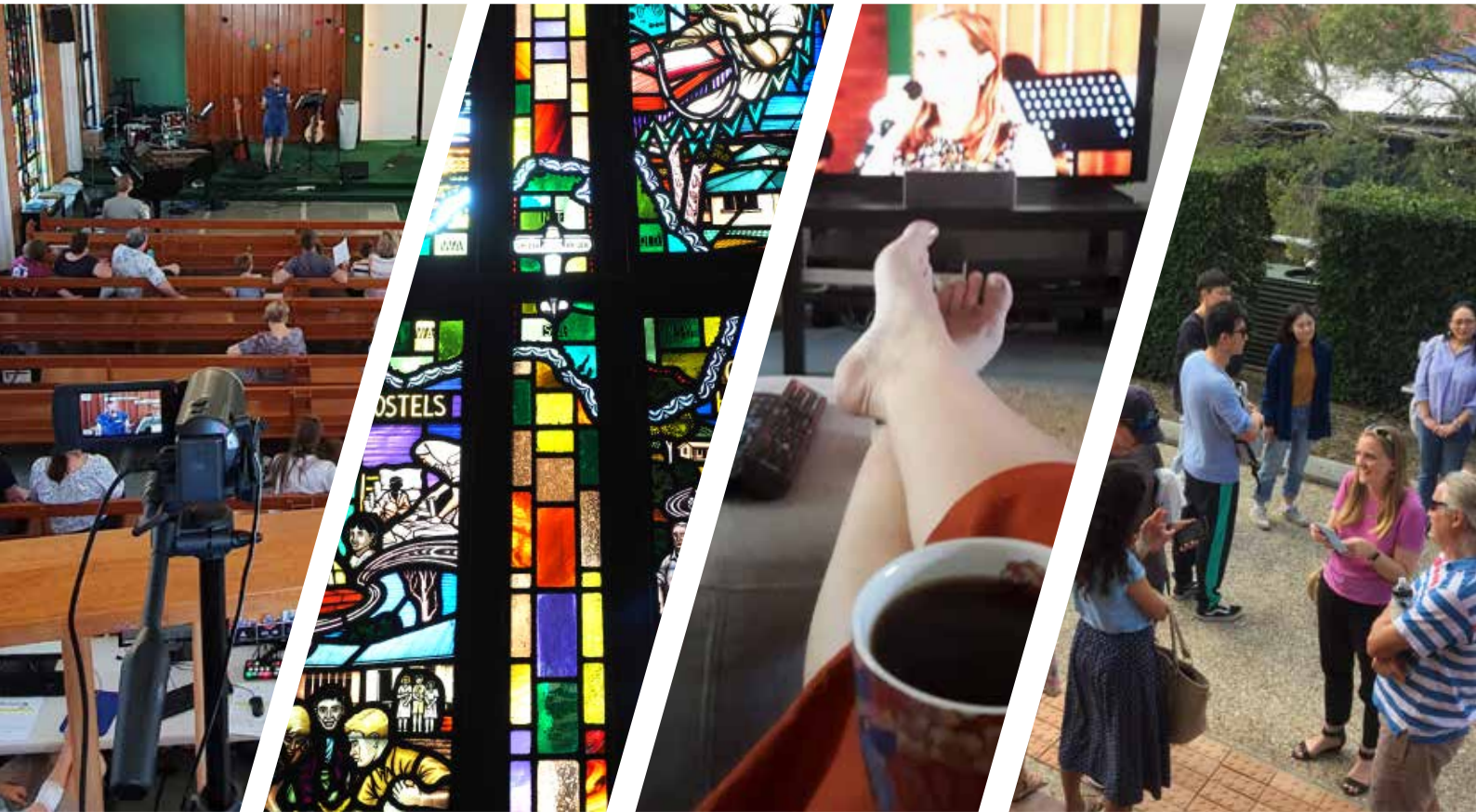




**TOOWONG**  
UNITING CHURCH



# 2020 Annual Report

The Uniting Church in Australia  
Toowong Congregation



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# Minister's Report

**Matthew Smith**

Lead Minister



Passing the peace at Sunday worship in early 2020. Little did we know it would only be a few months before we would have to cease in-person worship.

**“For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the last, He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, then in my flesh I will see God.”**

Job 19:25

As I write, the COVID-19 death toll in the USA has passed 500,000. This figure is a staggering reminder of the tragic scale of loss and the impact these last 12 months have visited on families and loved ones, as we also feel in Australia even with a comparatively smaller loss of life. Our taken-as-read certainties and mental anchors have all been pulled hard, and when our lives switched to ‘lockdown’ we even relinquished the idea of full control over our futures.

Thank God that we can declare like Job in the midst of our turbulence “For I know that my Redeemer lives, and

that at the last, He will stand upon the earth!” Job could stand in this truth, being fully convinced even amidst his overwhelming difficulties, that God would restore his life. He could boldly declare this, even while assailed with doubts that questioned his very reasons to go on living. If we can live in this truth, we can know this incredible experience “when I thought that my foot was slipping, your steadfast love held me up, O Lord” (Psalm 94). Consistently, the Bible reveals that it’s God’s love and affection for us that conveys us through the difficult sections of life. We have a Saviour!

Meeting the COVID-19 challenge at TUC required an extraordinary response from a team of uber-willing people, as they set to work, burning the midnight oil to enable live-streaming via YouTube in under 4 days. Luke Reynoldson, Brad Sheen, Eli Gearing, Adrian Gearing, Lauren Murray and Garry Jennings made it possible to continue to gather online, as our live-stream team that faithfully enabled our worshipping life for all at TUC. The added bonus to this is our now extended reach of TUC on the web. Moving to a live-stream format also invited creative input from the entire church, and we saw literally hundreds of video contributions in many styles and art forms, a literal stream of creative energy which revealed the depth of talent and inspiration that so many people were willing to offer. To all of our church – Thank you! You gloriously took on this creative challenge! Your expressions of the life of Jesus in your situation during this time was a powerful reminder that God is doing beautiful things around us all the time.

When we could commence worship in-person, there were significant COVID-19 safety regulations placed on all churches, before the doors could open. With the fluid situation, these rules changed frequently, and thus required many, many hours of attention and preparation to remain compliant. Such was the magnitude of the task, all churches were required to appoint a COVID-19 'Champion'. We were blessed to have Dianne Hubbard as our Champion who devoted weeks of work to get the church ready for a safe return. Additionally, Clare Hankamer and Felix Chen also gave countless hours to make preparations for our community groups and Youth & Children's ministries to recommence. All done without anyone noticing their behind-the-scenes efforts, with many late evening zoom meetings. We could not have regathered without their constant assistance, and we are so excited to see the community returning to worship in-person.

Throughout the year, our Church Council continued to meet via zoom, to pray for the church, give oversight and to seek guidance and discernment from the Holy Spirit in drafting the Vision & Values statement. This has been a steady 2 year process, arising out of our listening and group work at Vision & Planning Days. I can assure you it has not been rushed and it has been held in prayerful

consideration. I thank the Church Council for their sustained attention to this process of listening and their wise input and guidance.

I gratefully draw your attention to the outstanding leadership of our Church Council - Will Stewart. In leading the Council throughout 2020, Will has encouraged us through his constant positivity and approachability. I have relied heavily on Will's thoughtful counsel, and he is attentive to the many and varied needs of the entire TUC community. Will is also a highly skilled manager and can hold high level priorities in mind while still making thoughtful gestures such as providing supper for a Council gathering. He is simultaneously a Big Picture thinker while realising the little details also matter. His energy seems inexhaustible, he is hands on, and available while still finding time for other wonderful causes. Thank you, Will, for your very significant gift of leadership and wisdom, the community is blessed by your ministry.

Finally let me leave you with a quote from Tim Costello, who writes "Faith is synonymous with risk. Where there's no faith, there's no risk!" Our year ahead is going to present to us all sorts of challenges that may well push the boundaries of what's comfortable for ourselves and our church. The risk isn't that we won't make mistakes – that's almost guaranteed. The risk is that we won't be willing to follow Jesus' call to bold mission. That's when we need faith the most. I freely confess so often I'll pull back at the point where Jesus says to step out. All sorts of fears confront me – usually magnifying my inadequacies. But as we often see, God chooses to use the people who make themselves available, and then we realise the strength comes from beyond us.

I commend this 2020 Annual Report to you as a missional map of where we have been ...and I believe, confirming where we are going. Its good to follow the Saviour with you.



# Church Council Report

**Will Stewart**

Chair, Church Council



A photo of Sunday worship taken in early 2020 before the global pandemic.

## Vision, Mission, Values and Goals

It's certain that 2020 will be a year we will all remember. Church Council, like so many groups, connected mostly through Zoom meetings, but we're grateful that was possible. In some ways it was even a blessing because we could avoid travel time and therefore spend more time with our families.

The year began well with a focus on how to extend the involvement in the February Vision & Planning Day. Discipleship was to be an important discussion area. How blessed we were when so many people - more than 45 - willingly gathered at the Brookfield Friary to be part of understanding where God wanted us to go. We were garnered together and our minds widened through presentations from Scott Guyatt, Ross Homel and Rob Hubbard. Excellent group work produced many great thoughts and, amazingly, Scott was able to show how a summarised set of outcomes aligned well with the Synod Project Plenty deliberations.

In honouring this work, Church Council continued during the year to pray, discuss, consider and evaluate our vision, mission, goals and how they might translate into action. Prayer was (and is) a cornerstone and a lot of time was given to prayer and waiting for our Lord's guidance to be the first part of whatever we did. We were blessed with excellent research and importantly a willingness to listen to each other. Progress was not rapid but we believed that was necessary.

By the time of our first Zoom Congregational meeting on 1 November, we were able to present an initial draft of our Mission, Values, Goals and Actions. Review and refinement continues into 2021, hopefully also continuing to listen for and sense God's leading, as well as listening to the ideas and responses from the broader congregation.



Our Vision & Planning Day in February, 2020.

## People and Activities

### Church Council

Our Church Council is in an enviable position to witness the considerable variety of gifted people who willingly offered much of their capability and time. Some have stepped back after giving much and we both commend and are grateful for the blessings they have provided.

Considerable thanks to Wayne Middleton our former Chairperson, Alicia McLachlan, our former Secretary and Jane Trewern who, as the former Congregational Chairperson, also attended and contributed to Council meetings. All of course continue to be active in the life of the church.

Through the Annual General Meeting survey, we were able to welcome Felix Chen, Bev Homel and Ben Reid to Council in April. All of these new Councillors serve elsewhere as well. They joined continuing members, Dianne Hubbard, Garry Jennings, Lauren Murray, Susan O'Brien, Will Stewart and David Vicig.

The secretarial role was shared this year and was therefore a little challenging. Many thanks to Bev Homel, Sue O'Brien and Dianne Hubbard who each had the added challenge of Zoom meetings to deal with.

### Ministry

Our Minister, Matt Smith, and Families Pastor, Clare Hankamer are ex-officio members of Council. That somewhat strange title seems to translate to hard and gifted workers who serve in so many incredible ways.

Matt's Lead Minister role sees him in almost all of the many facets of Toowong Uniting activities. I think he sometimes is able to enjoy his rostered weekly day off, but all too often there's a meeting to attend, an ear to lend or an Aveo service to conduct, even on that day. God has gifted him greatly and Council is just one of the many ways he shares those gifts to bless God and our Toowong community.

### Children and Youth

Personally I'm amazed at the extent of Clare's role and how much she is able to dedicate in the three days each week that she's employed. Council is continually approving the huge variety of activities Clare oversees, guiding our young people to an understanding and in worship of our Lord. It's not only on Sundays with KATS (Kids at Toowong on Sunday) through the Pre-Schoolers (Tigers), Prep to Year Two (Leopards) and Years Three to Five (Lions). It's also the Junior and Senior Youth Groups.

There are also many volunteers and helpers and we extend our thanks to these wonderful people, especially with added cleaning jobs during 2020 to help manage COVID-19 safely. Council also noted with pleasure that Clare led both Junior and Senior Youth Groups in Zoom-based Alpha courses as another way for them to grow in their faith.

### **Worship**

It's been noted previously, but it's still so encouraging to see how live-streaming has grown our worship service numbers. Prior to COVID-19, our weekly average attendance was somewhere between 105 and 110. Live-stream connections, often with more than one person watching, have far exceeded that number. The added value is the opportunity to watch Sunday services again, other events such as Worship Nights, Kid's Talks, Special Singing recordings, Rehearsals and the Countdown videos. Our lead live-stream experts, Brad Sheen and Luke Reynoldson, have compiled and trained a team of people including Kelvin and Sam Wuttke, Asher Waverley-Smith, Adrian and Eli Gearing, Scott and Mitch Guyatt, Jack Lord, Bill Bowles, and others too.

Garry Jennings and Lauren Murray provided wonderful leadership in coordinating worship, especially with the added challenge initially of getting accustomed to live-streaming. Then, later in the year, they needed to balance live attendance with live-streaming. Great planning and arranging from Garry and Lauren meant so many were able to either lead or play a role in our worship and music each Sunday. The high numbers of live-stream attendance say so much for the quality and heart-felt worship in which we could participate and be drawn closer into our Lord.

Our Minister Matt, together with a range of guest presenters, used the monthly themed messages to convey and guide us to deeper understanding of what it is to be a Christian and to enable us to accept and move to a closer connection with God. While aimed at children, the variety of kids' talks also helped the adults and we can never forget the wonderful videos provided by Bev Homel and Rob Lord.



We initially had to live-stream from the church house with only 5 people allowed in the space. Nevertheless, we could still worship! And how wonderful we could even partake in Communion as an online community.



## Baptisms

COVID-19 limitations meant baptism services were difficult to arrange. Nevertheless a baptism service was held during June for Doug Stephens and two months later Kabir Singh. We praise God that both these adult baptisms see new people begin their faith journey. We were also very glad to baptise Joshua Jennings, Garry and Kim's baby boy, in October. While many family members and friends could not be present for Joshua's baptism, the live-stream meant they could join in with the celebration from around Australia and the world.

## Office Team

We have been blessed to have Lauren Murray continue in her role as Relationships Manager for 24 hours each week. Lauren works in her role beyond what the title suggests and is a great part of our worship, our face to the community as well as to the Congregation, and is a leader and advocate for and contributor to the Vision, Mission, Values Goals and Actions work. During 2020 Lauren completed her Period of Discernment.

Garry Jennings contributes to the Toowong Congregation in so many ways, even including Kim & Garry's new son Joshua. As well as his Office Administrator role (16 hours each week), Garry partners with Lauren to coordinate and lead worship. Throughout 2020, Garry also continued his studies and formation as a ministry candidate at Trinity College Qld, preparing to become a Minister of the Word.

## Financial Oversight

David Vicig capably moved into the Treasurer's role displaying a wonderful ability to communicate financial complexities in an easy-to-understand way and deal with two significant changes – a new financial system (Xero) and a move to financial year budget and reporting (rather than calendar year). We have been in great hands as he and Garry Jennings worked together and had help through a finance sub-committee.



After a few weeks of live-streaming from the house, we eventually moved back to the main church building. However, we could still only have about 10 people present. Above you can see Eli and Luke managing the tech behind the scenes while Geoff and Renata lead worship.

**Property Committee**

Initially Paul Briggs considered remotely chairing the Property Committee from his residence in China but that proved too difficult. Thanks to Ben Reid for agreeing to step into the role and to the untiring Robert Hubbard and Ray Mackenroth who, with Matt Smith, oversaw the needed property maintenance.

**Prayer Group**

Meeting through Zoom proved a bonus for the weekly prayer meetings, being able to continue each Monday to faithfully pray together and bring to God worship, thanks and requests for the many personal, communal and broader prayer needs. All done from the comfort of home but in the presence of each other and God. This Prayer meeting has been moved to Tuesday mornings in 2021.

**Pastorates**

What a blessing it was for Council in July to endorse the COVID-Safe plan for the Tuesday Pastorate. Thursday Pastorate continued as well using Zoom. The other delight was Amelia Browne’s initiation, through capable and enthusiastic guidance from Lauren Murray, of the Young Adults pastorate (SafeSpace), initially through Zoom and then personal attendance guided by a COVID-Safe plan.

**Safe Church**

Safe Ministry with Children continued to be an active and

strong focus. This is yet another area Clare worked in to ensure plans, processes, training and even the thinking of all involved, considered aspects of maximising child safety. Council was thankful that Felix Chen was also willing to take on a Safe Ministry with Children role.

A new feature of 2020, as mentioned in various activities above, was COVID-Safe planning. These plans required considerable development and oversight. They also evolved as our understanding of COVID-19 risks and issues did. Felix Chen worked with Dianne Hubbard, Clare Hankamer, Garry Jennings and Matt Smith to guide the development of these plans and what an amazing effort that was to help protect all involved in the many activities as they began to resume in-person gathering.

**Presbytery**

Like so many other groups, Presbytery needed to meet through Zoom for two of the four meetings during 2020. TUC is blessed with three regular attendees: our Minister Matt Smith, Jo Reynoldson who plays an active role in Presbytery Youth Ministry and Will Stewart, the TUC Presbytery representative. Council receives regular reporting on Presbytery activities, considerations and decisions. A sad loss during 2020 was the passing of Rev Don Whebell on 15 December. So much of Don’s life was dedicated to serving the church, twice as Moderator, and he was a wonderful part of our Congregation before he and wife Pam (a former TUC Officer Administrator) relocated to Beaudesert.



One of our Zoom catch ups after Sunday Worship.

## Missional Activities

### Playgroup

Playgroup is yet another way Clare cares for families and young people and this ministry provides an opportunity for Toowong Uniting to serve the wider community. Claudia Diaz served wonderfully as the Friday Playgroup Coordinator in 2019 and, while we were sad to see Claudia leave this position, we are glad that she has found work in her field. We were then blessed once more when Rui Xia stepped into the Friday Playgroup Coordinator role in 2020. Clare and Rui make a great team and, together with many volunteers from TUC and the wider community, create a beautiful space for parents, carers and their little ones to play and grow at Thursday and Friday Playgroup. While in-person gatherings were not possible earlier in the year and the groups moved onto Zoom, COVID-Safe plans were developed in July so Playgroup could begin meeting in-person again in the TUC hall. Extra thanks is needed for those overseeing and helping, as the cleaning needs were very onerous, although undertaken with thoroughness and love.

### LoveToowong

LoveToowong provided a great opportunity for support and outreach to those who were in some cases in desperate need as a result of COVID-19 restrictions and other factors. As part of the pastoral care that the PACT group offers, Dianne Hubbard, Wendy Geldenhuys, Bev Homel and Gem Mackenroth were able to steer the funds provided by the TUC congregation to the people and areas where it was most needed.

### TUC University Chaplain

Continuing our TUC connection to international university students, Zac Li as our TUC University Chaplain, rose to the challenge of COVID-19 restrictions with Zoom-based Bible studies. Of course this also meant being available as needed, working with Power to Change and coordinating the Beyond Brisbane events which connect the students with families.



Our KATS Christmas Service on 6 December, 2020. We could still only have a limited number of people in the building at this stage with ticketed seats, but it was a great celebration with the kids leading us and performing their nativity!

### **English Conversation**

This group began meeting on Monday 3 February, but by 16 March COVID-19 restrictions made it too difficult to continue. However, the ever-resourceful and very capable Jane Trewern was able to master Zoom to enable online English Conversation classes from April. This continued successfully for much of the remainder of the year with live attendance restarting gradually in Spring, around COVID-Safe planning. A gathering in Anzac Park with billy tea was a special highlight. Another advantage of Zoom classes meant some of those who had returned to their country of origin could still participate. Thanks also to the helpers who volunteered their time to work with our new friends for whom English is a second (or subsequent) language.

### **Community Morning Tea**

Monthly Community Morning Teas were certainly interrupted by COVID-19 restrictions. It's just not the same through Zoom, but through God's grace and the dedication and hard work of Wendy Geldenhuys and her team, it was wonderful to finish 2020 with an in-person event with great food, tea and coffee and friendship.

### **Connect Brunches**

Newer people attending TUC have continued to be welcomed through Connect Brunches, despite COVID-19 restrictions hampering some efforts. We were able to hold one Connect Brunch in March 2020, co-ordinated by Dianne Hubbard, before lockdown procedures began. While we could not hold any further Connect Brunch events in 2020, we look forward to engaging with this again in 2021 and are grateful to God that He continues to bring new people from all backgrounds to worship with us at TUC – what a privilege it is to welcome and share who Christ is with them.

### **Relationship with The Garden**

During 2020 TUC also worked more closely with The Garden and one of The Garden's Missionaries, Carly Kies. The Garden works in a gentle way to welcome University students into community and help them see God at work. Financial support was provided to The Garden from the congregation and also from specific congregation members.

### **Relationship with Outback Futures**

TUC's strong relationship with Outback Futures continued in 2020. Although the first "democracy sausage sizzle" wasn't able to proceed, the second election in October did provide the opportunity to raise funds for Outback Futures. A strong connection with Outback Futures also enabled the 16 Grove Street property to be provided to a family in need while their son was receiving long term medical care in Brisbane.

### **Relationship with the Korean Congregation**

It's a blessing that the Korean Congregation has been able to continue their worship at Toowong and we are able to work together where opportunities arise. TUC services have been blessed with the excellent musical leadership of Jisu Shin and Grace Kim and we have been able to assist our Korean brothers and sisters in a number of ways including COVID-Safe planning. It was sad that very recently the former Korean Congregation minister, Rev Paul Suh, passed away.

### **TUC Property Missional Consideration**

TUC has been blessed with quite a considerable real estate holding in Toowong. To evaluate whether there are improved missional ways the property can be oriented, an initiative to identify possible options and opportunities has been underway for some time, steered by Robert Hubbard and his Project Management Group. After many iterations a number of options were put to Brisbane City Council in the latter part of 2020 to test feasibility. More work is being undertaken to understand economic feasibility and it is hoped some proposals will be available for consideration by the Congregation during 2021.



Our Vision & Planning Day on 6 February, 2021. How great it was to plan and pray together for the year and years ahead!

## Looking ahead in 2021

The Council looks forward to the growing faith and discipleship of all people at Toowong Uniting Church, to the engagement of people not involved in the church, and to the equipping of our current and new leaders.

We ask you to continue to pray for Matt as he leads and cares for our church and we pray that the congregation continues to be a warm, friendly community which maintains its intergenerational and intercultural character, with Christ as its centre.

**Let us approach 2021, excited about what the future holds for our congregation, and with thankful hearts and minds, praising God and giving “thanks to the Lord for he is good; His love endures forever.”**

Psalm 106:1

# Families Pastor Report

**Clare Hankamer**

Families Pastor



**Thank you!**

**Without your prayers this year, none of the work that we do for God's Kingdom would be possible. Thank you for the prayer warriors who pray for this ministry every day. I pray that you are encouraged in this work as it is so vital. You are the most important people, humble as you are, in the Families Ministry Team!**

## **Overview and highlights**

At this time last year, we were facing the reality of lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We had a Senior Youth Leaders' Meeting just days before on 19 March and Hamish, Alice, Lachlan and I all recall trying to work out what to do. How would our young people manage without meeting face to face?

We look back on lockdown with great thankfulness to Our Lord for His provision. Even though it was a really tough time for everyone, the whole of Senior Youth was able to meet weekly online and connect deeply in prayer and worship as we shared the Alpha Course together.

It has been a huge privilege to work with Rui in this challenging year, too. I want to thank Church Council for their support throughout this time to see the importance

of resourcing Playgroup even though we could not meet in-person. Rui was able to hit the ground running in these circumstances, something I find truly amazing. I thank God for her and for both Rui and Felix's hard work and servant hearts as they work tirelessly to set up Playgroup, rising to all the challenges of COVID-19 regulations, especially the cleaning.

Rui and I ran Zoom sessions together during Lockdown for the Playgroup families and set up a Facebook page for support. It was so lovely to tell stories and to sing songs (that became huge favourites!) and watch the toddlers and their Mums dancing along to the music on screen. It became a lifeline for these families. One Mum told me later that we were the only people she connected with in Brisbane having newly arrived from overseas in March.



One of the final Senior Youth gatherings in 2020 where the group started off the night with a (competitive!) game of water balloon volley ball.

Our first onsite Playgroup sessions after lockdown were met with tears of joy as we welcomed families back. We were immediately struck with the difficult positions almost all families faced being stuck in Australia during the pandemic unable to see their families at home and anxiously watching infection rates skyrocket in many of those countries.

Having seen how well Alpha worked online, I felt led to run it for Playgroup families. I confess, the pandemic gave me a sense of urgency to share the Gospel when I have not been so bold before. Playgroup Alpha brought many beautiful moments with the two mums that attended. We were able to connect very deeply and all of us experienced being filled with the Holy Spirit.

It has been a joy to work with my co-workers on the KATS Team during this last year; to pray together, to plan together and most of all to learn to trust in the Holy Spirit to guide us through whatever challenges faced us. I thank them for their energy and superb creativity (especially Bev Homell!), their support to me, their steadfast approach and their wonderful faith!

My biggest vote of thanks has to go to Dianne Hubbard who has been awesome. Her work leading Care & Connect (pastoral care team) has been so vital during this last year. At my request, she very graciously agreed to join the COVID-19 Safe Team to help prepare us for reopening. Her skills and wisdom have been vital to us reopening and being able to continue to adhere to the evolving COVID-19 regulations. This has given me huge confidence in opening up to youth and children's ministry as safely as possible.

## Challenges for 2021:

### Regrouping

It has been amazing to have the ability to connect online each Sunday when we haven't been able to connect in person. As we continue through the pandemic this year, this will be important if we face future lockdowns.

I have made the difficult decision to run KATS on alternate Sundays to enable us to meet with Junior Youth on the other Sundays in the hall as we are currently unable to meet in the church house due to restrictions on numbers. We will review this to see how it is working. We are beginning to get into a routine and I am so grateful for the patience and dedication of families who have to plan to come on those weeks.

We miss the spontaneity of families just turning up and are aware that there is the extra challenge of families needing to stay away due to colds or coughs. This is important, but challenging when little ones so frequently get sick with bugs at Childcare!

I'd love your prayers as we think through how to minister to young families during this time.

### How do we do Families Ministry going forward?

We have relied so much on the commitment of parents to bring their children each week. As I talk to families at Playgroup, I am struck by how little support there is for them to guide them through bringing up their children to know Jesus.

My hunch is that we draw resources into supporting parents to do this at this time. I am running another Playgroup Alpha and would love your prayers for this.

We will review childrens' and youth ministry this year to pray through God's leading as we see a continuing and maybe more pronounced (due to the pandemic) shift in our communities with anxious and time-poor parents juggling many activities for their children. Many of these parents crave community but do not have an experience of God's family and his church.



## **Childrens' and Youth Ministry Teams**

### **Playgroup 2020**

Friday Coordinator: Rui Xia  
Volunteers: Felix Chen, Arini Stamenkovic, Maria José Hernández Astorga, Kavitha Penchala  
Thursday Coordinator: Clare Hankamer  
Volunteers: Sandra Hemming, Shelagh Griffin, Prakashni Sharpe

### **Playgroup 2021**

Friday Coordinator: Rui Xia  
Volunteers: Felix Chen, Arini Stamenkovic, Kavitha Penchala  
Thursday Coordinator: Clare Hankamer  
Volunteers: Prakashni Sharpe, Yuliya Litvynenko, Yun Huang, Marisa Ferrer  
New volunteers: Namuundari Bayarsaikhan, Isabelle Hurstel and Aziza Arefin (all starting after 13 March)

### **Junior Youth 2020**

Leaders: Clare Hankamer, Narelle Waverley-Smith, Amelia Browne (Matt Smith co-led Alpha)

### **Junior Youth 2021**

Leaders: Clare Hankamer

### **Senior Youth 2020**

Leaders: Hamish Gomersall, Lachlan Pennell, Alice Middleton, Emily Jones and Clare Hankamer

### **Senior Youth 2021**

Leaders: Emily Jones, Lauren Jones and Clare Hankamer

### **Kids at Toowong on Sunday (KATS) 2020**

Leaders: Bev Homel, Dianne Hubbard, Catherine Wuttke, Fiona Vicig, Rui Xia, Felix Chen and Clare Hankamer

### **Kids at Toowong on Sunday (KATS) 2021**

Leaders: Bev Homel, Catherine Wuttke, Fiona Vicig, Felix Chen, Rui Xia and Clare Hankamer  
Junior Leaders: Bryony Smith, Kahlia Gearing, Mikaela Gearing, Beth Middleton

# Care & Connect

**Dianne Hubbard**

Co-ordinator



**“A new command I give to you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”** These words of Jesus in John 13:34,35 are the inspiration for the Care & Connect teams, and they rang as true as any other time throughout 2020 despite our TUC congregation being separated from each other.

Throughout 2020, the Prayer And Care Team (PACT) and the Cluster Companions continued to care for others through providing practical needs and through prayer. Continuing our meetings online via Zoom, enabled the team members to collate various needs and decide on courses of action.

Frequent practical actions by both PACT and Cluster Companions included visits to several members of our congregation living alone, assistance in the form of meals or groceries delivered, and relational telephone calls and texts. At one stage, homemade biscuits were delivered to various members of our congregation, bringing a little bit of sweetness to their lives.

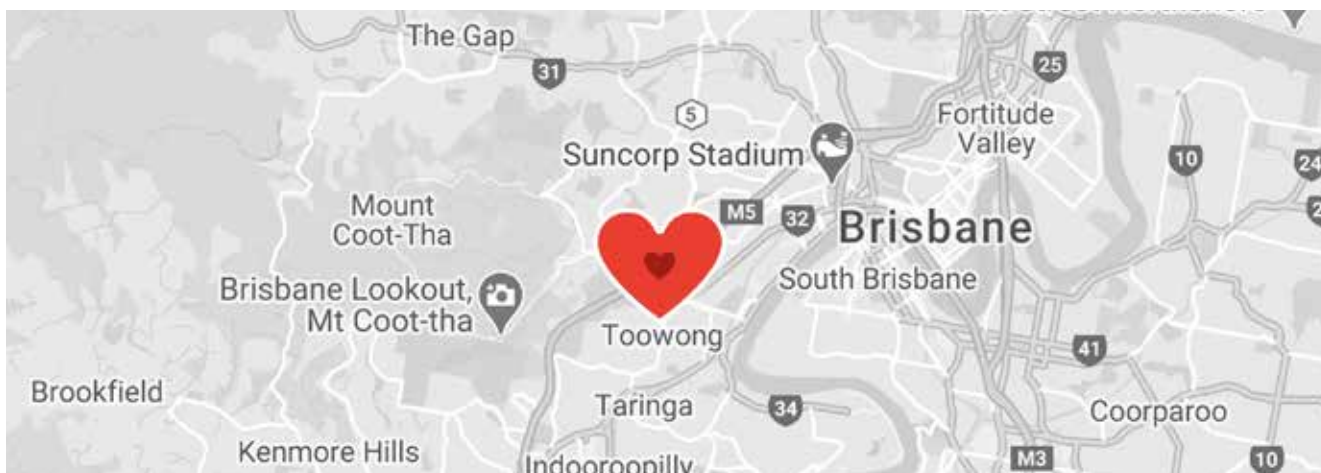
Additionally, it was inspiring to hear of many stories of telephoning people or meeting someone in the supermarket (one of the places we were allowed to go during COVID-19 restrictions) at just the right, Spirit inspired time, to share a word of comfort or a social chat.

The Care & Connect team looks forward to 2021 to continuing to foster a community where people feel they belong, where they feel safe, where they are cared for, and where they can grow and share in God’s light and love.

# LoveToowong

## Bev Homel

Member, LoveToowong Probity Committee



**In March 2020, in the face of increasing COVID-19 restrictions and business shutdowns, Scott Guyatt and Warwick Browne approached Matt Smith to discuss how TUC could act on its mission to love Toowong. What new needs would people face and how could we best help?**

After approval by Church Council, the LoveToowong fund was established under the operational oversight of a probity committee and the congregation began to make generous donations. By the time the fund was established, the type and extent of government supports had become clearer and this helped the probity committee to decide our approach.

The committee decided to offer help initially to people we knew of, or who were referred to us, who fell into the cracks between the various government programs – mainly international students and recent graduates from overseas. Some assistance has also been given to local residents already in difficult circumstances whose finances were further weakened by loss of casual work. Our international student contacts were also asked to tell us if they knew of students who were not receiving help and who were struggling.

Assistance has mostly been in the form of food vouchers, groceries and contributions to grocery bills, but the fund has also been used to help people in a variety of other ways, including paying for course fees, prepaid phone and data top ups, and fuel and public transport costs.

The individual amounts given have not generally been large, but this means the fund has been able to provide ongoing assistance to a number of people for over a year now – people who might otherwise have really struggled to get by.

The funds are distributed mainly through PACT and also through church office staff. The probity committee meets regularly to ensure transparency and equity in decision making and to decide unusual or larger requests. The committee reports to Church Council.

A number of people who have received assistance during the last year are now managing with more work or other changed circumstances. While some of our contacts still need regular assistance, as the jobs market improves and with the hope that the vaccine roll out will prevent further lockdowns, the probity committee is planning to wind down the fund over the coming months and transfer any residual balance to the general welfare fund.

By then, LoveToowong will have distributed close to \$20,000, a tribute to the generosity of the congregation and the TUC commitment to care for our community.

# Toowong Community Morning Tea

**Wendy Geldenhuys**

Co-ordinator



The above photo shows our beautiful Toowong Community Morning Tea set up in 2019 with tiers of delicious, homemade treats. While we had to change this slightly to fit with COVID-Safe regulations in 2020, it was worth it to still be able to meet together.

**Our enthusiastic Team planned to make the morning tea even more accessible for the wider community by advertising through local news, Facebook and the community bulletin board. Our first Toowong Community Morning Tea took place on 19 February 2020 attended by 30 guests, led by Wendy Geldenhuys and Matt Smith who were assisted by helpers including Solina de Lombardi, Karen Abbey, Laurel Asimus, Jane Trewern, Peter Hamilton, Shelagh Griffin and Sachin Christian. Such a fun morning! We felt really blessed that 2020 was off to a great start!**

With all plans in place and guest speaker arranged for 19 March – a representative from Ecumenical Coffee Brigade – along came COVID-19 and with the lockdown, Morning Tea was cancelled until further notice.

With the help of Dianne Hubbard, we went online using Zoom for Morning Tea Catchup for the months of June, July, August and September. This was a fun way to keep in touch and was well supported.

On 21 October we held our first COVID-Safe Morning Tea in the Church Hall. Special thanks and appreciation to Dianne and Rob Hubbard who guided us through

the processes of delivering a COVID-Safe event. All persons who would be working on the day needed a TAFE “Covid Safe Dine-In Certificate” and this had to be given to the Office. COVID-Safe registration, spaced seating, paper plates, paper cups, stirrers and gloves had to be used. Food had to be presented in individual boxes. Guests had to remain seated and be served. Limited people were allowed in kitchen and all cleaning processes had to be strictly adhered to. I was particularly grateful to Dianne Hubbard who patiently guided us through all the hoops as our guests were mainly in the vulnerable category!



Our first COVID-Safe Morning Tea in 2020 on 21 October.

It was a joy to have Michael Berkman, a sitting member for the seat of Maiwar representing our Electorate since 2017, as our speaker on that day. Twenty seven guests signed in for a different but fun morning.

On 18 November 2020 we held our Christmas Toowong Community (COVID-Safe) Morning Tea. All the COVID-Safe requirements which we were now familiar with were adhered to. Special thanks to Dianne and Rob Hubbard who assisted with setting up the hall and the pre-cleaning. The hall was decorated in a Christmas theme with Christmas linen table cloths and crackers. Twenty eight guests attended and a full morning programme was arranged. The speakers for the morning were Beryl Mortimer – Navigating COVID-19 and Beyond; Narelle Waverley Smith – A snapshot of being a working mother/teacher during COVID-19; Kim Jennings – a COVID-19 baby and family overseas. We appreciated the speakers sharing the highs and lows of their lives during the pandemic. A great idea from Beryl and a great success. Matthew Smith arranged a Bible Quiz and we had fun games and lucky numbers all with beautiful prizes

donated by Sandra Hemming. As part of our morning we celebrated Dot Beavis' 89th birthday with a birthday cake and words from Karen Runge, Dot's daughter.

To Matthew and the Team: I am sincerely thankful for the way we all worked together and followed the COVID-Safe guidelines. Appreciation to Dianne Hubbard who patiently guided me through what was a very different Café style morning tea in October and November. Great Teamwork – thank you!!

As I write this we are busy arranging our team for 2021, planning speakers and looking forward to our first New Normal Community Morning Tea on Wednesday 17 March where we will have a speaker from the Ecumenical Coffee Brigade. We had planned this speaker for March 2020!

# English Conversation

**Will Stewart and Jane Trewern**

Co-ordinators



**English Conversation occurred over about 27 weeks of the remarkable 2020 year, with some gaps in the regularity because of the challenges of COVID-19. As always, a group of volunteers (including one from another church) made this possible, with Will Stewart and Jane Trewern continuing as leaders. Shelagh Griffin was a permanent co-leader for all the Zoom meetings, which was so appreciated. These meetings had smaller numbers than in past groups, so only two leaders were needed.**

Early in the year, when COVID-19 allowed, about 3 meetings were held in the church hall, applying COVID-Safe precautions. Our 'student' numbers had declined somewhat since 2019, one reason being that some folk were afraid of coming in to Toowong because of the virus. In addition, a few people who had been regulars in 2019 had gone home to their original countries for the Christmas break and were unable to return to Australia.

When meeting physically, mask wearing and the required distances between people presented challenges for our particular task of modeling speech and pronunciation, so for twenty-one of the weeks, we met online using Zoom. Happily, three past members who were unable to return to Australia joined us on Zoom from South Korea, China and Thailand. As a 'one-off' during this

time, we had a gathering in Anzac Park. This provided a wonderful chance to 'say g'day' and meet physically over billy tea and snacks, while discussing the history and significance of Anzac Park. Then we returned to Zooming. As COVID-19 regulations and requirements eased, we returned to the hall for a further 5 meetings.

Although our group was somewhat depleted throughout the year, we found that there are people who want to join us: to use whatever English they already have, meet people, learn some new language and feel accepted in Australia. We also tried to share a little about the Christian faith while making it easy, we hoped, for them to join general church activities, regardless of cultural and language barriers. In spite of the challenges of 2020, English Conversation continued through most months.

# Safe Space (Young Adult Pastorate)

**Amelia Browne**

Co-ordinator



**At the start of 2020, during the difficult time of COVID-19, the young adult group, Safe Space, was set up with the intention of creating a 'safe space' to question, share and learn more about God's plan and Word, and our purpose.**

We had one in-person gathering in March 2020 before lockdown procedures began, after which we moved online. We continued to meet on fortnightly Saturday evenings through Zoom and, though we were a small group, strong friendships were created.

We were finally able to meet in-person again on 8 August, 2020. From this date onward, we began meeting in homes every second Saturday evening.

Our Saturday nights included games, dinner, worship, a devotional as well as in-depth discussions. We love talking about God and our faith, so much so that multiple times our gatherings have run far past 9.00 pm! We aim to allow others in the group to share and lead different parts of the gatherings to encourage shared leadership.

This small group of young adults have pushed through the hardships of 2020 and have stuck together and continue to grow with each other and with God. We began meeting again at the start of semester 1 on Saturday 27 February, 2021. This year, we have moved to the TUC hall so there is space for more people to attend. I'm so blessed to have been a part of this group and hope that this next coming year is even better than the last.

# Tuesday Pastorate

**Luke Reynoldson**

Tuesday Pastorate Leadership Team



Above is a photo from 18 February, 2020. Little did we know it would be one of the last times we would gather in-person like this for many months!

**The Tuesday Pastorate experienced new ways of connecting together over the course of 2020. The year started off as normal, but at the end of March we had to change our plans and meet online via the magic of the internet on a strange new platform called Zoom! However, in Term 3 we were able to meet together in-person once again in the TUC hall.**

Numbers tend to be around 15 – 18 each fortnight and often reached over 20 mid-year. In 2020, we worked through a variety of series including “What is the Spirit saying to the Church?” and “The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry”.

The evening starts at 7:00 pm in the Church Hall with dinner and dessert followed by singing and sharing. The study follows with plenty of time for discussion and reflection. We close around 9:00 pm after a time of prayer for ourselves, others and our communities.

A big thank you goes to Matt for his support with leadership and regular participation in the group.

We continue to support and pray for those who are looking for work, who have various health challenges, are moving house, have loved ones in crisis and students who are studying and face the regular stress of assignments and exams. Anyone of any age is most welcome to drop in anytime!



# Stitching & Friendship Group

**Shirley Holden**

Coordinator



Some members of the Stitching & Friendship Group enjoying a cuppa before they get to work on their various craft projects. This photo is from late in 2019, but we are glad to see the group meeting again like this in early 2021!

**Our Term commenced on 4 February 2020 and we managed to attend on 18 February, and on 3 and 17 March which was our last Craft Group meeting for the year due to COVID-19.**

We looked at a new way of covering coat hangers and making a table runner, and mug rug ideas using a die machine.

We made donations to the TUC pantry on the days we came to craft. Also, we were able to make a donation of \$95.00 to TUC to assist with welfare.

Our group comprises twenty ladies and we meet on the 1st, 3rd and 5th Tuesday of every month except for school holidays.

All new ladies are very welcome. Once again on behalf of our ladies, I would like to thank TUC for their continued support of our Craft Group in 2020.

We look forward to returning to craft in 2021 when it is practical and safe to do so.

# University Ministry

**Zac Li**

TUC Uni Chaplain



International Friendship Night, 2020.

**Toowong Uniting Church has a strong partnership with Power to Change International Student Ministry (ISM). As the University Chaplain at TUC, my job is mainly to build the bridge between TUC and ISM by helping ISM to organize different international student activities and inviting students to come to TUC and know more about Jesus.**

## **Beyond Brisbane**

2020 started with Beyond Brisbane, which is the mission trip at different campuses around Brisbane during orientation week. This mission trip lasts two weeks and our team seeks to reach out to uni students with the Gospel.

Before Beyond Brisbane launched, a few students went to TUC to share their testimonies and to fundraise.

## **House of Peace**

Houses of Peace are held during Beyond Brisbane and are hosted by local Aussie families. The families provide the meal and bible study for students who are new to Australia. These events allow international students to experience Aussie culture and learn more about Jesus. In 2020, two families from TUC hosted the Houses of Peace – the Wuttkes and the Homels. Approximately 30 students joined for a great evening of international friendship over delicious shared meals.



Thank you to the Homel family (above left) and the Wuttke family (above right) for hosting Houses of Peace in 2020!

## **International Friendship Night**

This was held at the end of Beyond Brisbane. We invited all students who we'd been approaching and following up to this event. During the event, we had games, speeches, worship, and dinner.

## **Catalyst**

Catalyst is the weekly Thursday gathering at UQ, organized by Power to Change ISM. We have games, bible study with discussion, worship, and dinner for international students. 30-50 students attend each week.

## **Bread of Life**

This is the holiday version of Catalyst. Students meet at different locations for bible study and dinner.

## **Sunday morning bible study**

Apart from working with Power to Change ISM, I also lead the bible study for students every Sunday morning at TUC before the service. This bible study is the easy English bible study and based on the service's passage on that day. There are a few students each time.

2020 was very different because COVID-19 changed the way we organized all our events and activities. During the lockdown period, although everything was shut down, God provided a different way for us to build the community through online meetings. Because we joined together online, we did not have any time and geographical limits. Online bible study has been going very well.

# Worship

**Garry Jennings**

Worship Team Co-ordinator



For many weeks after the initial lockdown in March, we live-streamed our Sunday worship from the church house.

**2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic had significant effects on every aspect of church life, but perhaps nowhere was this more obvious than in our efforts to continue to worship together as a community despite lockdowns, cleaning regimes and capacity restrictions. It is a testament to the continued work of the Holy Spirit among us that we have maintained a life of worship and service to one another despite some of the greatest challenges our community has faced.**

When the COVID-19 pandemic began to have global impact in March last year, we faced the demoralising prospect of having to close our church buildings entirely and cease gathering as a group. For many communities this would have spelt the end, but within days of the lockdowns being announced, our unflappable tech leaders were jerry-rigging a system by which to live-stream our worship services.

The first few weeks were managed with a webcam, a laptop and a mobile phone. Over subsequent weeks the

church internet connection was upgraded, the YouTube channel was formalised, additional computers and hardware were purchased, animations were created and music was recorded. At the time we had no idea of the significance of the medium that was being developed, but soon the numbers began to speak for themselves. Not only were we reaching into the homes of our congregation stuck in lockdown: We were reaching into homes of friends, family and other brothers and sisters in Christ all over the world. Far from crushing our worship, the pandemic lockdowns and the move to online



It was wonderful that we could all worship together in-person again for Christmas 2020.

streaming has increased our ability to engage people in any number of situations that would have previously been unreachable from Toowong.

It was a magnificent effort from all involved, but special thanks must go to a few individuals who have given greatly of their time and talents to keep our community of worship operational. Luke Reynoldson and Brad Sheen have invested countless hours in designing, sourcing and building our live-streaming system, using their gifts in network administration and AV systems to produce a stream that was of high quality and accessibility from week one. Adrian and Eli Gearing have also made invaluable contributions, leading the production of our pre-recorded worship music and adding their skills to our Sunday morning live-streaming team. We would also like to say a big thank you to all of the Tech Team and Worship Team members for sharing their gifts with us.

Even with physical gatherings possible once again and with the live-stream now a permanent part of our worship

together, we continue to face challenges as a worshipping community: "Individual portions of Communion" and "socially distant community" are oxymorons we continue to struggle with. However, by God's grace we continue to press onward towards the goal, doing what we must to maintain a community of people who love God, love each other and love our community.

# Treasurer's Report

**David Vicig**

Treasurer

**Toowong Uniting experienced strong financial performance in 2020, delivering a surplus of \$32,462 for the calendar year.**

We benefited from very generous giving throughout the period, including above budget general offerings despite the financial impact of the pandemic. Also we dug deep for the LoveToowong Campaign in addition to our regular tithing. That being said, JobKeeper and other federal government payments helped a great deal. Our facilities continued to bring revenue from Jahjumbeen, Toowong Childcare, Zumba, Kumon and Outback Futures. Mission Activity through Playgroup and Pastorate also brought in some revenue to offset the other activities such as KATS.

Offerings	\$233,875
Hire of Facilities	\$99,546
JobKeeper	\$19,800
Other Non-UCA	\$18,913
Other Miscellaneous	\$9,545
Mission Activity	\$8,467
Interest	\$327
Reimbursement for Ministerial Service	\$165

Toowong Uniting continues to invest its financial resources significantly into its people to continue to build our community and offer the great programs that we do. As we adapted to life in and beyond lockdown, we incurred increased maintenance (largely through cleaning) and equipment (streaming technology) expenses, but without either of these we would not be able to reach so many people throughout what was (and still is) a very difficult time. The congregation and community has afforded to give to LoveToowong, the Christmas Bowl, Outback Futures and The Garden.

Pay	\$228,187
Property	\$39,666
UCA	\$37,320
Congregational Life	\$17,887
Donations	\$16,467
Minor Equipment	\$7,028
Administration	\$3,170
Communications and IT	\$3,165
Playgroup	\$1,827
Youth Group	\$827
KATS	\$795
Welfare	\$691
Stationery	\$659
Gideons	\$317
Training	\$170

We finished the year with \$42,688.21 in our NAB account, \$81.12 in our St George account and \$430,788.14 in our UCIS account.

