

# ANNUAL REPORT 2021

## MINISTER REPORT

*“You will be my witnesses”*

*“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1 vs 8).*

*“This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.” (Luke 24 vs 46-49).*

*“You will be witnesses.” You are witnesses of all these things.”* These words keep echoing in my mind. The call, the commission, the fact that we are witnesses to God’s salvation and grace in Christ and that we have received and will keep on receiving divine power from the Holy Spirit to be such witnesses!

It is this identity, our identity as witnesses, that I will use as a lens through which to reflect upon the past year or more.

### *Gratitude and 2020/21*

As I reflect upon the past 19 months that I have been living in Maleny as part of the Blackall Range Uniting Church family I am filled with gratitude for all the blessings we have received and continue to receive.

COVID-19 – hearing and reading the stories of others around the country and world, we remain exceptionally blessed that the suffering and heartache and other consequences here along the Blackall Range and Queensland have been relatively minimal. We recognise the hurt and pain of those amongst us who have lost loved ones and embrace them; we share the disappointment of family gatherings that have been postponed time and again and again; yet we can rejoice that we have been able to gather as families and as a community of faith when so many others have not yet been able to. The manner in which we respond and participate in conversations about COVID, policies, lock-downs and vaccinations is our witness as Christians to this global pandemic and to our local community and friends.

### *Gratitude and Worship*

Congregational life – our lives as independent congregations continue to change, some more challenging than others. Palmwoods has fallen into a promising rhythm of two morning services in the church and two afternoon reflections in the community garden. During the former we have occasion to worship together with our Tongan brothers and sisters, whilst the reflections in the garden pose an opportunity for members of the broader community to join us. The attendance of morning services at Montville has sadly fallen due to the ill-health and frailty of members. At Maleny we continue with a steady number of worshippers. And of course we also have an on-line service!

And we have been blessed through special services, like the combined family services, the outreach services and harvest festival celebration. My special thanks and appreciation to the persons who help lead and participate in the gatherings in the different centres every Sunday, including the on-line services. And we remain grateful that we can continue to worship together as this is not only part of our witness, it is a critical part of our own spiritual lives.

#### *Gratitude and Community*

I am also grateful that our community involvement, which is our public witness, is fairly strong and I believe has grown stronger in the past while. Palmwoods has always had a strong community connection, especially through the community garden and through Kay and her bookshop. Montville enjoys a good relationship with the *Montville Village Association*, the school and broader community, including art groups. Whilst in Maleny our relationship with the *Maleny Neighbourhood Centre* is strong through the services and participation of individual members, whilst we are corporately also pursuing various interests and projects together. I am deeply humbled by the number of persons that have stepped forward as mentors in the schools' mentoring programs and are mentoring the vulnerable, our precious children and youth. So too, the faithful teaching of persons of religious instruction in the primary school is commendable and humbling. The urgent need for more religious instruction teachers, mentors and volunteers to join our school chaplains and help support them in the ministry in the essential field of our schools remains critical.

#### *Gratitude and ministry*

The ministry of other members through various groups (connect, ladies, men), prayer, pastoral care, Bible studies, meditation and other fields of ministry keeps the minister of a congregation deeply humble and grateful. Thank you to all who have and continue to minister to others in one way or another.

Again, the need for pastoral care and friendship within our congregation and community is big and more help and support is needed. A number of workshops to equip us in pastoral care are planned and it is hoped that more persons will be equipped in this important ministry.

I personally give deep thanks for the gracious, generous and loving persons that live and serve in our congregation(s) and communities.

#### *Gratitude and future*

It is the Holy Spirit that establishes, equips, and empowers the church to be witnesses of these things. As we looked back and reflected on the past 19 months we recognised God's faithfulness and steadfast love in our stories and witness. And this evidence of God's faithfulness enables us to face tomorrow with gratitude. Ebenezer – hitherto the Lord has helped us. Thanks be to God!

Join me in praying: *Come O Holy Spirit, come fill us anew, time and time again, so we can indeed become what we already are: witnesses of these things!*

**Shalom Liena**  
30 May 2021

## **MALENY U.C. CHRISTIAN MEDITATION GROUP**

The group, averaging between 12 - 15 weekly, meet in the church at 8.30 a.m. on Wednesdays to share a time of stillness, silence and simplicity before God. Each session, we have a reflection by various Christian leaders, then 20 minutes silence, ending with music and prayer. We finish well before 9.30 and those who choose, head to Maple 3 for coffee and conversation. Although the year was interrupted by the COVID lockdown, we fared well. We ceased meeting on 25 March and restarted on 3 June, following all the necessary COVID safe protocols. A bit strange at times, but worth coping with the strangeness. We celebrated our 10<sup>th</sup> birthday with a party. Lots to celebrate. Many in the group continue to find that practicing meditation is one of the resources that helps them cope with the everyday challenges of life. New members are always welcome.

## **PASTORAL CARE REPORT**

Care of the Maleny congregation continues with less recognised carers but some who do a lot unofficially. We seek to welcome all and help those who need encouragement, transport, help when ill, visiting and sharing Gods love as he enables us. Frozen meals are often given. We meet every 2 months to share the joys and needs so we can have a better idea of what we should do. This helps the minister as well as the carers and we can see God blessings.

## **LADIES FRIENDSHIP GROUP**

2019 was a successful year for our group (that is if success can be measured by good attendances at the Monthly meetings and enthusiasm for the shared leadership model we trialed.)

This has meant that small teams took responsibility for planning, setting up and running one meeting per year

The variety of themes and locations maintained our interest.

2020 started with a meeting in February where a full year was planned. Then the wheels fell off the trolley. It wasn't until July that we actually got restarted but since then we are grateful that we can meet albeit with appropriate social distancing and Covid safe food distribution.

We are thankful for those ladies who kept in contact with offers of help for those going through particularly tough times. Sadly we farewelled two much loved members with the passing of Betty Watson and Olive Harding.

2021 got off to a great start with good attendances at the monthly meetings. We made a visit to the Baptist Sitting Room during Autism Awareness month. Liena led us in a morning of celebration of mothers. And most recently we broadened the invitation and were delighted to welcome male and female visitors to a Practical First Aid demonstration.

One of the most appreciated outreaches from the group is the frozen food ministry.

A project to knit beanies for school girls in India has just begun.

All are welcome to any or all of the monthly meetings.

## **BOOK CLUBS**

Two groups of 8 or 9 ladies meet monthly. Sharing thoughts about books is the basis of the groups but deep and meaningful discussions about our lives is just as important. The support network is precious.

One group continues with the model of borrowing books through the Sunshine Coast library. Sets of 8 books are collected, distributed at a morning tea in a member's home, read at home and discussed a month later.

The other plan is that ladies read a book of their own choosing, bring it to a central location, talk about it and offer it for sharing and potentially swapping

Yes, within the groups we are able to be honest and state what we like or don't like about a book. Our tastes are certainly diverse but we have learned to be respectful of those with differing opinions.