

SOUTHSIDE UNITING CHURCH

ANNUAL
REPORT
2020



Do you remember back to the beginning of 2020? We started the year with a bang. On the first day of the year we had a great picnic to mark the beginning of our new congregation and then in February we had a wonderful worship service to formally recognise the birth of something that we'd been working towards for years. At our birthing service I reflected on Psalm 137. In exile the Israelites lamented with the phrase "How can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land?"

For some of us, being one congregation that meets in multiple locations has felt like we have been cast away from what we've been used to. We've had to rethink much of how we've done church in the past. We're in the process of developing trusting relationships with people in other communities, we are sharing resources and finding that our local building is not always the place where church activities take place. We are finding that the way we've done some things is having to change. In a world where nothing seems to be staying the same, some of us have treasured that the practices of church had not changed. But over many years the church has changed. Numbers have dwindled, our capacity to conduct our affairs has diminished, we have had to stop activities that were dearly loved. We had little ability to control these changes.

I see though that the forming of Southside has been a gift to us. It has allowed us to control the change that is inevitable. We will still experience change. But it is a change that allows the timeless value of our faith to be expressed in a new way for a new generation. It means that the things of church that are important to us can be carried on and offered anew and afresh. Our connections to our local neighbours, our love for each other, our commitment to outreach, our ministry to young people. By acting now, we can ensure that these fundamental aspects remain part of Southside going forward.

2020, our first year together as a congregation, presented many opportunities to ask us how we explore God's mission as a new congregation and to consolidate and forward plan. Many of the dreams and visions that we had are not yet being realised. These are yet to come. I'm proud of what we've achieved and excited about what is to come in the future.

Over the year I've listened to you what you've said in many different forums. And consistently I hear the same hopes. That those in our neighbours, our friends and families will know the life and love of Jesus through the ministry of our church. We look for a deeper love for Jesus for ourselves and the outliving of that in the Christian community that we build. We want the reach of the church expand into more and more places. I sum this up in the phrase, more people, living and loving like Jesus.

Thank you to all who have been part of our church in the past year. as you read through the rest of these reports you will see a range of activities that have only been possible because people like you were involved. You have given time, energy, money and attention. You have prayed diligently, served faithfully and led intentionally. Ultimately, this collection of reports is the story of us, the Body of Christ that calls itself Southside Uniting church.

Alongside this I want to thank you for risking a new and unknown way. We journeyed through the year contributing of ourselves and have come through this knit tighter together as one congregation. I look across our church and see many instances of teams and people coming together and offering something far more together than we ever previously had. In so many ways the risk we took is being rewarded now and we are establishing a greater missional future for us and generations yet to come.

David Fender



Focuses us on our ministry with children, youth and families, focussing on the family as the primary influence on faith development.

It has been an exciting 12 months for our ministry with Children, Youth and Families. It has been wonderful to see ways that children, youth and families ministry is becoming the ministry of all of Southside, rather than just activities of individual communities. We have seen leaders from across the congregation helping with JAFFA and Fun in the Sun Days. It was amazing that we had at least one leader from each community for Fun in the Sun Days, and we survived a two day program, which was a wonderful step in the process of reimagining our children's holiday programming. We have also had the chance to begin a picnic for the families in the church meeting on the second Sunday of each month. This gives not just our children the chance to see that there are children in our church beyond their own community but enables the parents to meet and support each other.

As we have been thinking about living in a changing cultural environment, we have tried to emphasise the faith development of our young people, so that they can grow a life-long faith. This has meant us focusing on the Hear2Stay 2 foundations and 8 pillars. We have been working strongly on the foundations. One is faith formation happening in the families. We have been providing resources for families to continue the conversation from Sunday with their children. We backed this up with a midweek video (Southside Uniting Time for Kids) which would hopefully help them to return to those conversations they might have had on Sunday. As we move into 2021 these are changing to be preparing the family for Sunday, on Monday introducing them to the reading, and the midweek video explaining the passage a little. This means that when children come into the service on Sunday they will have some foundational knowledge of the passage.

We have also worked on the other foundation which is focus on intergenerational. This is an attempt to not just make our services time when different generations are meeting and mixing, but a large number of the activities which we will do. We are in early days with this, and finding what works with all generations, we don't want to say we have perfected it. We hope that as we do this then our young people will grow in their connections with the church and help them to have a foundation as they interact with people out in the world.

New Missions

Jock Dunbar

Freed from the constraints of what church has been, the team associated with New Missions has been seeking to unlearn past practices of mission and to explore new ways of being with our neighbours to express the love of Jesus. The year commenced with many members of our congregation sharing a weekend of learning as we discussed what it meant to sing the lord's song in a strange land. We were challenged to see that the culture of our society has changed and that this presents both a possibility and a challenge to the church.



A Mission Experiment Group (MEG) was formed. These people have carefully listened to God, each other and the local community to discern the possibilities of where we can journey together with others. The MEG has had to unlearn past practices of mission where the church holds the power and invites others to come to us, on our terms. They have sought to align themselves with the way that God is already at work in people's lives and search and experience of faith.

Outreach

Esteban Lievano

Stimulates and coordinates the outreach ministry of the congregation, locally, nationally and internationally and equips and supports us to participate in outreach in, through and beyond the congregation.

Our Outreach Groups managed well during 2020, acclimatising to changes coming due to the pandemic as well as the formation of SSUC. Some groups opted to return to meeting late in the year, while others worked within Qld Govt guidelines to maintain their programmes. As at writing this, our Outreach Groups and Partners have not experienced significant loss of volunteer or financial resources and are looking to returning to something more similar to their pre-COVID situation.

As our groups have been inherited from our former congregations, it has been identified that a Values Document would be necessary. This will keep the Outreach Groups in alignment with the mission emphasis of SSUC, as well as help emerging groups establish themselves within SSUC's acceptable behaviours and norms. Along this vein, our significant Outreach Project for 2021 will be the SSUC Op Shop. During late 2020, I have been researching and canvassing the community for how we may carry out this enterprise in a way that will work with our values and missional drive. Conversations have taken place with Ministry Team and Synod Enterprise, onsite research at three UCA based Op Shops have yielded positive results pointing to this as a feasible and potentially lucrative SSUC activity. The Op Shop Steering Committee (OP SC) is being formed and will begin to meet monthly to engage our congregation on this idea.

Pastoral Care

David MacGregor

Providing a network and culture of pastoral care that equips all members of the congregation to show Jesus' love for each other.

Very much a work still in progress, several advances in pastoral care need to be named and celebrated – all part of the new thing God is calling us to in Christ.

- A key message has been – as COVID realities started to impact people's well-being – to “stay connected” and to be always open to reaching out to each other, keeping in touch. I celebrate the follow-up work done across Southside again and again by so many. Despite its imperfections, it continues and is a dedicated work of care.
- Considerable ongoing efforts were made to maintain contact with SSUC folk not on the internet or social media.



- In the latter part of 2020, ministry team spent time discerning God's best ways forward for pastoral care across SSUC going into 2021 and beyond. Expect the likes of continuing structures and processes that currently work well, continually affirming place of small groups, as well as some fresh approaches.

Resources

Rachel Manton

Is responsible for all aspects of financial and property management and ensures appropriate resources are available to attend to the administrative needs of the congregation

The formal Resources Ministry Group consists of 9 people with a range of skills including administrative, property, compliance and finance. However, our volunteer reach does extend much further as and when needed. During 2020 the following was achieved:

- Undertaking all the necessary requirements for an amalgamation, both from a Government and Queensland Synod perspective.
- Introducing a church management system (UCare) which is used for distributing emails, recording attendance at groups including worship, church membership register, Blue Card and Safe Ministry with Children registers, supporting our developing pastoral care system and recording any other necessary information.
- Developing a plan for maintenance on all our properties which includes 5 church properties and 7 residential houses.
- Working with a paid bookkeeper on recording our finances for our unique situation.
- Developing a centralised system for our hall users across our four Centres.
- Property management for our soon to be 6 residential houses that are rented.
- Ensuring Workplace Health and Safety requirements are being adhered to across our properties.

By beginning to consolidate these areas, we have noticed a shift for some of our volunteers, from either stepping down from areas they did not have a passion to serve in, or to focus more intently on areas within Resources that they do want to serve in. We have been able to see that Resources Ministry Area have embraced new beginnings and have been able to begin the process of releasing people for mission.

Spiritual Growth

David Fender

Focuses on a culture that nurtures and values continual spiritual growth, for all people.

A missional church is a contagious place of spiritual growth. We have sought to nurture within our congregation an expression of God's love and an experience of the movement of the Holy Spirit.

2020 was a year in which we focussed our attention on developing the practices and emphasis that stimulates our spiritual growth. Our small groups have continued to meet, including 2 new groups that were formed. We have provided daily devotionals at times throughout the year. Offered opportunities for prayer and engagement with bible reading. A course to explore our SHAPE for serving was conducted. At the end of the year a group of people starting a 2-year journey of been coached in a lifestyle of being a disciple who makes disciples.



Ultimately, this is my hope for us together as a congregation. That our growth in discipleship will be lived in a lifestyle that meets with and brings others along on their journey of faith. Over the past 60 or more years, it has been very evident that the church's buildings, programs, signs and openness do not make disciples. It is people who love Jesus and love their neighbour who make disciples.

Worship

David MacGregor

Releases people to offer worship that is vibrant, Spirit-filled, relevant and Christ-centred whilst recognising the diversity of our various communities.

- Online worship became a reality that provided challenges and opportunities. We should not deny the realities and challenges this placed on all at Southside. In openness to the Spirit, new approaches were birthed.
- We moved from each community minister majoring at their home community in worship curation and leadership *to* each community minister as well as Lead Minister Rev David Fender sharing leadership online each week. This has been a significant undertaking and is part of an ongoing, necessary conversation around the priority, shape and purposes of online ministry in all its missional, liturgical, pastoral, educational and intergenerational aspects. Watch this space!
- This “shared around” approach continued once gathered-together worship resumed in August.
- What style and emphasis in worship across Southside is God calling us to?
 - Two well-engaged worship survey opportunities were made available during the year. These gave direction to ministry team, Worship Ministry Area and Church Council with discerning God's ways forward, in respect to our newness as a congregation *and* COVID19 realities
 - Trialling of blended services across all centres, “contemporary” services at Tarragindi and Mt Gravatt
 - Exploring new beginnings and Missional/discipleship/spirituality imperatives through various 4-5 week themes, such as Commitments, *Daniel*/Church in exile, *Jonah*, *Philippians*, Stewardship
 - Exploration of what worship best “looks like” intergenerationally.
- New beginnings as music folk from particularly Tarragindi and Mt Gravatt shared together in building a significant library of worship song videos for our online ministry

