

February 2024

CONGREGATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS



Celebrating
Congregational
Churches
in Queensland



Our Vision

"To be a dynamic fellowship of evangelical churches, with each Church effectively reaching its local community with the Gospel and collectively impacting our nation and the world for Christ."

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From The Director of Ministries



One of the big things on the list of my objectives for this year is to begin to put in place some of the motions that were passed during our Annual Assembly, back in 2023. I say this year but, in truth, it was a process that began in the days and weeks that immediately followed our Assembly back in October of last year.

You may remember (or have read the Assembly minutes), that we all agreed that the Fellowship is 'in a time of crisis.' What does that mean, exactly? Well, essentially, that means that our network is not long for this world – at least, not in its present state/processes. We don't have the option of simply continuing to do things as we have always done them.

The pressures taking us to this point are many. They are financial: if we don't shift our approach to funding, we will run out of it (quite soon). It is a question of culture. This is harder to qualify; think of it as the attitudes, behaviours, and questions that we ask when we gather, the way we relate to one another, the sorts of things which take up our focus. All of these can come under the nebulous bracket 'culture.' Our culture has been identified as one of the key things holding us back, culture needs to change. Lastly, it is also a question of personnel. Do we need more people to drive the Fellowship forward, or even perhaps different people (and of course, that may include myself!)?

In response to these pressures, our presenter Rev. Ed Vaughan, gave us three options:


1. **DO NOTHING**

This is not really an option (see above).

2. **INTENTIONALLY CLOSE**

This is not as disastrous as it may at first appear. If this is pursued, it will mean that the infrastructure of the Fellowship will cease to exist. Those assets that the incorporated entity, that is the Fellowship of Congregational Churches hold, will be sold or gifted away to other Christian ministries. Local churches can still call themselves Congregational, if they so desire, but they will need to find another network for infrastructure: scripture licences, marriage licences, child protection and other areas of compliance. They will also need to look to other groups for fellowship and relationship.

If this happens, our job changes from 'holding on for dear life' to ensuring that those resources that have been passed down to us are utilised for their original vision and purpose: gospel ministry.



'ensuring that those resources that have been passed down to us are utilised for their original vision and purpose: gospel ministry.'

The intentionality in this situation is very important: this approach would provide a clearly defined runway and the time to help our churches look elsewhere. An intentional closure is much, much better than just letting things slowly ebb away. This would be disastrous. If we slowly just drift into nothingness, then we run the risk of our assets being transitioned over to the government, to other 'spiritual' services or to be used for private business. There's nothing sadder than seeing a resource, originally established as a space for the proclaiming the gospel, now being used as housing, a Buddhist temple, a mosque, a coffeeshop – or worse, a Strip Club.

That may sound alarmist, but it's happening all over our country.

3. **LOOK FOR PARTNERSHIPS**

In my opinion, I feel that this is the best way forward. One of the reasons that this is a strong option is because we already have some experience with this. You may know that Camp Fletcher has been partnering with an external organisation for some time now.

While that relationship has come to an end, there is potential that another similar partnership will be struck in the future.

Ministry collegiality like this is the way of the future, according to writers and thinkers who speak into the present and future of the church in the Western World. As Australia becomes more post-Christian, the idea that the evangelical church can be divided into parochial denominational lines is a luxury we enjoyed thirty years ago. No longer. As churches and denominations shrink, as ministry becomes harder, as pressure against churches becomes more intense, as property becomes more expensive, the need to share resources becomes much more pertinent.



These partnerships could happen with a specific ministry (as in the example with Camp Fletcher), but partnerships can also be built with many of our operational needs as well. We already are partnering with an external group to give assistance with our books, for instance. Similar relationships could be built to give us support in areas of compliance, legal aid, safe ministry, training, recruitment and building development.

Partnership can also happen at a smaller local church level. One of the more interesting changes we have at the local level is one of our churches partnering with another church of a different denomination. There are varying conversations around this at some high levels. I find it exciting, however, as it could pave the way for more similar partnerships moving forward.

Before we panic, it is helpful to know that this is not just a reality for FCC Churches. This is becoming necessary for Baptist, Presbyterian, and Anglican churches as well.

A brief example: a friend of mine has planted into Flemington in the Inner-West of Melbourne. He works within the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne, but also has several other ministry partnerships that intersect his denominational ties. His church partners with City to City and Soma, Australia. His church meets in a Baptist building and has a long-term lease; they have permission to develop the property so that it fits the church's ministry shape.

It is a beautiful gospel-driven picture of partnership across different networks.



Inner-West of Melbourne is an Anglican church meeting in a Baptist building, in partnership with City to City Australia and Soma Australia.

This does not mean that we partner with those networks that have become liberal or abandoned the authority of the Bible. What it does mean seeking ways forward with resources from different networks with the same theological foundations on which we ourselves stand.

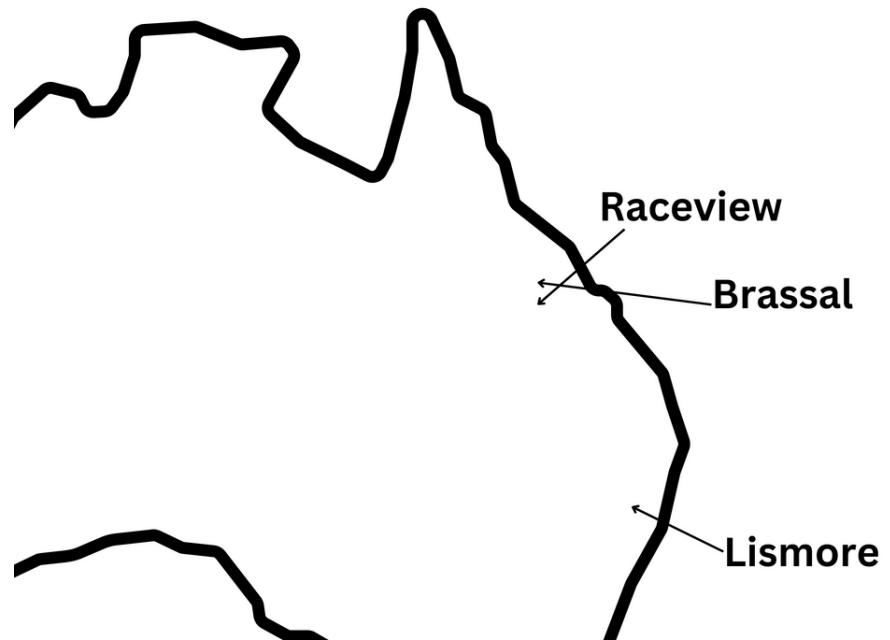
A criticism that came through the pages of the recent review was that It really is time for the FCC to begin to embrace change, to begin to look for new answers to questions that we have been asking for some time. Change is scary, change can be painful, change can mean letting go of things that we have held dear for decades ... or longer.

Thankfully, we serve a God who walks with us in our fear, who comforts us in our grief and gives us the resources to walk boldly into an uncertain future. The question to be asked: will we walk with him?

Tim

Churches

Road Trip



Pastor Michael Hunt and I were blessed to spend some time visiting some of our churches/pastors in Northern NSW/QLD in mid/late-December, just before Christmas.

Some highlights:

- Catching up with Suzy and Grant Tieman in Lismore, chatting about Immanuel Church, the ongoing impact of the floods in the area and the unique challenges of ministry to Indigenous Australians.

- Meeting with Billy Diehm, Pastor of Raceview Congregational Church in Ipswich, Queensland. Billy showed us the facilities of Raceview CC, as well as the site of an upcoming Church plant in Ripley, which is about 20 minutes away. Billy also took us out for lunch, and we spoke into strengthening ties between the churches in Queensland and the greater body of the FCC.



Christmas Carols Gathering

- Attending the gathering of Brassall Congregational Church (Tim) for a Carols service and a BBQ breakfast. The church is quite small; we spoke about the possibility of bringing in a new pastor and looking to the future of ministry in the area. I was also fortunate enough to be able to make a brief presentation on behalf of the FCC.



The saints of Brassall Congregational Church

- Attending the gathering of Raceview Congregational Church (Michael). Michael was also fortunate enough to be able to make a brief presentation on behalf of the FCC and meet and greet the members after the gathering.

It was an awesome privilege visiting these Churches on behalf of the FCC. Please pray for Raceview as they think to the future, and Brassall as they look to hire another Pastor.

Tim



Raceview CC Men's Shed



Church plant site at Ripley



Raceview CC Main Gathering Space

Camp Fletcher

Work goes on ...

Work goes on at Camp Fletcher, even while the rest of us were on holidays.

The Camp Fletcher committee, as well as some of the members of Soma Blue Mountains, installed some flooring into the recreation room. Prior to this, the recreation room had been flawed by hard cement. As a result of the new flooring, the room now has a warm, carpeted feel.

Below are some pictures of the new recreation room, being used by Soma Blue Mountains for one of their gatherings in January.



WORKING

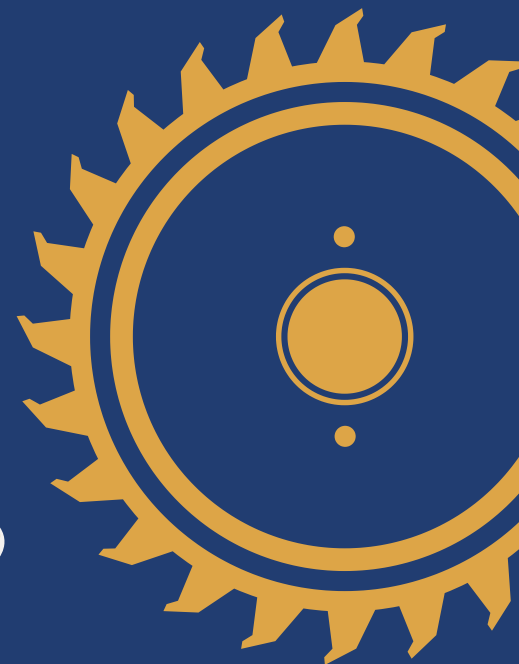
BEE



Camp Fletcher,
Hazelbrook

Saturday 17 February, 9am-12.30pm

Lunch will be provided.



The NSW 'Equality' Bill

**THE FOLLOWING IS A COPY FROM A LETTER FROM THE NSW COUNCIL OF CHURCHES.
THE FELLOWSHIP OF CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES ENDORSES ITS CONTENTS.**

OUR CONCERNS

The "Equality" bill makes wide-ranging and concerning changes to 20 pieces of NSW legislation. Significant problems with the bill include:

Undermining Religious Freedom

The bill hollows out, or entirely removes, existing provisions in the *Anti-Discrimination Act* that are designed to allow faith-based institutions to maintain their faith-based character. The bill also removes protections for faith-based schools and other religious institutions.

This will prevent faith-based institutions from keeping their faith identity by employing staff who uphold the faith, or by operating according to their beliefs. It will force religious institutions to act like secular institutions.

This bill will also open up faith-based institutions constant and costly allegations of discrimination that will need to be defended, and will allow judges to decide

whether religious beliefs are 'reasonable.' A school that teaches a traditional view of marriage and gender will need to satisfy a judge that this is 'reasonable.'

Replacing Biological Sex with Self-ID

The bill allows people to change their sex on their birth certificate whenever they want, regardless of biology or surgery. The bill permits children to conceal changes to their registered sex from their parents.

This places women's only spaces such as refuges, schools, prisons and places of worship, at risk because they will be forced to treat people according to their newly declared sex.

Commercial Surrogacy

The bill allows and assists the commercialisation of surrogacy, including paying disadvantaged women in third world countries to bear a child who is then taken from them and brought to Australia.

Subverting the Parent-Child Relationship

The bill permits a child under 16 to consent to medical treatment, against the will of their parents, so long as a doctor says that "the child is capable of understanding the nature, consequences and risks of the treatment and the treatment is in the best interests of the child's health and well-being." The bill clarifies the expanded scope in which treatment reasonably likely to have the effect of rendering a 'child permanently infertile' can be accessed.

This drives a wedge between parents and their children and empowers a minority of activist medical practitioners to push their ideology and override parents.

It would also allow one parent to consent to medical treatment, even if the other parent strongly objects. This has the potential for the medical treatment of children being used as leverage in family disputes.

The bill also deems all young people (16 and over) to be competent to make medical decisions for themselves (including life-altering procedures) as if they were an adult.

Promoting Prostitution

The bill protects sex-work under anti-discrimination law, making it equivalent to protected attributes such as race and disability. No other form of employment is privileged in this way.

The bill also removes existing limits prostitution, including laws that prevent coercing a woman into prostitution, public

acts of prostitution, and soliciting prostitution outside a school or place of worship

The legislation is 50 pages long and makes over 80 changes to 20 different pieces of legislation, including to standardise the notion of gender fluidity within statutory and governmental documents referring to gender and sex.

This includes over 50 amendments to the Anti-Discrimination Act - even though the Act has been referred to the NSW Law Reform Commission for a comprehensive review. The bill's provisions are complicated and interlinked.

There is no safe way of splitting this bill, or passing parts of it, without risking significant unintended consequences.

Mr Greenwich's bill is extreme, and prioritises the desires of one small group over all other parts of society.

Most of the issues in this bill were not canvassed in campaigning leading up to the election. There is no mandate to make any of these controversial changes.

Why Has This Bill Been Prioritised?

At 1:30am on 30 November, the Government voted to extend the time given to this bill, preventing it from expiring, giving it priority for debate in the very first week of parliament, and guaranteeing a vote on 14 March.

This forces a vote and avoids community scrutiny.



IN MEMORY OF
**REV. ROY
WATERS**

July 2, 2031 - December 10,
2023

**On 10th December 2023, Rev Roy Waters
went to be with the Lord, aged 91 years.**

Roy was well known to many in our FCC churches. Having been a Minister in Methodist churches for some years, Roy chose not to become part of the new Uniting Church and accepted a call to Engadine Congregational Church in 1977, and he and his wife Pam attended the inaugural meeting of the Fellowship of Congregational Churches in June 1977. Roy served as President of the FCC in 1980-81 and as Pastor at Engadine until 1985. He then pastored several Wesleyan Methodist churches in NSW.

In 2013 he accepted an invitation to rejoin the FCC by becoming Pastor at Gresford Congregational Church. It was only in May 2023 that Roy retired from his pastoral role at the Gresford Church (having been a gospel minister for 60 years!) and moved to live with one of his sons, Ross, at Campbelltown, where he was living when he passed away peacefully.

A thanksgiving service celebrating Roy's life and ministry was held at Malabar Anglican Church (where his daughter, Janine, attends) on Saturday 16th December.

'... as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain.' Phil. 2:16

Community



We Remember Rev. Greg Brien

The Rev. Greg Brien passed away late 2023.

Greg served as the pastor of Kogarah Bay Congregational Church between 1976 - 1983. More recently, Greg was serving as a missionary with Global Accreditation Association since 2011.

We're thankful to God for Greg's faithful ministry over many years.



Joy Restored

May the Joy of the Lord be your strength

About CWCI Australia

Christian Women Communicating International (CWCI) is a worldwide Bible-based faith ministry which began in Australia in 1957.

In Australia today:

- * Events are held in cities and country areas offering encouragement, inspiration, and Bible teaching.
- * Safaris travel into rural, remote and regional areas with Christ's love and teaching.
- * Know Your Bible (KYB) studies are being used to help women engage more deeply with God's Word.

For enquiries about CWCI Australia please contact Head Office:

Phone: (02) 9740 6355

Website: www.cwciaus.org.au

Email: asofo@cwciaus.org.au



15-17 March 2024

**Keynote speaker—Chris Quirk
The Tops Conference Centre,
Stanwell Tops**

Community

Recommended Remuneration Package for Pastors

	Annual	Monthly	Fortnightly	Weekly
Current to 30/06/2023				
Stipend	50,154.00	4,179.50	1,929.00	964.50
Car Allow	15,132.00	1,261.00	582.00	291.00
House Allow	19,968.00	1,664.00	768.00	384.00
Total package	85,254.00	7,104.50	3,279.00	1,639.50
Suggested from 01/07/2023				
Stipend	53,898.00	4,491.50	2,073.00	1,036.50
Car Allow	16,302.00	1,358.50	627.00	313.50
House Allow	21,684.00	1,807.00	834.00	417.00
Total package	91,884.00	7,657.00	3,534.00	1,767.00
Difference from previous year				
Stipend	3,744.00	312.00	144.00	72.00
Car Allow	1,170.00	97.50	45.00	22.50
House Allow	1,716.00	143.00	66.00	33.00
Total package	6,630.00	552.50	255.00	127.50

Note: These increases represent an approximate increase of 7.8% for the overall package.



Camp
Fletcher

Book for 2024
before it fills up!

For Prayer

Affiliated FCC Churches and Churches in Association:

Bexley Church (Ps Jim Seru)
Bexley Chinese (vacant)
Brassall Church (vacant)
Campsie Chinese Church (Rev. Sidney Yip,
Rev. Leung Sung, Rev. Neil Clark)
Cessnock Church (Ps Steven Wood, Rev. Neville Ogilvie)
Derwent Valley Christian Fellowship, Tasmania
(Rev. Cameron Douglas)
Emmanuel Church (Rev. Grant Tieman)
Engadine Church (Rev. James Stone, Rev. Roy Arellano)
Georges River Church (Ps Elie Haddad)
Gresford Church (vacant)
Jannali Church (Ps Michael Williams)
Kogarah Bay Church (vacant)
Kurri Kurri Church (Rev. Jonathan Sharma)
Leichhardt Church (Ps Stephen Hitchins)
Life Congregational Church (Rev. Alex Granchar)
Living Bible Fellowship Goondiwindi
(Rev. Paul Andrianatos)
Manly Church (Rev. Dr Alan Harley)
Miranda Church (vacant)
Narellan Church (Rev. Ian Forest-Jones)
Padstow Church (Rev. Robert Ayoub)
Padstow Chinese Church (Rev. John Yao, Rev. Frank Xue,
Rev. Alan Best, Rev. Sam Lin, Rev. Isaac Yick)
Raceview Church (Ps Billy Diehm)
Revesby Church (Ps Michael Hunt)
Wandong Church (Ps Allan Laurens, Ps Len Cutting)
Wollongong Church (vacant)

CrossLife Church Asquith (Rev. Michael Leong)
Congregational Church of Jesus in Sydney and
Melbourne (Samoan) (Rev. Atepera Lee, Rev. Poe Pouesi)
Congregational Church for All Nations (Cambodian)
(Ps Sivyeng Luy)
Northern District Chinese Church (Rev. David Troung,
Rev. Douglas Fyfe)

FCC Officers and Committees:

President, Ps Michael Hunt
Director of Ministries/PRO, Ps Tim Foscett
Treasurer, Mr Dave Turner
Registrar, Mr Greg Jones
Welfare Officer, Mrs Judy Van Vorst
Office Secretary, Ms Margaret Amos
Retired Pastors
Members-at-Large
Chaplains
SRE Teachers
Executive Committee
Camp Fletcher Committee
Finance and Property Committee

Fellowship of
Congregational
Churches

THE FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

Ministry Committee
World & Cross-Cultural Missions Committee
Social Services Committee

FCC Missionaries:

Michael and Catherine Brooks (FM), France/UK
Morgan (Central Asia)
Bob and Evelyn Prior (Sport Chaplaincy)
David and Jenny Rowe (WBT)
Joung Won and Tin Yow (SIM) Asia
Anton Zhang (MAF) Australia

Brian and Rosemary Allbutt (retired WEC)
Samuel Chan (retired Asia Missionary Caring)
Ruth Green (retired Latin Link)
Heather Johnstone (retired Mukti Mission)
David Strange (retired WBT)
Gail Warhola (retired Generations Christian Ed.)

WEFC:

President, Rev. Dr Ron Hamilton (USA)
Vice-President, Ps Pavle Kostadinov (Rep of Nth
Macedonia)
Treasurer, Rev. Gwynne Evans (UK)
Secretary, Rev. Dr Steve Gammon (USA)
Vine and Branches Campsite, Philippines
Member Country, Australia
Member Country, Brazil
Member Country, Bulgaria
Member Country, Canada
Member Country, India (Manipur)
Member Country, Northern Ireland
Member Country, Macedonia
Member Country, Micronesia (Chuuk)
Member Country, Myanmar
Member Country, Nepal
Member Country, New Zealand
Member Country, Philippines
Member Country, Portugal
Member Country, Samoa
Member Country, South Africa
Member Country, United Kingdom
Member Country, United States of America