

Newsletter to members and friends of Croydon Uniting Church

December 2019



Message from the Minister (Rev Dr Peter Mallen)

Advent greetings everyone! May you experience the hope, peace, joy and love that this season highlights for us.

This newsletter will provide an important update on the building program, especially the proposed long-term lease of the Hall to ElishaCare and other implications of the lease, including relocating Playgroup. The newsletter also provides an opportunity to share a little of what is happening in other parts of our life together.

One new group that has been established is a Bible study group that meets on the second and fourth Thursday of each month at 1.30 pm in the Fellowship room. We share stories from our life, open the Scriptures together, pray for each other and usually have a laugh. The group is open to everyone and includes several folks from Croydon North. We are still looking for a suitable name for this group. Suggestions are welcome.

If you haven't looked at the Church website for a while, go to <https://croydon.unitingchurch.org.au/> where you will find weekly messages from me that are also printed on the front page of *Notes&News* each week as well as downloadable copies of past messages (listed under the Resources tab).

A significant recent event was the service of celebration with Croydon Parish Players held on Sunday 17 November. This was an opportunity to remember and give thanks for many years of ministry and to bless this community in the next chapter of their journey. See separate report on this event.

Some upcoming dates for your diary

Tues 24 Dec	6.30 pm	BBQ dinner	Croydon UC
Tues 24 Dec	7.30 pm	Christmas Eve family service	Croydon UC
Tues 24 Dec	11.30 pm	Christmas Eve candlelit service	Croydon UC
Weds 25 Dec	9 am	Christmas Day service	Croydon UC
Sun 29 Dec	10 am	Combined service	Croydon North UC
Sun 5 Jan	10am	Combined service (HC)	Croydon
Sun 12 Jan	10 am	Combined service	Croydon North UC
Sun 19 Jan	10 am	Combined service	Croydon
Sun 26 Jan	10 am	Combined service	Croydon North UC



Update on building program

We have slowly grown accustomed to our new church spaces. While some of us miss the old entrance to the church and the large formal feel of the former space, there is a stronger feeling of intimacy and community in the new worship space. It is a delight to have the space lit through the beautiful stained glass windows, and perhaps for the first time, being able to truly appreciate their artistry. It is also a much more engaging space where we can see each other's faces rather than the back of people's heads. The seats are comfortable, the air is warm and the sound and images are clear. The new kitchen is a marked improvement. After a few teething problems with some items, all the equipment is now working properly and we are slowly learning to use and to appreciate the dishwasher and new oven. The toilets are also a big improvement.

In the past few months, we have also been working closely with ElishaCare to reach mutually agreeable terms for a long-term ground lease of the Hall, large steel shed and surrounding land. This agreement was dependent on ElishaCare obtaining planning approval from Maroondah Council for several planned changes to the occupancy of the Hall (e.g. to allow overnight accommodation). Council approval was finally received in late October, which in turn enabled the Uniting Church approval processes to begin. Consequently the proposal for a 10 year ground lease to ElishaCare has been approved by our Church Council, by Presbytery and in principle by the Synod Property Board. The formal lease contract still needs to be signed off by both parties, but we are hopeful that this will happen before Christmas or else early next year. So we are looking forward to welcoming ElishaCare to their new home early in the new year.

For those unfamiliar with the aims and history of ElishaCare, they are a Christian organisation formed about 15 years ago by Geoff Marsh whose aim is to connect with, support and restore hope



and purpose in people recovering from addiction and substance abuse. The heart of their mission is introducing people to Jesus and providing a strong and stable community in which people learn new ways of living. These goals are supported and facilitated by providing employment (in a social enterprise), accommodation (which is fairly limited but which will be provided in the Hall when it is refurbished) and ongoing community support

(including a model of people working in pairs, one person being a mentor to the other). Discipleship and dignity through work are thus key components of their mission. ElishaCare business activities include gardening and home maintenance, painting, cleaning and a car wash service. Every Friday they gather as a Christian community for worship, teaching and encouragement. They have been based at the old MFB Croydon fire station (opposite the primary school on Croydon Road) for the last 10 years.

The lease of the Hall will have several impacts on our church community. The most obvious change is that we will no longer have access to the Hall, the shed and the land immediately behind the Hall. The east side of the back carpark (Croydon Road side) will be reserved for ElishaCare on weekdays. We will still be able to use the land in front of the Hall for parking, along with the west side of the back carpark and the space alongside the driveway to the manse.

The next change is that Playgroup will move to a new home in the church building. Initially this will be in the Fellowship room. Equipment, toys and craft materials for Playgroup will be stored in some

of the new cupboards installed in the narthex. Consideration has been given to a new outdoor play area as the previous play area will be taken over by ElishaCare. After significant consultation, Church Council has decided that the best option is to fence off the area north of the church building and to make this a secure multi-purpose space. Initially we will relocate playgroup's outdoor equipment to this space (e.g. slide, sandpit) but over time we hope to add seating and other facilities.

Another impact of the lease to ElishaCare is a new income stream for the Church, which will provide us the financial opportunity to expand our mission and ministry. What shape this might take is still in the dreaming stage but any ideas would be welcomed by Church Council. There is a strong hope that we might partner with ElishaCare in some way, although the shape of such a partnership is still to be worked through. A final implication is that the Hall itself will remain for at least the next ten years.

Looking to the future, you may recall that the additions of the kitchen and toilets and changes to the worship space were seen as stage one of a longer term building program. There is money remaining in our account for further work, although not enough to complete the full vision for what the church building could become. So an important task for next year is to explore in detail what further additions are possible and high priority (e.g. construction of a permanent glass wall along the 'Street' and a moveable dividing wall between the worship space and the space to the south behind the temporary wall). Some costing work has already begun to explore options.

Finally, we owe a big thank you to those who have carried the building program forward these last few months. In particular the members of the Project Control Group (Charles Popple, Paul Chandler, Stephen Honey and Sandy Kahn), Church Council Secretary Graham McKern who helped facilitate the UCA approval processes, the team who helped mount the cross in the worship space and recabling of sound (Chandler family and friends, Andrew Lorimer) and the team who continue to establish the kitchen (especially Mary Birch, Meron Allen and Carole Turner).

Croydon Parish Players Celebration service

It was a full house on Sunday 17 November as we gathered to celebrate the 63 years of shared ministry with Croydon Parish Players (CPP). Many present and past members of CPP were there.



We heard stories about the early days of CPP as well as more recent experience. There was of course drama and singing with the CPP choir.

Earlier in the same week, CPP held their AGM at which they formally ceased to come under the auspices of the church and became a newly independent group who will now be known as CPP Community Theatre. Their plan is to continue to perform a play and a musical each year. Their new home for rehearsals and storage is in Bayswater, at a venue they are sharing with a dance group.

We want to thank Don Marsham for his valuable and at times challenging role of being the church liaison with CPP over many years.

An Advent prayer (by Rachel Mann)



Come to us, startling God,
wake us from our ease.
Stir up our hunger for justice,
cast out our fear.
Open our ways to your ways,
lead us down the paths
of mercy and peace.

Come to us, dazzling God,
renew us with your love.
Tend our wounds
with your wounds.
Span the poverty
of our failures and betrayal
with the abundance of your grace.

Come to us, living God,
ever ancient, ever new.
Meet us in our sufficiency
and our greed.
Feed us with your compassion.
May your vulnerability
call forth our trust.

Come to us, disturbing God,
on our streets,
in the lonely places,
in the palaces of power
and among those without homes.
To restore, revive and disrupt.
To comfort and convert.

O come, O come, Emmanuel.