



EASTWOOD UNITING CHURCH

REPORTS FOR

ANNUAL CONGREGATION MEETING



24th February 2019

Barbeque Outreach Report for 2018

ORIGIN AND STRUCTURE

Seven years ago Eastwood Congregation engaged in an eVision process and formed Umbrella Groups. One which then took shape engaged in outreach beyond the walls of the church by running Sunday-lunchtime community barbeques. These have generally been held at bimonthly intervals at Waterloo Park in the Marsfield area. Two years ago they were also held at alternate bimonthly intervals in Eastwood Park, adjacent to the church.

The original vision of the Group was “to go into the world beyond Eastwood to further the work of God in the Marsfield / Macquarie Park community by meeting and genuinely loving our neighbours and helping them in areas of need, thereby living out the Gospel.”

A core Group of about 10 members have planned and run this activity. A few other members joined when Eastwood BBQs were added. Both Rev Nicholas and Pastor Tennyson have been active supporters. The church Office also provides valuable administrative support.

REVIEW

Several hundred people have been contacted and followed up through our BBQs and many are now regular attenders. The events have been **especially popular with the Chinese and Korean people** in our community. In recent years the events have been integrated with other related activities of the Congregation. A small independent Korean congregation at Marsfield has also become a consistent attender.

These barbeques have always been happy, fun events, even in spite of an occasional down-pour!

Activities ‘behind-the-scenes’ for each BBQ event are:

- Prepare and distribute leaflets in the area adjacent to the forthcoming location;
- Email the contact list of previous attendees;
- A short planning meeting before each event (usually 9am on prior Sunday);
- Buy and prepare food;
- Provide cold soft drinks (and coffee/tea Eastwood) at the BBQ;
- Bring additional chairs, table, ‘picnic’ equipment and banner;
- Arrange with the local café (in Trafalgar Place) to host post-BBQ coffee;
- Occupy the site and clean the electric barbeque facilities from 10am Sunday;
- Provide any necessary transport;
- Run the event from 11.30am to 1pm providing food and engaging in conversation with our visitors;
- Clean up afterwards;
- Settle expense accounts with the Treasurer following the event (usually \$150-300); and
- Update lists and administrative matters.

For several years an end-of-year function was held in members homes and once in a hired hall in Marsfield attracting a dozen or more people. This has not been possible in recent years.

Some contacts from these outreach events have from time to time visited our church services at Lakeside Road, although this has not been quantified.

Engagement in the events has strengthened fellowship among members of the organising Group.

There have been occasional presentations to the Congregation on these activities and they have been regularly reported in the *Contact* magazine. The activity typically costs about \$1,500 per year.

Requests to neighbouring Uniting congregations for support have not been productive.

ASSESSMENT & RECOMMENDATION

Food was a key factor in Jesus' contact with his audience in his earthly ministry – think of the various dinners described in the gospels, the wedding at Cana, the feeding of the 5000 and 4000, etc. **Jesus' command to us today is: "Go forth and make disciples" (Matt 28v19).** Few people now spontaneously walk into suburban churches. We can view these BBQ events as an opportunity for us to "go forth". Yes, "making disciples" is hard in our modern world, but if we stay sitting in our buildings we are not even responding to the first part of the Lord's command.

Those of us involved in this outreach activity, believe it is worthwhile and know it is enjoyable. We thank all members of the Congregation who have supported the activity over the years. **We recommend that it continue in its present or a modified form.**

But our existing Group is ageing and we can't keep it going much longer – perhaps another year? We would really like some younger members of the congregation to join the Group with some new ideas and energy. Children and younger people would be a great addition to people attending on the day - those we meet are mostly younger than us! We would also like to welcome Chinese and Korean speaking members to our Group as regular attenders and helpers.

Can you help?

THE BARBEQUE OUTREACH UMBRELLA GROUP

FEBRUARY 2019

CONTINUING CHRISTIAN EDUCATION UMBRELLA GROUP

Annual Report to Congregation for 2018

The Group

The purpose of the Continuing Christian Education Umbrella Group (CCEUG) is to promote continued spiritual development and learning at Eastwood Uniting Congregation while building better relationships through involvement in small group activities. Sunday School activity is not included in the brief.

Members during 2018 were Trevor Bird, Linda Brunton, Christopher Cooper, John Court (convenor), Margot Doust, Sophie Edington-Cheater, Nicholas Fried, John Loxton and Bob Springett. The Group met on 4 occasions for planning and management, supplemented by much activity at individual level.

Activities for 2018

Continuing Christian Education activities during 2018 were:

1. Lenten studies: Rowan Williams' text, *The Sign and the Sacrifice*, accompanied by a CCEUG Study Guide, proved to be rather challenging. There was some interesting discussion among about 20 participants in three groups. This was an increase on last

year's involvement, shared with St Kevins, but slightly down on previous years' EUC-organised Lenten studies (2015 – 25 av; 2016 – 22 av; 2017 – 12 av; 2018 – 20 av).

2. Visiting speakers: UTC Lecturers, Dr Anthony Rees (OT) and Dr Jeff Aernie (NT) led two evenings for exploration of current topics of research interest in their respective fields on 23 April and 22 May. Average attendance was 19, with about half from Eastwood Uniting.
3. Finding God in the Movies: *Shadowlands*, a biographical film based on the life of CS Lewis was screened and discussed on 24 and 31 October, with a write up in the 3rd Quarter edition of *Contact*. Attendance was 14.
4. Back to Basics: Discussion groups were held in February and March to provide an opportunity for 'fundamental' questions and other religious uncertainties to be explored in a safe environment. On average 10 people attended.
5. Bible studies: A study of *Galatians* was undertaken on a fortnightly basis from August through November. A study guide by John Stott entitled *Galatians: experiencing the grace of Christ*, although having shortcomings, provided the basic material, along with CCEUG supplementary notes. An evening and morning group operated with an email group also receiving study material for 'on-the-go' engagement, in line with the successful experience in the study of *Matthew* in 2017. Average combined group attendance was 16, with an additional 7 signed up for the email study.
6. A 'book-swap' facility has been established with a collection of over 100 books accumulated (mainly, but not exclusively religious). It was available during each Sunday morning in the foyer until the offices had to be refurbished following the break in. No records are kept and it is a case of "Take! Read! Return /Keep! Donate! Be stimulated!"
7. Sunday morning 'dramatic interludes': Christopher Cooper and others have prepared and joined in occasional dramatic interludes with Nicholas during Sunday services to prompt lateral thinking and discussion.
8. The CCEUG activities have been amply promoted through *Weekly Notices*, by announcements during worship services, on the EUC website and by articles in *Contact*. Some items have also been included in the Sydney Central Coast Presbytery weekly notices and advertised through email/facebook contact.

Expenditure and support

Expenditure for 2018 CCEUG, primarily for the visiting lecturers, Drs Rees and Aernie, and a small subsidy for purchase of study material, amounted to approximately \$ 450 net.

Commitment of volunteer and office time has been very substantial and CCEUG thanks all who have been involved in the planning, organisation and delivery of the 2018 program. We especially thank Nicholas and Sue Fried (at the Manse) and John and Michelle Loxton (at their home) along with others who hosted various small-group sessions during the year.

Review and Assessment of Continuing Christian Ed. – 2015 to 2018

In the light of four years' experience and with some changes impending in the CCEUG make up, it is appropriate to review and assess the activities and direction of Continuing Christian Education at Eastwood.

There have been eight (8) types of small-group and presentation activity:

- Lenten studies,
- visiting expert lecturers,
- 'finding God in the movies',
- studies on progressive Christianity around DVDs (as in *Living-the-Questions* style),
- confirmation classes,
- 'back to basics' discussions,
- Sunday morning 'dramatic interludes' and
- Bible studies (in small groups and by email).

Where appropriate Nicholas has aligned aspects of sermons into the current programs. CCEUG activities have been advertised variously, both locally and at Synod level, personal and email contact proving best.

Each year between 45 and 50 people have engaged at least once with a CCEUG activity, while a core of between 20 and 25 have supported regularly. Typically 5 to 8 people on average have come from other congregations or churches, in response to attempts to raise Eastwood's profile to that of a regional hub for Christian education in Uniting circles. A small decline in numbers engaging over the 4-year period is also evident. Costs have been managed to below \$500 per year. CCEUG has welcomed very healthy volunteer support, to the benefit of both those participating in sessions and the volunteers.

A few shortcomings against planned objectives have been:

- the failure as yet to develop training programs supporting greater lay engagement in worship, and
- development of spiritually engaging activities for older people.

Other aspects which might be appropriate to explore in future, given our developing situation at Eastwood Uniting, are:

- more effective engagement with those in the Congregation in younger and middle years, and
- increasing engagement with Chinese or Korean sections of the Congregation, noting the growing ethnic outreach led by Tennyson and featuring in our ESL activities.

Another survey of Congregation members on Christian Educations needs may be helpful.

Recommendation

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT the Congregation:

- endorse the activities of the Continuing Christian Education Umbrella Group in 2018 as reported;
- ask it to continue to plan and deliver a program for 2019;
- ask it to explore further options for a 're-boot' of CCE, including:
 - continued support for the core group currently engaged,
 - development of programs more attractive to younger and family members,
 - development of programs attractive to Chinese and Korean people,
 - undertake a survey of the Congregation on its expectations, and
 - development of Eastwood Uniting as an CCE hub in the Presbytery/Region

CONTINUING CHRISTIAN EDUCATION UMBRELLA GROUP

For EUC Annual Report, March 2019

English classes

It is a privilege to meet, teach, and get to know the many students who attend our EUC English classes.

We have a team of 40 volunteers which includes members of EUC Congregation (Val Bird, Michelle Loxton, Marion & Malcolm Gledhill, and John Court). Others are from the wider community, enthusiastic and generous people who share our aim “to hold out the hand of friendship and to offer assistance with English language to people from non-English speaking background who have come to live in our community”.

The more volunteers we have the more individualised attention can be given to our students.

We are very appreciative of the willing assistance given by Kerrie and Michelle in the EUC office. They deal with paperwork involved with students' donations, many special photocopying requests, and an assortment of other tasks.

It was very encouraging to receive a generous **donation** of \$1,000 from the Korean Australian Community Support corporation (KACS), a group of local Korean business people. The donation has been used to purchase a new whiteboard and a portable speaker/microphone.

Stall for Lunar New Year

Volunteers helped to staff a stall in Eastwood Plaza, at the celebrations for Lunar New Year in February 2018. Many conversations were held with interested people, and lots of brochures were distributed about the classes.

Monday 9.30am classes

7 graded classes were offered in 2017. Each class has a team of volunteer teachers and helpers, each with a lead teacher. The average number of students attending each week was 79.5.

Tennyson Chan relates well to Chinese students, and (among other helpful contributions) assists with interpretation.

Training workshops

Two 'in-house' training workshops were held on the Mondays that are 'pupil-free days', in April and July. The July workshop was presented by an Anglicare ESL trainer, and we invited volunteers at St Phillip's Anglican Church, Eastwood, who came to share the training.

We regret that the free training courses for volunteers teaching English that were previously attended by many of our volunteers at Meadowbank TAFE have now been discontinued.

Drought Fundraiser Luncheon

Students and volunteers hosted a luncheon on 3 September to assist drought-stricken communities. The luncheon and accompanying entertainment was a great success and enjoyed by all. It raised over \$3,000 to buy food and fuel vouchers for cash-strapped farmers, and brought together 120 people from all cultural backgrounds.

Our Stories, version 2

Students were invited to contribute to a 2nd edition of 'Our Stories'. Whereas the first 'Our Stories' was available in hard copy because of a donation from Uniting, this time the stories are available on line. A number of students and several volunteers have contributed stories to date. Warren Liang, one of our volunteers, has given generously of his time and efforts to set up a website, linked to the EUC website, where the stories can be uploaded and read.

You can read the stories at <https://eslourstories.wixsite.com/our-stories> . Volunteers from several classes encouraged their students to contribute and then edited their stories.

Christmas concert and party

This is always a highlight, enjoyed by students and volunteers alike, after sometimes weeks of practice of their class item.

Monday Bible/English classes

These are held at 11.15am on Monday and offer an opportunity for students to improve English and learn something about the Bible and Christianity.

Numbers increased during 2018, with a weekly average attendance of 22 students. It is wonderful that we have a sufficient number of volunteers for these classes to have 4 graded groups.

Tuesday evening classes

3 graded classes continued, led by 6 volunteer teachers and helpers. Average number of students was about 17.

Friday classes

Two classes are now held on Friday mornings.

A volunteer, Yahlin Lim, asked for a Friday class for more time to improve her beginning students' English. She follows her English class with a Bible class.

Warren Liang asked if EUC would sponsor a class he had been running under different sponsorship at West Ryde. He now leads an enthusiastic class of beginner to intermediate level students on Fridays at EUC.

Marion and Malcolm Gledhill

6F Annual Report

6F is now in its 22nd year rather surprisingly and this year it has changed slightly. When we began in 1996 we were offering a monthly outing, either a movie or a meal, for anyone living alone. And over the years we have had 50-60 members. Anyone could join, either men or women, there has never been any distinction. However as wives tend to outlive husbands and therefore are living on their own, the 6F group became a women's group by default although this was never the original intention.

This changed in 2017. We had been lunching at the restaurant in Balaclava Road for a number of years when Ian Gemmell and his son happened to be lunching there on the same day. We met and Ian suggested that he could come to 6F, a suggestion we agreed would be a good idea. And so Ian began coming and 6F members enjoyed his company. The idea of men living on their own extended to Ian Hunt, Merrill Bootes, Hans Duursma and even Geoff Widmer on one occasion, all of whom have joined our group at lunch and added significantly to our enjoyment.

With our Balaclava Road restaurant up for redevelopment, we have begun patronising the Viking Sports Club at Dundas Valley, suggested by Janine Joannou, where we are welcomed, the parking is easy and a lift carries everyone to the dining room level.

Where we will meet in the future remains to be seen but the Church Notices will keep you up to date. If you are living on your own and would enjoy a meal in cheerful company, just contact Margot Doust on 0408 250 790

Annual Report – Women's' Bible Study - 2017

A group of ladies continued to meet each Wednesday morning to share, pray, study the Bible, and do some craft. Some of us are members of Eastwood UC; for others, this is their only association, but all are welcome, as we form community. It is an essential part of the week for those attending, allowing us to support one another through the ups and downs of life, all the while conscious of God's love and presence.

This is a place for care and concern, where lives are shared openly, and prayer for each other offered. We share a cuppa and alternate Bible study and craft. This year we have participated in the Lenten studies, as well as looking at a series on parables and their application to the present day and how the concepts and truths apply to our lives as Christian women.

All are welcome, Wednesdays 10am during school term in the crèche.

Janine Joannou