 10.30 am at Turramurra
7 October 2023 at 6.50 am at Gordon

So in 2023, please invite a friend to come along with you or let a friend know they are welcome to join the group. Please contact me if you have any queries.

Peter Barnes, Golf Convenor

Stir up Sundays

Stir up Sunday was started 13 years ago as a community activity to attract people to the church and to meet Steve. It has grown from an initial 36 participants to now over 200. Stir Ups are also conducted for Messy Church and FFC families. During Covid, the name was changed to “Stir Up Someday” and bags of ingredients were purchased for participants to make at home. This proved very successful and many joined family and friends around kitchen tables, with one participant having her whole tennis group of 12 join her.

We are pleased that in 2022 we are again able to make puddings face-to-face. Over 200 puddings will be made; about half are going to be made at home and it is hoped that these “stirrers” will return to the church next year.

Making money has never been the purpose behind Stir up Sundays, but each year we’ve been to support the church’s charities with any profit made.

Steve has always enjoyed the opportunity of meeting new people and it has been a feature of Stir Up Sundays, which will be greatly missed upon his leaving, although the blessing he composed for the first Stir Up will live on.

A Pudding Blessing



*Lord God of the pudding,
as different ingredients have come together in the making of these creations,
so may our family Christmas gatherings be a happy blend of different personalities.
as the puddings are created to be given and consumed,
may we learn that our lives are most tasty when we are given away
in love and care to those around us.
and as these puddings go to different homes in a variety of places,
may each one carry the love, grace and peace that Christ came to bring to the world.
Amen.*

Thank you, Steve, for your continued support of, and enthusiasm for Stir Up Sundays.

Judy Gill

The Stitching Group

The Stitching Group resumed meeting at the Church in February this year. We have had varied numbers in '22. Many reasons for this have been family, health, holidays the weather and more. We have enjoyed our evenings together – sharing, caring and supporting the many needs of our friends.

The ladies have supported the Wrap With Love Group, knitting many squares, crocheting and completing rugs. Also, about forty beanies have been knitted and they have been given to The Wayside Chapel (large) and small beanies given to children recovering from cancer. We also knitted a rug for “Henry Jack” to go with the one we knitted for “Elizabeth Rose”.

We would be very happy for any members of the GPUC congregation or other ladies to come and join us on a Thursday evening in the Yellow Room.

Beth Bunyan & Janet Scott

Wrap With Love Group

Through the Covid chaos, Zoom helped us to stay in touch and our group for WWL has had a busy and successful year – two highlights being giving 8 rugs to our Ukrainian families to distribute to those in their community who could use them and also Flo's visit recently to the HQ at Alexandria for a day to see what happens there and join in with them.



Another highlight has been the great contribution from the Ravenswood Years 11 and 12 girls who've recently taken up knitting and found it relaxing and enjoyable. We frequently receive large bags of squares which keeps Flo busy sewing them together. Overall, this year we've sent close to 100 rugs to the WWL HQ for their wonderful distribution to the world over which amounts to almost 750,000 for the relief of humanity since the commencement of Wrap With Love in 1992.

Flo Brawn and Rosemary Watson

COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

We are pleased to record our appreciation of all who have contributed to the significant development of the ways we communicate with our congregation, and with the wider community.

During the past year, this has been even more significant as we realise the impact of Covid and how we connect with our community. This has meant

- further development of our website – thank you to Lloyd and Courtney
- livestreaming of worship services – thank you to Bruce Kwong
- hybrid participation for meetings and groups
- communication by email and mail – thank you to Steve, and all our staff
- success in obtaining grants to upgrade our AV equipment – thank you, Lesley.

BUSINESS TEAM

The Business Team takes responsibility for the finances and the property of the Gordon-Pymble Congregation. As Chair of the Team, I would like to thank all members of the Team for their fantastic contributions in the past year. In particular, I wish to thank David Turner who has rejoined the Business Team in the important role of Treasurer. David will provide a separate report on the Church's finances.

Property Report

After a period of little activity during the two years of COVID, the Team recommenced works on our various properties.

The major activity in this regard was unexpected. We were conducting negotiations with Presbytery to extend its lease on the St Ives Manse when they notified us that our tenant, the Presbytery Minister had accepted another placement and Presbytery no longer wished to lease the property. The original intention was to lease the house on the open market and we held discussions with local real estate agents about that. The agents emphasised the need to undertake work on the house before it could be offered to the market, in particular, new carpet in the downstairs lounge/dining room and stairs, electrical repairs, repair of a leaking shower which had damaged an interior wall and repair of the surface to the swimming pool. Contracts were entered for these works. During this period, GPUC was approached by Turramurra UC about leasing the Manse for their newly appointed second minister.

In the end, additional work was required as other problems were discovered at the Manse and the total cost, including repainting and replacement of air conditioners, was \$51,531. Turramurra UC has taken a lease of the Manse for a 12-month period from 24 April 2022. The Minister and his family moved in before all the work was finished. The re surfacing of the pool was delayed by approximately 4 months due to the continuing rain. It is unlikely that a commercial tenant would have agreed to move in before all works were finished.

Unfortunately, water ingress continues to be a major problem at both Gordon and Pymble. At Pymble, Programmed Building Projects undertook work on roof leaks, replaced missing flashing on the hall building and installed a new downpipe on the church. There is still an issue with one leak over the office area, which seems to be coming from under a solar panel. We will enlist the help of the solar company to deal with this problem. Programmed work in April 2022 cost \$11,620. Additional work on the Gordon UC roof was completed in April 2022 by Arrow Roofing at a cost of \$14,000. There are still some leak issues which we are endeavouring to resolve with Arrow.

Once the COVID restrictions were lifted, we engaged one cleaner, All-in 1 Solution, for both premises. This has generally worked well and the owner of this company has worked with us when there have been issues. This company also undertook gutter cleaning and path/driveway cleaning at both sites in early 2022. No further gutter cleaning has been done since then, but it is our aim to have a yearly schedule for the gutter cleaning and less frequent schedule for the path cleaning.

We reported last year that we were considering installing air conditioning in the Gordon Church. After several quotes, it was clear that this would add a considerable electrical load and require a major electrical upgrade at a similar cost to the air conditioning itself. For this reason, the

Business Team decided to replace the failing heaters with more modern ones. This work was completed in August 2022 at a cost of \$3,792.

Computer upgrades were made to most computers used by our staff, mainly paid for by a generous donation. One new development has been the Hub project which has started with a "co-working space" being equipped with monitors and desks. The first part of this project has seen the fit out of Room 4 at Gordon which is now used by Presbytery staff who bring their own computers and use the photocopier (under their own account), kitchen and meeting areas. Presbytery will pay \$24,960 per year for this usage.

As well, a heavy duty, portable shade umbrella has been installed in the courtyard at Gordon at a cost of \$4,510. This has already been put to good use by many of the groups using the centre. We also have new tables and chairs in that courtyard, thanks to a successful grant application.

At Pymble, after discussions with the neighbouring unit committee, a large tree in their yard was lopped back from our fence line at a cost of \$700. This tree had been dropping leaves that contributed to the blocking of drains. We also added a battery to the solar array at Pymble, partly paid for by grant money. This will assist in managing electricity costs at Pymble, although the predicted large increases in the cost of electricity and gas will affect us in 2023.

Looking beyond July 2022, we will undertake another renovation project when Rev Steve Aynsley moves out from the Pymble Manse. There will be further work on the Hub project. Hirers have been returning to use our halls and income from the hiring has been gradually increasing. We hope to add more hirers during the next 12 months.

The Business Team gratefully acknowledges the many individuals who have attended to property and maintenance tasks, large and small, and providing knowledge and advice to the Team. We specifically recognise the members of the Sydney Covenant Uniting Church who have provided valuable input to the working bees conducted at Gordon.

We thank the Congregation for its ongoing support and encouragement of Business Team activities.

**Lyn McLennan
Chair, Business Team**

Gordon-Pymble Uniting Church

Church Council

<i>Chairperson:</i>	Lloyd Robinson
<i>Deputy Chairperson:</i>	Sue Conde AM
<i>Secretary:</i>	Brian Gill
<i>Treasurer:</i>	David Turner
<i>Councillors:</i>	Rev Steve Aynsley
	Sue Cripwell
	David Hodges (co-opted)
	Rev Paul Swadling
	Wendy Wallin

Team Chairs

Communications	<i>(vacant)</i>
Community Connections	Sue Conde
Faith Development	Janet Scott
Mission	Yvonne Barber
Business	Lyn McLennan