



**Victorian Council of Churches
Annual General Meeting**

10am, 14th May 2022

To be held online via Zoom

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89161880218?
pwd=bEdmWEJEcFNmUTZMbnpXQ0xYR2NOQT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89161880218?pwd=bEdmWEJEcFNmUTZMbnpXQ0xYR2NOQT09)

Meeting ID: 891 6188 0218 Passcode: 740468

Zoom will be available from 9.45am

Documents will be available on the VCC website (link on front page, vcc.org.au)
Speakers may use the 'screen share' option on Zoom for presentations

AGENDA

Gathering

Welcome

Acknowledgement of country

Prayer/reflection

Opening remarks and general introduction to the meeting

Business

1. Attendance

Present:

Apologies:

2. Minutes of the VCC AGM held Saturday 14th July 2021 (pp 3-13)

Action: for discussion and approval

3. Business arising:

4. Reports

4.1 President's Report

Dr Graeme Blackman (p 14)

4.2 Executive Officer 2021 report

Rev Ian Smith (pp 15 - 19)

4.3 Commission reports

4.3.1 Faith and Order (p 20)

4.3.2 Social Questions (p 21)

4.3.3 Living Faiths (p 22 - 23)

4.3.4 Other: Inter-faith report (p 24)

4.4 Agency/organisation report VCCEM (pp 25-26)

5. Financial report and 2022 Budget summary (pp 27-40)

6. Associate members

6.1 KORUS Connect, Council for Christian Education in Schools (p 41-42)

6.2 ASCM, Australian Student Christian Movement (p 43)

6.3 World Day of Prayer (pp 44)

7. Communication strategy (p.45-46)

8. Any other business

8.1

8.2

8.3

9. Concluding remarks

10. Prayer



VICTORIAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

(Inc.A0036552E)

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President: Rev Fr Shenouda Boutros; Executive Officer: Rev Ian Smith

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Minutes

SATURDAY 24 July, 2021

Meeting Hosted on Zoom Platform

Registration: Registrants admitted into meeting at 9.00am.

Acknowledgment of Country – Rev Ian Smith acknowledged the traditional custodians of the land, the Wurundjeri Peoples, paid honour and respect to Elders past and present whilst expressing a hope that Reconciliation with the First Peoples of this land can be achieved.

Opening Worship was led by Rev'd Rachel McDougall using the form of Anglican Morning Office.

Chair: President Rev Fr Shenouda Boutros

1. OPENING REMARKS

The President, Rev Fr Shenouda Boutros, welcomed all the participants to the 2021 Annual General Meeting, hosted on Zoom for the second time running. Most of his tenure as president has been under lockdown. Expressed his hope everyone is coping well with lockdowns and isolation. The President thanked the numerous Church Leaders present at today's AGM for attending.

2. REFLECTION Rev Fr George Frangos (Northcote District Greek Orthodox Church) Last year was challenging on a personal level but also at the hierarchical level. The Church has become a beacon of hope, comfort and salvation. Challenges have been dealt with utilising new methods of outreach.

The shock of 'lockdown' came for the wider Orthodox community during the celebration of Sunday of Orthodoxy in 2020 – uncertainty reigned over what this meant. The biggest impact was felt by our elderly parishioners who mostly remain at home except for weekly shopping trips and attending Church on Sundays. The impact was great across the board however, for all age groups. Using technology, a new phase of outreach was implemented and there was a concurrent kick-start of welfare programs. Assistance was provided to families in need and the programs still run.

Zoom now occupies a central place in our ministry. The bridge of disconnectedness has been overcome with the usage of this platform. We can offer advice, comfort, embolden

people with faith. Streaming live services has meant the faithful partake in worship but in an obviously different format.

Throughout the last 5 lockdowns we have dealt with a sense of uncertainty. This has led to some people embracing conspiracy theories. A lot of uncertainty surrounds vaccination with some expressing reluctance stemming from theories circulating on social media and sometimes on mainstream media, too.

We have been trying to spread the message of light and of encouragement. We are still trying to get the message across that although lockdowns may inhibit our freedoms it also gives us a chance to reconnect with our families and friends, build new relationships, to focus on God and on His gifts. We are called to embrace the change and move forward and to be emboldened.

Fr Frangos conveyed Fr Evmenios's apologies who was not able to attend the meeting, and conveyed the blessings and greetings of Archbishop Makarios who is currently representing Australia at a Holy Synod meeting at the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

Fr Shenouda thanked Fr Frangos for his Reflection and asked that he convey our regards to Archbishop Makarios and to Fr Evmenios.

3. BUSINESS

(i) Attendance: Bishop Gregory Bennet (Catholic Diocese of Sale), Bishop Richard Treloar (Anglican Diocese of Gippsland), Rev Denise Liersch (Moderator Uniting Church) Mr Gavin Faichney (Uniting Church), Rev Fiona Wynn (Uniting Church), Ven. Neil Hicks (Anglican), Bishop Paul Bird CSsR (Catholic Diocese of Ballarat), Rev Fr Evmenios Vasilopoulos (Greek Orthodox).

The Apologies were received.

(ii) Minutes of 2020 VCC Annual General Meeting

The minutes of the 2020 Annual General Meeting, as circulated, were accepted as a true record of the meeting. Moved: Rev'd Rachel McDougall. Seconded: Dr Max Stephens. CARRIED.

(iii) Business arising from Minutes

Report from Faith and Order on churches responses to Dying with Dignity legislation (*see report*).

Faith and Order Commission have asked the Churches for responses. Commission members are collating those responses and will create a resource which will be disseminated. A preliminary report has been circulated in the AGM booklet and will be discussed with the rest of the Commission reports.

(iv) Reception of Reports

Those who had submitted a report were invited to speak to those Reports.

President's Report

The President spoke to his report noting his term ends at the end of today's AGM. It has been a wonderful two years of learning; it has been enriching meeting with each of the churches within Victoria. Some he has come to know quite well even though most of the communication has been conducted over Zoom.

No questions were asked of the report.

Executive Officer's Report

The Executive Officer, Rev Ian Smith, was invited to speak to his already circulated report and noted that no one could have forecasted 2020. Both on personal levels as well as at organisational levels, everyone and everything has had to pivot. For those communities that don't have large infrastructures, there was a heavy need for the Council to pivot and become a conduit. There is a real need for the Council to become a point of reference. Rev Ian thanked the Anglican and Uniting Churches who early in the pandemic made available several very good resources which many churches adopted including manuals on setting up YouTube accounts and conducting liturgies online.

Rev Ian's term as Executive Officer of the VCC ends on 31st December. This amounts to some 10 years' service of senior leadership of Council (2 years President, 8 years Executive Officer). Before that, he served Council for some 20 years in various roles. It has been humbling serving Council and Rev Ian has been privileged to learn from those of other traditions. Rev Ian feels deeply humbled having experienced the warm hospitality of churches many of which are of traditions vastly different to his own.

The VCC and the Church are moving into tough circumstances, and there is a need for collaboration among the churches. Therefore, Rev Ian will continue to offer his services to the VCC in whatever capacity needed. Rev Ian's hope is that the VCC has been enriched by his presence amongst it.

The President conveyed from Council to Rev Ian that he is a pillar of the VCC and in Fr Shenouda's own involvement with Council of over 20 years, Ian has always been the face of Council, a force behind the scenes. We are very grateful for Rev Ian's work over the years and no doubt will continue to be a part of Council in different ways going forward. He proves to be a wealth of information, a great networker and a great minister. He has a beautiful pastoral heart and is very caring to those who come by his way. We pray and wish him every blessing and every success in whichever way God uses him.

Financial (Mr Ashok Jacob, Treasurer of the VCC)

2020 was challenging but Member Churches contributed generously to Council. We witnessed a slight drop in the number of contributions, but still ran a surplus. This is partly made up from a boost on cash flow and the JobKeeper subsidy. For the past few years, we ran big deficits; we forecast the surplus to run into 2021. Our balance sheet is strong: no debts, no borrowings with healthy assets mostly as investments with U Ethical. We received two bequests this year; both have already been invested in U Ethical and we are seeing good returns on them. We have been keeping tabs on our investments and they are performing well. Financially, we are in a good position.

Questions:

Ms Lisa Carey: In the budget interest is rated at only \$10,000 and queried why we have such a conservative estimate when last year we received some \$25,000 interest.

Treasurer: The budget was drafted late last year, and we opted for a more conservative figure, however, current earnings for the last 6 months indicate that the interest will be significantly higher.

Executive Officer: Recently we formed a Finance Committee and they moved towards a three stage investment package. There is \$100,000 in the Cash Portfolio, \$500,000 in the Australian Equities (6-6.5%), and the latest bequest of \$600,000 in an international equity fund under the guidance of U Ethical and the Treasurer's advice. Finance Committee expect a growth figure of around 8% going forward.

Moved Mr Ashok Jacob, Seconded Ms Lisa Carey that the Conference accepts the President's, Executive Officer's and Treasurer's reports. CARRIED.

(v) Faith and Order Commission

Rev Roxanne Addley spoke to her report.

2020 was very productive with Zoom central to the Commission's ability to communicate and thanked Fr Kevin Lenehan of Catholic Theological College (CTC) for facilitating Zoom and face to face meetings. Participation rates quite high. Main focus of the past 15 months was on the Voluntary Assisted Dying legislation.

Faith and Order was asked to review the Australian Churches Covenanting Together documentation. We spent some time on this document and held a workshop in early July. We were happy with the workshop's content although not many participated. We have been reflecting on what lockdowns have meant both personally and among our worshipping congregations. This has been very helpful for the Commission.

Rev Dr Sandy Yule spoke to the Voluntary Assisted Dying report. Some 4 years ago we foresaw this legislation would prove divisive for the churches. We gathered responses that had been made public and they were diverse. The media but also our own receptions focused only on the disagreements. We focused on the theological tenets expounded in the responses and found every response was very similar at the basic faith level - we view life as a gift from God and that suicide rejects that gift. Pastorally, emphasis lies upon palliative care with respect for the way each person faces up to their own death. The greatest divergence was on points of public policy, the different viewpoints taken of what the legislation allows etc. The difference lies at the points where one church views suicide as akin or not, to voluntary assisted dying.

Questions:

Archbishop Peter Comensoli: We need a common voice at Parliamentary and Regulatory levels. There is a tendency at those levels to play one position off over another in order to claim some sort of legitimacy. Although the issue of suicide is very important, the report does not fully address the giftedness of life from God.

Rev Yule: It is important to know that the gift of life from God is not eternal but a gift of time. It is an issue we struggle with in our time living. The recognition of our mortality is something we shouldn't have to rationalise further

Bruce Charles: Does "gift of life" consider the gift of modern medicine?

Rev Yule: This has not been looked at, it doesn't show up in the church responses. The point is pertinent when seeking to extend the life of those who are ill. Spiritually there are many facets to the question, including the right to refuse medical treatment which honours the Christian understanding that our lives are in the hands of God.

- *Rev Ian Smith:* This discussion might be included as a point for further discussion in the upcoming Faith and Order meetings.

- *Rev Ian Weeks:* Focused on Creation and the tools it has provided us in furthering advancements in medicine, but also noted how destructive we are of Creation in the way we live our lives and in the way we work.

- *Fr Shenouda Boutros:* How do we understand illness itself. We have come to view illness and suffering as an evil to be avoided. Is it an evil or can we come to view it as a vehicle for our sanctification, our holiness, our *theosis*.

- *Mr David Schütz:* Has the conversation changed since the pandemic? A lot of the pandemic conversation is on keeping the very weakest of our community safe and alive; there have been times when this has sharply contrasted with the discussions we had been

having with voluntary assisted dying in the past.

Rev Yule: The pandemic has had little effect on the discussion, but since it involves public policy it highlights the inconsistencies in public policy.

Living Faiths Commission *Dr Ian Fry spoke to his report*

Ian noted that the past few years have been marked by more difficulties than successes in interfaith. Without political and industrial leadership, communal tension will continue to rise. The Christian faith will have to reassess its relationships with its Abrahamic partners, the other major faiths and philosophies globally. The global crisis will not abate and cannot be resolved with either political or military posturing. The Church will have to struggle theologically with covenantal revelations of God's relationships with all humanity. We might appear to be stable in Australia, but global pressures will undermine that stability and we must remain proactive in building plans and programs that can prevent crises from enveloping us.

One step is to review the Living Faiths Commission's structure and look at its resources. We must look at how Council can co-operate with Faith Communities Council of Victoria and other bodies, with a view to establishing a Multifaith Centre for the whole of greater Melbourne which was mooted some ten years ago.

Questions

Ian Weeks: Had great pleasure writing to Dr Fry on behalf of his representation of the Uniting Church on this Commission and thanked him for that.

Professor Abdullah Saaed (Professor of Islamic Studies at University of Melbourne) in the last month and Dvir Abramovich (Chair of Jewish Studies at University of Melbourne) have agreed to join with Ian Weeks and Sean Winter from Pilgrim College in an Annual Lecture series entitled "Religion in the University". Jewish and Islamic members will be participating in the planning of the series and speaking at the lecture series. The Sikh, Hindu and Buddhist communities will also be invited to participate.

Social Questions Commission *Rev Ian Smith spoke to his report.*

Social Questions Commission faces difficulties defining itself: a group of colleagues or a group of church people? The past 3-5 years has seen the Commission run as the former. Structural changes at a number of our churches has seen a number of positions no longer existing and the Commission finds itself in a hiatus as it thinks through a new way forward. Rev Ian asked Conference to think who they might know that would like to be invited to the Commission.

Rev Ian noted that he was Secretariat to the 3 Commissions. He thanked all Commissions members, all enrich Council and their respective Commissions.

Rev Ian acknowledged the following Social Questions Commission members:

- Mr Peter Hudson (Catholic). Peter led the Commission very well for several years but has had to retire from his membership
- Mr Mark Clarke (Catholic) who was Executive Officer of Catholic Social Justice also has had to retire from his membership to the Commission

In addition, the Executive Officer thanked the following current members of the Commission who continue to work for the Commission in trying circumstances:

- Mr Mark Zirnsak (Uniting Church – Justice and International Mission)
- Scott Smallacombe (The Salvation Army) social worker and policy writer
- Rev'd Gordon Preece (Anglican – Ethos)

We have been trying to maintain 3 activities:

* *Palm Sunday March*: Rev Ian continues to sit on the organising committee for this annual event involving some 100 community organisations of which some 50-60 are Christian communities. This year, we had some 3-4000 people marching. We were commended by the Police Officer in charge for taking all the appropriate COVIDSafe measures. The march proceeded to Lincoln Park at Carlton where 6 refugees are still being held after 18months.

* We have been working with *Anti-Poverty Week* (aligned with International Day for the Eradication of Poverty) which will be held from 17-23 October, 2021.

* *Reconciliation with our First Peoples*. Sorry Day (26 May, 2021) and NAIDOC Week (4-11 July, 2021).

No questions were asked of report.

Moved Rev Ian Cayzer, Seconded Dcn Joseph Leach that all reports be accepted. CARRIED.

Rev Ian Cayzer noted that Dr Ian Fry's wife, Lynn, died recently. The President conveyed on behalf of the VCC condolences and prayers to Dr Fry.

Moved Rev Ian Cayzer, Seconded Dcn Joseph Leach that the VCC sends its prayers and condolences to Dr Ian Fry over the passing of his wife Lynn. CARRIED.

Break

The meeting broke for a 10 minute's break at 10.50am. Participants returned at 11am.

(vi) Reports by Organisations

Emergencies Ministry – included a welcome to new CEO Kellie Shewring

VCC Emergencies Ministry's CEO Kellie Shewring was invited to speak to her report. Ms Shewring thanked Rev Ian Smith for being such a strong pillar of support. Rev Ian proves to be a mentor as Ms Shewring's journey as CEO continues.

The past 12 months have been a great growth phase for VCC EM. COVID-19 forced EM to think differently, and a complete digital transformation was made possible due to a successful grant application from Emergency Management Victoria.

Questions:

Prof. Jane Freemantle: Spoke with VCC EM yesterday discussing how VCC EM volunteers were tasked with calling people to see how they were coping with the lockdowns. Many people appreciated the calls and appreciated VCC EM organising supplies such as nappies to be delivered to those in need. Prof. Freemantle wondered why this has not continued since the ministry provided was so welcomed.

Ms Shewring: The callout campaign first occurred in May 2020 in relation to the Flemington towers lockdown. As part of DHHS's Community and Social Isolation Program – VCC EM was not a part of that campaign but during June's severe weather events VCC EM engaged in a similar activity and is something VCC EM is keen on.

Dcn Mark Kelly: The telephone callout was a great initiative. He and others have spent a

lot of time in recent weeks providing outreach at the La Trobe weather event.

Ms Shewring: The event meant 5 weeks' worth of outreach but volunteers rely on their own phones when deployed. The CEO envisions this changing once the Microsoft Access database migrates to Microsoft Azure, meaning a shift to VOIP telephony.

Rev Ian Cayzer: As a Regional Co-Ordinator for VCC EM, informed Conference that EM does not self-deploy. An activation mostly comes from an LGA, Victoria Police or from Department of Health. This means there are limitations to what it can do.

Ian Weeks: La Trobe Municipality was once resistant to VCC EM involvement but now is increasingly supportive of it.

Bruce Charles: Was involved with VCC EM from approximately 2000-2012 and VCC EM's role was enshrined in the legislation on Emergency Response. At the Anglican Synod of Gippsland, it was said that this was no longer the case. Are we no longer part of the Emergency Response Act? How do we get others to volunteer?

Ms Shewring: Took Bruce's second question on notice and will liaise with Bruce off-line. It is not true that VCC EM have been omitted from the State Emergency Management Plan. VCC EM's role has expanded and is now lead agency in psycho-social support and emotional spiritual care. VCC EM is the only agency representing ecumenical and multifaith participation. Of the 79 municipalities in the State, VCC EM participate in 77 of them.

Archbishop Philip Freier: In relation to Human Resource planning and due to confidentiality reasons, the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne does not know who is accredited with VCC EM. Will this information be made available to the Churches to know who of their clergy are volunteering with VCC EM?

Ms Shewring: took this question on notice and would put it to the team on Monday for discussion. There could be a letter sent out and ask for permission to receive this information in accordance with Privacy Law. If all is good to go, then Ms Shewring would have no hesitation in releasing this information.

The President thanked the VCC EM CEO Ms Kellie Shewring for her report and acknowledged the report as having been read.

vii. Reports by Associate Members

KORUS Connect (ACCESS)

No representative present at today's Conference. Report had been previously circulated to Conference. KORUS Connect expressed its thankfulness for our support.

Australian Student Christian Movement

Rev Dr Sandy Yule was invited to speak to the already circulated report. ASCM is at a fairly low state and there is hope for better things next year.

World Day of Prayer

No representative present at today's Conference. Report had been previously circulated to Conference. World Day of Prayer expressed its thankfulness for our support.

All reports taken as read.

4. GOVERNANCE MATTERS

(a) Incoming President of VCC – Dr Graeme Blackman AO

The Chair announced that the next President of the VCC is Dr Graeme Blackman AO (Anglican Diocese of Melbourne) and was invited to introduce himself to Conference. Dr Blackman paid respects to the traditional owners of the land where he is currently located (northern Queensland), the Ngaro People, and personally commits himself to furthering the cause of Reconciliation around Australia.

Dr Blackman confirmed his commitment and appreciation of the work of VCC. He has past taken part in various activities Council has hosted. As University of Divinity Chancellor, Dr Blackman has met many who are engaged ecumenically and commits himself to it. The VCC was a driving force in 1910 in creating the Melbourne College of Divinity and there is a strong relationship between the VCC and University of Divinity.

The Chair thanked Dr Blackman for his introduction.

The Chair called for a ratification of that nomination via a unanimous show of hands on Zoom.

Fr Shenouda Boutros will continue as Immediate Past President to allow for Dr Blackman's return to Victoria.

(b) Election of Standing Committee Members

The Executive Officer explained the process of the elections for the Standing Committee. The Constitution requires the Executive Officer to write to all the Member Churches seeking nominations. At the close of the nominations period, a fortnight ago, seven (7) nominations were received for the seven positions available.

- Rev Denise Liersch (Moderator UCA)
- Rev. Rachel McDougall (Anglican Diocese of Melbourne)
- Dcn Joseph Leach (Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne)
- Sieneke Martin (Religious Society of Friends)
- Archiespiscopal Vicar Very Rev Evmenios Vasilopoulos (Greek Orthodox)
- Fr Jacob Joseph (Malankara Syrian Orthodox)
- Assoc. Prof. Dr Nasir Butrous (Chaldean Catholic / ACU):

Co-opted member of the Standing Committee: Mr Daniel Bellis (Greek Orthodox)

Treasurer: Mr Ashok Jacob (Mar Thoma) continues as VCC Treasurer

Moved Dr Max Stephens, seconded Ms Lisa Carey that this Annual General Meeting elect the seven people nominated to positions on the Standing Committee and encourage the Standing Committee to seek to co-opt members for stability within the Standing Committee. CARRIED.

For ecumenical purposes, Archbishop Comensoli noted that Dr Nasir Butrous is not a delegate of the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne but a member and delegate of the Chaldean Catholic Church of Australia, New Zealand and Oceania.

There are 3 fixed positions on Standing Committee: President, Immediate Past President and Treasurer. Furthermore, there are the 7 positions available as already mentioned above, and a further 4 co-options which seek to allow for age, gender and denomination. Standing Committee commit to finding another 3 co-opted members to bring about those balances. We currently have a very diverse and enriched Standing Committee and this will only deepen with Dr Blackman's leadership.

Prof. Jane Freemantle: Suggested Standing Committee look at co-opting someone of Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander background.

Rev Smith: Standing Committee attempted to bring in Rev Glenn Loughrey to sit on Standing Committee and although this did not happen, we are very open to having

someone of First Peoples background sit on Committee.

Archbishop Peter Comensoli: All nominations are Melbournians and suggested we recruit those of regional residency, something befitting Council's name.

(c) Thank you to Fr Shenouda Butrous – End of Term as President

Rev Ian Smith thanked Fr Shenouda for his time as President, one marked by immense disruption. Rev Ian is very thankful to have had Fr Shenouda as President of the VCC during this time, for in him he found a very generous and warm person. A gift will be given to Fr Shenouda in appreciation of his time in leadership of the Council.

Fr Shenouda thanked the VCC, in particular Standing Committee who have worked in trying circumstances yet managed to work cohesively and professionally. He believes the ecumenical movement is a fulfilment that we be one body. It is an essential work that must continue and welcomes the support of Church Leaders in this endeavour. Fr Shenouda thanked Rev Ian for his incredible commitment, passion and dedication to the cause of ecumenism and to Council over the years.

GENERAL BUSINESS

(i) Report on Current Thinking on Priorities Going Forward 2021-2024

Rev Rachel McDougall invited to speak to a report completed by Standing Committee based on setting goals for the VCC for period 2021-2024. Rev'd Rachel acknowledged the work of the other 3 members of the working group *viz.* Sieneke Martin, Fiona Winn and Nasir Butrous. Further work looked at smart goals for the VCC. An online version of the PowerPoint was shared on Zoom and discussed the topics touched upon in the report.

Questions:

Archbishop Peter Comensoli: In building relations with Government and various Government Authorities, significant work could be done to improve our engagement. This is not something that should only be left to the emergencies services area. We have been mainly voicing concerns only through Multicultural Advisory Group and should be expanding our channels of communication.

How do we reach out to other Christian Churches such as Baptists, Pentecostals, Evangelical etc. We need to hear and engage with them not just among ourselves.

Rev'd Rachel: We acknowledge the importance of communication with government and COVID-19 response highlighted this quite clearly. Archbishop Comensoli's questions would be tabled at Standing Committee for discussion.

Rob Nyhuis: Endorsed Archbishop Comensoli's comments on wider inclusion of other Christian Churches into the VCC for a fairer representation of Christian voices. It is important that younger members represent their churches at Council.

Fr Shenouda Boutros: Last year an ecumenical prayer was held online and each church had a part to play and this did include some of those churches. One issue might be that they work independently of each other. Rob Nyhuis acknowledged that but added that if we talk with their State Councils this might prove a tipping point to get more to come on board.

Bruce Charles: One way we could get more to join would be through the various local Ministers' Associations and Interchurch Councils.

Rev Ian: One of the ministries of the VCC over the last 3-4 years has been to support local Church Councils. They explore ways of doing church together, and one of the many phone calls Rev Ian receives is whether local Baptist or Pentecostal churches can be invited. The grassroots level of doing church together has seen much collaboration in emergency responses, Palm Sunday Marches etc. *Fr Shenouda Boutros:* re Communication with government. The Victorian Church Leaders Network is very active there and Fr Shenouda hopes this will continue.

Rev Dr Sandy Yule: Globally we have the Global Christian Forum which builds trust between leaders of the whole Christian family and includes Evangelicals, Pentecostals etc. They bring people together and listen together. Taking that sort of working example, we can begin engaging the other Christian churches.

Peter Bickley: Having other Christian churches on board would be very important.

Rev Ian Cayzer: Asked that Rev'd Rachel McDougall's presentation be circulated amongst the delegates so we can study it at our leisure. The Executive Officer agreed to circulate the document.

Bruce Charles: re Archbishop Comensoli's point on regional representation on Council. There are difficulties travelling to Melbourne when one considers carbon footprints, might technology get the regional areas more involved. Also: what is God saying to us throughout this Pandemic? The message might be that there is a distinct lack of equality. Rev Ian Smith took these questions on notice.

The Chair: Thanked Rev'd Rachel and the Standing Committee sub-group. We have been working on these priorities for the last 18 months or so and going forward it helps with our goals and strategies and thanked all who participated.

New Business – Taken on Notice

The following was taken on notice:

i - Adibeh Abdo-Attia: VCC and the Church don't seem to have a voice either at SBS or at ABC. Was offended that Ramadan was discussed lengthily on Radio National, yet Christianity was attacked by Mr Waleed Aly during Orthodox Easter. Rev Ian took this as noted and will explore the question going forward.

ii - Ms Lisa Carey: Presented a motion from the VCC to NSW over the COVID-19 crisis that is currently afflicting the State there.

Moved Ms Lisa Carey, Seconded Rev Ian Cayzer, that the Victorian Council of Churches acknowledges the extremely difficult time our sisters and brothers in New South Wales are facing and will continue to face in the coming weeks and we assure them of our prayers and support. CARRIED.

iii - Rev Ian Cayzer: Noting that Rev Ian Smith's term finishes in December Standing Committee will need to look at what follows in 2022. How will this be managed? A consequence of 2020-21 with Rev Ian being the only person employed is that a lot of his energy is spent on administrative tasks. Might employing a new Executive Officer under a part-time arrangement so that there is a little money left over also allow for a part-time administrative officer to be employed. This would allow the Executive Officer to focus on leadership rather than on administration.

President: Standing Committee is discussing this. We might employ a part-time Executive Officer (hours not yet finalised) and a part-time admin assistant.

Sieneke Martin: We have to look at all that within the context of our income. Lowering contributions from Member Churches has been of great concern.

Dr Ian Fry: Expressed disappointment that we must look at employing a part-time Executive Officer. This would be a retrograde step and Council's status would fall dramatically not just with our Member Churches but also with our affiliates and the general media's view. It is better to trim our expectations of the Executive Officer and keep the full-time position rather than employ 2 people part-time. If we can't raise the money, then this reflects poorly on the Member Churches.

Rev Dr Sandy Yule: There are many on Conference who are retired and would be capable of volunteering for any admin roles required.

President: Informed Conference if anyone has comments or questions regarding issue delegates can contact Fr Shenouda or Standing Committee.

Rev Ian Smith: At around this time we would all move into a sacred space and begin a service of liturgy for the rotation of Presidents. Standing Committee is hoping that later in the year we can gather for a liturgical moment where we can acknowledge the outgoing and incoming Presidents.

(e) CLOSING PRAYERS

The Most Reverend Peter A. Comensoli was invited to close the meeting with a blessing prayer for Fr Shenouda Boutros, Rev Ian Smith and Dr Graeme Blackman. The prayer was taken from the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity for 2022.

The 2021 AGM was concluded at 12:10pm.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Since my appointment as President of the Victorian Council of Churches in 2021, it has been my privilege to work closely with the members of our Standing Committee, members of the Victorian Church Leaders Network, members of our Commissions, our Executive Officer and many others who contribute to the life and work of the VCC. The Covid19 challenges to our life and mission, outlined by my esteemed predecessor Fr Shenouda Boutros in his Report to the last VCC Annual General Meeting, have continued relentlessly. As I write, we discern a sense of gradual return to normality, but our world and our churches have been irrevocably changed in the way we operate as community.

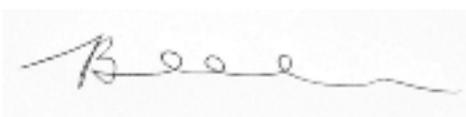
During the year under review the Standing Committee has completed its development of the new Strategic Plan for VCC, we have been involved in a number of ecumenical gatherings including the

Holding the Light Lament held in November at St Peter's Anglican Church Melbourne, the annual Palm Sunday march and connections with Christian and other faith leaders. More recently we have joined in the #Setthemfree initiative in support of and advocacy for refugees held in detention in Australia and participated in a ceremony acknowledging the eight hours movement. Our Executive Officer has represented the VCC on a number of advisory boards and committees and the VCC has continued to provide support to our member churches in an environment of constantly changing Covid regulations.

Our VCC Emergencies Ministry continues its fine work at times of disaster and major challenge, providing unparalleled support to communities and individuals in crisis. I warmly thank the team at VCCEM, so ably led by CEO Kellie Shewring. Indeed, it was my pleasure during a recent conversation with our State Attorney General and Emergency Services Minister, Jaclyn Symes, to hear some very positive comments about the work of VCCEM following their deployment to Northern NSW during the recent floods.

Our Executive Officer Rev Ian Smith completed his time with VCC at the end of 2021. In recent months, Ian has graciously assisted VCC in a consulting capacity during the period of recruitment of our new Executive Officer. On behalf of the Council, I wish to place on record our thanks to Ian for his long period of service to VCC as a former President, as a long serving member of our Executive and Standing Committee, and as our Executive Officer. I wish him all the very best for the future.

It is my very great pleasure at this Annual General Meeting to introduce our newly appointed Executive Officer. Rev Sandy Boyce comes to us from Adelaide where she has been in ministry in a city church for the last twelve years. She comes with a wide ministry experience, including a deep appreciation of ecumenical matters and considerable pastoral experience. We welcome Sandy to this significant area of ministry.



Dr Graeme L Blackman AO

EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT 2021

2021 saw VCC continue to operate under the pandemic restrictions that meant that for the majority of the year the office facilities weren't able to be fully utilised with the Executive Officer spending significant amounts of the year operating from home, utilising a number of online platforms. VCC also continued to operate without a dedicated Administration person. As Executive Officer, the task of ensuring both the ecumenical endeavours and networking whilst maintaining the necessary administration roles particularly in the situation of the lockdowns proved difficult and at times frustrating.

The VCC, like so many other organisations, continued to need to be flexible during the uncertainties of 2021 as it continued to offer ministry, in ways that largely didn't involve gathering people in person to reflect, discuss or pray but rather virtually.

Hence 2021 saw the maintenance of two of the roles VCC adopted in 2020.

- i. The need to maintain our online presence. Standing Committee met on line monthly, The AGM was held online in July and the Commissions all worked online. Our online presence enabled VCC to maintain relationships with both Government Agencies and departments as well as the other Faith Communities and community sector organisations within Victoria.
- ii. The VCC continued to be a sounding board and resource for those member churches from CaLD communities or those with less infrastructure:
 - (a) through enabling churches to discover how to deliver liturgies or pastoral care online. Many of these new adaptations are still in practise as we re-enter life after lockdown.
 - (b) being a place of information regarding the changing restriction requirements. This role particularly important to non-Western members of Council who often found the language in roadmaps or pronouncements confusing or so generic as to need interpretation.

2021 saw the completion of Fr Shenouda's time as President. A time encompassed largely by the pandemic and Governments responses to it. The Standing Committee wishes to express its gratitude to Fr Shenouda for his leadership over his term. In July at the AGM, the VCC presidency passed to the Anglican Synod of Melbourne, who provided Dr Graeme L Blackman OA as their person. Graeme has led the Council as we have emerged and then gone back into restrictions and as 2022 unfolds without restrictions, his leadership is greatly appreciated. Graeme has led the process of securing a new Executive Officer for the Council, with a successful candidate being appointed in March 2022. The new Executive Officer is the Rev Sandy Boyce who comes to VCC with extensive experience in both ecumenism and local church life.

As Executive Officer, I am particularly grateful of the way both Fr Shenouda and Graeme Blackman ensured we were able to be in contact weekly through a variety of ways to ensure that communication and direction was maintained and I was enabled fulfil the task required.

2021 drew to a close with both an uncertainty as to what 2022 would entail but also

excitement as VCC enters this new phase of ministry under the leadership of new Executive Officer, Rev Sandy Boyce, and the Standing Committee, as they bring the strategic plan in life focusing on the three priorities of Community, engagement and witness.

Year in Review:

Council believes that in conjunction with its Commissions the VCC remains a critical resource for the Churches across Victoria as they seek to live out the calling to be disciples of the Risen Christ.

i. Peak Body

Council has throughout 2021 sought through our engagement with Government, Government Departments, peak bodies within the Community Sector and other peak faith bodies to bring a Christian voice to the public sphere. This was particularly so in the latter half of the year as we sought to, through Victorian Church Leaders Network raise concerns that arose from two contentious pieces of legislation that were put before State Parliament. Whilst our engagement and input didn't change the legislation or allay concerns nevertheless the Christian voice and presence was present in the public discourse surrounding these laws.

Council continues to have a presence on 'Multi Faith Advisory Group' to Government where the Christian narrative and perspectives on topics of Social Policy and community inclusion, the Prevention of Violence against Women and the development of child friendly places of worship are heard.

Council also is working with other Faith communities to ensure that we have a whole of community understanding.

ii. Sacred Space

2021 saw some consolidation in the relationships between member churches. The Victorian Christian Leaders Network continues to meet, welcoming a number of new Church Leaders into the network. The circumstances of 2021 has continued to the church leaders to seek to work closer together on a number of matters that have whole of church context or consequence. Whilst it's true to say that formal, structured Ecumenism is not a high priority, collaboration on matters of mutual importance is occurring. This is particularly so in the area of Church and State relations.

Here are some signs of hope:

- The Church Leaders' gatherings throughout 2021 where some 16 senior church leaders gathered and committed to exploring ways of supporting each other and working together.
- The 'Holding the Light' Ecumenical Service of Lament held during the International 16 days of 'Say no to violence' continues to offer an opportunity for Christians to gather, lament and commit afresh to working towards zero domestic violence. St Peter's Anglican Church in East Melbourne again hosted the gathering which was able to be a hybrid with some gathering in person whilst others joined via online means. This service continues to grow and broaden with different member churches participating.

- During 2021 VCC continued to engage with a number of wider ecumenical partners, VCC Emergencies Ministry and our national partners, NCCA and Act for Peace.
- During 2021 the VCC maintained its involvement with *Intergen* (a new iteration of VCCE, Victorian Council of Christian Education) – through the presence of the VCC Executive Officer being a member of the Board of *Intergen*. VCC also publicises the resources available and training opportunities to the member churches through the e-newsletter.
- A renewed awareness of VCC as the VCC continued to be a resource hub for many churches as they maintained church online. The sharing of resources by many churches via their online platforms was a gift to the wider churches. Catalyst

This strategy builds on the premise that there are great resources and potential amongst the Member Churches. Through our networks and contacts, Council tries to bring ministries and people together.

The VCC through its Executive Officer continues to be a strategic and key participant in the movement across Victoria to implement programs and change of attitudes and behaviours within Faith Communities concerning Domestic Violence. As a member of the Multifaith Advisory Group's Reference Group, VCC is a participant in a Participatory Action Project to develop resources and model community change within Faith organisations.

Through our partnership with Commission for Children and Young People, the VCC continues to be at the forefront of creating safe environments for our young people. The online training portal continues to attract people seeking to be educated in the application of the 7 Child Safe Standards, Reportable Conduct and Mandatory Reporting.

During 2022, there is both need and potential to enhance this ministry as Victoria adopts the national standards for Child Safety. This will require an updating and refreshment of the website. Currently the Website is used by the major teaching institutes in Victoria as they prepare their students for child oriented work.

iii. Advocate

This strategy prioritises the Council being a voice for the voiceless or an organisation that stands with the marginalised. The strategy adopted is that we work in partnership with other organisations within each sector.

In particular, over 2021 the focus was on Refugees. Refugees continue to be a focus as our Federal Government continues to maintain an inhumane policy towards those seeking refuge within Australia. As a member of Refugee Action Network (RAN) – in particular planning and leading the Palm Sunday March.

During the latter period of 2021 and into 2022 there has been a new endeavour called 'Set them Free' which has a focus on those trapped in Hotel detention around Australia – I'm happy to report that at end of March 90 % of those in Hotel detention had been

released into the community.

iv. Good Governance

In parallel with the ministry strategies, Council continues to apply due diligence to its governance structures to ensure that Council is a good steward of that which we have inherited from the ecumenical family who have gone before.

During the year 2021, the VCC received two substantial bequests. The largess of these gifts when added to our reserves ensures that the VCC is financially secure into the medium future.

To ensure good financial management the VCC has engaged with U Ethical where our reserves are spread across a monetary trust, Australian Equities and International equities.

Through changes made to financial and Executive Officer reports, and continuous updating of our Risk Register, Standing Committee is seeking to meet all the requirements of ACNC and CAV reporting.

We have continued to seek better communication with our members, both Churches and individuals through a number of formats:

- i. Facebook: www.facebook.com/viccouncilchurches/
- ii. Website: www.vcc.org.au
- iii. Monthly newsletter: to subscribe email vcc@vcc.org.au

In conclusion

This is my last report. It seemed right to both myself and the Standing Committee that 2021 would see the completion of my time in leadership with the VCC. These past 8 years as Executive Officer have been a humbling and rewarding time as I have had the privilege to meet, share and worship with our great family of our God in all our colours, shapes, traditions and understandings.

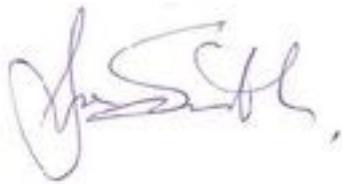
My time with VCC in general encompasses some 30 years, initially as a delegate and Commission member, then as a member of the Executive of Council, now called the Standing Committee. I have served as both a Vice President and as President. During these last 8 years, I have learnt much as I have worked alongside you all and am deeply grateful for the richness of the gift of the breadth and depth I have come to know, appreciate and celebrate as the Body of Christ, the visible expression of the Kingdom here on earth. It's my prayer that in some tangible ways I have been able to enrich this journey and experience for others.

It would be remiss of me not to note my deep appreciation of the leadership of all the presidents I have worked with, Mrs Joan Pye, Monsignor Peter Kenny, Pastor Gordon Wegener, Archdeacon Philip Newman, Major Kerryn Roberts, Rev Jason Kioa, Mr Frank Stuart, Mr Ashok Jacob, Bishop Peter Danaher, Fr Shenouda Boutros and most recently Dr Graeme Blackman. Their wisdom, grace, humour and tenacity have enabled VCC and myself to undertake ministry through these past years. Apologies to anyone I have overlooked.

I too note the privilege of working with the General Secretaries of my time; Rev Doug Dargaville, Rev Robert Gribben, Rev Hamish Christie-Johnson, Ms Maureen Postma, Mr Theo Mackaay. Each brought their unique contributions and insights and encouraged me in my ecumenical journey.

Finally, let me say a big thank you to our Standing Committee members; they have given of themselves in many ways to ensure the ongoing ability of the VCC to continue to enable the church's life and witness within the State of Victoria

To all associated with VCC, thank you. To work with so many wonderful Christians seeking a clearer expression of the unified body of our Lord, leads me to constantly giving thanks for the graciousness, creativity and generosity of God's people.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ian Smith', with a large, stylized initial 'I'.

Rev Ian Smith, Acting Executive Officer, Victorian Council of Churches

COMMISSIONS

Faith and Order Commission Report 2022

The VCC Faith and Order Commission continues to meet regularly. Our meetings during COVID times have been mostly via Zoom. In 2021, we met on five occasions.

Our most significant event since our last report has been the workshop in July of 2021 which was part of our work on the NCCA document, 'Australian Churches Covenanting Together'. This was a mixed media event, with a small face-to-face gathering at the Catholic Theological College, with other participants gathering via Zoom.

The Workshop was called "Covenanting Together in a Covid World" and sought to provide participants with an opportunity for listening, learning and sharing and exploring new ways of covenanting together as churches, of being the Body of Christ in new ways. The keynote speaker was Dr Antonia Pizzey who gave a profound lecture about "Deepening the Spiritual in the Ecumenical". She explored Spiritual Ecumenism by looking at the inward work we need to do to address in our own institutions, attending to our own wounds, the soul of the ecumenical movement and ecumenical activity that focuses on internal conversion. Inspired by John 17:21 "that they may all be one just as you Father are in me and I in you", Dr Pizzey unpacked Ecumenism as a spiritual task, as the search for a renewed spiritual ecumenism grounded in the primary relationship between Christ and us.

The Workshop also included speakers Rev Ray Williamson who provided an historic context to ecumenism in Australia, and Liz Stone General Secretary NCCA who reflected on the future of ecumenism and viewed ecumenism as a movement not a destination framed by *Koinonia* – communion – union with God in Christ Jesus through the Holy Spirit.

From our previous report:

We are close to finalising our collation of responses of VCC member churches to the Victorian Assisted Dying legislation. We found a diversity of approaches to the pastoral challenges posed by this legislation. We think that there would be value in publishing a version of what we have received from churches on our web site, partly as a reference for chaplains and other church members with a pastoral engagement in this area and partly as a basis for further theological and socio-political reflection.

The other focus of our work has been to share information about how our churches have been coping with the current restrictions on gathered worship and meetings in general. We have noted that there is widespread use of 'live-streaming', of online resources for home worship and the use of Zoom for meetings of many kinds. We have noted the various approaches to eucharistic worship, from live-streaming a eucharistic celebration, to a Zoom event with the possibility of more interaction between the participants (perhaps with people at home providing their own elements), with some churches choosing to 'fast' for the time being. We have begun a conversation about what theological questions we should be asking about virtual worship.

The membership of the Commission continues to be reviewed and we are currently seeking new representation from the Greek Orthodox and Coptic Orthodox churches.

VCC COMMISSION ON SOCIAL QUESTIONS

The continuing Pandemic with its associated restrictions made gathering in person impossible and our attempts to meet online weren't as successful as hoped, though we were able to stay abreast of what member churches were doing.

During 2021, the Social Question Commission maintained an involvement through its members on a number of justice groups, both within Victoria and Nationally. These groups being Refugee Action Network, Anti-Gambling Task Force, Say No to Violence.

Members also participated in Refugee Week activities (in June), NAIDOC activities (in July) and Week to Eradicate Poverty (in October)

In 2021, the Palm Sunday Peace March was able to be held with some 5000 attending. The Executive Officer of VCC was a key note speaker at March. The Refugee Action Network did manage a number of online gatherings to show support and were active in the campaign to release the remaining men in hotel detention within our State. These activities included gathering in Lincoln Square Carlton at the foot of the Park Hotel to offer support to those held within.

The members have reconvened for 2022 and the foci for 2022 will be:

- i. maintaining our watching brief on matters of social importance within the State
- ii. preparing material for Victorian Church Leaders Network in readiness for discussions with political parties in the lead up to State Elections to be held in the later part of 2022.

The Social Question Commission is seeking to broaden its membership and is keen to hear from either individuals or member churches who have people both interested and engaged in Social Questions.

Rev Ian Smith, Secretary to Social Questions

Commission on Living Faiths and Dialogue (LFDC)

Normally the Report would have been presented by Dr Ian Fry, as Chair of the Commission. As he has stepped down, Rev Ian Smith, as VCC Acting Executive Officer, requested me to step in.

I am unaware of who the members of this Commission were earlier, but during my time of attendance Dr Ian Fry (UCA), Fr Edmund Chia (Catholic), Ms Leigh Fisher (UCA), Fr Ruwan Palapathwala (Anglican), myself (Catholic) and Rev Ian Smith, ex officio, formed the Commission.

I also report that I was recently invited, as were the other two Commissions, to meet with the VCC Standing Committee (ST) and share reflections on

- * how the relationship between the Commission and the ST can be strengthened;
- * the helpfulness of the mandates (or not)
- * how the ST and LFDC can collaborate in the three areas identified by the Strategic Plan.

LFDC discussions have recognised that connecting with a pluralistic, multi-faith community is a vital function of the VCC in striving to be relevant to that community. The LFDC offers a significant pathway to interact with such a society continually shaped within a zeitgeist reflecting *inter alia* (among other things) the place of faiths and diversity. A Commission so guided can be regarded as fulfilling a prophetic role for the VCC.

The LFDC, however, has been hamstrung in its ability to function optimally. The pandemic has obviously been a major disruptor that has seriously impacted some of the planned activities.

There are structural difficulties, too, that debilitate the Commission. The membership is an area that needs to be looked at with concern. An unstable membership is not conducive to doing systematic work.

Regarding the Commission's relationship with the ST, there appeared to have been none or very little, which means there was minimal sharing of communication and mutual inspiration.

During the final meetings of the Commission some time was given to exploring a version of a Multi-faith Centre. There were preliminary conversations with a well-regarded Multi-faith Centre in the UK regarding possible ways forward. These can be resumed anytime.

The following are suggested as ways to enhance the functioning of the LFDC:

1. Members to be sought by the VCC, in consultation with the Commission and Member Churches, but not left to the Commission Chair or members entirely to do this.
2. While the Strategic Report well delineates the need for relationship building with Churches through meetings and other avenues, it overlooks the need for engagement in the public square. An awareness of such an emphasis would assist the LFDC greatly in its interaction with an evolving, contemporary environment. A Multi-faith Centre of some description would assist this, given the prospect of eventual public focus initiatives. In turn, this would help improve the visibility of the VCC itself.
3. We need to be creative in attracting and engaging youth on our issues and concerns.

4. An active Commission would help link with groups such as the Columbans, and others.
5. The positive relations that exist with community interfaith and related groups via the Commission's own work or through ecumenical linkages should be strengthened.
6. The leadership shown by Dr Ian Fry as Chair, and Rev Ian Smith, the outgoing Executive Officer, is gratefully acknowledged, as is the contribution by LFDC members.

Thank you for the opportunity to report to you.

Caesar D'Mello, LFDC. 2 May 2022

VCC ENGAGEMENT IN MULTI FAITH

Over the year 2021, the Victorian Council of Churches through its Executive Officer and the Living Faith Commission have attempted to engage in dialogue and projects with the other peak faith organisations. VCC has primarily worked with the Faith Communities Council of Victoria and the Jewish Christian Muslim Association (JCMA)

A highlight for 2021 was being able to attend the Premier's Iftar in May held between lockdowns and a Two day online conference held by JCMA exploring *Hope in the Midst... Faith engaging with life*.

The restrictions imposed by the Covid pandemic made meeting in person very difficult and so meetings and dialogue went online.

However...

Victorian Council of Churches continues to be an active member of the Multi faith Advisory Group - a body of religious leaders that works with Victorian Multicultural Commission to engage with Government around policy and projects. A current priority is the eradication of domestic violence from within Faith communities.

Victorian Council of Churches also maintains a strong relationship with the Commission for Children and Young People, working closely in the training of Faith Communities in the compliance with the 7 standards, Reportable Conduct and Mandatory Reporting.

Note that from July 2022 the Victorian Standards are being expanded in line with the National Agreed Standards so work on updating our training website need to be undertaken.

Ian Smith, Acting Executive Officer

VCC EMERGENCIES MINISTRY (VCCEM)

VCCEM continue to provide excellent support and service to affected communities, Local Government municipalities and the Department of Families, Fairness & Housing (DFFH). Towards the second year of my tenure as CEO I am pleased to confirm that the organisation continues to grow from strength to strength and as the tables and graphs demonstrate in this report it has the capability and capacity, together with the necessary operational arrangements to respond to any request for service. In the last 18 months VCC-EM has had the most requests for Outreach and Secondary Impact Assessments in the history of the organization and, most recently, completed its' historic milestone with the first interstate deployment to the Northern NSW Floods collaborating with our AVECA Partner Disaster Recovery Chaplaincy Network (DRCN) which is part of the Uniting Church Synod of NSW and ACT.



Operations

A total of 63 incident activations from January 2021 to April 2022:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surf Coast Residential House Fire • Lifespring Church -Murder Suicide Incident • Aircraft Crash - Mt Disappointment • Coburg Stabbing Murder, Community Outreach • DRCN Deployment - NSW Floods • Whittlesea - Happy Sad Man Event • Monwell AFL Footy Match • Rutherglen House flood • Central Goldfields House Damage - Mini Tornado • House Fire, Beard St, Armstrong Creek • Warburton Murder Suicide incident • Lovell Court House Fire, Geelong • House Damage, Mooroolbark • House fire Whittlesea • House fire - Farmers Road Dumbalk • House fire Central Goldfields • Humphries Rd House Fire - Frankston • Moorabool Shire-June Storm Outreach • Mancello Drive Housefire, Warribee • Wellington Shire Council Outreach • House fire, Ona tree Rd, Whittlesea • Red Hill BBQ - Storm Event • Mornington Peninsula SIA Oct Storm Event • Moorabool BBQ events - June Storm recovery • Endeavour Hills Homicide • House fire Grovedale • House Fire Wonthaggi • Macedon Ranges Community Drop-In Meetings • Petrie St Homicide, Frankston • Grassmere Housefire - Moyne • Bessiebelle house fire - Moyne | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Torquay skydiving fatality • Leonard St, Dandenong House Fire Fatality • Ariele Apartments • Tallarook House Fire • Outreach Visit - Wellington • House fire - Norlane, Geelong • Cardinia Community Meeting - Emerald • Rosedale Caravan Park Outreach - Wellington • Yarra Ranges Community Meetings • Wangaratta Shed Fire • Yarra Ranges Outreach • Traralgon Floods and Storms • House Fire - Bass Coast Shire • Storm Event - Macedon Ranges Outreach • Storm Event - Cardinia Shire Cockatoo Centre • Storm Event - Wellington Yarram Centre • Storm Event - Bass Coast Centre - Krowera • Storm Event - Cardinia Shire - Emerald Centre • Lake Bolac House fire • Belfast Aquatic Centre Drowning • Power St / City Rd Vehicle Pedestrian Accident • Skye, Frankston House Fire • Naroghid Housefire • Gippsland Community Information Sessions • Inverleigh Truck Crash • BUNYIP OUTREACH - 2-year Anniversary • Stonnington Business Outreach • Wellington Shire Council Outreach • Angelsea Beach Drowning • Danebin Housefire • Burgess Street Homicide - Tulamarine |
|---|--|

Our Volunteers

While the COVID-19 Pandemic continued to deliver challenges for our service we mitigated the situation well and after the Authorised Worker mandates were issued by the Victorian Government (requiring all staff and Volunteers to be vaccinated) we have over 800 Chaplains available to be deployed!



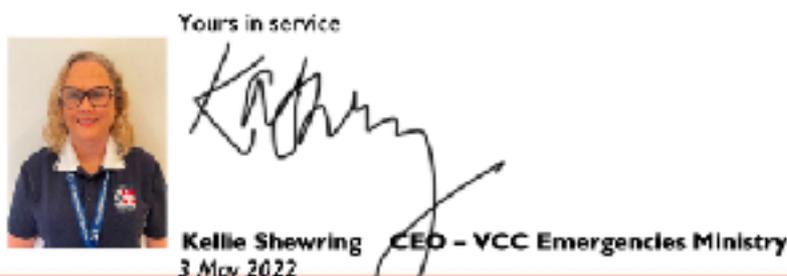
Finance & Governance

VCC EM operates on a Financial-year accrual basis for its accounting standard with no significant variations or events to our approved plan or budget for the period. Other notable activities included:

- Financial Year 2020/21 Audit completed, and all required submissions completed, including ACNC (for our Annual Information Statement (AIS))
- Ongoing financial stability with VCC EM in Year 2 of 5-year funding from DFFH (to FY2024/25)

Other key milestones for VCC EM included securing a further 3-year SLA for the Ambulance Victoria Chaplain Pilot Program which will now have over 50 VCC EM Chaplains provide pastoral care to AV staff across Victoria. In addition, VCC EM were successful in securing a Government Grant to continue our digital transformation journey with the implementation of a new CRM and Volunteer management system and the introduction on a Digital Learning Management System for training delivery.

I look forward to sharing our continued growth and achievements moving forward.



COMPASSION

CARE

COMMUNITY

DIGNITY

HOPE

VICTORIAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES INC.

Registration Number A0036552E

FINANCIAL REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

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**STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE
INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED
31 DECEMBER 2021**

	Not e	202 1	2020
		\$	\$
Revenue	5	905,674	181,155
Expenses			
Executive Salary		92,875	88,475
Casual Staff Salary		4,895	2,310
Staff Superannuation		9,594	5,171
Work Cover Premiums		1,294	1,395
Accounting Fees		2,838	1,640
Audit Fees		2,750	3,500
Bank Charges		129	686
Book Purchases		-	16
Computers – Supply		12,600	-
Conferences & Special Events		82	-
Consultancy		625	-
Contractors		15,511	-
Donations		10	70
Dues & Subscriptions		618	1,460
Equipment < \$1,000		-	188
Equipment Maintenance		-	131
Hospitality		1,899	1,864
Insurance		6,888	3,949
Legal Fees		-	1,370
Office Costs		11,921	25,991
Photocopying & Printing		3,019	3,407
Postage		553	1,408
Promotion & advertising		72	-
Rent		10,952	19,916
Software Costs		2,995	3,794
Stationery		570	1,049

Telephone, Fax, etc.	1,008	3,527
Travel	586	1,065
Other expenses	-	113
Total operating expenses	184,284	172,495
Operating profit/(loss) for the year	721,390	8,660
Other Comprehensive Income:		
Gain/(loss) on the revaluation of investment portfolio	109,710	3,599
Total comprehensive profit/(loss) for the year	831,100	12,259

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL
POSITION AS AT 31
DECEMBER 2021**

	Note	2021 \$	2020 \$
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash and cash equivalents	6	8,890	311,013
Trade and other receivables	7	1,489	19,378
Prepayments		-	3,381
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		10,379	333,772
NON-CURRENT ASSETS			
Other financial assets	8	1,414,048	277,846
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS		1,414,048	277,846
TOTAL ASSETS		1,424,427	611,618
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Trade and other payables	9	3,748	1,890
Provisions	10	-	20,149
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES		3,748	22,039
TOTAL LIABILITIES		3,748	22,039
NET ASSETS		1,420,679	589,579
EQUITY			
Asset revaluation reserve		137,556	27,846
Retained Earnings		1,283,123	561,733
TOTAL EQUITY		1,420,679	589,579

**STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN
EQUITY FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31
DECEMBER 2021**

2020

	Asset Reval uation Reser ve	Retained Earnings	Total Equity
	\$	\$	\$
At 1 January 2020	24,247	553,073	577,320
Net profit for the year	-	8,660	8,660
Other comprehensive income	3,599	-	3,599
At 31 December 2020	27,846	561,733	589,579

2021

	Asset Reval uation Reser ve	Retained Earnings	Total Equity
	\$	\$	\$
At 1 January 2021	27,846	561,733	589,579
Net profit for the year	-	721,390	721,390
Other comprehensive income	109,710	-	109,710
At 31 December 2021	137,556	1,283,123	1,420,679

**STATEMENT OF CASH
FLOWS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021**

	Not e	202 1 \$	202 0 \$
CASH FLOW FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES			
Cash receipts in the course of operations		881,131	155,297
Interest received		24,543	25,858
Cash payments in the course of operations		(181,305)	(174,065)
Net cash flow from operating activities	11	724,369	7,090
CASH FLOW FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES			
Transfers to investments		(1,026,492)	-
Net cash flow from investing activities		(1,026,492)	7,090
Net (decrease)/increase in cash and cash equivalents held		(302,123)	7,090
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of financial year		311,013	303,923
Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year	6	8,890	311,013

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL
STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR
ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021**

NOTE 1: REPORTING ENTITY

This general purpose financial report is prepared in order to satisfy the financial reporting requirements of the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 (Victoria) and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012. The Executive has determined that the Victorian Council of Churches Inc. ("Council") is a reporting entity.

The Council gathers together in pilgrimage Churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures; seeks to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and commit themselves:

- (a) to deepen their relationship with each other in order to express more visibly the unity willed by Christ for his Church; and
- (b) to work together towards the fulfilment of their common mission of witness, proclamation and service.

NOTE 2: BASIS OF PREPARATION

(a) Statement of compliance

The financial report is a general purpose financial report which has been prepared in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards ("AASB's") - Reduced Disclosure Requirements including Australian Interpretations adopted by the Australian Accounting Standards Board ("AASB").

(b) Basis of measurement

The financial report has been prepared on an accruals basis and is based on historical cost convention and does not take into account changing money values, or except where specifically stated, current valuations of non-current assets.

(c) Functional and presentation currency

These financial statements are presented in Australian dollars, which is the Council's functional currency.

(d) Use of estimates and judgements

The preparation of financial statements requires management to make judgements, estimates and assumptions that affect the application of accounting policies and the reported amounts of assets, liabilities, income and expenses. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

Estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised and in any future periods affected.

(e) New or amended Accounting Standards and Interpretations adopted

The Council has adopted all of the new or amended Accounting Standards and Interpretations issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board ('AASB') that are mandatory for the current reporting period.

NOTE 3: SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

The principal accounting policies adopted in the preparation of the financial statements are set out below. These policies have been consistently applied to all the years presented, unless otherwise stated.

(a) Revenue

Revenue from voluntary donations and bequests is recognised when received.

If Government grants are received with conditions attached, that must be satisfied before the Association is eligible to the contribution, the recognition of the grant is deferred until those conditions are satisfied.

(b) Income Tax

The Council is a tax-exempt entity for the purposes of Division 50 of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997. In

addition, the Council is a rebateable employer for the purposes of section 65J of the Fringe Benefits Assessment Act 1986.

(c) Cash and Cash Equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents includes cash on hand, deposits held at call with financial institutions, other short-term, highly liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less that are readily convertible to known amounts of cash and which are subject to an insignificant risk of changes in value.

(d) Trade and Other Receivables

Other receivables are recognised at amortised cost, less any allowance for expected credit losses.

(e) Property, Plant and Equipment

Property, plant and equipment are only recognised where the Council holds ownership of the asset or has legal rights to control the asset's future use. Each class of asset is stated at historical cost less depreciation at a rate of 25.00%. Historical cost includes expenditure that is directly attributable to the acquisition of the asset. The residual values, useful lives and depreciation methods are reviewed, and adjusted if appropriate, at each balance date.

An item of property, plant and equipment is derecognised upon disposal or when there is no future economic benefit to the Council. Gains and losses between the carrying amount and the disposal proceeds are taken to profit or loss.

(f) Impairment

At each reporting date the Council assesses whether there is objective evidence that a financial instrument has been impaired. If any such indication exists, the recoverable amount of the asset, being the higher of the asset's fair value less costs to sell and value in use, is compared to the asset's carrying value. Any excess of the asset's carrying value over its recoverable amount is expensed to the income statement.

(g) Trade and Other Payables

These amounts represent liabilities for goods and services provided to the Council prior to the end of the financial year and which are unpaid. Due to their short-term nature they are measured at amortised cost and are not discounted. The amounts are unsecured and are usually paid within 30 days of recognition.

(h) Trusts & Projects

Liabilities are recognised for amounts received in anticipation of expenses relating to specific projects; where such expenses have not yet been fully committed. The expectation being that, were amounts not to be fully committed, they would be liable for return to the remitter.

(i) Provision for annual leave

Liabilities for wages and salaries, including non-monetary benefits, annual leave and long service leave expected to be settled wholly within 12 months of the reporting date are measured at the amounts expected to be paid when the liabilities are settled.

Long service leave

The liability for annual leave and long service leave not expected to be settled within 12 months of the reporting date are measured at the present value of expected future payments to be made in respect of services provided by employees up to the reporting date using the projected unit credit method.

Consideration is given to expected future wage and salary levels, experience of employee departures and periods of service. Expected future payments are discounted using market yields at the reporting date on national government bonds with terms to maturity and currency that match, as closely as possible, the estimated future cash outflows.

(j) Goods and Services Tax (GST)

Revenue, expenses and assets are recognised net of the amount of goods and services tax (GST), except

where the amount of GST incurred is not recoverable from the taxation authority. In these circumstances, the GST is recognised as part of the cost of acquisition of the asset or as part of the expense.

Receivables and payables are stated inclusive of the amount of GST receivable or payable. The net amount of GST recoverable from, or payable to, the tax authority is included in other receivables or other payables in the statement of financial position.

Cash flows are presented on a gross basis. The GST components of cash flows arising from investing or financing activities which are recoverable from, or payable to the tax authority, are presented as operating cash flows.

Commitments and contingencies are disclosed net of the amount of GST recoverable from, or payable to, the tax authority.

(k) New Accounting Standards and Interpretations issued that are not yet effective

Australian Accounting Standards and Interpretations that have recently been issued or amended but are not yet mandatory, have not been early adopted by the Council for the annual reporting period ended 31 December 2021. The Council has not yet assessed the impact of these new or amended Accounting Standards and Interpretations.

NOTE 4: CRITICAL ACCOUNTING JUDGEMENTS, ESTIMATES AND ASSUMPTIONS

The preparation of the financial statements requires management to make judgements, estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts in the financial statements. Management continually evaluates its judgements and estimates in relation to assets, liabilities, contingent liabilities, revenue and expenses. Management bases its judgements, estimates and assumptions on historical experience and on other various factors, including expectations of future events, management believes to be reasonable under the circumstances. The resulting accounting judgements and estimates will seldom equal the related actual results. The judgements, estimates and assumptions that have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities (refer to the respective notes) within the next financial year are discussed below.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

Judgement has been exercised in considering the impacts that the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has had, or may have, on the Council based on known information. This consideration extends to the nature of the products and services offered, customers, supply chain, staffing and geographic regions in which the Council operates. Other than as addressed in specific notes, there does not currently appear to be either any significant impact upon the financial statements or any significant uncertainties with respect to events or conditions which may impact the Council unfavourably as at the reporting date or subsequently as a result of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Estimation of useful lives of assets

The Council determines the estimated useful lives and related depreciation and amortisation charges for its property, plant and equipment and finite life intangible assets. The useful lives could change significantly as a result of technical innovations or some other event. The depreciation and amortisation charge will increase where the useful lives are less than previously estimated lives, or technically obsolete or non-strategic assets that have been abandoned or sold will be written off or written down.

	2021	2020
	\$	\$
NOTE 5: REVENUE		
Member Contributions	117,660	114,396
Affiliation Fees	2,600	1,700
Bequests Received	750,000	-
Cash Flow Boost	-	20,000
JobKeeper Subsidy	9,600	10,800
Donations	730	-
Interest	25,004	22,259
Emergencies Ministry - Cost Recovery	-	12,000
Other income	80	-
	905,674	181,155

NOTE 6: CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS

Cash on hand	-	29
Cash at bank	8,890	37,740
Cash Management Account	-	273,244
	8,890	311,013

NOTE 7: TRADE AND OTHER RECEIVABLES

Trade Receivables	-	18,600
GST Receivable	1,489	-
Loans – VCCEM	-	778
	1,489	19,378

NOTE 8: OTHER FINANCIAL ASSETS

Investment – Enhanced Income Trust	9,964	-
Investment – Growth Portfolio	682,134	277,846
Investment – International Equities Trust	721,950	-
	1,414,048	277,846

NOTE 9: TRADE AND OTHER PAYABLES

Trade Creditors	-	1,005
Credit Card	1,248	885
Accrued Expenses	2,500	-
	3,748	1,890

	2021	2020
	\$	\$
NOTE 10: PROVISIONS		
CURRENT		
Provision - Annual Leave	-	9,430
Provision - Long Service Leave	-	9,942
Provision - MBA	-	777
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	-	20,149
	<hr/>	<hr/>

During the year, entitlement provisions were paid out. There are no permanent employees as at 31 December 2021.

NOTE 11: CASH FLOW INFORMATION

Reconciliation of operating result to net cash from operating activities

Net surplus	721,390	8,660
Changes in assets and liabilities:		
(Increase)/decrease in receivables	17,889	3,012
(Increase)/decrease in prepayments	3,381	-
Increase/(decrease) in payables	1,858	1,704
Increase/(decrease) in provisions	(20,149)	(6,286)
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Net cash from / (used in) operating activities	724,369	7,090
	<hr/>	<hr/>

NOTE 12: KEY MANAGEMENT PERSONNEL DISCLOSURES

Compensation

The aggregate compensation made to officers and other members of key management personnel of the Council is set out below:

Aggregated compensation	102,469	120,081
	<hr/>	<hr/>

NOTE 13: REMUNERATION OF AUDITORS

During the financial year the following fees were paid or payable for services provided by DFK Kidsons Partnership, the auditor of the Council:

Review of the financial statements	2,000	2,000
Advice on employee entitlements	750	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	2,750	2,000
	<hr/>	<hr/>

NOTE 14: CONTINGENT LIABILITIES AND CONTINGENT ASSETS

The Council had no contingent liabilities and contingent assets as at 31 December 2021 and 31 December 2020.

NOTE 15: EVENTS AFTER THE REPORTING PERIOD

The impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is ongoing and it is not practicable to estimate the potential impact, positive or negative, after the reporting date. The situation is continually developing and is dependent on measures imposed by the Australian Government and other countries, such as maintaining social distancing requirements, quarantine, travel restrictions and any economic stimulus that may be provided.

No other matter or circumstance has arisen since 31 December 2021 that has significantly affected, or may significantly affect the Council's operations, the results of those operations, or the Council's state of affairs in future financial years.

**VICTORIAN COUNCIL OF
CHURCHES INC.**

**STANDING COMMITTEE
DECLARATION**

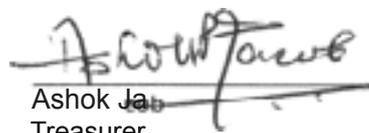
In the opinion of the Standing Committee the financial report as set out on pages 3 to 12:

1. Presents a true and fair view of the financial position of Victorian Council of Churches inc. as at 31 December 2021 and its performance for the financial year ended on that date in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards — Reduced Disclosure Requirements, the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 (Victoria), the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 and other mandatory professional reporting requirements; and
2. At the date of this declaration, there are reasonable grounds to believe that Victorian Council of Churches Inc. will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due and payable.

This declaration is made in accordance with a resolution of the Standing Committee and is signed for and on behalf of the Standing Committee by:



Dr Graeme Blackman
President



Ashok Ja
Treasurer

6 April 2022

INDEPENDENT REVIEW REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF THE VICTORIAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES INC.

Conclusion

We have reviewed the accompanying financial report of Victorian Council of Churches Inc., which comprises the Statement of Financial Position as at 31 December 2021, the Statement of Comprehensive Income, Statement of Changes in Equity and Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended on that date, a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory notes and the declaration by the Standing Committee.

Based on our review, which is not an audit, we have not become aware of any matter that makes us believe that the financial report of Victorian Council of Churches Inc. does not give a true and fair view of the Council's financial position as at 31 December 2021 and of its performance for the year then ended on that date in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards – Reduced Disclosure Requirements and the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*.

Basis for Conclusion

We conducted our review in accordance with ASRE 2410 *Review of a Financial Report Performed by the Independent Auditor of the Entity*. Our responsibilities are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Review of the Financial Report section of our report. We are independent of the Council in accordance with the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 *Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (including Independence Standards)* (the Code) that are relevant to our review of the annual financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

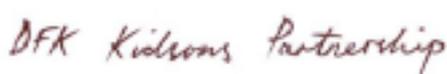
Standing Committee's Responsibility for the Financial Report

The Standing Committee is responsible for the preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards – Reduced Disclosure Requirements and for such internal control as management determine is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view and is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Auditor's Responsibility for the Review of the Financial Report

Our responsibility is to express a conclusion on the financial report based on our review. We conducted our review in accordance with the Auditing Standard on Review Engagements ASRE 2410 *Review of a Financial Report Performed by the Independent Auditor of the Entity*, in order to state whether, on the basis of the procedures described, we have become aware of any matter that makes us believe that the financial report is not in accordance with the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* including: giving a true and fair view of the Council's financial position as at 31 December 2021 and its performance for the year ended on that date and complying with Australian Accounting Standards – Reduced Disclosure Requirements.

A review of a financial report consists of making enquiries, primarily of persons responsible for financial and accounting matters, and applying analytical and other review procedures. A review is substantially less in scope than an audit conducted in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards and consequently does not enable us to obtain assurance that we would become aware of all significant matters that might be identified in an audit. Accordingly, we do not express an audit opinion.



DFK KIDSONS PARTNERSHIP
Chartered Accountants

6 April 2022
Melbourne



M L Port
Partner

2022 Budget – Summary

Income

Contribution Income	\$112,000
Cost Recovery	\$14,680
Distributions from investment	\$25,000
Total Income	\$151,680

Expenses

Employment Expenses	\$145,470
Travel	\$2,200
Communication Expenses	\$2,000
Events	\$1,500
Occupancy Expenses	\$23,000
Legal & Accounting Expenses	\$14,500
Admin expenses	\$20,000
Contingency	\$4,000
Total Expenses	\$212,670
Net (Income - Expenses)	-\$60,990
Growth in the value of investments	\$65,000
Profit/Loss	\$4,010

KORUS CONNECT: PARTNERING FOR COMMUNITY

Introduction

Korus Connect (the trading name of the Council for Christian Education in Schools) is a Christian not-for-profit organisation that partners with like-minded organisations including churches, to deliver initiatives that foster connection and collaboration, with the conviction that unity and collaboration bring holistic, real and lasting transformation in local communities.

Like many organisations, including The Victorian Council of Churches, the challenge for Korus Connect during 2021 was to find creative ways to reconnect, rebuild and restore communities as they continued to see-saw in and out of lockdowns. We have been reminded that people matter more than things; that relationships need to be prioritised over possessions, experiences or programs. Relationship building and activities continued in person and online as necessary across chaplaincy, Special Religious Instruction (SRI) and through our community connector initiative. We also started exploring how we might serve churches better through training and equipping.

During 2021, our more than 450 paid and volunteer workers continued their commitment to serve individuals and local communities, helping to connect people with their purpose and full potential and to build communities that are connected, supported and whole.

Special Religious Instruction (SRI)

SRI was predominately offered online, using the existing materials repurposed for online use, along with some of the videos created in the previous year by SRI instructors. We are thankful to God that some in-person SRI sessions were able to be offered early in the year as well as in the latter part of Term 4. This varied from school to school across the 13 schools registered for SRI.

Chaplaincy

During 2021, online and face-to-face support to parents and families was an important aspect of the chaplains' work as well as morale boosting for school communities. Chaplains provided pastoral care to many students and staff, as well as facilitated groups around friendships, grief and loss, community development, role modelling, mentoring and spiritual support to more than 16,000 students. Each week, nearly 5000 conversations were held with students. Formal conversations primarily focused on mental health and friendship / peer issues. As two chaplains commented,

Many students... have shared that they are more inclined to have angry outbursts and that they are fearful of the strength of their emotions and how readily they get out of control.

Good connection has been made with two students who are usually [reluctant] to talk. Using different strategies with each, these students have opened up and talked about significant family issues which they are struggling with.

Such students are part of the 60% of students who enjoy ongoing pastoral support from their chaplain; chaplaincy is relational and committed to the overall wellbeing of the individuals served.

Community Connectors

During 2021, our community connector initiative was offered in five Local Government Areas (LGAs): in an aged care centre, in two shopping centre precincts, in a local community service area and at Melbourne Airport. In each location, the role provided pastoral care, connection to local services and the building of relationships, reducing loneliness and social disconnection.

Summary

Thank you for your commitment and interest in the work of Korus Connect. We very much appreciate your support, your ongoing prayers for more workers and your interest in this wider Christian work.

Dawn Penney

Chief Executive Officer

ASCM (Australian Student Christian Movement) report

In June 2021, the ASCM appointed two National Directors (part-time) on the retirement from the position of John Probudhan Biswas. Robbie Tulip, based in Canberra, has responsibility for relationships with the World Student Christian Federation and David Hale, based in Brisbane, has responsibility for work with students. These two, together with the national committee, are working with good energy to keep these international contacts alive and available to current students. Robbie Tulip will be representing the ASCM at the WSCF General Assembly next month.

ASCM is in the early stages of implementing the results of a strategic review conducted in 2020-21. This review identified our 'front door' as the internet (moving us away from the failing idea of relying primarily on the formation of branches on university campuses). This gives us the possibility of working more closely together nationally. We are seeking to provide resources for ecumenical formation to students, including the possibility of international contacts. For example, we now have a significant collection of recorded international conversations with student leaders from Indonesia, Myanmar, Palestine and others.

In Victoria, we remain grateful for the support of the VCC through the offer of a 'hot desk'. The national movement provides us with a focus for our work, though in Victoria we are at a low ebb at this time.

We ask for your prayers as we continue to seek to offer resources and opportunities to students for ecumenical formation and international contact.

(Rev. Dr.) Sandy Yule



WORLD DAY OF PRAYER AUSTRALIA Victorian Committee

Report to Victorian Council of Churches 2022

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER (WDP) is a worldwide movement of Christians of all traditions. They come together each year, on or near the first Friday of March, to observe a common time of prayer to which all people are welcome. In many countries they have a continuing relationship under the motto “informed prayer, prayerful action”.

World Day of Prayer focuses attention on one country each year with the Christian women of that country writing a prayer service which reflects on their country, their lives and challenges. More than three million people in over 170 countries join in services or prayer events, many contributing to a project to aid the country for which we are praying. The World of Prayer 2021 service was prepared by the Christian women from the Republic of Vanuatu with the theme based on the final words of the Sermon on the Mount as presented in Matthew’s Gospel chapter 7 – “Building on a Strong Foundation”, whilst 2022 service was prepared By England Wales, and Northern Ireland “*I know the plans I have for you*” inspired by the Prophet Jeramiah.

The last couple of years has presented us with many challenges in Victoria having been in and out of lockdowns and various levels of restrictions in order to control the spread of the Covid-19 virus. This is reflected in the slightly lower number of services conducted in 2021 and 2022. The WDP district reports received highlighted the creativity of our Victorian Christian community’s response to living with Covid-19 restrictions. Out of 151 services conducted in 2021 two services were held online, one in a farm shed, two were part of the normal Sunday worship service, and two were held in people’s homes. In districts where services were cancelled the service booklets were distributed to members of their community to pray in their own homes.

Our partnership with the Bible Society continues to thrive and we value their support in designing programmes to address the needs in our focus countries. Bible Society Trauma Healing Program was the 2021 project developed by the Bible Society for Vanuatu. This project aims to bring understanding care, healing and hope to 60,000 women who have been traumatized by gender-based violence. The project has been designed to take a holistic approach, advocating for women and empowering those who have been victims. It was our pleasure to donate \$65,000 last year to the Bible Society’s project for Vanuatu. This donation would not be possible without the support and generosity of everyone who organises and/or attends one of the many services held around Victoria on or near the first Friday in March. We hope to receive similar donation for the 2022 Bible Society Project for North Ireland “Bibles for Babies”.

We would like to thank the Victorian Council of Churches for their prayerful support for World Day of Prayer in these challenging times so “**Let your hope make you glad. Be patient in time of trouble and never stop praying.**” Romans 12:12

With blessings,
Ann Robinson, Secretary, World Day of Prayer Victorian Committee

VCC Communication Strategy

Priority has been given to raising the profile of VCC. Accordingly, the following have been acted upon:

Website - vcc.org.au

A new website has been designed and populated, with content updated regularly. Many thanks to Rev Geoff Hurst who chased the details to set up the new website, and did the 'scaffolding' for the new website, and to the Executive Officer who populated the website. There is a Facebook 'feed' on the front page, highlighting the latest posts, and a link to blog posts by the Executive Officer (top right hand side). The ecumenical prayer calendar (World Council of Churches) is included on the front page of the website. The turnaround from conception to going 'live' was 2 days, because it is imperative to have a website that can be responsive, informative and an effective vehicle for communication about the work of VCC. It is hoped the website can develop into a recognised portal/repository for ecumenical resources, and information. The website will also be able to collate resources developed by member churches on particular topics eg election resources uploaded on the Resources section of the website. The Executive Officer will explore an option to have a link to the VCC website on each of the websites of member churches.

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/viccouncilchurches>

Daily postings are being maintained to keep the Facebook page refreshed. This includes VCC specific emails, as well as news from member churches (local and national). The Executive Officer will gladly welcome news from member churches to include on Facebook posts.

MailChimp

Link to e-news on 4th May - <https://mailchi.mp/8a571e5a1f40/vcc-e-news-4-may-2022>

The Executive Officer manually entered in emails on the data base with 'tags' for each person so that e-news can be targetted when necessary, or generic to all contacts (as per the VCC e-news). The Executive Officer will be adding contacts into the MailChimp data base as networks are built. The advantage of MailChimp is that it can be easily formatted, easily forwarded on to others, is not a large file size in people's inbox, and people can opt to subscribe (and unsubscribe) automatically.

At present, the plan is for fortnightly e-news from VCC.

The Executive Officer will gladly welcome news from member churches to include in the e-news so it is broadly representative of the breadth of the VCC member churches.

Media Networks

The Executive Officer will collate the contact details for e-news/communication of each of the Member Churches, and use those avenues for promoting events and activities (eg Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, and other ecumenical activities such as Palm Sunday and Holding the Light). Similarly, the Executive Officer will collate media contacts (where applicable) in member churches and in the wider community so that newsworthy events and activities can reach a wider audience.

Other avenues to be explored include media releases (in consultation with member churches) when appropriate, other social media (eg Instagram).

The Executive Officer will also give high priority to building relationships 'in person' with people in member churches, related agencies and networks, Government etc.

Rev Sandy Boyce
Executive Officer
Victorian Council of Churches
sandy.boyce@vcc.org.au
0499 726 213