



16th Chair report for AGM 2023

Dear members of PeaceWise,

Goodmorning and welcome to the 16th AGM of PeaceWise.

A special welcome as well to our new Board members: Lucy Dessington and Hadyn Bernau joined our Board in June 2022. Elizabeth Torres-Russell joined us recently in February this year. We are absolutely delighted for your willingness to serve on the PeaceWise Board.

I also like to express my gratitude to those who will have taken the time and effort to read this report at a later time, when it is available on the PeaceWise website.

Before I share my report with you, allow me to pray.

Father in Heaven, we thank you for Jesus, our Lord and Saviour, who reconciled the world to himself by the blood of His cross. This report is in honour of you. You have sustained us and produced the fruits of the PeaceWise Ministry through the faithful service and dedication of many. We thank you that our vision to see vast numbers of people passionately living and sharing Jesus' promise: "Blessed are the Peacemakers" is becoming a reality.
Amen.

It is always an honour to present the Chair report at the PeaceWise AGM. This is the 10th report and I am in my 11th year of being the Chair of PeaceWise. Why an honour you may ask? Isn't it just a report of achievements, milestones, financial performance and other metrics? A formality? Perhaps for some chairs and organisations that is indeed the case and I am not at all suggesting that that is wrong or unhelpful. It is that for me, preparing the report and reflecting on the past year, I always end up in a space of gratitude and honour to our heavenly Father.

Of course, milestone, achievements, finances and other metrics are important to be mentioned and some of those we are legally required to report. I, however, have the privilege to report those in the context of recognizing and acknowledging that it is our God who has blessed the work of our hands with a variety of fruits of value. Can these fruits of what has happened and achieved through the PeaceWise Ministry be quantified? Some can, but others are much harder or impossible to quantify. We recognize that God gives fruits that have a temporal value that is often quantifiable and other fruits that have an eternal value, that is beyond our space and time. In my report I will share some of the fruits so you can also marvel in the wonder of God's mercy, faithfulness and goodness.

At the beginning of last year the world and Australia were slowly coming out of the grip of COVID19. Restrictions were progressively reduced and lifted. Interstate and international travel became possible again as borders were opened. Life was slowly returning to normal or rather finding the new normal. People could meet and mix again, schools started up and church services went from online back to in-person services. For many people work has changed forever as they

continue to work on a part-time basis from home. COVID has also caused PeaceWise to change some of our ways of working, such as providing online Peacemaking courses, online Hubs, online coaching sessions and our staff and volunteers working and meeting remotely.

But when we can actually meet face to face, I certainly feel a sense of gratitude. This Board has longed for today and the following days, when we have our first in-person Board retreat since March 2020.

The lifting of travel restrictions also meant that some of us could be present at the second PeaceWise National Gathering on the seventh of April last year. A Holy Spirit inspired wind of change had been softly blowing for some time and was gathering strength. At the 2022 National Gathering we announced that our National Director Bruce Burgess would hand over the baton of leading PeaceWise to Wayne Forward. Wayne started as our new CEO on the first of June 2022.

Many beautiful words of thanks, praise and encouragement were spoken on that evening. There is just one thing I would like to mention and that is the PeaceWiseKids project. I say intentionally PeaceWiseKids Project or even Kids project, because that was what it is was called for many years. In fact the vision of the PeaceWiseKids Project was caught, expressed and captured by Bruce, the Founder of PeaceWise and the Board from the very beginning of PeaceWise in 2007. They prayed and worded the PeaceWiseKids vision in a PowerPoint slide that says Change the world by reaching the world's Kids through the Kids project.

Just the other day I was notified that PeaceWise reaches currently over 17,000 kids and youth through PeaceWiseKids and PeaceWiseYouth. When I heard this I texted Bruce, saying, "you must be so encouraged". He is the first one to divert any praise to God and all the people who have made PeaceWiseKids and PeaceWiseYouth a reality. This, my friends, is one of the most beautiful and precious fruits the Lord has given through obediently trusting, working, praying, and persevering with blood, sweat and tears. Many of the fruits we will never know. How lives of kids have been transformed into following Christ in a deeper way or maybe the first time, or perhaps in 20, 40, 60 years from now, when they remember the Prince of Peace who they met in primary or secondary school. Relationships are being restored and many relationships in the future will be restored, because of the biblical peacemaking training received today.

Wayne Forward took over the reigns of the ministry leadership on the 1 of June 2022. As the Chair and on behalf of the Board we are deeply thankful for God's calling on Wayne's life and his leadership of PeaceWise. We certainly pray that the Lord will continue to bless Wayne and that we may serve together for many years to come.

Another change we have observed is in the uptake of the National and Dedicated Training events. Whilst the uptake of the online training has been excellent since we started online training in 2021, we have seen a moderate and below expectation uptake of the face-to-face National Training events since the beginning of 2022. It seems that there is a reluctance to spend considerable time with other people in the same space as well as people preferring online training in the comfort and COVID risk-free home environment.

On the other hand the Dedicated Training has continued a growth trend, despite these events usually taking place face-to-face in the venue of choice of the organisations. The upshot of it all is that the Lord has sustained us financially throughout 2022 by compensating the under-performance of National Training with better than expected and budgeted growth in Dedicated Training. Over the years we have trained thousands of people in biblical peacemaking and in 2022 alone we trained just over 2000 people. I point out again that the praise for these results goes to God because it is God who provides the opportunities and fruits, when we serve in obedience and

trust, through many prayers and hard working, seeking to do His will. We make personal sacrifices because Jesus has captured us and called us to share the Truth of the Gospel, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour with all people.

So, I am pleased to report that PeaceWise is in a healthy financial position and we ended 2022 with a modest net surplus of \$28,749.-. PeaceWise is a not-for-profit organisation and our costs are covered by the income from different ministry arms, donations and grants. Training, in particular Dedicated Training, and PeaceWiseKids and PeaceWiseYouth are our main income streams. At the end of each year the Board reviews and approves the Budget for the following year, which is largely an extrapolation of the income and expenses streams of the previous year plus a good dose of faith for growth. The faithfulness and the goodness of the Lord are evident in the fact that where perhaps a particular budgeted income stream turns out to be below expectation by year end, the results of another income stream are above expectation. Or some expenses were less than expected or we received an unexpected donation. The Lord always has a way to balance the budget by year-end and even provides a surplus. Let me be clear though, the Lord works through people. We cannot thank our Partners for Peace and other givers enough for their generosity, faithfulness and obedience to the Lord by supporting and investing in His Kingdom through PeaceWise.

And it is the careful and prayerful stewardship of resources by the CEO, leadership team and all staff, that the Lord honours and works through. I also believe that the Lord has opened and opens doors and opportunities to share the Gospel of Peace of Jesus with many people and organisations, because we desire and seek to share, teach and proclaim the Truth with a capital “T” and with love.

I am pleased to say that our auditor, Avenyou Accounting & Advisory, has given us a clean bill of health. More formally he has advised PeaceWise that the 2022 Financial Report is in accordance with Division 60 of the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission Act 2012, including:

- a) giving a true and fair view of the Company’s financial position as at 31 December 2022 and of its performance for the year then ended; and
- b) complying with Australian Accounting Standards as described in the report and the Division 60 the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulation 2013.

The 2022 Directors, Financial and Audit Reports can be soon be downloaded from our website or from the ANCN website. Financial transparency is one of our ministry hallmarks and I encourage anyone to read the reports and examine the financial statements.

I would also like to mention our work in the area of Cultures of Peace. We have seen a rising trend in the delivery of dedicated training events for organisation, especially schools. Training is, however, the first step towards building a culture of peace within an organisation. We intentionally seek to offer and provide support to build a Culture of Peace within. To build and grow a Culture of Peace does require planning and time and because each organisation is different there is no standard way of building a Culture of Peace. The purpose is the same though and that is to grow an organisational culture where relationships are healthy and strong, where conflict is resolved in God-honouring ways, where there is no bullying, harassment or discrimination and where the sweet fragrance of the presence of Christ and His peace permeates all human interactions. That is an attractive organisational culture by any standard, but by God’s standard that is the beginning of the fulfillment of Jesus’ command in John 13: “ A new commandment I give to you, that you love

one another; just as I have loved you, you are also to love another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another”.

Biblical peacemaking brings people together, restores relationships, deepens existing relationships, builds unity, and is a conduit for encouragement, healing and freedom.

This sounds and is quite anti-cultural. It seems to me that today the cancel culture is becoming more the norm. You are either in or out, left or right, for or against, tolerant or intolerant, pro or anti, and so-forth. There is little patience or grace for an alternative view or even the middle ground. Polarisation provides to some extent clarity as positions are emphatically voiced and defined, although there still might be the hidden agenda's. I believe this is all part of God's plan for Australia and the western world. The boundary lines are being drawn. The ideals and intentions of each side will become clearer and openly proclaimed as the only truth. History can be re-written or blotted out to serve the ideals of the proclaimed truth.

This polarising trend creates the perfect space and vacuum for the Body of Christ to share and demonstrate the Truth of the Gospel. It is an opportune space for biblical peacemaking, bringing people with different views together to find a truth that unites and brings freedom. This can happen in a school, family, Sunday school, sports club, or any other public space, or wherever God opens a door in a space defined by contrasts, opposite views or conflict. Biblical peacemaking skills and ethos are ideally suited for bridging the gap or divide that exists between opposing positions and to bring people together instead of distancing. That is why we at PeaceWise are passionate and excited to train and equip people of all ages in biblical peacemaking and to help building of Cultures of Peace everywhere.

Paul says in Colossians: Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all His energy that he powerfully works within me.

PeaceWise has grown from small beginnings to a ministry with a solid national reach, embryonic international reach and offering the only biblical peacemaking teaching for kids and youth in Australia and dare I say in the world.

We are now truly transitioning from the developing stage into the maturing stage. That comes with it's own set of challenges. We praise God for the success and growth of our different ministry branches, in particular PeaceWiseYou, PeaceWiseUs, PeaceWiseKids and PeaceWiseYouth. The risk, however, is that we become the victim of our own success. The increase in ministry opportunities requires more resources, efficient processes, service and support systems, appropriate policies compliant with legal requirements, IT systems, cyber security, continuous improvement and renewal of our products and services, and more time and resources to maintain the increasing number of client relationships. We set ourselves a high standard because PeaceWise wants to honour God in everything we do. These things do not happen overnight or by themselves. People, who toil, struggling with all His energy that He powerfully works through them, carry these. We are working very hard to stay on top of things. As the Chair, I am super proud of our staff, leadership team, volunteers and ministry team. They are the people who make the ministry happen.

One of our marks of our philosophy of ministry is Relationship-based management instead of result-based management. Our leadership focus is on serving and building into people humbly and to do everything with love. In other words people are not an asset to be used for the success of the ministry, but people are a gifts from God and we invest in our people to help them grow in maturity in Christ, develop their gifting and together bear kingdom fruit by following Jesus in obedience. I will be honest with you. This is not easy. The demands and needs of those who use our materials or want to be trained or helped are always there. Workload and pressure is high

and we always working toward and praying into how to balance the well-being of all our staff and volunteers with delivering excellent services and products to our clients.

Given the success, the opportunities, our limited resources and the well-being of our staff and volunteers, we have decided to slow down the Internationalisation of PeaceWiseKids and PeaceWiseYouth as well as the development of the PeaceWiseVoice ministry branch. Both these potential developments require significant resources, planning, people and much prayer. We trust God that He will make clear when and how to proceed in these areas. He will also provide all the necessary resources in his time, because He is Wisdom and is Faithful.

Another aspect of maturing as an organisation and being blessed by the fruits of the ministry is that we become more known in the public space. Therefore, we can expect that our organisation or ministry arms might be challenged, critiqued or even attacked in the public space, possibly originating from where we least expect it. To date we have not experienced this, but we shouldn't be surprised if it does happen. Jesus himself said that persecution will come when we boldly and unashamedly teach and share the Gospel of Peace of Jesus Christ. After all Paul writes in Ephesians that we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

There is only so much you can do to prepare for a possible challenge or public attack. One is maintaining high standards of integrity and transparency, and ensuring we put in place and follow fit-for-purpose policies. As Chair I am proud to say that the CMA Standards Council has accredited PeaceWise since 2017. Each year we are audited by CMA SC with a focus on ministry transparency, financial integrity, diligent governance and organisational accountability. Their standards are significantly higher than those of the ACNC, the Australian Charities Not-for-profits Commission.

But that is not all. Friends, PeaceWise has started in humble beginnings and has always been carried by and infused with prayer. Prayer and humility are the weapons the evil one has no defense against. I believe it was Vincent de Paul who said: "The most powerful weapon to conquer the devil is humility. For, as he does not know at all how to employ it, neither does he know how to defend himself from it". Saint Augustine said: "If you should ask me what are the ways of God, I would tell you that the first is humility, the second is humility and the third is humility. Not that there are no other precepts to give, but if humility does not proceed all that we do, our efforts are fruitless."

Humility and earnest prayer go hand in hand. We try to seek God unceasingly in prayer, in humility to be obedient and dependent on Him for everything, to serve others and doing everything with love, and to give all glory to God. That is our position and our walk as we grow and always learn.

In God's grace and in step with His Spirit we celebrate success, we learn from our mistakes and we continue to share the Gospel of Peace.

Hudson Taylor wrote "I saw that the apostolic plan was not to raise ways and means, but to go and do the work, trusting his sure promise who has said, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you'".

We have been given a vision:

'To see vast numbers of people passionately living and sharing Jesus' promise 'Blessed are the peacemakers'

and we have been given a purpose:

'To promote peace and reconciliation in relationships through biblical principles and the power of Christ'

and we have a plan that we believe is a Holy Spirit inspired plan that expresses what God asks us to do and what He wants to accomplish in and through PeaceWise to see the vision fulfilled. May I invite all, who are called by Jesus, to journey with us and to share with the world the Peace of Christ that surpasses all understanding.

Thank you,
Jeroen Bruins
Chair PeaceWise, 23 March 2023