

## **Belgrave Heights Convention Annual Report 2023**

As a convention we exist to inspire and equip Christians to love and live for Christ in this world. Our **Vision** is to see the spiritual renewal of God's people for His mission in the world. Our **Mission** is to develop spiritually mature Christians, whose faith and practice is anchored in the Bible, through the teaching and practical application of God's Word.

The year 2023 continued the recovery from Covid and established new expectations which were different to those experienced pre Covid. It was good to be back together again although for some ministries there were less of us. External hirings continued to recover and much of our attention was absorbed in construction of new accommodation and dining facilities. None of what was accomplished in 2023 would have been possible without the wonderful work of the board, staff and many volunteers who coped with the challenges of the year.

We continue to recognise that the 'major core' and strength of our ministry is closely linked to securing the best possible speakers who can model expository Bible teaching and bring relevant application and challenge to our daily discipleship. This Annual Report demonstrates yet again that God continues to bless and encourage the mission of BHC. We are reminded, *'Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct paths.'* Proverbs 3:5-6. Let these words continue to encourage us all.

### **BHC Board**

Members of the Board are elected from and by the Company Members to take responsibility for oversight and to provide guidance for the effective running of the Belgrave Heights Convention.

It continues to be a very great privilege to be able to serve in the role of Chairman for the Convention and its ministries. The Convention continues to major on and have a significant ministry for the faithful preaching and exposition of God's word for the encouragement and building up of God's people in Melbourne and Victoria particularly, but also a much wider reach internationally due to on-line presentations and streaming.

### **2023 in Review**

#### **Governance and Management.**

The Board has continued its role in having oversight and watching our legal responsibilities under the ACNC, and in the areas of environmental compliance, Taxation, Workplace health and safety, Privacy, Fund raising processes, Redundancies, Consumer protection legislation etc. Checklists including the ATO Self Governance Check List are useful in this process of review. The CEO will report to the AGM on these areas.

#### **Ministry**

The Ministry Committee now takes responsibility for the ministry activities of the Convention largely through the Convention Committees. Its membership has remained steady at the number of 15, but we are aware of the need for new people to help in the running of Convention ministries. We are conscious of needing to replenish the Ministry Committee with people who are committed to the vision of the Convention and who can be representative of our wider community - youth, maturity, ethnic and denominational diversity, gender, etc.

The Ministry Committee has settled into its role of being responsible for all of our ministry activities through the Convention Committees who undertake the event specific work. Some questions have been raised recently with respect to the authority the Ministry Committee has over individual Conventions ministry.

#### **Property and Facilities.**

We are very blessed to have the property and facilities that we have so close to the city of Melbourne.

We have been very grateful to have Tony Evans as our Project Manager and, together with the Property Committee, we have been blessed to have many different people with outstanding gifts and abilities to lead the Convention through this project.

It was a delight to be able to officially dedicate and open the 'Hope Centre' on the Sunday afternoon of our recent Summer Convention (31 December 2023). We are very conscious that we still need generous benefactors to raise finances needed in order to repay loans offered to the Convention. With the loan received from Baptist Financial Services we do need to continue to look for different avenues of income for the building. We do recognise that all of this needs to be under-written by prayer and trust in a Father who is able to provide all our needs.

Our thanks go to David Webb as Chairman of the Property Committee and our very grateful thanks to members of the Property Committee who have done exceptional work in helping us save significant costs for the building. We also express our appreciation to the staff and army of volunteers for their commitment and consistent work in 2023.

## **STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

None of the above would be able to be achieved without the committed work of the staff and volunteers.

The Lord continues to bless us with a growing *team of willing volunteers*, who help in a multitude of ways, and we give thanks for each one of them. The regular working bees have again been very well attended. We are conscious of how much of our ministry is enabled through the work of volunteers – much of it unseen.

We continue to look for committed and capable people to serve on our Board, Ministry Committee, and other Convention Committees.

Richard Coombs – Chairman on behalf of the Board

## **BHC CEO Report**

Finalising the Hope Centre was the major activity in a busy year. The availability of the Baptist Financial Services loan later in 2022 and donations, including the million dollar donation later in 2023, enabled work to proceed without financial constraints.

Post Covid Convention attendance varied between events creating different challenges for each committee.

We continue to be accredited with the CMA Standards Council and NARTA (Christian Venues).

### **Ministry**

Experiences of conventions varied post Covid and it was encouraging to successfully launch the Ideas Convention into this situation. Our committees that are responsible for our conventions are pivotal and there is an ongoing need to ensure that they have adequate membership and skills. The Ministry Committee needs to work with the committees to achieve this.

### **Property**

The focus in 2023 was planned to be almost totally on supporting the building project which was how it happened. Unfortunately, the vacancy in the Property Manager position in mid 2023 caused by Devin's illness and subsequent resignation was a challenging gap.

### **Volunteers**

We continue to be blessed with a large volunteer workforce in the property, office and convention activities areas. The property challenge of eight working bees in a row was a spectacular effort in November and December which resulted in the building being not only built but furnished ready for occupation.

Geoff Gawler, CEO

## **Ministry Reports**

### **Summer 2022-23**

The Summer Convention was able to be held without Covid restrictions which had restricted us the past two years. The theme of the Convention was 'Kingdom Come! Our place in God's plan'.

Speakers were Ian Coffey (UK) who spoke from the book of Ruth; Wei-Han Kuan (CMS Director, Victoria) who spoke from the book of Revelation, chapters 4-21; and David Robertson (Sydney) ran seminars during the afternoons. An additional seminar was held with respect to the HopeBuilders project. The Global Focus meeting speaker was Wei-Han Kuan.

Mission spots were available at afternoon and evening meetings and these were filled by a number of various Mission agencies by a mixture of video and in person.

All messages were streamed and broadcast on-line.

### **Easter 2023**

The theme of the Easter Convention was 'More than Conquerors'.

Steve Brady (Cayman Islands and UK) spoke from the book of Revelation, chapters 1-3; Gary Millar (Brisbane) spoke from the book of Joshua; Kirk Franklin (Wycliffe Bible Translators) spoke at the Global Focus meeting. Afternoon seminars were run by our speakers and a panel from different Theological Colleges around Melbourne.

The continuing high standard of preaching and application of God's Word is appreciated by many.

The Easter Convention was also live streamed.

Richard Coombs

Summer / Easter Convention Chair on behalf of the Committee.

### **VCYC 2022**

#### **2023 Events and Review:**

##### One Night Event(s):

We started the year with a new host for our first event of the year. Mitcham Baptist was a new contact through a new committee member. The venue was a good space for the event and also saw large attendance. We had 318 in attendance from 18 churches or youth ministries. This was a significant increase in attendance with new churches joining us. These new contacts were also part of the new churches in attendance at the convention which was great!

With good momentum from the term 1 ONE and solid attendance at the convention, our term 4 one at Holy Trinity Doncaster was also well attended. We had 356 attend from 18 churches or youth ministries. This also included new churches checking out VCYC that we are following up for the 2024 convention. Overall, the good attendance as well as constantly having new churches coming has validated for the executive team the importance of these events for the youth ministries attending as well as being vital for reaching new churches.

## Convention:

Following the well attended return to a weekend convention in 2022, the 2023 convention again grew in number of both participants and churches. We had just over 650 in attendance including our volunteers from just over 40 churches. This was a decent increase from the 580 in 2022.

Andy May preached from the Psalms and he was warmly embraced for his clarity, honesty, and humility in preaching God's Word. The theme and passages felt like they were timely and necessary we embrace several new post-covid norms.

The growth of VCYC's attendance continued to stretch our capacity. Catering for over 500 as well as accommodating youth and youth leaders across three locations (as we are using two off-site cabin sites) is a big challenge. In God's kindness we were able to recruit over 70 volunteers to execute the event and the catering team did an amazing job!

We significantly benefited from a more experienced executive team who did their roles exceptionally well. Further, new recruits to the executive team taking on new roles was particularly important to spread the workload better. This was mainly seen in our music team, prayer ministry, and aesthetics.

The weather did play a factor for our event with significant rain and wind for those camping or walking to off-site accommodation. This also resulted in a river running through our prayer tent which was less than ideal.

Overall the VCYC Executive team was thankful to God for a great event and the continued growth of the convention. We are acutely aware of how important VCYC has become for the ministry of several churches and the role we are playing to encourage and promote biblical teaching in youth ministry. The team is eager to continue to work hard for the growth and sustainability of VCYC.

Andrew Wort  
Chair on behalf of the Committee

## **Men's Convention**

**2023 Convention** - The theme for the 2023 Convention was 'Strong Mind Soft Heart' and our 2 main speakers, David Walter from AFES and IFES based in Brisbane and Ed Surrey from CRU based in Perth, shared messages from 1 Peter. David and Ed helped us think about living as Christians today, standing firm for God's truth with strong minds but then learning how to share that truth in a loving way.

Along with David and Ed, Arthur Bolkas shared part of his life story. This involved Arthur being sent to prison via a drug rehabilitation clinic after holding up a number of TAB's at gun point. Then after the four-year mark of his sentence, God touched and challenged his life. Many men were impacted by Arthur's testimony.

David, Ed and Arthur all led various seminars along with Rhys Bezzant, Senior Lecturer at Ridley College and Ian Harper, Dean and Director of the Melbourne Business School and Co-Dean of the Faculty of Business and Economics at the University of Melbourne. The seminars were all run twice and were well attended. In general, there was very positive feedback about the range and content of the seminars. Some even indicating they were the highlight of the Convention.

Overall numbers were down from 2022 and pre COVID but there was still about 400 men attend on the Friday Night and Saturday. As a trial, we did offer the opportunity for men's groups to stay over for the weekend, incorporating the Convention into weekend, but no groups took up the offer.

Music for the Convention on both the Friday Night and Saturday was again organised by Joel Creek and involved some of his muso's friends from City On A Hill, East. Again, Tim Grant did a great job as MC. In general, feedback with regard to the Convention was very positive.

Tony Burgum

Chair on behalf of the Committee

## **Women's Convention**

We held our convention *Songs for all Seasons – Our emotions and the Psalms*, on Sat October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023.

A big thankyou to the volunteers and office staff who made the day run smoothly.

Thanks to the intercessory prayer team from Regeneration Church, our band from Merri Creek Anglican and Inner West Anglican Church, guest leaders and to our cooks.

Our specific goals in line with the BHC vision continue to be:

- i) To provide a high-quality bible teaching convention for women.  
Our guest speaker was Dr Melinda Cousins who spoke about the Psalms of Lament, Joy and Imprecation. The teaching was challenging and very helpful in encouraging authentic and biblical response to God in all circumstances of life.
- ii) To be a convention for all kinds of women: different ages and stages, churches and denominations and cultural backgrounds, Christian and seekers.  
We were encouraged once again that we drew in new attendees – many younger than we've had previously and certainly from a variety of denominations and cultural backgrounds.
- iii) We have also developed a third goal or aspiration specific to women's convention which is to model, encourage and facilitate creative and reflective responses to God's word.

Our guest artist was singer storyteller Nerida Cuddy. Nerida sang and shared some of her own story at our Friday night dinner event and again on Saturday in the Lament session.

We held a variety of electives some which were creative/responsive, including a session for taking time out to pray/receive prayer from the team, a write your own psalm elective, and a choir elective where women came together and learned a song which they presented in the final session.

Beck Miller

Chair on behalf of the Committee

## **Seniors Ministry**

The Committees for the Seniors Retreat and 50s+ Getaway were joined in early 2023 to become the Seniors Ministry Committee.

### **Seniors Retreat – 1-5 May 2023**

The Speaker for 2023 was Bruce Bickerdike (vicar at South Croydon Anglican Church) who led the daily studies from 1 John under the theme "Being Transformed by God's Love", which was well received by those attending. All aspects of the week were appreciated by attendees with high scores on the feedback and it was encouraging to see the total number over 30 again after the Covid period and several last minute cancellations in 2022. Those attending included loyal regulars who made first timers feel included and welcome.

Those attending are looking forward to staying in the ensuite accommodation of the Hope Centre in 2024, but we will need to ensure that we create a good sense of community that has been easily achieved in the

Convention Lodge. We are hoping for attendance of 50. The dates for 2024 are 29 April to 3 May with the speaker being Daryl McKerlie leading studies from Colossians with the theme of "A life worth living".

### **50s+ Getaway – 17-19 November 2023**

Stephen Gaukrodger from the UK was our speaker and his visit was facilitated by him speaking at Mt Tamborine on the previous weekend. He addressed the theme "A letter to my younger self" from 2 Timothy.

We were hoping that this could have been the first event in the Hope Centre but that was not to be and so we were not able to promote this aspect of the convention. Numbers were low but the convention ministry was excellent.

Geoff Gawler  
Chair on behalf of the Committee

### **Songs of Praise**

#### **Aim:**

Songs of Praise exists to provide spiritual enrichment, encouragement and renewal through corporate worship, good Christian music, testimony and fellowship, as well as providing opportunity to introduce newcomers to the Convention. We aim to reflect the Keswick themes of renewal and whole-hearted submission to the Lord Jesus through music and commentary.

### **Songs of Praise 2023**

SoP 2023 was held on the Sunday afternoon of the Women's Convention weekend, 22 October 2023. Attendance was around 440, consistent with the previous year's numbers.

Our theme was **Hope** and guest artists pianist Peter McLean, Ally Paterson accompanied by her siblings, and professional musicians, the Vita Ensemble, performed exceptionally and contributed genuine testimonies to the glory of God.

We welcomed Nathan Smith to the committee last year, and were pleased that he was so warmly received in his debut as song leader, giving Jeff a well-earned break.

Peter Ting organised and supplied a generous afternoon tea.

Our sincere thanks to Joel Creek and Cassandra Minett who were faultless on sound and slides, the wonderful BHC musicians, and Andrew Fisher and his team who ensured that entry and payments ran smoothly.

Sally Minett  
Chair on behalf of the Committee

## **Property Report**

### **Staff and Volunteers**

Devin Le Page continued in his role as a full time Property Manager, however he experienced deteriorating health which impacted on his ability to perform satisfactorily. He resigned from his position in July 2023. The position was advertised and Louwrens Theron expressed a desire to return as Property Manager. He was appointed to the role in September 2023 and has been performing well since then.

We have been blessed with a good number of regular volunteers attending the monthly working bee days with numbers up to 20 people, which has been an encouragement to us all. A number of other regular volunteers come each Thursday.

Phil Abbott, Roy Watson and Andrew Rhyder have been a great help to Tony Evans, our Project Manager, for the new accommodation/dining facility and have continued supporting the Property Manager with a wide range of activities around the property. Rob Small continues to do much of our electrical work. Sharon Robertson has also been on site one day a week to oversee the extensive planting works that have been done on the property.

### **2023 Projects**

**Creek Work** - In 2023 we received another small grant from the Melbourne Water Stream frontage program to do clean-up work on German Creek, which was to engage a contractor to supplement the work already done by BHC. This program has been going for several years with good results. This exercise has significantly improved our relationships with neighbours with whom we now have regular meetings. We have also applied for another grant for 2024.

**Planting** The Shire of Yarra Ranges has a project called "Ribbons of Green" which involved providing 1500 plants to be planted around the property in 2023. This was supervised by Sharon who was through Tim Norton able to secure the services of a local scouts group to help with the planting. Sharon has also been involved in general landscaping around the property.

### **Major Development Project – Hope Centre**

An important and main activity of the Property Committee has been to provide support and guidance to our Project Manager, Tony Evans, who attends the fortnightly meetings.

Significant progress has been made on the construction of both the accommodation and dining facility with construction finance being available through Baptist Financial Services. Tony has managed all the onsite contractors effectively with construction completion achieved in December 2023.

Jim Finger is arranging further supply of furniture and other items from China, with another shipment planned for 2024.

It was planned to obtain a certificate of occupancy to enable the building to be operational for the summer convention and this was achieved on 22 December.

We continue to thank and praise God for His guidance throughout the year and look forward to new opportunities in 2024.

David Webb on behalf of the committee

## Financial Report

The Belgrave Heights Convention produces audited accounts each year that are lodged with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission.

### Summary from 2023 Accounts Year to 30/9/2023

#### Statement of Profit or Loss

|                          | 2023             | 2022             |
|--------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Income                   |                  |                  |
| Ministry                 | 735,262          | 981,367          |
| Property                 | 493,124          | 314,427          |
| Other                    | 10,630           | 30,128           |
| <b>Total Income</b>      | <b>1,239,016</b> | <b>1,325,922</b> |
| Expenditure              |                  |                  |
| Ministry                 | 279,925          | 137,792          |
| Property                 | 655,903          | 451,663          |
| Admin & Other            | 144,176          | 146,515          |
| <b>Total Expenditure</b> | <b>1,080,004</b> | <b>735,970</b>   |
| <b>Operating Surplus</b> | <b>159,012</b>   | <b>589,952</b>   |

#### Statement of Financial Position

|                          | 2023              | 2022              |
|--------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Current Assets           | 737,368           | 326,961           |
| Non Current Assets       | 17,706,366        | 13,242,236        |
| <b>Total Assets</b>      | <b>18,443,734</b> | <b>13,569,197</b> |
| Current Liabilities      | 1,333,289         | 933,200           |
| Non-Current Liabilities  | 5,085,436         | 770,000           |
| <b>Total Liabilities</b> | <b>6,418,725</b>  | <b>1,703,200</b>  |
| <b>Net Assets</b>        | <b>12,025,009</b> | <b>11,865,997</b> |
| <b>Equity</b>            | <b>12,025,009</b> | <b>11,865,997</b> |