



NEWMARKET BAPTIST • CHURCH

April 24, 2016

Greetings Friends,

This is a letter to thank you for your role in being part of the revitalisation of NBC over the last four years and to invite you to deepen and renew your commitment over the next year.

May 15th is Pentecost where we also celebrate the birthday of the church. This year marks 130 years since Alfred 'Dad' Mathew's put an advertisement in the local paper calling people to join "a cause in our neighbourhood."

Covenanting 2016-17

In the Baptist tradition covenanting is an intentional way of expressing our freedom and desire to worship the God of eternity by associating for a time with a particular local gathered people and cause.

At Newmarket, Covenant Partners are those that have publicly confessed to follow Jesus Christ and/or have expressed this through the rite of baptism. They prayerfully commit each year to personal covenant rhythms of praying, eating, learning and serving through Newmarket Baptist Church. Covenant partners are expected to gather regularly to worship, to help discern its direction and make decisions at church meetings.

Our partners may also include children to whom we have dedicated ourselves to share and learn in our life of faith; or people of any or no faith who are seeking to belong and explore this faith with us in a committed way.

Alternatively if people cannot make this commitment we encourage them to stay connected by being named as a friend or a volunteer.

Our covenant is an organic process and a draft for this year is attached below. Please consider it carefully as we finalise it over the next few weeks. Alongside this document we are keen to start some physical and online 'learning and coaching' spaces around our church covenant to better encourage each other over the coming year.

Building Community

Over the last period we have been asking what are ways which God is calling us in this place and time and upon listening our leadership has summarised a core focus for the coming year to be 'ministry to kids and families' and 'food'.

To this end we are talking to local council about establishing a local buyers food co-operative to complement our People's Pantry activities and Baptcare are presently considering a commitment toward a much longed for community kitchen. Canterbury Stables have recently approached us about needing more space for Playgroups which will be starting soon in our meeting room.

We are grateful to God that our own sense of core has grown from a low ebb 4 years ago to a sustained gathering of 30 people on Sundays, (despite many regular apologies), and that we are blessed with the energy of many children and many new relationships with local people and groups.

Community Buildings

This month a the Flemington Association Heritage Group toured our buildings which alongside the Post Office have the longest continuous use for the same purpose in Flemington. The group included local member Adam Bandt and his partner who regularly uses our space with Nat Gilbert's baby friendly fitness program.

We also met with Rev. Ken Luscombe (Newmarket Pastor 1980-86) who is exploring a partnership between us and West Melbourne Baptist Church. As we walked the buildings he talked of the significant challenges and the investment in the buildings that took place over 30 years ago now.

We are conscious that whilst we live in the benefit of this legacy we are once again at a point where we need to reinvest in the buildings in order to renew our heritage; to effectively meet the needs of the community for today and leave our own legacy for the future.

As their commitment to revitalising 130 years of ministry in this neighbourhood the Baptist movement (BUV & Baptcare) have invested close to \$150K in our vision of participation in God's mission over the last four years.

Recently the broader community has responded to this with groups such as Bendigo Community Bank, Reclink Australia and ex-members of our fellowship contributing over \$40K.

Most significantly **YOU** have invested! In four years we have a congregation that has gone from being reliant on the subsidy of outsiders to supporting over \$30K per year in direct giving which is above our budget and growing.

In light of all this and the current skill mix of the current pastoral team the leadership feel this to be a 'kairos' time in which we might be challenged to respond to God's generosity to us by making further investment in our buildings and local ministry.

For Discernment and Decision

On May 15th our church birthday and covenant celebration will include a church meeting where we will be asking covenant partners at Newmarket Baptist to affirm three things.

1. *That the congregation affirms the direction of the leadership to explore the development of our Brighthon Street buildings.*
2. *We commit to a goal of raising \$20K over 2016-17 to develop plans towards development of the buildings for the preservation of our heritage future.*
3. *We commit ourselves to the process that will renew both our community and the buildings.*
 - a.) *Support the focus of the development of specific local ministries around food sharing co-operatives and to families/kids.*
 - b.) *Participate in considering and developing initial ideas and plans for our site.*
 - b.) *Consider a one off extra donations and/or participation in a Community Fundraising Event/ Campaign.*

Thanks for your work and commitment to this people and place. May the power of the Holy Spirit strengthen you in every way.

Much Grace and Peace,



Marcus Curnow & Andy Staunton.