



Reconnect

Annual report 2020





From the Senior Minister

Reconnect

Last year Bree Mills wrote, “I sense that for GWAC, this year (2019) has been a year of changing seasons. We have had times of incredible growth as a faith community, we have had times of rest, and although we may not like it there have been times of pruning as well. Our call is not to question or resist the pruning, but to trust The Gardener, and abide in The Vine. God the gardener knows what we need to grow and be fruitful, and I believe he has provided that for us in Phil’s appointment. In the meantime, we are called to a time of waiting, a time of reflection, and seeking to abide as a community in Christ.”

Well who would have thought that 12 months on we would have spent more than six months scattered as God’s people while we wait to regather as the body of Christ on site at the GWAC facility? COVID-19 has changed all of our lives forever. It is going to be one of those moments (seasons) that none of us will ever forget.

At the time of writing we are still in lockdown but hopeful of an outcome that allows us as a church to begin regathering. However, with the easing of restrictions there will be some

pretty strict rules in place about how this will take place. But an even bigger challenge for us will be encouraging the existing GWAC community to regather with purpose and with our mission in mind. There is also the challenge for us to be pastorally mindful of all the people at GWAC as we regather. For me I will be keen to see everyone come back to the Sunday and Wednesday celebrations as soon as possible.

There are likely to be various reactions as to when and how people are ready to reconnect:

- Some will be fearful of reconnecting physically due to HEALTH-related reasons – not wanting to catch or spread coronavirus
- Others will have been conditioned, due to the severity of lockdown, to stay away and may not be in the right “HEADSPACE” to gather with large numbers of people with whom they have previously been comfortable.

For both of these reasons we need to be pastorally sensitive, supportive and prayerful for people with these understandable fears.

“ **Let us hold on to the confession of our hope without wavering, since he who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to provoke love and good works, not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching.**

Hebrews 10:23-25

There is a third group of people that may struggle to reconnect due to a HEART condition. With the interruption to our predictable lifestyles this year, there will be Christians who have got out of routine. Loss of motivation to gather for regular worship will be one of the effects. I was talking with one person recently who told me they have replaced their regular Sunday service time by an online car club zoom meeting! They occasionally catch up with ‘church online’ and watch the bits that suit them at some time later in the week. In situations like this we need to remind one another of the following words from the book of Hebrews:

“Let us hold on to the confession of our hope without wavering, since he who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to provoke love and good works, not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching.”

Our challenge as a community in 2021 will be to reconnect in a meaningful way, with worship that honours God and both encourages and grows God’s people. Are we up for the challenge? Absolutely we are!

- For starters, God is with us. Even in a pandemic, God has not abandoned or left us high and dry.
- Secondly, the GWAC people I have met since Barb and I commenced here in February this year are amazing and in many respects I have seen the mission of being ‘a caring community making, maturing and mobilising disciples of Jesus Christ, locally and globally’ being lived out despite the challenges.
- Thirdly, there is an incredible leadership team that I have been privileged to lead and serve. Every staff member is committed to serving and seeing this mission and the vision of the church lived out.

Yes, there will be changes to our staff team in the coming year, we trust that under God the right people will be raised

up to pick up from Bree Mills’ outstanding ministry across the GWAC community these past nearly 10 years, as well as new staff to take up Bre Wilkinson’s role as Youth and Young Adults’ pastor as she steps into the developing church plant with the Monash community.

The following report presents a snapshot of the Cultural Values that makes up GWAC. Within each value you will find stories of various disciples from GWAC who share something of what God has done, in and through them, as they have sought to live as disciples in this challenging season.

2021 will be a year of **reconnection** for GWAC as we engage with one another and with the wider community. It will also be a year of establishing some new mission and ministry initiatives in the local community, and a year of seeing a refreshed facility from which the worship of God, training and equipping for and delivery of existing and new ministry takes place. It’s all very exciting!

I look forward to partnering with each one of you as we serve our risen Saviour in the task ahead of us.

Phil and Barb Meulman

Transformational discipleship

The gospel calls us to be a community of disciples on mission together, as we live out our faith in word and deed, locally and globally.

Norm Winfield

My journey with God started as a lad in the Choir at St Barnabas' in Balwyn, and drifted away until I turned 30.

Shortly before my 30th birthday, God presented Joan and I with a baby daughter, our second child. Around the same time a Baseball teammate was injured and close to death. For the first time I really prayed for his life and he pulled through. At work I did not know at the time but a few of my colleagues were praying for me. One of them gave me the modern Bible "Good News for Modern Man" I read it and cried and accepted Christ as my saviour.

Joining St. Paul's, I started to understand where God was leading me and joined several Bible Study groups over the years to study His word. Amalgamation into GWAC

started a new phase of Christian life including new Bible Study groups.

On moving to Rowville to the Waverley Country Club I have joined the Village Bible Study Group, we meet during the day as these days Joan and I rarely go out at night.

With the advent of the lockdown I have accepted the invitation to join with the GWAC staff at Zoom Discovery Bible Study Group and find it a most informative and friendly group. With members of the staff and others in the group, you can ask questions in depth about scripture that you have difficulty with. For older folk like myself and people with transport problems, God has yet again opened possibilities to study his word via Zoom.



Gordon and Doris Li

I had always thought that what I loved most was architectural design. I dreamed of designing a master building one day. For this reason, I came to Australia from China to study architecture in 1990, and my wife followed a year after. The love of God drew us into the church, and we were both baptized in 1992. I asked God to help me become a good architect one day.

In 1993, after graduation, we migrated to Singapore in hope of better career prospects. I became very busy with work and often ignored church life. In 2001, inspired by the success of friends back in China, I went to Beijing to set up an architectural consulting firm. There, I faced many temptations while exploring business opportunities, and struggled at the crossroads.

I was uneasy, lonely and anxious. It was at this time that a Singaporean brother, who had been doing business in Beijing for many years, came into my life. He shared how God had taught him hard life lessons. He had come close to losing his sight after years of self-serving, chaotic living, but God cured his eye and restored his life when he repented and returned to church. God sent this brother to remind me not to stay away from him, and to bring me back into the church. I was then surrounded by mature Christians whose spirits of generous service to others impacted me greatly.

Matthew 6:33 became my reminder: "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Prompted by the Holy Spirit, I began to share the gospel with the locals. By serving others, my relationship with God had been renewed. I witnessed the amazing power of the gospel in others and in myself. God undoubtedly used his grace, mercy and power to turn my plans for self-fulfillment into plans for expanding his kingdom on earth.

My family moved to Melbourne ten years ago, and I continued to serve in church while working. One day, I felt that the desire to be a good architect no longer dominated my life. Having now gone through the first half of my life, I asked myself, "In this next half, am I really contented to only pursue my own goals?" In 2017, I started full-time study at the Melbourne School of Theology.

God continues to guide and empower me through his word and Spirit. Today, I am convinced that God is the master architect who planned my life from the beginning, and that I am just a brick in his hand to be placed in the master building of the Kingdom of God. Being able to serve generously is our privilege by God's grace.



FROM
SAFE TO
SURRENDERED

Missional living

The gospel calls us to be a community of disciples on mission together, as we live out our faith in word and deed, locally and globally.

“ **As Christians, we are called to love our neighbour, and I’m becoming more aware of the issues and challenges faced by Indigenous Australians and am working towards reconciliation.**

Hannah Craig

My school is committed to working towards and promoting Reconciliation. We focus on learning about Aboriginal culture and understanding the issues surrounding reconciliation. I became involved in the Reconciliation Group at school to help raise awareness within the school community. This interests me because as Christians, we are called to love our neighbour, and I’m becoming more aware of the issues and challenges faced by Indigenous Australians and am working towards reconciliation.

This year, our focus has been to educate, inspire and act. This has been challenging at times due to covid, but we have found new ways to connect within the school community. We have run some documentary and discussion evenings. I was inspired by this to engage with the Ignite community using the same format, and ran a couple of discussion nights over Zoom. We watched the documentaries ‘In My Blood It Runs’ and ‘The Final Quarter’. Both these documentaries have some confronting aspects to them. We got together afterwards on Zoom to reflect and debrief on the issues that came out of the documentaries.

I was grateful to be able to run these evenings with the support of Ignite. I hope to continue to educate myself on the complex issues around reconciliation, and pray that God will guide us forward towards closing the gap in the future.



This year our focus has been to educate, inspire and act.

We decided that we can trust God and put our faith into action.

”



FROM CONSUMER TO MISSION

Rochelle and Harold

The Covid pandemic followed by the lockdown took us all by surprise. The challenges of doing everyday life in the face of this pandemic brought anxiety and uncertainty to us.

We thought about how we would do life, and what it meant for us to not see our children, grandchildren, family and loved ones and miss out on the regular things in life we take for granted. Feeling this sense of loss amidst the anxiety of ensuring we stayed safe and did not expose ourselves to COVID-19 became our everyday conversations. A few weeks into lockdown, we asked ourselves what we could do to make a difference in this time, and whom can we walk with whilst keeping safe?

We chose to support our neighbour, an 87 year old lady, who lives on her own. To ensure she did not have to leave home for shopping or whatever she required. We had other opportunities to befriend and serve, amongst which was to support an organisation that delivered food parcels to the disadvantaged in our neighbourhood. We decided that we can trust God and put our faith into action and made a conscious decision to serve by delivering food packages every Friday afternoon to these families.

We continue to seek opportunities to support and assist our neighbourhood community.

“He is good; his love endures forever.”

Authentic community



The gospel calls us to be a community of disciples on mission together, as we live out our faith in word and deed, locally and globally.

Studio Seven

At the beginning of 2020, Studio Seven was facing many changes. Members of our core team stepped into new ministries, and a number of newly graduated year 12s connected into our community. What started as a community seeking to unite creatives and explore creative worship, was now a community facing the unknown.

When COVID-19 hit, as many communities experienced, we were struck with a sudden inability to meet in person, with no idea of when we would reunite. Since Studio Seven is primarily connected with students and young adults, we quickly succumbed to Zoom fatigue. It was difficult to ask those studying online to commit to more hours each week on Zoom. We began to ask ourselves how this would impact our gatherings.

We turned to the early church in the book of Acts, and the core of Christian community. It was both challenging and encouraging to revisit the early church, discussing the unshaken hearts of the apostles facing struggle and persecution. Through the most difficult times, we are encouraged that our community has committed to the discipline of prayer, for the world, and for each other. Many of us have especially struggled with our mental health, but have also been blessed to bear witness to God’s healing power through each others prayers and encouragement.

Our migration to Zoom also meant that we couldn’t paint, sing, or create together as easily as before. We doubted the role of creativity and art in our community, since we could no longer provide the same accessibility to creative resources.

Despite uncertainty and Zoom fatigue, we continued to meet. Two young adults from our community volunteered to run creative workshops, sharing their skills in creative writing and music production with us. Through these workshops, God provided spaces for us to be vulnerable with each other, to share our passions and gifts with one another, as well as to work together on creative and collaborative projects. As our leadership struggled with finding ways to make creative worship accessible, God reminded us that it wasn’t our responsibility to make the community ‘work’, but to trust that He is at work beyond our own capacity.

In an isolated time, God continues to remind us that we are connected through Him. We give thanks for His provision of technology and a well-needed space for us to regularly spend time in fellowship through this difficult season.

FROM ISOLATED TO CONNECTED

Sarah Edwards

Playgroup this year has looked very different from previous years, but it has been really pleasing to see how families have rallied together to support each other through these times. Playgroup is served by a faithful group of GWAC leaders, and my family and I have enjoyed attending and helping, in a very small way over the past few years. For me, I love the conversations and relationships that can arise out of just quietly drawing alongside the other families as we play and have fun together.

This year we have stayed connected through emails, a WhatsApp group, and Zoom sessions, and have also been grateful for opportunities, at times, to meet with other families at Jells Park. There is nothing like the opportunity presented while pushing a swing to have a great one-to-one conversation with the Mum, Dad or Grandparent pushing a swing next to you. This year Jacob and Jocelyn have loved getting Jules’ delivery of craft supplies and activities. In the helter skelter life of juggling home, school, work and care for my family, it has been so nice to share in the struggles and joys of it all with people who are at the same stage of life, but also with those more senior and wiser members of our leadership team.

A container of home-made biscuits left on my front door step just when I needed a little pick-me-up, cards of condolence, prayers of support and encouragement from the other playgroup leaders again at just the right time. That i think is what playgroup and life on mission is all about; being able to share our hope in the gospel in the way we live out our lives every day.

Playgroup is a non-threatening environment for people to enter into our church, and by that I mean the community of people that is GWAC. The love, support and encouragement of people who, empowered by the truth of the gospel and the love and peace they have in it, are able to be outwardly focused and care for the people they meet.

We are looking forward to being able to meet again in person soon, and are looking forward to what God has planned for playgroup and all the families that attend it in the coming months.



A container of home-made biscuits left on my front door step just when I needed a little pick-me-up, cards of condolence, prayers of support and encouragement...

Radical Generosity

Chris Brassington

I am married to Gail and we have two children and four grandchildren. I attended St James' parish prior to the merger of the three parishes to form St Barnabas' Glen Waverley. I was a warden at St James' before and during the merger process. My involvement at GWAC involves attending the 8am service, assisting with some of the roles at 8am, including money counting and being a steward, and volunteering one morning a week in the GWAC office.

Ten years ago, Gail attended the local volunteer recruitment agency now called South East Volunteers and was referred to Monash Waverley Community Information & Support (MWCIS) who were calling for volunteers. Gail expressed an interest, and I attended an information interview with her. I was impressed with



FROM SELF TO OTHER CENTRED

the organisation and decided to volunteer as well. We completed the required accredited course to equip us for the role. I am now the President and have been for seven years.

MWCIS provides emergency relief to local residents who are in need of assistance, including food parcels, supermarket vouchers and referrals to other support services for assistance. Volunteers offer a listening ear for those who attend. We have no paid staff, we are all volunteers.

The COVID 19 restrictions have affected the operations of MWCIS greatly. As an essential service, we are still open to assist those in need, however on a reduced basis. We normally operate 30 hours a week, but this has been reduced to 9 hours a week.

GWAC members have supported MWCIS faithfully. The grocery trolley in the fellowship area is well patronised and this is a great help. Please continue your support once we can meet again.

My reason for volunteering was due to the desire to do something for others in my retirement. I was greatly assisted by the pastoral care course at GWAC a few years ago as it helped me to help clients, and also fellow volunteers when they faced personal problems. I can see God's help in the work I undertake in providing emergency relief and working administratively in this role. I enjoy meeting people from all walks of life and I am grateful for the opportunity to share God's love in a quiet way.

The gospel compels us to be radical in our generosity and compassionate in how we respond to all those we encounter.

“It is my hope and prayer that in response to God's radical generosity, we will reflect His nature and become emboldened to be even more welcoming to our friends, family and workmates.”

Howard Walker

It has been a real privilege to be given the opportunity to work with the Project Team, Staff and Governance Board on the exciting refurbishment project. The silver lining of this tiresome pandemic is that it is the ideal chance to manage a lot of work while the building is empty.

When I was asked to consider the "job", my first concern was: "Where will the funds come from?" Fundraising in the environment of a damaging pandemic seemed to be difficult at best and even ill-advised at worst.

However, while God requires us to be radically generous, He only requires us to do what is in His own nature. And in this regard, God knows our needs and He has provided Himself!!! Thanks to a recent sale by GWAC of a former vicarage we have set aside more than enough to complete all the works that need to be done, over the next year or so (\$0.6-0.7m - depending on final quotations). The Diocese has confirmed that these funds are consistent with the purposes that were stipulated - building and maintenance only.

While acknowledging God's generosity today, we should also be thankful for the members who dreamt of linking three local churches and who gave sacrificially to make this dream a reality. We have much to be thankful for in this celebration year as we renovate this gift that we have inherited.

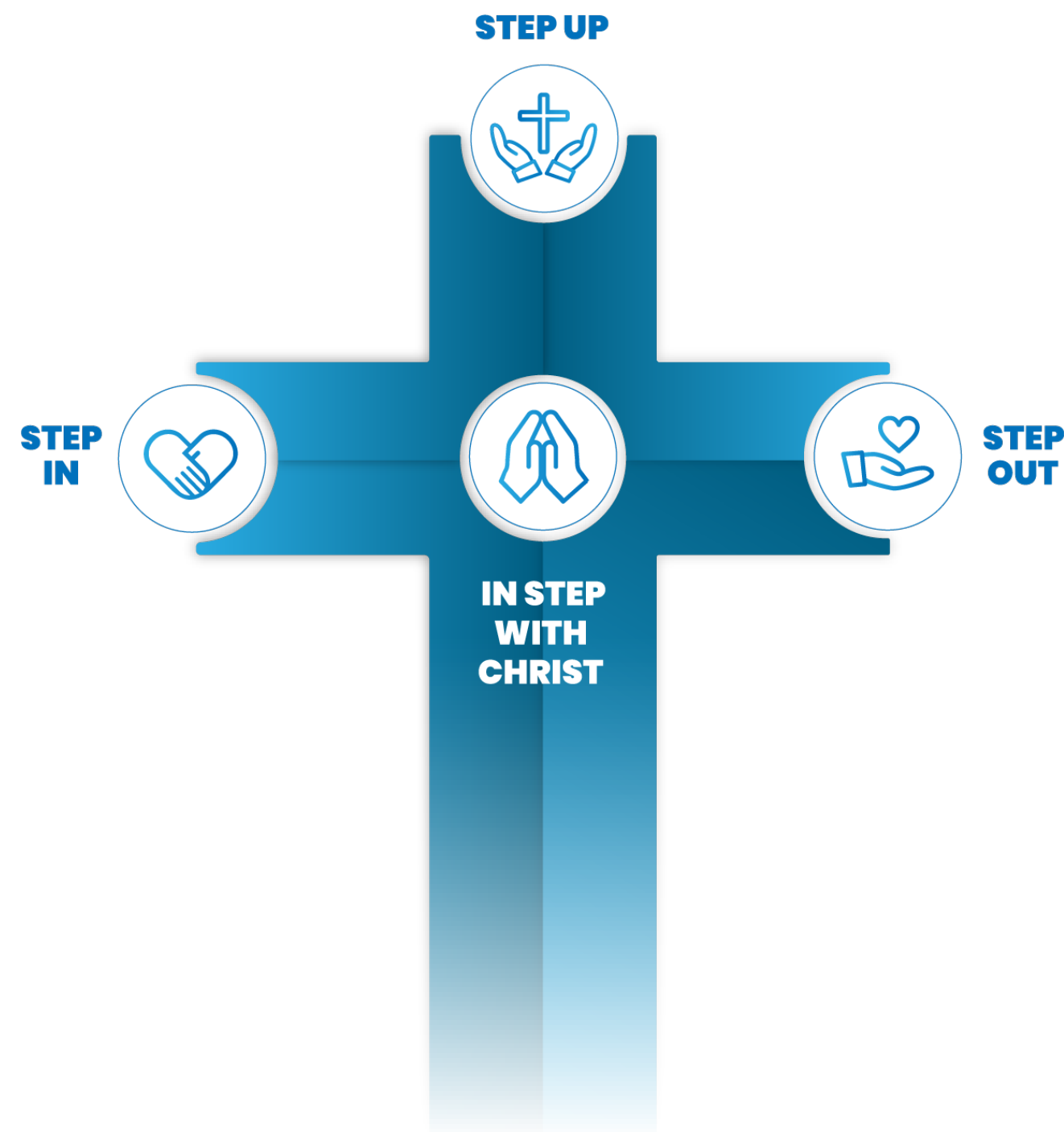
I'm personally very excited about this project. It fits with our latest 5 year Vision to be a Light on the (Wheelers!) Hill. Lockdown permitting, we will soon be able to see the church building becoming renovated inside and out, with the commencement of the first few major sub-projects. In addition, SBMC will be an even safer and more inviting environment in which staff and members can work and worship.

It is my hope and prayer that in response to God's radical generosity, we will reflect His nature and become emboldened to be even more welcoming to our friends, family and workmates who do not know the Gospel.

Inviting them to our refurbished building will present a good opportunity to renew relationships with them too!!



Vision 2025



GWAC will be a light on a hill as we live in step with Christ. We will nurture and equip one another, as we serve the broader community with a Christ-centred and Spirit-led approach.

IN STEP WITH CHRIST

Walking a Christ-centred and Spirit led life to serve the body of Christ.

- Christ-centred
- Spirit led
- Prayerfully dependent
- Serving the body of Christ
- Shaped by Scripture
- Willing to give our first fruits for God's purpose

STEP UP

Stepping up with courage to follow God's call and to grow one another in faith.

- Courage to grow in faith – self and others
- Equipping people to follow god's call on their life
- Embrace all styles of worship – traditional, contemporary and others
- Inclusive of everyone in the broader community
- Hands-on learning
- Committed and accountable

STEP IN

Stepping in with one another as a caring and nurturing community.

- Caring and nurturing one another
- Intentionally creating opportunities for all of the GWAC community to connect
- Intentionally welcoming everyone
- Living out a culture of hospitality
- Value differences whilst upholding unity
- Fostering/Cultivating intergenerational connections

STEP OUT

Stepping outside of GWAC to share Christ's love with those around us.

- Seek opportunities to serve community needs
- Actively engage in local community
- Innovate and experiment
- Embrace the multicultural community around us
- Nurture Christ-centred communities outside our walls
- Culturally relevant

FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

Average Weekly Giving

2019 Financial Year \$11,669

2020 Financial Year \$11,055

Change **-5%**

Special Appeal Giving

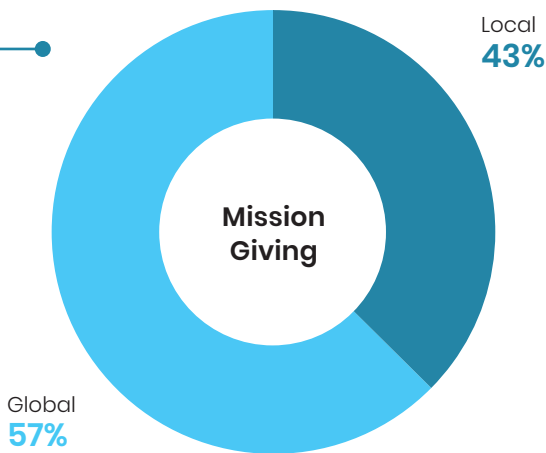
2019 Financial Year \$66,550

2020 Financial Year \$0

Change **-100%**

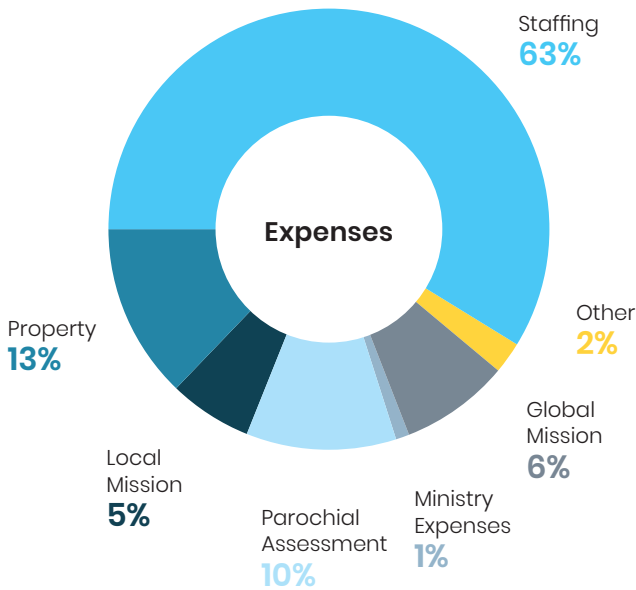
Mission Giving

Local	Global
Alpha	BCA
Ridley	CMS
	Pioneers
	Bakara family
	OMF
	Power to Change



Expenses

Staffing	\$519,359
Property	\$108,328
Global Mission	\$53,064
Local Mission	\$40,835
Ministry Expenses	\$8,440
Parochial Assessment	\$81,619
Other	\$16,365
Total	\$828,010



VISION

A caring community making, maturing, and mobilising disciples of Jesus Christ, locally and globally.

VALUES

Transformational Discipleship – from safe to surrendered
Surrendering to God’s transforming work in our lives.

Radical Generosity – from self to others
Investing generously and compassionately in Kingdom work.

Authentic Community – from isolated to connected
Genuinely and deeply connecting with others in relationship.

Missional Living – from consumer to mission
Living out our faith in word and deed, locally and globally.



800 WAVERLEY ROAD, GLEN WAVERLEY 3150
WWW.GWAC.ORG.AU
9560 7494