



# **Gordon-Pymble Uniting Church**

## **Annual Report**

**2020**

## Minister's Report 2019 – 2020

As I prepared to write this Minister's Report, I've been looking back over my 2019 diary. And I have been noticing how different things were BC (Before COVID). I guess that is an obvious statement, but so many of our significant events as a church community involve people gathering together in close proximity, often around food. It reminds us that 'community' is at the heart of who we are as God's people. And it reminds us why as a church, the year has been such a challenge.

And so we had to find new ways to do things and maintain community. That wasn't easy but you have been adaptable. The technology skills of so many have risen in these last months, enabling us to meet online in some form. We do lose something in that electronic interaction, and clearly not everyone can participate, but it is better than no interaction at all.

Early in COVID days I had expected I would be catching up on reading and doing a lot of forward planning. It turned out very different! Time gifted to me from the cancellation of Scripture lessons, fewer standard meetings and much less travel was more than taken up by learning new technology, additional special meetings on Zoom and a completely different weekly schedule. Like us all, I learned to adapt, and just as I got settled into one routine, the requirements changed again. Perhaps the year has taught us the value of flexibility and that everything, always is subject to change.

But I want to encourage you at how well you responded, especially in those early days. Our quick adaptation to worship on YouTube and the development of pastoral phone networks were great examples of doing the important things in different ways. Special thanks to Di Willis and Sue Cripwell who took a co-ordinating role in the pastoral networks, and to Bruce Kwong for all he has done to support us with technology.

Then, when we took a breath, we were reminded the church is always about service – even in difficult times – and we began to develop ways to help and connect with our wider community. Letterbox drops let people know that we were thinking of them, care packs were dropped off to play group parents and others, zoom classes of all sorts were offered and daily chats kept people connected. Warm thanks to Lesley Burt – starting her role in such a difficult time – for all the innovative ideas and enterprises she has developed, so well backed up by the Community Connections Team.

There were difficulties too. Not being able to gather formally has impacted our communication as a Congregation. The lockdown began just as we were to submit our profile for a new part-time minister. We decided not to submit it, uncertain what the financial impact of COVID would be. Then, when we were ready to submit, perhaps we hadn't kept the congregation as informed as we normally would have and it felt like we were playing catch-up. Thanks for your understanding of these deficiencies. I trust the current mission planning process will go some way to improving our consultative and communication needs.

Throughout it all the vision of coming together as one congregation in order to do something new in our community hasn't wavered. It has been the exact model and detail that has changed and required flexibility as circumstances altered. And it feels we are now on the cusp of something new, with Nicola and Courtney's commitment to the New Growth course being a large

part of that. We look forward to seeing how things will unfold from here, knowing that any developments belong to us all together.

We remember there was a time before COVID. And in that time we enjoyed having Duncan McDiarmid with us in an extended practicum and part time employment. We all loved Duncan's presence and he offered us a great deal, especially paving the way for such a smooth transition into our pastoral care network once COVID hit. We are so pleased to be able to follow Duncan's ministry now that he has been ordained into his new position in Eurobodalla.

2019-2020 saw many deaths of our members and it was particularly difficult early in the pandemic not to be able to celebrate their lives as we normally would have with full services and rousing singing. The recent All Saints Day service was a poignant time of remembrance and thanksgiving. It will be important to make time for special commemorations where desired to give thanks and facilitate the grieving process for families.

There are too many people to thank as I reflect on the year, but one or two are concluding terms or shifting focus within the church. David Turner has resigned from the Business Team and it gives us opportunity to thank him for the many, many hours of work he does for the congregation, from taking minutes and keeping us on track in Church Council to chasing up strange-looking bills and doing battle with Otis over the Pymble lift! David continues to do so much for the congregation and we acknowledge his willing service. Bruce Kwong seemed to be many people's personal "tech help" as we all shifted into the world of Zoom and realised our devices weren't adequate. Bruce assisted many individuals and us as a church with our technology needs. Bruce is stepping down from Chair of the Communications Team and we thank him for all his work in that role. Andrew Cripwell and Kerry Blight are not seeking re-election to Church Council after years of faithful service. We thank God for Andrew's constant encouragement and positive outlook and for Kerry's wise and insightful way, often impatient to see new things come to pass.

I feel very fortunate to be at Gordon-Pymble UC. It is a mix of personalities and outlooks but I sense we are unified around the important things in church life. We are well-led by a Church Council that cares for people and understands the need for change in the Church. It has become very clear across the wider church that staying the same isn't really an option as congregations look to the future. And so we seek to be innovative and creative with our planning and always faithful to God who calls us ever forward.

Advent blessings,

***Rev Steve Aynsley***

## Church Council Report 2020 – Looking Back

Of course, I need to mention COVID in the report. So there it was...

As I sit at my computer, ready to write the annual report, I am buffeted by two stories:

- The story of the sower and the seed that Nicola and Courtney will talk about on the Sunday of the general meeting – their challenge to us “how will we be the good soil?” (good community) and “how will we remove all the weeds that we often grow to choke others from accessing community and growth?” (inclusive community)
- The story of Ephesians 2, where Paul explains that the practical outcome of understanding Jesus central purpose is the removal of tribalism, membership, race, and religious difference (tolerant and diverse community).

So, I thought I would review the council activity in terms of these stories.

*Positive:* We moved forward to appoint a community worker, Leslie Burt to help us break down barriers between us and the community. The community connections team have worked with her to keep pushing ahead, even during the worst of our lockdown. Her job is actively working to remove the weeds that we like to grow and uncover the good soil. She is surrounded by an active, positive group.

*Positive:* We have a much bigger online presence than we have ever had before. A large part of that is the online worship services that extend our reach and make our services seem less scary and more accessible.

*Positive:* Our participation and development in the Presbytery’s new growth course. This is the first time in my lifetime that the church has been interested in growth and intentionally tried to develop and deliver training for congregations. Nicola and Courtney’s summary challenges us to be a “community that is always open”; to move from an activity basis to a person basis. We move from counting attendees at playgroup, worship services, and coffee connections and start to search out the people behind the numbers.

*Positive:* When we asked for financial support to start something new, we were blown away by people’s generosity. This gives us confidence to keep searching for a way forward. We will find a way and when we do, we can be certain of support from the congregation.

*Positive:* The competent tackling by council and our staff of the government regulation and rules (overlaid by church rules) to get us back into our buildings safely. I receive weekly updates (at least) in my inbox from Synod, Presbytery and other members of council. Someone somewhere is actively figuring this all out! (a lot of figuring out is by Brian and Nicola).

*Positive:* We seemed to have a surfeit of business at each meeting, such was the activity from across the church. Many of our meetings have 15 papers to review, consider and approve. We are an active community with many components (we recognise David for arranging all this documentation!).

*Positive:* We have financially survived (maybe not thrived), but we are still here as a community and council. We thank Maureen Hovy and the business team for working hard through the year to manage all the abnormalities that the year threw up at us.

*Work in progress:* We need to make it easier to be part of our community. Youtube videos, web sites and social media, interactive faith activities, more engaging buildings and more people

welcoming each other, even strangers; out for coffee, tea and smoothies. Let's have a spontaneous "dinners for eight".

*Work in progress:* Following Paul's exaltation to the Ephesians, we need to break down barriers between tribes (us and them, them and them, us and us). At the one time, the congregation is everything and at the same time it is nothing. We need to live in this paradox we call faith.

2021 is already both exciting and filling up with the congregation:

- Developing a mission plan for the next three years
- Mobilising something of the "new community of faith"
- Coming to grips with a \$200M Uniting project in Carlotta Street Gordon that will incorporate "community facilities"
- Engaging further with Ku-ring-gai council in rolling out their vision of community (that is remarkably similar to ours)
- Working with the presbytery to further develop an enterprise hub concept that may be centred in our buildings. It is designed to encourage social enterprise start-ups.

I want to recognise the amount of work that staff and volunteers have had to do this year in addition to their normal duties. Part of the reason we have remained safe was the individuals that clean chairs, tables, pews, door handles, cupboard doors and toys after every use (and write COVID plans, review them, create emails to register, put out sheets of paper, contribute to presbytery and synod meetings). There has been a mountain of work to lift us out of the valley of despair.

I also thank and acknowledge the dedicated service to Council by retiring Councillors, Andrew Cripwell and Kerry Blight. Andrew has served on Council for almost 40 years. Well done, good and faithful servants.

***Lloyd Robinson***  
***Chair***

## **Community Coordinator Report**

**Lesley Burt**

I joined Gordon-Pymble Uniting Church during December 2019 as the new Community Coordinator. The year started off with a successful Gordon Centre Community Showcase where we spoke to a lot of people about our programs and created an awareness of what we provide.

Within my first four months of employment, the world and the community environment began to change, people were required to isolate due to the introduction of COVID-19 restrictions. These new challenges provided us with an opportunity to re-evaluate how we were communicating with each other and our local community.

We slowly introduced Zoom and web conferencing sessions for groups that had previously met in our church centres. New groups were also formed, and a daily chat session was facilitated by a group of volunteers. It was a wonderful learning curve for us all and it was lovely to see people encouraging and assisting others to use the technology.

Another initiative had a broader reach into the local community was the introduction of letterbox postcard drops that was undertaken by a team of more than 20 volunteer walkers from our church community. The “Thinking of You” cards acknowledged the difficult time, introduced the church, and invited people to join our zoom groups. The second in the series “Caring for You” promoted Zoom exercise, cooking, and art classes that were funded by the Ku-ring-gai Council.

Ku-ring-gai Council has generously granted GPUC with two lots of funding this year. The first grant was to assist people experiencing isolation through COVID times. This grant enabled us to work with some church renters to deliver free online classes of Yoga, Gentle Exercise and Art. We received a lot of positive feedback about these online sessions. One yoga participant wrote: *“Well done GPUC for their innovation and providing such services- Appreciated. I feel privileged to participate.”*

The second, a Community Development Grant purchased web conferencing resources. The web conferencing resources allows us to have hybrid groups with people attending at the centre and connecting online to others in their home.

GPUC was also granted funds by Stockland to add an additional raised garden bed to our community garden. We now have three raised beds that are nurtured by TAFE participants and a group of GPUC volunteers.

I enjoyed working in a support role with Nicola and Tamara to facilitate the Zoom Trivia Quiz held in August to raise funds to support the UnitingWorld Kiribati project. This event brought the church community together for an afternoon of fun and learning more about this threatened Pacific nation.

Thank you to the wonderful supportive team and community that I work with and I look forward to the future.



*'Thinking of you' postcard - our first letterbox drop*



*Lesley at the KMC Seniors Showcase in February*

## GPUC Playgroups and Family Ministry

Nicola and Courtney continue to run 4 playgroup sessions each week to support the 100 families registered with GPUC Playgroups.

Terms 1 & 2 were affected by Covid and Zoom sessions replaced our face-to-face playgroups at both sites. Our baby playgroup (0-1years) wasn't successful online, however we will continue in person at Pymble in 2021.

Since returning in Term 4, we have had to waitlist sessions to ensure GPUC keep to the government restrictions per room. The Red Room only allows 18 people in total. All crafts have been individually placed in the children's playgroup bag each week. Parents have helped with cleaning surfaces and toys after use.

Our highlight was calling all our playgroup families over the isolation period to let them know we were thinking of them and we miss our little friends. The team prepared and delivered weekly craft packs and care packs to get them through the isolation period. We packed craft, games, pencils, activities and best of all some chocolate and tea for parents to sit back and relax. We had a few playgroup families enjoy our free online art, yoga and fitness sessions. The feedback was well received. We heard – *"wow you care about us, we miss you and can't wait to return to face to face"*. Our regulars on Zoom have since returned and have enjoyed being back for term 4.

Our Pymble families transitioned well to the Gordon site for our time during Covid. They were pleasantly surprised that our Gordon site was more children friendly, especially with the large garden and trampoline.

Our final term for 2020, the children have enjoyed creating Sea Creatures, making art to decorate the communal areas and the annual making of Christmas craft. Santa (Andrew Cripwell) will return for our end of year celebration (taking into consideration Covid Restrictions).

Courtney continues to actively use the public **GPUC Playgroups** and **Gordon-Pymble Uniting Church** Facebook page to communicate with the families on weekly updates and fun photos. Courtney is ensuring playgroup families are aware of all other community events our Church offers, including Messy Church and Stir Up Someday.

It is wonderful to see our playgroup families enjoy the many activities the church provides to the community. We are all looking forward to a break and a fresh start to 2021.

Messy Church since Covid met by Zoom, on YouTube, in person at the beach and in the church for making Christmas puddings and preparing for Advent. We have a small core of dedicated families. We are looking at how the format can be relevant and attractive for the children who are getting older.



**Courtney Heyden**

**Nicola Robinson**

## THE TEAMS OF GORDON-PYMBLE UNITING CHURCH

### FAITH DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Convenor: Janet Scott

There are a number of activities and groups at Gordon-Pymble which provide opportunities to explore faith from across a spectrum of ideas, beliefs and certainties. Sunday Morning worship is a rich tapestry of progressive music, traditional hymns, thoughtful sermons, and the good news about what is happening across the community.

### **PUnCH:**

P.Un.Ch is a discussion group on matters of importance with a faith twist. We meet on the second and fourth Sunday evenings in the Pymble lounge area. Those who attend are mainly in their 50s – 60s who are keen to ask some deeper questions or explore faith perspectives on our lives and sometimes on current affairs.

It is a relaxed group, with people attending as they are able and fitting it into busy lives, but there is strong sense of belonging and support among the members. We normally punctuate our year with a couple of dinners out.

Like all groups we were COVID affected from March and moved online with Zoom enabling us to meet remotely. My sense, as the one who leads the discussion, was that meeting online was about 80-85% effective. That is, you always lose something by not being in person, but it is better to be together online, than not at all. Our topics were a little more restricted as we sometimes watch a video together to discuss, and this became more challenging over Zoom.

The discussion topics are often shared with Tuesday Night Conversations and have included

- What creates and enables a sense of community
- Sharing a small part of our life story
- TED Talks on Vulnerability and Shame (from Brene Brown) and about leaving a cult (Megan Phelps)
- Self-Care
- Reflections on COVID's impact on our lives
- Wesley's quadrilateral (on making ethical, faith-informed decisions)
- Some challenging 'parables' by Edwin Friedman

The group has decided to remain on Zoom for the balance of the year and reassess in 2021.

*Rev Steve Aynsley*

### **Heart and Mind**

Heart & Mind is an informal discussion group of about eight to ten people, that meets at 6 pm on the third Sunday of each month at my home in West Pymble. In some ways, 2020 has been a different type of year for our 'Heart and Mind' group but in other ways it hasn't changed a great deal. We had our first meeting in February and went into Zoom mode for every other meeting until our end-of-year gathering in November. The Zoom advantage was that people could stay at home on cold wet nights or when they had family members requiring their presence, and they didn't need to race home after on a Sunday afternoon after a weekend away. Nevertheless, it was wonderful to be able to enjoy our final meeting face-to-face and include husbands.



Here are those of us who could be at our end-of-year function. A few of our members were unable to be present - two had already headed off to Queensland to see young grandchildren they had never met or not visited for a very long time.

The book we chose for 2020 was "Faith: embracing life in all its uncertainty" by Tim Costello – a very apt title since we knew nothing of COVID-19 at the time.

At our end-of-year meeting we took a look at a new book called "Phosphorescence" by a local author, Julia Baird. This book is

described as "A beautiful, intimate and inspiring investigation into how we can find and nurture within ourselves that essential quality of internal happiness - the 'light within' that Julia Baird calls 'phosphorescence' - which will sustain us even through the darkest times."

We will be starting up again in February with this new book. Please let me know if you might be interested in joining our group. We'd love for you to join us.

*Heather McMaster*

## **Choir**

The choir started the year full of enthusiasm doing its best to sing at each service at Pymble (numbers permitting) and at joint services at Gordon as well leading with an Introit and then supporting the congregation during the service.

As we all know, COVID-19 came along and stopped us in its tracks. At least we tried to help you sing in "spirit" by sending out suggested Introits, especially in the early days when we were not able to be together to worship.

We look forward to be able to start up again soon to ensure that the joy of music enhances God's message to all!

*Alex Hovy*

## **Special Religious Education**

SRE classes began as usual in Term 1. Steve - Year 5 at Gordon West and Year 5 at West Pymble. Robyn - Year 1 at Pymble. Courtney - Year 5 at Pymble

After a few weeks, SRE classes were cancelled due to Covid 19 restrictions.

Anglican Youthworks provided SRE material for all age groups during the time students completed their activities online at home. SRE teachers were invited to return to teaching at the beginning of Term 3 with appropriate requirements in place i.e.

- \* External Visitor form to be completed on every visit
- \* Only one SRE teacher in the classroom
- \* No singing or class reciting of verses
- \* Workbooks to remain in the classrooms

The Uniting teachers were not able to present a Combined Christmas Assembly at Pymble PS. However, students were invited to bring donated gifts to the school office and place them under the Giving Tree for the Make a Difference Out West Toy Appeal. Gifts are to be taken to Griffith for distribution in the area and also to Broken Hill. Some gifts are being sent to bushfire affected areas in Eurobodalla to be distributed by Duncan through the local schools.

The parents & students at Pymble have been extremely generous. Almost 300 gifts were donated. A Thank You note will be included in the school newsletter with thanks and appreciation from the MADOW Committee.

***Robyn Joyce  
SRE Coordinator***

### **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, as has been experienced by many other groups, has been different! We have been meeting by Zoom, and this has worked very well for our group, which has grown in numbers because we have gained members who can meet by Zoom, but to get to the church on Thursdays would be difficult for them. 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 value the quality of the theology in WLTW from the contributors selected by Dr Peter Butler.

We have been blessed this year to have been joined by Parvaneh Khosdouz, and rejoice in her baptism and the baptism of her son, Hooman. To relive the significant stories and events of the Christian year through the eyes of a new Christian has been a wonderful experience for our group.

We welcome you to join our group on Thursday mornings at 10.15-11.30 at Gordon Church, or by Zoom. A weekly email is sent out, with the Zoom link, and passages for our study, and you are very welcome to join our email list.

***David & Sue Conde***



*Baptism of Parvaneh and Hooman  
on 29 November 2020*

## MISSION TEAM

Convenor: Yvonne Barber

The focus of the Mission Team is to look at, understand, oversight and shape the mission activities of GPUC.

At any one time these might include MADOW, Uniting World, SRE Teaching and TCEA (Turrumurra High School financial) support, Margaret Jurd College, Carols in the Park, support for refugees and Human Rights for All, KAIROS (prison) plus our all year round support for Lifeline and Exodus.

The key priorities for 2020:

### 1. *Signing the Uniting World Partnership:*

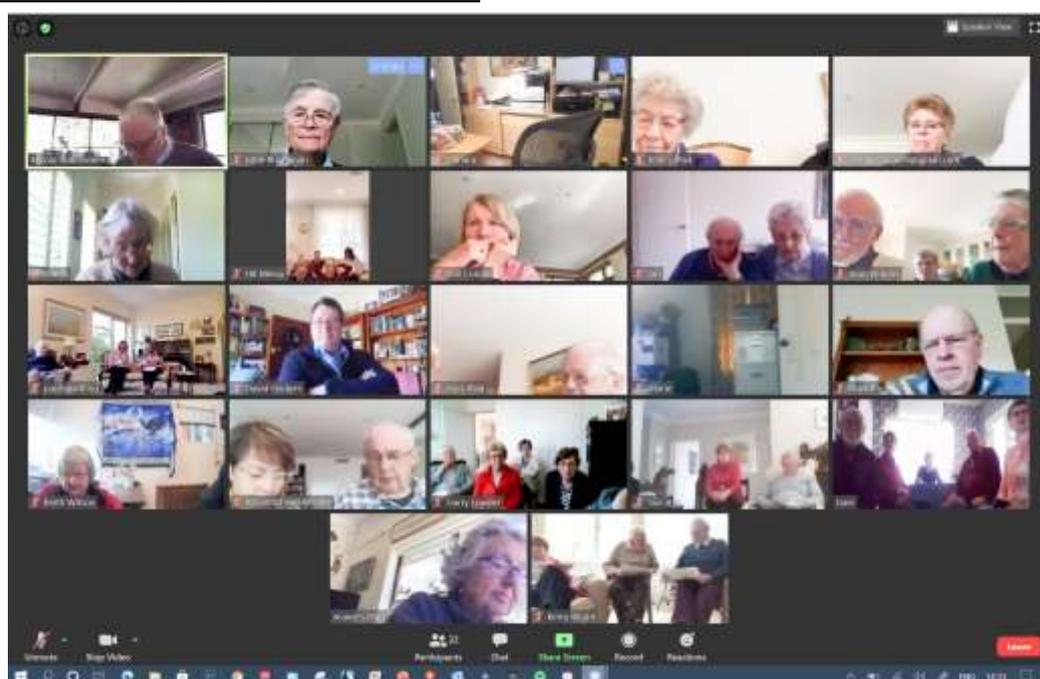
We have promoted it in the GPUC. We have established the GPUC Playgroups' connection to Kiribati and also organised a Zoom Trivia Afternoon which made a significant donation to support a Kiribati program.

### 2. *Margaret Jurd College*

Still establishing what involvement would be possible in the Margaret Jurd College other than financial support already given. This has not yet been decided.



*Zoom Trivia afternoon  
27 August 2020  
which raised  
\$6000 for UnitingWorld  
Kiribati program*



## **MADOW:**

### *Projects*

**Griffith:** Clothes, bedding, toiletries et al. Our friends in Griffith seek to meet needs in their town and in the wider Riverina, including Murrin Bridge at Lake Cargelligo.

In response to their requests, MADOW has collected and sorted good quality second-hand clothes, manchester and toiletries. Margo Lowder and Pam Stewart delivered loads in March, June, July, September and November to the Pittari Transport Company warehouse at Chipping Norton. Pittari generously provides free transport from there to Griffith.

**Enngonia Public School:** Ten PLC Students and staff visited and stayed at Enngonia Public School for a week in mid-November 2019. Rev Steve, Pam and Bob Stewart, David Turner and Diane Willis joined them to act as cooks (of sorts).

**Gidget Foundation in Dubbo:** The Gidget Foundation's aim is to promote the importance of emotional wellbeing amongst expectant and new parents, their healthcare providers and the wider community, to ensure that those in need receive timely, appropriate and supportive care.

Last year MADOW donated to the Compassionate Fund of Gidget House in Dubbo. Most of the Foundation's clients in Dubbo are referred from the Aboriginal Medical Service.

This year we made another donation of \$1,500. We have been told that there is now a "GPUC MADOW" brick in the donor wall of the Gidget Foundation's Dubbo building. Do take a look if you head that way.

**Buying from the Bush:** COVID 19 has restricted MADOW from holding gatherings to raise funds for its work out west. Yet we were aware of many rural communities still struggling from the effects of drought, fire, floods and Coronavirus restrictions.

Given that many of us had turned to shopping online for all sorts of things, MADOW turned its thoughts to buying products online from the bush, as a means of assisting rural communities.

There is a wonderful website and Facebook campaign, Buy from the Bush with links to hundreds of local rural businesses – [www.buyfromthebush.com.au](http://www.buyfromthebush.com.au)

And so the MADOW team curated a selection from that campaign, from towns and communities we know from our travels in western NSW, and urged our congregation members to buy online.

**Bushfire relief in Eurobodalla:** As you would know, bushfires have ravaged the Eurobodalla area. One family not only had to move six times after bushfires destroyed their home, but then had their furniture destroyed in a subsequent storm.

Duncan McDiarmid, now ministering at the Uniting Church in Eurobodalla, is helping to coordinate the distribution of Debit Vouchers to people who have suffered because of the fires. After liaising with Duncan, MADOW sent \$1,500 to Eurobodalla Uniting Church.

MADOW hopes to continue to support the bushfire recovery program in that area.

**Toys for Christmas 2020:** Thanks to the wonderful generosity of so many in our community, MADOW has been able to send a bumper collection of toys to Griffith where Michelle and Nicole, our Griffith contacts, are making plans for distribution to needy families.

And some of the toys are headed toward Eurobodalla, where Duncan will work with his community to distribute the gifts to bushfire-affected families.

A special message of appreciation for collecting and wrapping the toys must go to Robyn Joyce and staff and families at Pymble Public School, to Nicola and Courtney and the Playgroup families, to GPUC supporters, and to the merry band of MADOW elves.

#### Line Items

Since we last reported: Significant contributions came from:

Stir up Sunday – \$500 in November 2019.

Christmas Stall – \$1,763 in December 2019.

Stitching Group – \$420 in December 2019.

But all contributions, great or small are much appreciated.

Significant donations were made to:

Condobolin UC Music Program – \$1,000 in December 2019.

Bathurst UC Methadone Breakfast BBQ – \$300 in December 2019

Griffith Meals on Wheels' hamper cake appeal – \$200 in January 2020.

Griffith support – \$545 in May and June 2020

Gidget House Compassionate Fund – \$1,500 in June 2020.

Eurobodalla Uniting Church – \$1,500 in August 2020.

Funds raised or contributed but not expended as at 31 October 2020 – \$1,542.50.

Future opportunities:

Enngonia Public School. COVID-19 has meant there have been no opportunities to visit Enngonia. Since we last visited, a new Principal, Paula Buttenshaw, has been appointed. MADOW is keen to reignite and foster our connection in 2021.

**Christmas Stall:** The Stall will be held on Sunday, 6 December 2020, before and after the service at Gordon, and around the fringes of the congregation General Meeting. Any unsold items will be made known on the website and on subsequent Sundays.

**Conclusion and thanks:** One insight arising from this COVID 19 riddled year is that plans and traditions can be unexpectedly shaken or even blocked. Although MADOW has not been able to travel far beyond GPUC'S postcodes, its long-established friendships in rural NSW have enabled it to develop modest ways to stay in touch and to offer support.

I sincerely acknowledge and thank the MADOW team of willing zoomers and "can do anything" types – Margi Abraham, Yvonne Barber, Margo Lowder, Jane Simpson, Pam Stewart, Pru Tout and Wendy Wallin.

The regular and generous support of GPUC members allows MADOW, on behalf of the congregation, to continue to try to Make A Difference Out West. Thank you all.

*Diane Willis, Convenor, MADOW Committee*

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS TEAM

Convenor: Kerry Blight

The Community Connections Team consists of seven members: Kerry Blight (Chair), Rev. Steve Aynsley, John Buchanan, Sue Conde, Andrew Cripwell, Nicola Robinson and Pru Tout. The team meets usually once a month.

We started the year well with a very successful week-long showcase of GPUC community activities at the Gordon Shopping Centre in early February. It was staffed by over 20 enthusiastic GPUC volunteers. We engaged with at least 30 people a day and distributed flyers highlighting our community activities, and provided playdough, wrapped chocolates, capsicum seedlings to many more people – well over a hundred. It was a very successful venture and the profile of GPUC was raised.

This was followed by a well-attended Congregational Dinner on 29 February when we formally welcomed Lesley Burt, our new Community Coordinator, and farewelled Duncan McDiarmid. Duncan and the dinner attendees were surprised with a vigorous rendition of a new song, *It's time to say farewell to Duncan*, by the newly formed 'Duncan Choir'. The choir has since disbanded.

In March, when we entered lockdown, we moved to Zoom. Lesley became busier than ever showing us how to use Zoom and setting up afternoon chats so that we could all keep in touch and Lesley started applying for grants. As a result of the \$5000 grant from Ku-ring-gai Council, we reached out to our community with *Thinking of You* cards, which were well received. Our enthusiastic volunteers pounded the streets; letterboxing local residents on two occasions and letting them know that GPUC was concerned about all local people. With funds from this grant, Nicola and Lesley also made up community treat bags, which were distributed during the lockdown and later in the year GPUC also threw itself into mask making – an activity organised by Lesley.

The \$5000 grant from Ku-ring-gai also allowed GPUC to run on-line Community Groups such as painting classes, easy exercise classes, Yoga and cooking classes all via Zoom. Book clubs still met as did Stitching and Playgroup but all through Zoom. The Current Affairs group was another of the groups that met on-line as did the Computer group and now that Covid restrictions are easing, some are starting to meet face-to-face.

Unfortunately, while some activities have grown via Zoom because people, who found it difficult to get to a GPUC site, could now come on-line, others, such as Mah-jong, have had to cease. Hopefully it won't be too long before the Mah-jong group can resume playing at Gordon and other activities such as Breakfast Forum and Coffee Connections will be able to hold meetings. Some of the Art group who meet at Gordon as part of the Community Centre were able to meet for the first time on Friday 4 December, following Covid safe practices. Although the annual Wrap With Love event planned in August had to be cancelled, the knitters kept on knitting producing wonderful squares that became blankets.

**Our Community Garden** is thriving with the help of volunteers and TAFE students. The second Stockland Care Grant of \$1000 has been used to purchase materials to build another raised garden bed.

Our audio-visual equipment is being upgraded with the help of a \$3000 grant from Ku-ring-gai Council that Lesley applied for and received. GPUC can now run hybrid community groups so that those who wish to meet on church premises can combine with those who wish to zoom. This will enable people to either participate face-to-face or via Zoom in community activities and that may be the way that we will operate for a while yet.

Stir-Up Sunday, now Stir-Up Someday, attracted an audience of over 200 and raised funds for MADOW. The Zoom Trivia quiz fundraiser on 27 September attracted about 60 people (11 teams) and raised over \$5000 for Kiribati. For the first time, small groups were able to meet in various homes, following Covid safe practices. The driving force behind that was the Robinson family with their home becoming 'Trivia Central'. Thank you especially to Tamara for her amazing skill at not only writing questions, but uploading them in a way that was fun and impossible to use Google to find out the answers. And what about the wedding photos and interesting facts about our members!

Despite the challenges of this year we are still connected and planning to develop further groups and activities. We are still outward looking and want to be supporting our local community. The Community Connection Team would like to continue, when it is safe to do so, Congregational Dinners and events and to reintroduce and expand community activities at both Gordon and Pymble sites.

I would like to thank all the members of the Community Connections Team for all the work that they have done this year and also so many others who have also been involved in Community Connection activities. I would especially like to thank Lesley, our Community Coordinator and Nicola and Courtney, our Play Group convenors.

**Kerry Blight**  
**Chair, Community Connections Team**



## **The Stitching Group**

Well, this year has certainly been a different year for the Stitching Group. We commenced meeting on the 6<sup>th</sup> February and continued until March.

Due to the Covid virus and the Synod/GPUC rules which had to be adhered to, we ceased meeting at the church from the beginning of April.

In April Janet Scott instigated an App for us so we could be in contact with each other and Zoom each Thursday at 5 p.m. After a few weeks the App changed its name to Stitching Plus to include more friends. This proved a very successful way of keeping in touch.

One of our Stitching Plus friends, Jeanie Atkinson, has kept us informed, amused and amazed with the talent she has. Everyone has joined in commenting and thanking Jeanie for all she has contributed to the App.

Stitching has always been a caring and supportive group and in some ways our separation has kept us together in a different way.

Following the restrictions being reduced, the Stitching group commenced meeting again in the Yellow room with the ability to have ten people meet. Our alternative was to be that we could move to the big hall if the numbers swelled.

As I write, my understanding is that there have been happy meetings of ten on the evenings since we resumed. (Unfortunately, I have not been able to join them.)

There is still an opportunity to Zoom on a Monday at 5 p.m. for those unable or unwilling to go to the church at present.

We will continue to support each member to the best of our ability and look forward to 2021 being a happy one for us all

***Beth Bunyan***

## **Breakfast Forums at Gordon 2020**

Well, we had 3 of our 4 hoped for gatherings lined up for the year but we only achieved one before the curtain came down. We did not think that these Breakfast events were suitable for conducting them on Zoom – it would be unfair for the speaker as well as lacking in fraternisation amongst attendees and restrictions on raising questions on the subject spoken about.

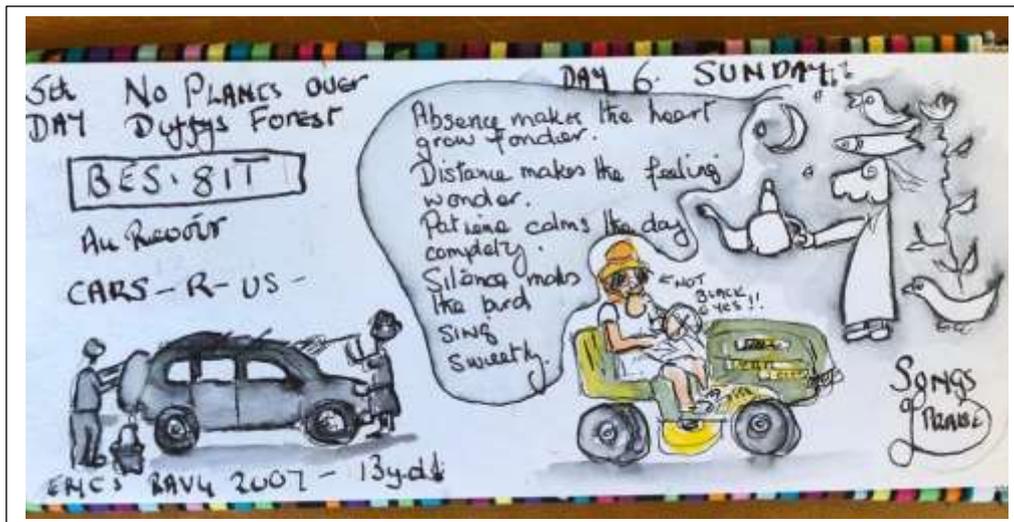
Our one breakfast was in February when we heard from the Chief Executive of the Ku-ring-gai Neighbourhood Centre - Michele Bell – and she spoke on “My Aged Care”, an important subject for us all. Attendees at the breakfast on that morning should have all gone home with this message from Michele:

***Notwithstanding that you don't see yourselves needing any of the services available through My Aged Care in the near future or ever, you should register NOW to avoid being at the end of the queue if you find in the years ahead you actually do need assistance from MY Aged Care.***

***Bruce Kwong, Herb Schoch, Bruce Watson***

## Iso-Artist, Jeanie Atkinson

As mentioned in the Stitching Report, Jeanie Atkinson, our Iso-Artist, introduced her daily sketch in the early days of the Covid lock-down, and has entertained, educated, entranced, connected and captivated the Stitching Plus group, her Painting group, and a wide circle of our community with her ingenuity and creativity. The daily sketches, which are now up to Day 255, have been a feature of the church and UGCC Facebook pages. Thank you, Jeanie, for keeping us connected during the long winter months. They have become something we look forward to each day, and have triggered conversations and memories among us all. When we remember 2020 in the future, we will be grateful for the way Jeanie's sketches kept us united together.



## **Wrap with Love**

Wrap With Love has been very different this year as we've had only a few gatherings at the beginning of the year and of course couldn't have our very popular Knit-in planned for August – we are hoping that next year will see an improvement.

Meanwhile the squares keep coming in – we're delighted that the girls at Ravenswood, under the guidance of their teacher Kate Prowse, have provided upwards of 200 squares this year which are so appreciated and they seem to enjoy being involved.

Our chief rug-maker, as distinct from square-knitters, is Flo who works sometimes day and night, we think, to keep those of us who do the edging busy in our corner!

It's very satisfying and great to be a small part of such a wonderful organisation – over 2000 rugs were distributed locally to those affected by the fires, as well as many sent to overseas countries.

If anyone has wool lurking in a cupboard or knows of some going begging, we're always very happy to receive it.

Everyone keep knitting!!

*Rosemary Watson*

## **The Trading Table**

The Trading Table has not been operating over the last few months due to Covid and all the items remaining, as well as the books, have been donated to Lindara for their sales as we've not been in a position to make our usual annual donation to them.

Hopefully when things calm down again, we can get the Trading Table reactivated as it provides interest generally and brings in a reasonable return. The return to the Church for the nine months to the 31.3.2020 has been around \$1,100.

The sales of jams etc. has similarly been very much curtailed by the lack of people around the Centre. In the last year of so, there's been a return of about \$500 which over many years has contributed to the Flying Padre at Broken Hill - now known as the Broken Hill Patrol - and we understand we continue to support that within the wider MADOW plan.

*Rosemary Watson, Flo Brawn, Janet Scott*

## **Stir up Sunday**

COVID restrictions made it impossible for this year's pudding making sessions to be held in the usual church hall. It would have been easy to abandon the exercise but I felt everyone had gone without so much this year, the least I could do was ensure no one went without a pudding.

So it was decided to still package the ingredients, but for collection, by people who would make their puddings watching me make one on YouTube . As pudding-making then didn't necessarily have to be on a Sunday, **Stir Up Someday** was born.

Everyone was very enthusiastic and many invited friends and family to join them in their kitchens. One participant even invited the other eleven members of her tennis group to join her.

In addition, Courtney was able to hold a normal Messy Stir Up with a number of Messy Church and Playgroup families. A truly “messy” affair.

As happens every year, but surprisingly for this year given the circumstances, we were responsible for a record number of puddings, 234 in all, with a profit of just over \$4,000 including donations of \$187.

*Judy Gill*



## **Social Golf Group 2020 Report**

I was part of the group of people, including Rev Nick Fried, who established this group 28 years ago. The group was established with an initial focus on encouraging all golfers in Pymble Uniting Church, particularly the less talented who would like to be able to join a corporate golf day without too much embarrassment or simply enjoy the sport. Over time the group has been expanded to include friends of PUC members and the focus has become more to have fun and celebrate any good shots. In golf you are really competing against yourself and your last score.

The mailing list includes a lovely group of people who are very happy to play, in whatever groups of 2, 3 or 4, I decide based on meeting new people, similar standards and the number playing. Four quarterly dates are organised each year. That means 112 rounds with only a few abandoned due to wet weather. A lot of golf. Each year, we play two rounds at Gordon Golf Club and two rounds at Turramurra Golf Club.

We have been able to continue in 2020 despite COVID with no raking of the bunkers, leaving the flag in the hole and only able to play in pairs in April.

This year we played as follows:-

1/2/20 Gordon – 18 players

18/4/20 Turramurra – pairs only – 12 players

13/6/20 Turramurra – 16 players

10/10/20 Gordon – 16 players

Next year's dates for your diary are as follows:-

23 January 2021 at 7.00 am at Gordon

10 April 2021 at 10.00 am at Turramurra

10 July 2021 at 10.00 am at Turramurra

18 September 2021 at 7.00 am at Gordon

If you are interested in being on the mailing list and joining the group in 2021, please contact me.

**Peter Barnes, Golf Convenor**

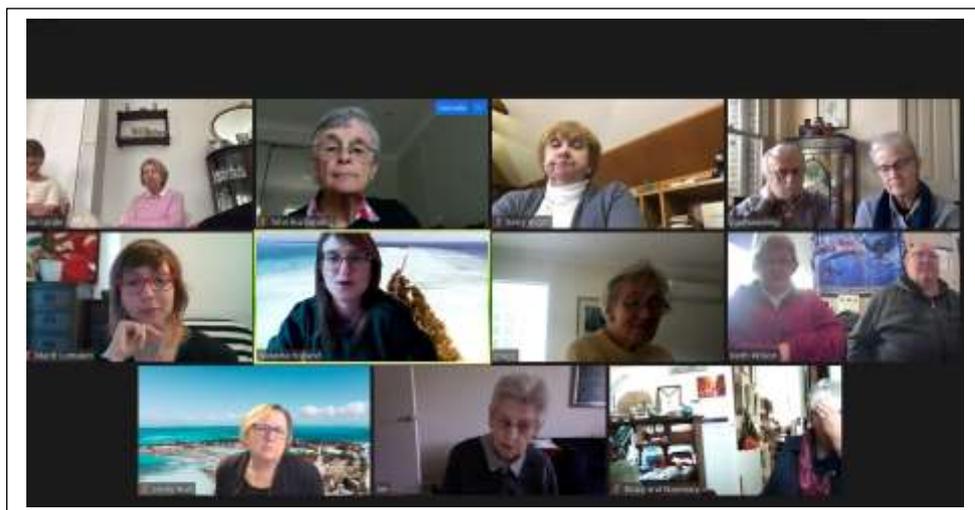
## **The Luncheon Group**

The Luncheon Group is yet another group which has had its activities curtailed this year because of the COVID virus. We started the year with a friendly get-together at the home of David and Sue, and met again in March at the home of Janet and Paul. Sadly, by April our plans for the year were put on hold, but by June we were back together again, thanks to being able to meet by Zoom. Duncan McDiarmid joined us for our August meeting by Zoom, and we were delighted to hear of his early days in the Eurobadalla region, and the efforts that are being undertaken to help those who have suffered so much from the summer bushfires.

In September, we invited Natasha Holland and Mardi Lumsden from UnitingWorld to join us by Zoom to tell us more about the Kiribati project, why it will make a difference to the people of Kiribati, and especially in the lives of the women. Natasha is the project manager for the Gender Equality Theology program, and has been working with our partners in Kiribati and brought us personal stories from her experiences alongside the people of Kiribati.

We look forward to 2021, and hope that we will again be connecting on the first Thursday of each month through the Luncheon Group.

***Janet Scott and Sue Conde***



*The Luncheon Group Zoom meeting with UnitingWorld*

## **THE COMMUNICATIONS TEAM**

**Convenor: Bruce Kwong**

The GPUC Communication Team (“The Team”) continues to support other GPUC Teams to promote their events and programs to the GPUC community using a number of communication platforms including our website, emails, social media accounts, newsletters and magazines.

At the beginning of 2020 the new GPUC website was pre-loaded with the calendar for the entire year’s events and programs allowing website users to plan ahead for the entire year. Unfortunately, after COVID-19 restrictions were introduced in March many of the planned events and programs had to be cancelled, resulting in much re-work of the website calendar and content. The old Pymble Uniting Church (PUC) and Gordon Uniting Church (GUC) websites were decommissioned.

In response to the COVID-19 restrictions on face-to-face meetings the GPUC community was forced to find other ways to communicate with its members via the Internet. “The Team” helped to introduce and train the community in the use of the Zoom Video Conferencing technologies. In addition, “The Team” helped to setup the GPUC YouTube Channel and assisted the Ministry Team in uploading videos for Sunday Worship and Messy Church.

“The Team” believes that online Video technologies will still be in demand after the COVID-19 pandemic has abated, and that these technologies will help GPUC further extend its outreach to the wider community. As such “The Team” is trialing new video equipment at the Gordon site. There are plans to install new video equipment at the Pymble site upon completion of a successful trial at Gordon. As COVID-19 has increased the need to share information via the Internet “The Team” are working towards using the GPUC website as the central repository. Information will be maintained in the website and then disseminated to Facebook, email, paper and other media as required.

With the need to disseminate information via electronic means “The Team” plans to gradually transition away from using paper media. However, current processes will remain in place for those people who still need to receive information in paper format. The gradual transition away from paper will reduce our environmental impacts, reduce our costs on materials and postage, and save time for the GPUC Staff.

During 2020, The GPUC Business Team was given the task of contracting a telecommunications provider to replace the ageing Internet and telephone services at both the Gordon and Pymble Churches. “The Team” provided advice to the Business Team. NEXGEN was selected as the telecommunications provider. They subsequently implemented the new Internet and Telephone systems.

Before COVID-19 became a concern, the Church Council asked “The Team” to document a GPUC Communications Policy. The policy document has been provided to the Church Council for review and adoption. While the policy document has taken a back seat to more important issues such as COVID-19, it is hoped that the document will be approved and published in the near future. Not only is the document important in stating GPUC communication protocols, it also lays the groundwork for ensuring that communications amongst the GPUC community remains open and respectful, free from discrimination, vilification and closed one-sided discussions.

In many ways 2020 has been a very challenging year for “The Team”. Much appreciation and many thanks must be given to Steve Aynsley, Nicola and Lloyd Robinson, Lesley Burt, Natasha Radley, Courtney Heyden and Sue Conde.

## **THE BUSINESS TEAM**

**Convenor: Lyn McLennan**

### **Report for the year 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020**

The Business Team takes responsibility for the finances and the property of the Gordon-Pymble Congregation. The Treasurer has covered the financial issues in her report, which is attached as a separate addendum to this report. This report deals with the property.

As well as usual repairs to the properties, there have been some larger scale works undertaken during this reporting period.

Toward the end of 2019, solar panels were installed on the roof of the halls and of the Manse at Pymble, at a cost of \$21,352 plus ancillary electrical costs. On the completion of this installation, electricity has been generated from the solar array which aims to reduce the total cost of electricity at the Pymble site. We are unable to fully assess that reduction as Energy Australia has not provided a full invoices to us for the period. David Turner has worked to resolve the problems with Energy Australia.

There was also major works at Pymble to address the water ingress problem in the print room and the Church, with rectification work and consequential repairs, fixing carpets, woodwork and wiring carried out, at a cost of approximately \$30,000;

It is no longer possible to buy the mercury lamps used in the Pymble Church, so we purchased a full set of 8 x 3000Kw LED lamps at a cost of \$1,056. Those lamps will be held in storage until the next mercury lamp fails and the full set of LEDs will then be installed to replace all the mercury lamps.

Noise reduction work at the Pymble Manse was completed in November 2019, at a cost of approximately \$16,000. Rev Steve Aynsley has reported that this work has resulted in a significant reduction in the noise entering the Manse from traffic and local construction work.

At Gordon UC, work was underway to identify the source of some problems with the roof when a large storm in February resulted in the loss of a skylight and subsequent water inundation and other roof leaks. A new skylight was installed shortly after that time and based on the assessment of the age and condition of the other skylights, they were also replaced, at a total cost of \$4180, only \$880 of which will be recoverable under insurance claim. After discussions with our insurers, we were required to carry out certain works on the roof prior to internal rectification work being undertaken by a company selected by the insurers. The roof rectification work was completed after 30 June 2020 and the internal ceiling repairs are being carried out in late November 2020.

An earlier storm had damaged the roof of the Pymble church and this was repaired in January 2020, with the cost being covered by insurance.

The same storm that damaged the Gordon Highway Centre in February caused water inundation in the lower area of the halls at Pymble. Although the damage has been advised to the insurers, no work, other than removal of the damaged carpet, can be undertaken until the source of the water entry is identified, which has proved to be difficult.

At the St Ives Manse we have installed a new stove and a new garden shed.

We had been advised that the NBN would be coming to both properties in 2020. This required an upgrade to the telecommunications system used at both sites (as existing systems would become obsolete), which also gave us an opportunity to integrate the system across the two

sites. The work is being conducted by NexGen. Due to various delays, the installation in Gordon occurred in September and the NBN connection at Pymble will be made in mid-December 2020

Of course, a major and continuing concern during 2020 has been the COVID-19 pandemic. The Business Team has worked with Church Council to implement the necessary measures at our sites. Some of the measures include the installation of air dryers in bathrooms in place of towels, purchase of additional cleaning products and implementing additional cleaning measures. This work has required a constant review of the COVID measures imposed by the State government and Synod. Many people have been involved in this work and we greatly appreciate all the work undertaken by Brian Gill and the Church staff to research the requirements, adopt those requirements for our situation at Gordon-Pymble, propose rules and implement those rules across the properties during this time.

The Business Team reiterates the Treasurer's thanks to the Congregation for the support and commitment, financial and otherwise, shown during the period that we have been unable to hold in person worship services. 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.

During the period of this report, the Business Team has accepted the resignation of two members of the Team: our first Treasurer, Darryl Maytom, and also Herb Schoch, both of whom had made major and significant contributions to the establishment of the Business Team and to its operations. After this reporting period, we also accepted the resignation of David Turner, another significant contributor to the work of the Team. We greatly value the expertise, insights and contributions made by these three members and are sad to lose them from the Team. We welcomed the addition of David Brawn as a member but would also warmly welcome any new members who would like to join the Team. Please put your hands up!

***Lyn McLennan  
Chair, Business Team***