

» 50 YEARS OF GRACE «

REDEEMER LUTHERAN CONGREGATION WAVERLEY



A BRIEF HISTORY
OF
REDEEMER WAVERLEY CONGREGATION
1967—2017

This record has been prepared as we celebrate fifty years since the formation of the Redeemer Waverley congregation. It contains much of the history which was recorded in the booklets prepared for the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the dedication of the church building in Cypress Avenue and the 40th anniversary of the formation of the congregation.

Since its formation in 1967, Redeemer has been positive in developing a comprehensive ministry while dealing with the fluctuations of membership in an urban environment. While the ministry has changed over the years, to cope with the nomadic nature of modern families, the challenge to project our Lord's message to the community has been strongly nurtured over the past fifty years.

EARLY HISTORY

Work began in 1959, when the two former Lutheran Churches in Australia commenced separately in the Waverley area. Pastor J.T.P. Stolz of the former UELCA St Mark's congregation, East Melbourne, held monthly services in the Syndal Hall for migrants living in what was then an outlying Metropolitan area. As far as it can be ascertained, these services were discontinued in 1961.

Pastor W.H. Paech, president of the Victorian District of the ELCA, commenced monthly services in the Methodist Church in High Street Road, Mount Waverley. The use of this church continued until the opening of the Chapel in Cypress Avenue in December 1968.

In October 1965 Pastor F.H. Eckert of St Paul's Box Hill congregation took over the responsibility of serving the Lutherans in the area. Immigrant Lutherans, along with about fifteen families of the Box Hill congregation, attended services. The caring concern and support by this "mother" congregation continued until 1977.

In 1966, the Victorian District purchased land (\$7,000) in Cypress Avenue. On July 16, 1967, a meeting of church members was held to plan the formation of the Waverley congregation. At this meeting, Pastor Eckert reported that the District Church Council had offered to erect a portable

chapel on the site. The inaugural meeting was held on October 8, 1967 in the Methodist Church in High Street Road.

The records show 85 members attended on foundation day, of which 52 were communicant members. From this meeting emerged the new congregation, to be known as *Redeemer Lutheran Church, Waverley*. It would constitute a parish together with St. Paul's Box Hill.

The original church council comprised:

Chairman: V. Huf; Secretary: C Semmler; Treasurer: D. Kottek;

Councillors: R. Dymke, Len Gaulke, M Heinrich, C Pratt.

Immediately the activity of God in and through the members of this new congregation became apparent. A course of instruction for existing and prospective members was commenced in members' homes. Sunday School classes, under the direction of Deaconess Margaret Ritter were arranged to coincide with regular services on a two weekly basis. Deaconess Margaret Ritter (Mrs Pat Horwood) was a regular organist for the new congregation. She was also a leader in the Sunday School. Mrs Ron (Vicki) Wheaton later became our first permanent organist.

In May 1968, confirmation classes commenced for about 12 young people. The women had a fellowship, demonstrating a zeal for God and his work in and through the congregation, and working towards the formation of a guild.



The first confirmation class

In July 1968 work was commenced on the temporary chapel, which was to cost \$10,000; most of the money came from the District through a legacy from the late C.F. Mibus of Tarrington. The chapel was opened and dedicated on December 1 1968 by Pastor T.M.J. Wiebusch, President of the Victorian District of the LCA. He was assisted by Pastor Eckert. Membership had grown to 101 baptised members, and 67 communicant members and 25 Sunday School children.



The temporary chapel

Soon after the opening of the Chapel, Pastor Eckert and his family accepted a call to Maryborough, Queensland, Pastor Sam Simpfordorfer of Ringwood conducted services during the vacancy. Pastor David Paech was installed at Box Hill on May 4 1969, as pastor of Box Hill and Waverley congregations.

The number of worshippers continued to grow. The Sunday School overflowed to adjacent members' homes and it was clear that the time had already come to plan for a permanent Church Centre. A subcommittee was formed to evaluate congregational growth rate, and to determine the basic requirements for a future permanent building.

BUILDING PLANS

As a result of the work done by the subcommittee formed the previous year, a building committee of seven members was elected at the 1970 Annual General Meeting. Mr Bruce Lockwood was commissioned to draw up plans for a permanent building. These original plans were not acceptable to the approving local authorities, mainly because it was not possible to provide sufficient parking on the church property—access to the adjoining MMBW easement was not permitted. When revised plans were costed in October 1971, the estimated cost was \$60,000 and this led to a concerted effort to add to the building fund.

Late in 1972, Redeemer turned its attention to becoming a parish with its own resident pastor. St Paul's Box Hill not only gave much encouragement to this move but also decided to donate \$10,000 to the Waverley

congregation over the next five years, as part of their 25th anniversary thanksgiving to God. Redeemer for its part pledged to become self-supporting and *“to reach out to the unchurched people in the community that they might be brought under the influence of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and be won for Him and His Kingdom.”*

Pastor Kevin Helbig answered the call to serve the new parish, and was installed on August 12 1973. He and his family moved into the manse which had been purchased some months earlier, for \$23,000. The Chapel by this time was completely inadequate, and two services were conducted each Sunday morning. The Sunday School attendance had outgrown the facilities not only of the Chapel, but also the Glendal Kindergarten. The East Burwood State School was used until the opening of the Church Centre.

Chapel interior



A larger building was an urgent requirement. The size of the property placed severe restrictions on the possible capacity of the building, and relocation to a larger site seemed the only alternative. However, land costs had become prohibitively expensive. The committee was moved to apply once more to the MMBW for permission to use the

adjoining easement for parking. Permission was granted, and the local council accepted this arrangement as satisfactory. God's guiding hand was evident in this development.

THE GOSPEL SHARED AT SCORESBY-KNOXFIELD

In August 1973, the congregation accepted the commission to commence mission work in the Scoresby-Knoxfield area. In January 1974, Parish Lay Worker, Clem Schulze, canvassed some of the area, seeking especially children for a proposed Sunday School. Under the direction of Clarice Gaulke, the Sunday School commenced on June 2 1974 with an enrolment of 53 children. Five classes were held with teachers from

Waverley, and assistance from Box Hill and Doncaster. This work continued until late in 1976 when the Ferntree Gully congregation, served by Pastor Dennis Obst from Nunawading, commenced. This led to the formation of the present "Our Saviour's Parish" at Knox.

FINAL PLANS

Permission to use the MMBW easement for parking meant the land in Cypress Avenue was sufficient for a complete Church Centre seating almost 200 people. Immediately, a small building committee comprising: Eric Koop (chairman), Clarice Gaulke, Colin Semmler and the Congregational Chairman was set up. This committee, working with Loftus-Hill and Ziersch, drew up sketch plans for a multi-purpose building which utilized to the maximum, the oddly shaped small site. These were submitted to the Waverley City Council, and a Town Planning permit was issued on January 28 1975. The final plans were presented to the congregation on June 22, and were accepted. At a special meeting of the congregation, Dance Bros. tender was accepted and the contract was signed on September 12.



Church under construction

The Chapel continued to be used until May 30 1976, when it was transported to Leopold, near Geelong, for use by the newly formed congregation there. It is still in use there now. For the next five Sundays, services were conducted in the Glendal State School.

OPENING THE NEW CHURCH CENTRE



The new Church Centre was opened and dedicated by Pastor T.M.J. Wiebusch, assisted by Pastors, David Paech and Kevin Helbig, on June 20 1976. The church was packed to capacity (and overflowing) for the special dedication service. The congregation had grown to 186 confirmed members and

were joined by many former members and friends for the joyous occasion.

Opening service



The next Sunday saw the introduction of Bible Hour before worship service for adults, coinciding with Sunday School. Every area of the Church was used at the time. God had faithfully blessed the congregation and provided the needed facilities for His work to be continued in this area.

The Worship Today service order was introduced in 1978. In 1980 a two-service programme, with an early service before the Bible Hour, was introduced. This allowed a more varied programme of service formats to suit the needs of the members.

Youth ministry has varied over the years as age groups changed. At one stage junior and senior youth formed two associations, joining with other Lutheran congregations. Sunday School has also fluctuated and a Children's Ministry team has been constantly active.

REDEEMER CONGREGATION IN THE 1980's

Pastor Helbig accepted a call to Broken Hill and Pastor Michael Pietsch, a graduate of Luther Seminary was installed in January 1981. He served enthusiastically for nine years. During this period a part time volunteer office secretary and lay-worker supported his ministry.

Family care groups were established which were overseen by the Elders. Bible Study groups (on Sunday

Baptism: Pastor Mike Pietsch



mornings), enhanced by the Crossways course were active. Other groups such as Open House (for senior members), Play Group, Library and Prayer Chain, added to the sharing ministry. Home Worship Helps were produced on a rostered basis with five other congregations.

During these years some 150 confirmed members were involved with strong contacts with neighbouring suburbs. Some families migrated to the fledgling Knox and Glen Iris congregations. The congregation has been blessed by the temporary membership of visitors from overseas—some studying at Monash University. A number of family camps were held during 1970's-80's, which further developed the bonding of members. Two worship services were held for some years with Sunday School and Bible Hour being held between services. However a single service format was reintroduced in 1987.

In the ten years following the dedication of the church centre and manse, loans were totally repaid. However support for the General Church was somewhat restricted.

With the building of the Monash Medical Centre, Pastor Mike and some members helped to establish a chaplaincy there. Also Lutheran teachings were enhanced by the involvement of the pastor and members in the ecumenical scene in Waverley. Pastor Pietsch continued to serve until December 1989.

The first manse in Packham Crescent, purchased in 1973 did not meet LCA standards and became unsuitable for a pastor with a family. After several studies in 1989 a more suitable manse was purchased at 13 Cherry Street with the help of an LLL loan of \$40,000.

RECENT YEARS

On June 24 1990 Pastor Gordon Wegener was installed and faithfully served the congregation for thirteen and a half years. Worship was a high priority and the caring ministry coupled with study of the Bible an important aspect. The encompassing ministry continued with Pastor chairing several workshops to plan the congregation's direction. He projected the Gospel

Gordon & Jenni Wegener with youth



into the community by being active in the Waverley Ministers' Fraternal, as a Monash Medical Chaplain and as a member of a Bioethics Working Party. His membership on the District Church Council and role as District Vice-President for a time helped provide the congregation with a vision of the wider church. In September 1990 Pastoral

Assistants replaced Elders and during this period the Chataway service order was introduced. A men's group was formed for Christian discussions and fellowship. This group is still very active.

The nomadic nature of the congregation became apparent with several families being transferred. By the year 1999 the viability of the congregation had to be considered. Again God's guiding hand brought St Paul's Nunawading and Redeemer into dialogue. Positively led by Pastor Wegener and congregational leaders, discussions resulted in a harmonious amalgamation of both congregations in November 2000. This congregation is known as Nunawading and Waverley Lutheran Church, having two preaching places—St Paul's and Redeemer. Pastor Gordon Wegener had been serving both congregations since being commissioned on December 5 1999 and agreed to continue to provide stability for some years.

The Church Council (chaired by Al Zavalis with treasurer Rolf Bossmann), had a strong aim to bond the two groups. A busy year was planned involving combined services, congregational luncheons/dinner, breakfasts, musical evenings, etc. Christian tolerance soon resulted in harmony and the agreed 9.00 am and 11.00 am Sunday Services have been retained.

The sale of the Mitcham (Nunawading) manse in June 2000 and the Cherry Street (Waverley) manse in May 2002 provided finance to clear loans and purchase a large manse (meeting Church requirements) in Vermont

South. The surplus finance of some \$160,000, invested with the LLL, provided financial viability.

The genuine spirit of stability and unity under our Lord's guidance was stimulated by the amalgamation and Waverley benefited. Pastor Gordon Wegener continued to serve until December 2003 when he accepted a call to the District Office as Pastor for Service and Witness and Hospital Chaplain.

Pastor Wayne Muschamp



Pastor Wayne Muschamp accepted the call to the combined congregations and was installed on February 8 2004 at a service in St. Paul's Nunawading. Mission outreach coupled with extensive visitation under the theme "Sharing our Faith" has enriched the congregation. Late in 2004 a National Church Development Programme was established, piloted by a steering committee. Its role was to establish a survey of the congregation under various categories of congregational life and it was found that "needs based evangelism" required a focus. One of the objectives of the National Church Development programme was to become aware of our identity as

Lutherans and so in 2006 a study of Luther's "Theology of the Cross" according to the Heidelberg disputation was undertaken.

Small groups have been a feature with active Bible Study and social events building Christian warmth. By mid 2004 a 30 strong regional youth group (Icthus) was flourishing with Redeemer youth playing a predominant role. The Nunawading inspired 50 Plus Group (led by Harry Speiss) provides Christian fellowship for the not so young.

The newly structured congregation became secure with a confirmed membership of over 140 and church attendances of about 80. Financial viability was assured with a healthy LLL account and pleasingly some \$20,000 provided yearly to the General Church.

The Sunday School has remained very active throughout the life of the congregation. A highlight over the years has been the Children's Christmas service, which has been a witness to the large attendance. The dedicated teachers have also been very active in promoting mission outreach to Indigenous Australians and Asian Ministries. A worship committee has been very active for some years, in assisting the planning of worship.

During 2005 a PowerPoint presentation was introduced for the services, reducing the need for printed material. On June 18 2006 Redeemer celebrated 30 years since the opening and dedication of the Church building and Nunawading celebrated their 50th anniversary with a special service on July 9 2006.

With great joy the congregation gave Pastor Wayne a complete set of stoles to celebrate his 50th birthday on April 12 2006. In April 2007 the Timothy Arnold-Moore version of "Sing the Feast" Order of Service was introduced. As we experience a gradual growth in attendance with the impact of a few young families we confidently look to the future in our mission of witnessing under the guidance of our Risen Lord.

PASTOR WAYNE MUSCHAMP 2007 – 2017

As I survey the last ten years I am conscious that the Lord has been working through his word, his baptism and his Lord's Supper to strengthen the members of the Waverley Church and add to their number.

Members have particularly met the Lord in worship and over the years the worship committee has worked hard at enhancing special occasions such as Christmas Eve, Reformation, Baptismal/Milestone and Pentecost services. For a small congregation, we have been gifted with creative and innovative ideas and have been blest with a great team of musicians. About once per



month, a small band has added its gifts to the music of the church.

Confirmation

Our home groups have functioned well in the previous decade and groups have studied a wide variety of materials, on Christian ethics, topical studies, Bible studies and so on. Some of the material covered has included books of the Bible, various DVD series such as “Towards Belief” and “A Man Named Martin”. Books have figured prominently too, such as, “If I were God, I would End all the Pain” and “Gospel Centred Discipleship”.

A major emphasis over the years has been the growth of the congregation. The Natural Church Development and National Church Life Survey programmes have been used as tools to help the congregations assess its own health. In 2007, the Natural Church Development survey revealed that a minimum factor was “Passionate Spirituality”. A number of responses came out of examining this weakness. One was to offer a DVD series called “Introducing God” developed by Dominic Steele. Following this, in 2010 a Lenten devotional booklet called “Walking with Jesus” was produced by Christine Wilksch and me to encourage commitment to the Lord and spiritual growth. This was received well and has become a regular feature of Lent each year. In 2015 Eva Dabasy and Pastor Nathan Hedt contributed, thus expanding the team of writers.



Easter sanctuary

In 2012 the congregation switched to National Church Life Survey as a means of examining and analysing the spiritual health of the congregation. Waverley’s major strength was an alive and growing

faith but its weakest characteristic was inclusion and following up on members who have drifted away. In 2014: After extensive discussions with the Church Council, a meeting with the District Pastor for Congregational life, Brett Kennett, took place. A new mission, vision and values statement for the congregation was developed and accepted by the congregation in the following year. The following is a summary of the vision and mission statement: 'Our vision is to be a vibrant and spiritually mature Lutheran church where people find God's saving grace and are empowered to be Christ's disciples in the world. Our mission is to nurture and care for the members and friends of our church family and take the gospel of Jesus Christ to our neighbours and to the world. We aim to grow closer to the Lord, closer to each other and closer to the world.' In addition to these statements, in 2011, a new iteration of the English Conversation Class was

developed under the leadership of Dean Barton-Ancliffe.



English conversation class

The Church Council also believed that the congregation could be strengthened through a web page, providing an additional means of reaching out to others and offering resources in a convenient

location for members. Work began in 2012 and a remodelling of the site in 2016. (nunawadingandwaverleylutheran.com.au)

Another National Church Life Survey was held in 2016 and results are being worked on presently. Worship is now our strength and Inclusion, our cellar dweller, continues to be a hard nut to crack.

The small number of young adults in the congregation has always proved a challenge but in 2008 I managed to encourage the pastors of Ringwood and Croydon to work regionally. An expanded group of 18 to 28 year olds, under the leadership of Karen Nield, a Waverley member, came into

existence. Numbers varied from about 8-14 and meetings generally were held in the manse. In 2011 the young adults group was gathering about every fortnight between terms. A pleasing development occurred when two of its members, Brian Nagorka and Alex Muschamp, took over leadership. Sadly, the group came to an end in 2016 due to work commitments of its members.

Young adults



Regarding the younger people of the congregation, this age group proved to be even more difficult to cater for because of lack of a critical mass. However, in 2015, eight young people in our congregation attended a youth breakfast at which youth leaders in the District provided a discussion time and entertainment. David and Lisa Miles provided initiative

and have also cooked the meals.

Taking confirmation classed has been a real delight for me, especially after introducing the “Head2Heart” resources. This comes from Faith Inkubators and I introduced it in 2009 because of it has a multi-media curriculum format, incorporating skits, dramas, video, power point and small groups, which engage more of the brain and heart than the book style approach of the past.

Mens' breakfast



Pastoral care has been a traditionally strong point of the congregation. Sandra Zibell visits Australian born residents at Martin Luther Homes twice per month as well as serving as a chaplain at Monash Hospital. In 2010, some software called Pastoral Care 10 was installed so that church records could be stored electronically and lists and

reports be more easily produced. The four Pastoral Assistants have served the congregation well through their visits, phone calls and support at funerals.

It is always a pleasure for members to attend a Men's Breakfast and a Women's Breakfast. In the last ten years these have been well supported with 25 to 30 in attendance. A pleasing feature is the effort members make to invite others to these occasions. Speakers have talked about their faith and its impact on their lives and work. They have included Kathy McBain, Kevin Tischler, Elizabeth Kendal, and Bernie Power just to name a few. Fellowship and inspiration have been the order of the day at these annual events.

A real highlight of recent years has been a number of adult baptisms, beginning with Ann Chen in 2012, Kerry Bathersby in 2014 and in the same year the adult confirmation of Jessica Schaeffer. Then in the following year, in 2015, Scott Heath was baptized. We have learnt a lot through this development, especially the need to follow on with discipleship training and scriptural knowledge.

Of course, the last ten years has witnessed the death of many dear members who have now entered into the presence of our Lord Jesus. We remember Merle Hein, Len Gaulke, Ray Dymke, Evelyn Trewin, Joyce Koch, Katharina May, Ray Felhberg, Lydia Veremcuikas, Colin Semmler, Bob Bartram, Pauline Bartram, Lyn Love, Vytautas Sestokas, Elaine Salisbury, Alma Micuilis, Gunther Kinne, and Horst Berg.

All members are dear to us and this account of the last ten years highlights the great work our Saviour has done in keeping so many people strong and faithful to him to the very end.

50 YEARS OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Children's Ministry in our parish has always aimed to lift the lid of God's love for our children, to share knowledge of the Bible, and to encourage children to see themselves as a vital part of both their local congregation and the global community.

In the early days, Sunday School followed a traditional format. Texts on

cardboard are fondly remembered by the littlies. We experienced a dip in numbers in the seventies. By the early 80's the congregation had grown, with a very vibrant Sunday School of over 60 children. Teachers also taught at Knox to support the inaugural congregation there.

Alice Springs town camp project 2005



At Waverley classes were held in every available space: the kitchen, Pastor's office and the crying room as well as four designated classrooms. And classes were large with up to 17 children in each. There were plans afoot to add rooms to the worship complex simply to accommodate the children. Then the

demographics shifted again as younger families moved away to more affordable suburbs and we were down to only two children in Sunday School. But over time our numbers again bounced back with 21 children now on the roll.

Iraq project team 2004



It was Peter Jenke who, as Superintendent in 1988, launched the idea of a fundraising project for the children...the task was to earn and bring coins to Sunday School to fill up a river, fundraising for the Leprosy Mission. This success of this idea led to an annual project which has supported various Lutheran World Service

Projects in East Timor, Cambodia, Thailand, Africa, Sudan, Japan and Tibet. We have also branched out into projects associated with our members including the Alice Springs Town Camps, Lutheran Bible Translation, LCA International Mission in Indonesia, and the work of Pastor August Fricke in Myanmar – Burma.

The form of the project has also developed to ensure children really connect with the plight of people around the world in physical, emotional and spiritual need and to impart a sense of social justice. For four weeks beforehand children learn about the target community, and consider their needs and how we can help. Then on the final Sunday the Sunday School Community prepare an authentic lunch and run stalls and activities to raise funds. In the aftermath, our senior children review all aspects of the Project, providing critical feedback for the following year.

Mary Kinne with Amelia Lang



The second major event in the year is our Children's Christmas Service. This service has been a core part of our Advent preparation. Each year programs have been sourced and then adapted to the numbers and ages of our children. As numbers dwindled, members of the congregation have

been co-opted to fulfil roles as wise men, angels and shepherds, which proved fun a great blessing. In earlier days the services were memorable for all participants and included the Purple Puzzle Tree, a relevant Bicentenary Christmas from around the world and a movie of the Nativity Story! This year the theme will look at Superheroes with our Lord as the ultimate Super Hero. With more children we now have far more flexibility and so much acting, IT and musical talent. And parents work alongside teachers in rehearsals and with costume, staging and props.

In line with Grow Ministries' national vision for child, youth and family ministry in the Lutheran Church of Australia to help provide support,

resources and ideas for shepherding faith in our families, with our children and our grandchildren, we at Waverley encourage family involvement in the Children's Ministry Program. Parents and families come on board with the Project Day. Our confirmed teens often move into assistant and mentoring roles alongside parents and volunteers with our Junior Class where a spare pair of hands is a great blessing.



Christmas 2016

Pastor Wayne also presents and circulates Grow Together resources which are designed to equip parents to be spiritual leaders in their homes.

Children's Presentations, currently led by Pastor Wayne, are a continuing highlight of the service for young and old alike. While children are curious and enthusiastic, their capacity to think outside the box is a constant delight, and challenge.

Christmas 2011

The Congregational Picnic is another event which engages children and families. Traditionally held in March in lovely sunshine, the Children's Program is a lot of fun. When numbers of participants recently dwindled, Children's Ministry worked with the Worship Committee, identifying strategies to revitalise it. These ideas all worked very well, generating lots of interest and excitement, especially the games and icecream stall.



May God continue to smile upon and bless our ministry to his precious children over the coming 50 years!

Merrilyn Beaumont - Coordinator Children's Ministry

ENGLISH CONVERSATION CLUB

The original idea for the English Conversation Club came from a discussion regarding local outreach which took place in 2010. Later that year, Pastor Wayne, Denise Muschamp, and Dean Barton-Ancliffe undertook the AMES (Adult Migrant English School) course and the following year, after our congregation completed a letterbox drop we started a weekly day course run by Pastor Wayne and a weekly night course run by Dean. Although there was good initial interest, numbers soon dwindled due to no further advertising, and the grind from us each running as a lone band soon wore us out. Both courses had closed within four months.

Although the initial project had failed, the idea behind the local outreach was still solid and early in 2014, we accepted an invitation to attend a successful English Conversation Class run by the Crossway Baptist Church at



St. Paul's, Box Hill. At the end of one two hour evening, we had both come away with renewed enthusiasm and had realised how many things that we had omitted to plan for the first time around.

English conversation club

Later we called for expressions of interest and as a result, a committee of seven interested people from our congregation came together to plan towards recommencing an English Conversation Club in 2015. This time around, we would run just one class per week on Thursday nights at 7:00pm and we would not break for school holidays to allow for continuity for those attending. There would be four class co-ordinators, being Pastor Wayne, Susanne Hudson, Marilyn Beaumont and myself, each sharing the duties of co-ordinating the class through a roster. We also would have two class assistants, Eva Dabasy (who has since stepped up to co-ordinate a couple of classes later in the year) and Peter Heyn. Peter Nelson would take on the role of advertising co-ordinator and has organised

a continuing programme of letter box drops and posters in local businesses. A large sign was erected in the front of the church and our details were placed into a national website which advertises English Classes through Christian Churches throughout Australia. The structure of our lessons would consist of a main topic which would run for about an hour and twenty minutes, a twenty minute break for tea, coffee and biscuits, and the final twenty minutes would be spent going through a scripture passage. We would also have a gold coin donation to cover costs.

In early February, 2015, we opened our doors and 5 people attended our first session. The number of attendees ranges each week with 12 being the most in a week and we did get down to just 1 one cold and wintry night. The average sits at around 6.5. The ages have varied from university students to grandparents. They come from countries from all over the world but just under half are Chinese. The local letter box drop has brought in a lot of local people but the greatest drawcard has been the website, which attracts people from right across Melbourne, even as far as Frankston, Ringwood or inner City Suburbs.

It runs from the first Thursday in February through to the first Thursday in December for a total of 44 weeks for the year. Each evening runs from 7:00pm to 9:00pm and consists of about an hour and a quarter on a pre-prepared topic, a 20 minute break for supper where casual conversation is encouraged and the remainder of the evening is spent going through a Bible passage that relates to the topic of the evening.

The friendships which have already developed between our members and those attending, has been a great blessing and we too have learned so much about these people, their culture and backgrounds. Finally, and most importantly, if nothing else we have had the opportunity to welcome 36 people into our church, to witness and share the good news through a regular Bible segment in each session and through casual conversation. Three attendees have further enquired with us about Christianity and we have been able to provide each of them with a copy of the scriptures and two have since become members of the morning Bible study group. This opportunity would not have been possible without the club and we

continually give thanks and pray guidance for what we do that we may give honest testimony and be worthy stewards of Christ.



English conversation club

The ECC provides our congregation with a valuable outreach opportunity. The area around the Waverley Church has seen a marked increase in the number of migrants over the last 10 to 15 years and many of those have only a fair grasp of English upon arrival in Australia. Good News Bibles were purchased in 2016 for use by those who have had little previous access to the gospel before attending the Club. Depending on the topic and people attending, discussions can go quite deep and evenings often run 10 to 20 minutes overtime as attendees want to explore topics further.

2017 marks our third year of providing the ECC in its current format, during which time we have attracted 115 people from 22 different countries.

We are still gaining experience in this mission and there have already been many positives which have come from our efforts to date. The experience and the friendship is still key to keeping the enthusiasm and ideas coming. Even with the experience, we still have many things that we struggle to understand. Things like why nights with extremely cold or bad weather, we still manage to have good attendance, then on a milder evening, attendance will drop to one or two only to pick up again a couple of weeks later, all for no apparent reason. Or how a topic that you think may be a little difficult really gets the conversation going but on trying to replicate a similar idea later in the year, it falls flat.

We always thank the congregation for continuing prayers and support and our main incentive is that we get to witness and make friends with strangers within our local community on a weekly basis.

Yours in Christ, Dean Barton-Ancliffe



Progressive dinner 2016



Men's breakfast 2017



Children's Christmas presentation 2013



Front of the church with large gum tree

Prayer of the Day for the 50th Anniversary Service

Dear heavenly Father,
you have given so many blessings
to those who have worshipped you
in this house of prayer.
Lead all who seek you here to find you,
and by your Holy Spirit
to become a living temple pleasing to you.
We ask this through your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever.
Amen.

Sermon Text

Hebrews 13:8

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever.