



Baptist Union
of Victoria

TOGETHER

Our stories together ♦ Quarterly magazine

Issue 8 July 2024



Featuring **LONELINESS**
mission Easter Wrap ups
GENERATIONS
RESOURCES events **PRAYER**

WELCOME

Welcome to our July 2024 issue of TOGETHER – stories from around our Victorian Baptist Union.

As usual, this edition is filled with stories reflecting our 2024 theme ‘Being and sharing the good news’. Our feature is on the significant issue of loneliness in our communities. As we have discussed this epidemic, experienced by one in six Australians through our discernment processes, I have been heartened to hear and read the ways our churches are already addressing this issue, and the eagerness by others to pursue activities that can have an impact.

In this issue we look back as far as Easter at some wonderful church outreach activities and share a number of stories from our Generations area (kids, youth and young adults) – an area so important as we work hard to encourage, empower and equip churches to develop strategies to engage the next generation of faith. You’ll read a wrap up of our May Gathering events and join with us in celebrating milestone ordination anniversaries.

During Refugee Week in June, we highlighted a story of hope from Jordan, a member of one of our Karen (Burmese ethnic group) congregations with an update from Sharing Hope, the organisation he co-founded, that works on the Thai Burma (Myanmar) border.

I am praying that as you read these stories, you would not only be aware of the wonderful ministries around our union but would also be inspired with ideas to continue being and sharing the good news of Jesus with those you interact with.

Enjoy reading and God bless,

Daniel



Rev Daniel Bullock

Got a story to share?

Send through your story and photos

(with appropriate permission from people in the photo)

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WELCOME	2
FEATURE: LONELINESS	3
A Great Space to Connect	4
NCR Playgroup adopts an aged-care facility.....	5
Empowered Faith Communities – Oakleigh Baptist Church & Fusion.....	7
Do you share Ken’s heart for the homeless?.....	8
EASTER WRAP UP	10
A Superb Depiction of the Wondrous Cross.....	10
Powerful Love of God on Display	11
A reflective visual journey at Easter	12
LEADERSHIP	14
Nourishment With Hope To Restore	14
Members Dinner Wrap Up.....	16
GENERATIONS.....	18
A Little Postcard Goes A Long Way.....	18
Colour and Faith on Display at Epic Youth Camp	19
Roundup Camps Buzzing with Action.....	20
Deakin Uni Worker Appointed to Lead Red Frogs on Campus	21
MISSION	22
Jordan’s New Life, New Journey.....	22
Bringing Hope	23
“Hub And Spoke” Approach To Rural Campus Planting	24
An Unexpected Joy.....	25
24 kids decide to follow Jesus at Werribee Easter Sunday Services	26
RESOURCES	27
Together on Mission Podcast	27
Welcome to Ministry.....	27
PASTORAL NEWS.....	28
BUV celebrates Milestone Ordination Anniversaries	29
PARTNERSHIP NEWS	30
Stand with Myanmar Campaign.....	30
AGENCY NEWS	31
Better World Magazine	31
Baptist World Aid Celebrates 50 Years of child sponsorship	31
Baptist Camping Farewells Geoff	31
UPCOMING EVENTS	32
PRAYER CALENDAR.....	34

We would like to thank our BUV Editorial Consultant, Naomi Kollmorgen, for assisting with collating, interviewing and writing stories.

FEATURE: LONELINESS



How can our churches have an impact on the loneliness epidemic, creating places of welcome and inclusion

One of the issues that is becoming increasingly relevant in our communities is the issue of loneliness. Loneliness has serious consequences for both individuals and the wider society. On an individual level,

it has been found by many studies to be associated with mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation. Worldwide, initiatives have been launched to address “the epidemic of loneliness.” In Australia, Ending Loneliness Together (ELT) is our new national organisation working to raise awareness and reduce the negative effects of chronic loneliness and social isolation in our communities through evidence-based interventions and advocacy. One of the recommendations for the way forward from Australia’s inaugural State of the Nation Report on Social Connection is to empower communities to help each other.

“It’s up to all Australians to address loneliness and encourage meaningful social connections. We can create safe environments in our homes, workplaces, and communities by equipping the community (individuals, workplaces, schools, and neighbourhoods) with the skills to recognise the signs of loneliness and to respond appropriately and safely. This will allow Australians to get the help they need.”

The BUV has been discussing this year through our Consultation Forums and at our May’s Members Dinner, how our churches can have an impact on the loneliness epidemic, creating places of welcome and inclusion.

Following is just a small selection of the activities being undertaken by many Baptist churches in Victoria, to address community loneliness.



ALMOST 1 IN 3 AUSTRALIANS FEEL LONELY



1 IN 6 AUSTRALIANS ARE EXPERIENCING SEVERE LONELINESS

How often do people feel lonely?



Source:

A Great Space to Connect

Just a simple space where people can share a hobby or a free hot drink can bring vital connections to combat loneliness, as Renew Wellbeing leader and NewHope Baptist Church Associate Pastor Sally Agostino has found.

Sally, whilst in her previous role, was involved in the setup of Renew Monte, pictured here and on front cover (located in the Montmorency shopping strip in north-east metro Melbourne), which is one of three Baptist-run Renew Wellbeing spaces in Victoria. She started the space after a visit to the UK to see the concept in action. Renew Wellbeing UK helps churches open places of welcome and inclusion in support of emotional and mental health.

“I shared the idea with my local ecumenical group, and they were excited about it. The concept is not rocket science. We do have a psychologist volunteering at times, but really all we want is companionship. You might find there's people in the community who are lonely, or are in and out of psychologists' appointments, or retirees, or young people who are studying uni online. It could be for any number of reasons. People need a space to be, and there are so few of those around. Loneliness is just becoming increasingly prevalent in society.”

Renew Monte is run by several churches, three of which are Baptist. Four volunteer hosts per day spend time with those who come along. “The expectation is, you want people to be volunteering knowing that there's very little they have to do, but they need to do it for a long time.”

A quiet prayer space is available for use anytime,



and people are invited there for shared prayer times each session. While the space is easy to run, some challenges included starting rosters across the different churches and learning the appropriate risk assessments, but the UK training videos helped.

Another Renew Wellbeing space, run by Brunswick Baptist Church Associate Pastor Jenn Garavito Alarcon for the Latin and Spanish communities, is using a book to foster connections amongst people. “We ask the group to reflect on the book, and people bring their own understanding of God and what they are doing to nurture their spirituality.”

Click here to watch the video Renew Wellbeing helps churches open spaces of welcome and inclusion where its ok not to be ok.



She said loneliness was common amongst immigrants who “don’t speak the language, and many don’t have friends”, so the Renew group members had expressed gratefulness for the “welcoming and safe space” to share stories, vulnerability and values. “This is a very diverse group but, despite those differences, we are finding unity which is that expression of kindness, of love, of empathy for one another. That really moves my heart.”

Sydenham Pastor Catherine Ottavi started a Renew Wellbeing space on May 2, to provide a place where those who are struggling with loneliness or grief can connect and feel supported. “Community is so beneficial. My heart is that they find community and socialise – to know they can talk to someone and share. We have a prayer space where they can see how Christians work through our hardships too, how we deal with some of our brokenness and struggles as we

take it to God in prayer.”

A dozen people have started attending already on Thursday afternoons, but Catherine hopes to add another session per week, plus Saturdays to accommodate those who work on weekdays. A main attraction is the table tennis table, plus areas for jigsaw puzzles, colouring in and chatting.

“Our space isn’t on a main road so it’s harder for people to walk in off the street, but over time we are hoping they come through being invited by others who have joined the group, and through our relationships with local health providers.”

If you are interested in starting a Renew space at your church, you can find more information at renewwellbeing.org.uk. Or feel free to visit or follow up with one of the Pastors or churches mentioned above.

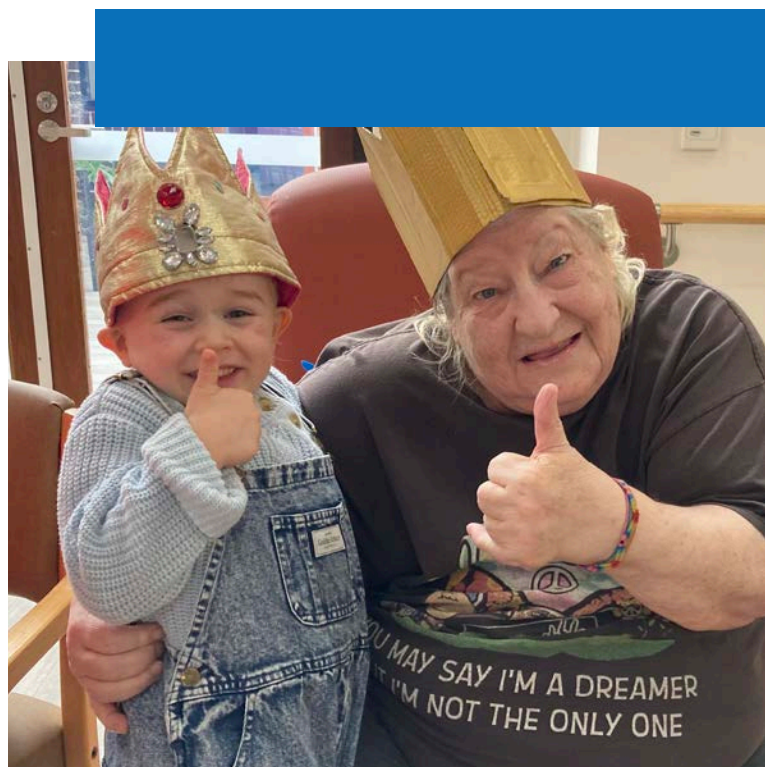
NCR Playgroup adopts an aged-care facility

Every week, residents at Lionsbrae Aged Care in Ringwood East look forward to the smiles and antics of little children who attend an interactive musical playgroup at the facility, organised by New Community Church Ringwood (NCR).

The free playgroup joins with the elderly and the residents with a disability to sing songs and nursery rhymes and enjoy a morning tea provided by Lionsbrae.

NCR Community Engagement Pastor Bronwyn Arnott said the playgroup members sit in a circle while the residents sit in chairs around the outside, as the children sing and dance, using percussion instruments and props as part of the fun.

“Everyone starts interacting as we sing our songs in each session – we might do a song with scarves, and we’ll encourage the children to pick up one for yourself and one for the resident near you, and then after the song we tell them to make sure they collect the scarves from the residents. They just love watching the kids play. During morning tea, parents who have a baby will often sit near a resident allowing them to see their baby, and the parents and grandparents make a real effort to chat to the people around them.”



Staff at Lionsbrae told Bronwyn the event was a highlight of the week for many residents.

“It has been a huge success – the residents, families and our team love it. They’ve watched babies grow up as we’ve had about four babies in the group and some of



them are just now starting to walk, so they get to see the beautiful growth of children in the group.”

Bronwyn said Lionsbrae staff were very keen to welcome the playgroup into the facility as a fun way for residents to interact with people of all ages.

“On our first week, we were due to start at 9.30am and by 9.20am, the Lionsbrae staff had about 25 residents that had been showered, dressed, breakfasted and medicated and were sitting in the open area ready for us to start! We have built up a lovely relationship with the staff. Anyone who walks past dances and sings, joining in enthusiastically. The centre and staff are incredibly supportive and often say it’s the highlight of the week seeing littlies and the joy they bring to the residents.”



“They’ve watched babies grow up ... some of them are just now starting to walk, so they get to see the beautiful growth of children in the group.”

Bronwyn said it would be wonderful to see many church playgroups “adopting” an aged-care facility to encourage residents, keep them connected and ward off loneliness.

“It’s surprisingly easy to do, if any churches are in a position to host a playgroup. It’s so much easier and cheaper than hiring a hall – for example with the staff kindly providing all the morning tea for us we don’t need to do any of that setup and cleanup. And at the same time, it has been the most delightful opportunity to get to know the residents and to enjoy music together. It ticks a lot of boxes in the amazing things that we can be part of within our community. We’ve

had the privilege of being asked to pray with someone during their last days; we’ve also been able to go to a couple of funerals and shown photos of someone’s loved-one enjoying the playgroup, to let them know it was wonderful to get to know their relative.”

The playgroup celebrates special events like Easter and Christmas, sharing the hope of Jesus and the reason for these celebrations. New Community also runs a regular church service for residents who are no longer physically able to attend church.

“These people have all the time in the world to sit and chat, and it is a joy to spend time with them and also to share with them about Jesus. In our playgroup, most of our songs are secular but we also sing a few Jesus songs. We explain that we come from a local church (many know us from the church service we run in their centre), we come in as friends of Jesus, and everyone is welcome.”

Bronwyn would love to provide information for anyone wanting to set up a similar playgroup – for details email bronwyn@ncr.org.au





Oakleigh Baptist Church tackles needs of local community

Oakleigh Baptist Church has been on a journey with Empowered Faith Communities (EFC) since early 2023, and we are seeing a fruitful impact on our church and local community.

Coming out of two years of lockdowns, we were faced with the reality that the landscape had changed - both inside and outside the church. Initially we focussed on understanding and uniting our church community; now vastly different to that which we had been two years prior.

We then looked to the community around us. Oakleigh BC has had a long-standing relationship with Fusion Youth & Community Organisation which continues today. Since re-opening, the church post COVID, and undertaking EFC training, we looked at how to address the growing needs in our local community including loneliness and have since introduced two new programs - a homeschooling program and a free community lunch. Volunteers from within the church are involved in these programs.

Our EFC journey and training has helped equip us to have meaningful and spiritual conversations with people who have joined these programs for practical reasons, mostly to spend time, enjoy fellowship and community.

The EFC model is based on the idea that being part of a caring, like-minded community is essential for human flourishing. Participants of EFC programs, are encouraged to share their strengths to benefit one another in a supportive, empowering and gospel-centred environment. EFC communities promote personal development and strong spiritual growth, moving away from a benevolence and charitable model to an empowered and ownership model, essential for sustainable long-term flourishing.

It is hard to find the words to describe the joy of watching a young mother of four children (with another on the way) come into relationship with our Lord Jesus. She was baptised, along with one of her twin daughters in early March this year. Both testimonies brought tears of joy and encouragement to the church family, visitors and many who joined from the programs. Her husband and whole family stood in the church as they dedicated another daughter to the Lord. Another of their children was among others baptised on Resurrection Sunday.

Alongside them, three others were also baptised. This included a gentleman who had been invited first to lunch, then to church, and then to know the Lord Jesus as Saviour.

We've been surprised at others who've come into our church family also. A young lady, visiting from Malaysia, wished to be baptised, (it wasn't safe to be baptised where she lives, nor in her birth nation of Iran.) Another young man found our resources and worship services online. After watching for a while, he reached out and also asked to be baptised as a witness to his faith in Jesus.

There are many other stories I could share, including those who are still on a road of discovery, each of them every bit as special. At the heart of each one, is a church committed to prayer, and the knowledge that we have hope and Good News for our neighbours. What we've learned through our EFC partnership has helped us have the confidence to take the first step, and then reflect on the journey as we go. It is a journey that has led, and we believe will continue to lead, to kingdom fruitfulness.

Rev Brad Rumble, Pastor Oakleigh Baptist Church



Do you share Ken's heart for the homeless?

A love for people, and a general habit of chatting with those who are homeless, prompted Croydon Hills Baptist Church member Ken Weller to join Maroondah Winter Shelter as a volunteer when it began in 2018.

Ken was drawn to the program's goals of providing shelter, food and honour to the homeless in his local area, at a time of year when freezing temperatures can add to the discouraging circumstances in which people sometimes find themselves.

"Anyone with two ears and eyes and a mouth can play an important part in the Winter Shelter program – that's all you need to be a helpful volunteer! I've found that most of the guys who come to stay want to share what's going on in their lives, but they just need someone to spend time with them and listen to their story, and to love them the way they are."



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Seven churches in Maroondah participate each year in Winter Shelter by providing overnight accommodation to males aged over 18 years. It runs from June 1 until August 31 – around 12 weeks. Potential clients are assessed and referred to the program by professionals from local community support service organisations, Uniting Ringwood, and Wellways.

Last year, the shelter program across Maroondah provided a bed 557 times to a total of 37 men – some staying a night or two, and some for the whole program.

To make this happen, it took 327 volunteers who did a range of jobs: cooking, washing, setting up beds, driving buses, spending time with clients to make them feel safe and comfortable, and more. There is always a great need for more volunteers, and people can lend a hand for as many hours as they like.

In 2023 several homeless

men secured jobs, and some found long-term accommodation during their time with Winter Shelter. A local dentist provided free care to a dozen men, worth hundreds of dollars.

Ken said he has met some amazing people – both clientele and volunteers – during his work at the Shelter. “This is an absolutely awesome program. It’s a very encouraging environment with all the volunteers and the clients. People look out for each other and there’s always a bit of banter or a joke – never at anyone’s expense, but we have a lot of fun.”

He said training is key for new volunteers because it enables them to see how the program runs, the protocols involved, and gives a chance to question those who have volunteered before. “Before Winter Shelter first started, I was slightly hesitant wondering what type of blokes we would be spending the night with – I didn’t have much idea of what the program would

be like. Knowing the process now, I have no hesitation about being a volunteer due to the professionals who support the program, the quality of training, and the expectations we have on staff and on the guys that come along.”

Ken continues to catch up with some of the homeless men to have a chat, check on their wellbeing and offer further assistance if needed.

For information on Winter Shelter or to sign up, visit wintershelter.org.au/volunteer. Ken is happy to talk with potential volunteers on what the program is like – email kenweller007@gmail.com



EASTER WRAP UP



A Superb Depiction of the Wondrous Cross

An estimated 2000 people gathered in Rosalind Park, Bendigo on Good Friday to see a live theatrical performance of the trial, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Way of the Cross was produced through the commitment of many churches throughout the City of Bendigo working together, including Bendigo Baptist Church (BBC). The production was a highlight of the Bendigo Easter Festival.

Around 40-50 people were involved in the production, (including committee members, directors, cast and backstage crew), and organised the performance in just eight weeks under the expert guidance of director Julie Lovell, from BBC.

The first scene depicted Jesus washing his disciples' feet, with the retelling covering the Passover meal, the garden at Gethsemane, Jesus' arrest and trial, followed by Calvary and the resurrection. It aimed to present an historically-accurate story that portrayed the depths of

love God gave to humankind and His message of hope for the world.

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The church felt it was an incredible opportunity to spread the gospel as part of the massive four-day festival

Publicity manager Judienne Santos said church volunteers were on hand to answer people's questions as they responded to the story.

“We made sure people had a way to talk to someone if they had question about who Jesus was, or the story. It presented a clear message and we provided ways for people to connect and explore further. The crowd seemed very receptive to what

they were hearing and seeing. Their applause at the end was welcoming and warm, and feedback that the committee received was very positive. Many churches in Bendigo were represented in the crowd and I know there were people who didn't have faith there as well who responded positively. For example, we heard of someone sitting next to a family who didn't have faith but the story made sense to them, and they are thinking of coming along to church because of what they had seen. There were also some great conversations

generated in response to the show.”

The church was excited to be approached by the City of Bendigo initially, to perform the show every year – which The Way of The Cross committee hopes to do despite the estimated production costs being very high. Cost for this years production we covered through donations and the support of volunteers and local churches. The committee has also begun raising the funds for 2025, as some funds must be available in advance in order to commit to doing the production.

“It’s not often that you get a secular council asking churches to represent at a major event. The church felt it was an incredible opportunity to spread the gospel as part of the massive four-day festival – it’s huge, with people from all the surrounding towns coming to Bendigo. We would be remiss to not take up this opportunity to spread the gospel. We’re very blessed to have a lot of volunteers from many churches involved. Some things are donated but we’re never sure each year what will be donated and what volunteer efforts will be offered. We are always looking for Christian people to form the cast and crew – people are very welcome to put up their hand to audition, especially those who enjoy acting. Jesus had 12 disciples and it’s sometimes hard to find men! We rehearse one night a



week, with a few intensive rehearsals in the leadup to performances as well.”

For more details on the Way of The Cross cast, crew or donations, visit thewayofthecross-bendigo.com or the Facebook page. If your church is interested in how to produce The Way of the Cross in your City, contact Julie Lovell at Julie.lovell@westnet.com.au



A moving presentation by Crossway Baptist Church entitled, Greater Love, brought close to home the sacrificial and all-conquering love of Christ on Good Friday and the preceding Thursday.

Presenters sang reflective songs, danced, shared testimonies and performed powerful dramatisations of bible stories.

Senior Pastor Dale Stephenson also shared a message about God’s incredible love for humankind and the hope extended to all through Jesus’ death and resurrection.

One person who attended said the presentation was “dramatic, clear, and I’m sure deeply touched the hearts of all who saw it”. Another said, “The presentation of the love of Jesus to all, despite our failings, is the greatest gift of all.”

A reflective visual journey at Easter



Artistic works put Christ in the spotlight

A thought-provoking exhibition at West Preston Baptist Church (WPBC) titled, **Stations of the Cross**, immersed visitors in a reflective visual journey through Christ's death and resurrection with support from a BUV and Baptcare community grant.

Around 160 people visited over four days leading up to Good Friday to view the artworks created by WPBC members.

The works were spread throughout a labyrinth that was set up over temporary flooring in the church, which encouraged attendees to take their time as they reflected on the meaning behind the pieces, from intricate drawings and live displays to collages and sculptures.

A booklet contextualised each artwork with a Bible passage, artist's statement and prayer. While the exhibition space was quiet and contemplative, people were invited to stay for a chat over a hot cross bun and a hot drink afterwards. A children's table with Easter craft activities was also provided.

Many visitors said that the exhibition provided a meaningful and creative way to connect with the Easter story. One said the "incredibly beautiful" artworks had left her "in awe of God's goodness"; while another person said, "The combination of labyrinth, art, verses, reflections and prayers, is very powerful".

Co-curator Vicki Leo, said the church had put on similar exhibitions before 2016. "There were a lot of people in

our congregation who hadn't experienced it before, and we have a few more artistic people in our congregation, so we thought we'd try organising it again. We were encouraged as people came in and walked around at their own pace, that they were reflecting on the crucifixion story and enjoying the creativity, thought and effort the artists had put into it."

The exhibition was curated by Vicki, Kerry Edwards and Faye Butler, and it was also an opportunity for many WPBC members to get involved by serving food and drinks, helping with setup and pack up, and welcoming visitors. The curators advertised with posters and flyers, street sign, social media and on 89.9 TheLight FM radio's community noticeboard.

Vicki said the church will consider running the event every two years and they had picked up several ideas for improvements for better inclusion, such as providing the booklet in large-print, audio or QR codes; making wider walkways for those who use movement aids; and improving lighting in the foyer to help with reading.

"Running it every two years leaves room for the church to host other types of Easter celebrations as well. It's important that we don't try to run too many things or too regularly to allow a rhythm that's sustainable for the congregation and the artists who are involved. We had a really positive response from the community, and this has given a lot of satisfaction for myself and the other curators!"

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...incredibly beautiful

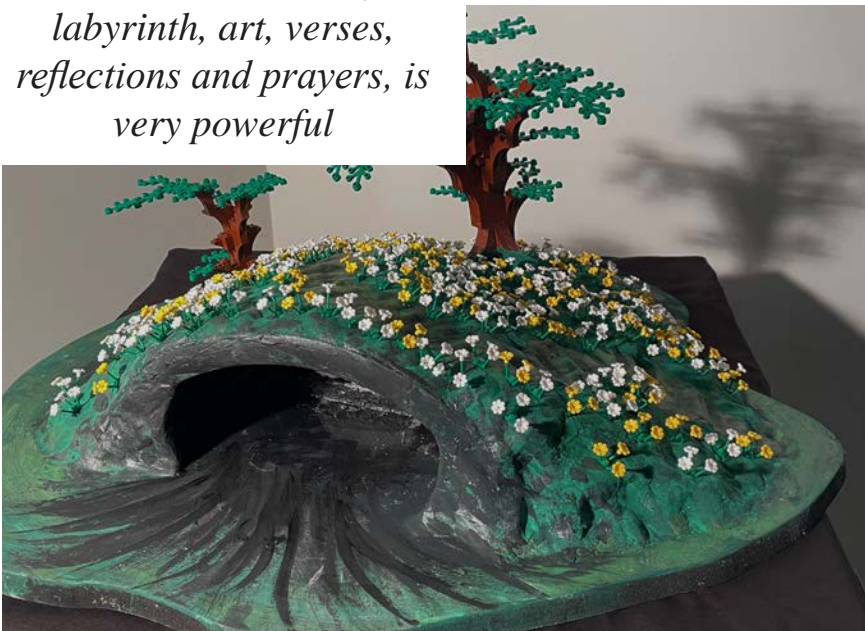


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... in awe of God's goodness

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Nourishment With Hope To Restore

Nourish is a day for pastors and spouses from Victorian Churches to receive input, connection and fellowship.

May Nourish was an uplifting time of connection and encouragement for pastors from around the state seeking to support each other and reflect on how God is at work in our midst. Our hardworking BUV pastors received an uplifting message with the themes of restoration and resilience.

BUV Director of Mission and Ministries, Rev Daniel Bullock, in his introduction of the theme, reminded pastors to regularly strengthen both their mindset and body for the pastoral journey because although it can bring challenges, issues and conflicts, there are also many opportunities for hopes and dreams to be realised.

“The journey is not just about the slog of the challenges and the process we are going through – we also get to look up, and it’s restorative and hope-filled! It is good to be with one another as we reflect on these aspects of our ministry.”

Daniel shared a time when he grew in dependence on God in new ways as he persevered through difficult times. He encouraged pastors to remember that God has control of tough situations and that “He loves His church”.

Keynote speaker, Senior Pastor of NewHope Baptist Church for nearly 30 years, Allan Demond, said that ministry moves through cycles or seasons – from easy and enjoyable to challenging and rewarding.

He reminded us that difficulties “can be moulded by God into shapes beautiful and unexpected” if we



seek to find God within our trials and live victoriously through them, in His strength.

In a session on strength for the journey, Allan spoke about watching out for God’s special blessings amongst the ups and downs of life; and in a session about hearing from God, he said it was important to look back on the Holy Spirit’s work over the long-term.

“There is always plenty of immediate feedback to sort through, but the Holy Spirit’s work is often on a slow-burn, a long trajectory, as you look back. Hold on! Stay in the game and pray about what feedback needs to stick and what to let go of... Remember that the voice of God is real and He wants to encourage you in your ministry. Watch for God rewiring you for a different way to do ministry as seasons change, rather than responding purely out of your past experiences. Each season is always different – that’s why we need to be held by God and to hear from Him.”

At Nourish, the BUV celebrated the significant



ordination anniversaries of many pastors: from 10 years right through to 70 years. Daniel congratulated these pastors and prayed that God would walk alongside them “on the hilltops and valleys”, and that their ministries would “continue until each one graduates in Your presence in heavenly realms.” (see page 29)

Lauren Pickering from Kew Baptist Church shared her testimony, encouraging us to minister out of humanity and present challenges “because that’s what God did for us through Jesus... It’s in our humanity that God loves and chooses us”.

Weimin Zhang of Balwyn Baptist Church led communion with thoughtfulness and godly reverence.

The day also held time for worship in song, reflection, discussions and prayer, plus updates from BUV Support Hub.

October Nourish will be held at Essendon Baptist Community Church on Friday October 18th.





Members Dinner Wrap Up

It was a packed house at Karralyka Centre in Ringwood, for the BUV Members Dinner in May, beginning with resounding worship led by Victorian Chin Baptist Church that seemed to lift the roof as Baptists from around Victoria joined in song together.

BUV Director of Mission and Ministry, Rev Daniel Bullock, welcomed in three new Constituent Churches (Australian Christian Baptist Church, Ebenezer Karen Baptist Church and Shepherd Centre Church) and three new Faith Communities (Cross Vision Church, Zo Baptist Church and Melton Bethel Baptist Church) and as is custom, provided updates on mergers and new campuses. Daniel also fondly farwelled several small congregations who have left the BUV for various reasons. Daniel also acknowledged the 12 people who are completing their ordination journey this year and will be ordained at a special service at Crossway Baptist Church on October 26th.

During the Assembly Meeting led by BUV Union Council Chair, Mick Turnbull, BUV members voted in favour of Rev Michael Riddell (Syndal Baptist Church) and Karen Naylor joining the Whitley College Council. Whitley College Council Chair, Rev Katrina Lambert provided an update on the search for a new principal for the College, and explained she hoped to bring a candidate to the October Members' Dinner. Debbie Uy provided an update of the audited financial results for 2023 and an overview of the budget for 2024.

Daniel outlined the 2023 Flourishing Churches Survey results which showed a 25% increase in the number of churches that participated. All churches increased in their "flourishing" rating over the past year, possibly due to a greater level of activity and enthusiasm following pandemic years plus improvements made to the survey. The highest-scoring elements were spirituality, congregational engagement and structure



and processes. Evangelism has been a focus for the last 2 years and it was good to see that, despite it still being a fairly small number of churches, more churches than the previous year rated themselves as flourishing in this area. Work continues and we hope to see this improve over future surveys. Daniel encouraged churches to participate in the 2024 Flourishing Church Survey in order to gauge their own church's health and share helpful insights.

Continuing on the theme of Evangelism and being and sharing the good news, a video about the Renew Wellbeing program that is running now in at least 3 churches around Victoria was shown. Two of the BUV's wonderful female pastors, Sally Agostino and Jenn Garavito, explained how they have gone about setting up Renew spaces and how much the community has appreciated it. Daniel then facilitated a panel discussion on some different forms of evangelism that churches are engaged in across the union.

Simon Fee of New Peninsula Community Caring talked about the Rosebud Empowered Faith Community which welcomes disadvantaged people, fosters belonging by encouraging them to participate, and nurtures their belief in Christ. Simon Young of Werribee Baptist Church spoke about a sudden growth in the number



of children attending the church, plus numerous baptisms and decisions to follow Christ, resulting in the need to add an extra service. Steven Tangbau of Victorian Christian Church has reached out to people of other faiths through sharing his testimony, with his church now mostly from former Hindu and Buddhist backgrounds. Dave Gillett of Epsom Community Church shared about noticing a growth in membership and deciding to plant a new church in the next suburb of Huntley last year, with 25 members moving across. Dave organises collaborative events with the two campuses each month and has seen growth by taking the step of faith to launch a new campus.

Later in the evening, discussion centered on the topics of loneliness in society, and supporting intercultural

relationships as discussed in the consultation forums earlier in the year. Churches are encouraged to continue to work on addressing these two issues with their congregations and communities.

As usual it was a great night of fellowship and connection, updates and input from members of assembly. We look forward to our next Members' Dinner which will be held on Friday 18th October at Hyatt Place in Essendon Fields. Rev Dr Elijah Brown, General Secretary and CEO of Baptist World Alliance will join us as special guest and keynote speaker.



A Little Postcard Goes A Long Way



During the week, the youth of Sale Baptist Church keep an eager eye on their mailboxes, hoping to receive one of the handwritten postcards of encouragement that their leaders regularly send.

At the end of each youth group event, during their debriefing session, the leaders write these notes as a fun and simple way to communicate their encouragement – things like acknowledging young people's actions, supporting the sick, or showing that they are thought of and missed.

Associate Pastor Lauren Pearce remembers the church sending postcards about 10 years ago when she was in the youth group, and she thought it would be fantastic to resume the idea.

"I still have some of my postcards stashed away that my youth leaders sent to me, and so do other youth leaders! It has huge impact potential. Sending mail isn't a new idea of course, but it actually is quite novel for this age group. We wanted a way to follow up the youth that was easy, very transparent and made them feel really cared for. This is a time-effective way to follow up that makes them feel really special."

Lauren and the team have been sending the postcards for around a term and already they are highly valued by the youth. "They all talk about it at youth group – about who received one this week, or wondering who will be next to get one. It's like they're waiting for Christmas! Snail mail is not something that's very common anymore, so it's exciting to receive."

The postcards have many benefits. They can be decorated in the youth group's logo or an image relating

to a recent major event which keeps church fresh in their minds. They are open and transparent for parents

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It's little things like this that make you feel like you're a part of something, and it is noticed when you're not there.

to read. Every person gets followed up over time. And postcards are inexpensive to make and send – Lauren designs them online and prints them out.

"We have a lot of youth from non-church backgrounds, whose families get to see the type of support and encouragement we give to young people. They get a sense of our church and the way we notice and care about their child. It's little things like this that make you feel like you're a part of something, and it is noticed when you're not there. Kids pin them up so they can read them or as a reminder of the great time they had on camp. They're in their hands, and in their spaces, reminding them that they belong."

It does take a bit of organisation – Lauren and the team keep a careful, up-to-date database with names, addresses and a record of who was away. She said this record-keeping is vital as this enables her small team to do a good job of caring for the large number of young people who attend.

"For the benefit that the youth receive, it's not a huge amount of time required. We do it because we love people. It's great to be able to tell people, 'I loved what you shared at youth group last night', or 'I love that you're a part of the family here, it was so good to see you', or 'You're so funny!' We show them and their families that we believe in them, and for a young person that's really significant."

Colour and Faith on Display at Epic Youth Camp



According to campers, the biggest highlights of Epic 2024, a Baptist youth camp held at Camp Wilkin Anglesea in the April school holidays, were the worship sessions, the Bible teaching, and the 'Colour Wars' where young people enjoyed splashing coloured chalk onto each other.

The event is run by Baptist Camping Victoria (BCV) and this year's theme was "The Gathering: Jesus full of Grace and Truth!" which was communicated by the presenters through both biblical and individual experience. Torquay Christian Fellowship Associate Pastor Michael Brew, focused on the father of Prodigal Son, who did the unthinkable, embracing and reinstating his son, even after he'd disowned his family and wished his dad harm.

OneHope Baptist Church's Geelong Youth Worker Jess Box shared her personal experiences as a follower of Jesus and taught campers that we cannot paint an accurate picture of Jesus with our lives while our eyes are fixed on the passions of this world.

"The analogy Jess created was very powerful and many youths re-examined their lives as the gentle presence of the Lord worked in hearts and minds," said BCV Ministry Manager, Fiona Simcoe.

Fiona spoke on Bartimaeus and Zacchaeus, who sought to "see" Jesus despite the crowd's opposition. "Jesus knew that both men desired to know him, and Jesus was not influenced by the opinion of the crowds but responded with grace and truth to both of them."

A highlight for the 12 leaders and 6 trainee leaders was to see the authenticity of relationships between the 53 youths, and their responses to Jesus. One camper accepted Christ as their Saviour, and a further three decided to be baptised – one during camp and two upon returning to their home church. Many youths rededicated their lives to follow Christ and more than 20 Bibles and new Christian Thrive Bible study tools were distributed throughout the week.

One camper said the leaders were "amazing, beautiful and God-gifted". "I'm just so grateful that I had the opportunity to spend a week with such awesome people. Thank you for the ongoing support and encouragement that each and every one of you provided to every single youth member that was there. You all are such kind people and I can truly see God working through you in many ways."

Another young person said they looked forward to Epic every year, particularly the worship – an opinion shared by many. Another said the teaching had encouraged reflection on relationships that had a negative impact on their lives.

Other program highlights included tribal wars; beach games; a "big day out", a creative painting workshop on the river; op shopping; a visit to the ice creamery; and a challenging beach walk.

"All of the leaders had incredible energy," Fiona said. "The youth were so keen to worship and spend time learning from the word of God."



Roundup Camps Buzzing with Action

Autumn Roundups at Mill Valley Ranch (MVR) saw 130 ranchers and 60 volunteers attend this much loved BCV site, enjoying the changing autumn weather.

“We have been known to say that Autumn Roundups are a mixture of summer and winter, and that was true this year. We had both sunny days enjoying the lake and cozy times around the fireplace in the barn,” reflected MVR Ministry Coordinator, Lloyd McLean.

The chapel speaker in the first week was Andrew Fox who focused on the theme of “Amazing”. He shared a variety of ways that people are created to be amazing by an amazing God, and about Easter being the most amazing event in history. In the second week, Hayley Meredith reminded campers that everyone has a story to share, and that God invites us to be a part of His story. She shared part of her own story, and how following God doesn’t always mean that everything is fixed but He promises to be with us in whatever we face.

“Across the holidays it was such a blessing to see at least 19 ranchers making a decision to follow Jesus – six of those for the first time. We were also privileged to be able to give away 32 Bibles to Ranchers who did not have one,” Lloyd said.

One rancher said: “Mill Valley has helped steer me back the pathway of Christ whenever I turn away! Also seeing everyone being there for one another during worship night, whether it was a friend or someone they’ve never spoken to before – it was really beautiful and it is clear to see that this is a camp that brings people together no matter their differences. I feel like Mill Valley has become my second home and I’m so grateful for the opportunity to experience this wonderful camp!”

Baptist Camping Victoria has multiple camping venues. To get in touch or find out more baptistcamping.com.au/information

Deakin Uni Worker Appointed to Lead Red Frogs on Campus

Every second Monday night the residents of Deakin University's Waurin Ponds campus get to munch on delicious pancakes while chatting with Grace Worldon of OneHope Baptist Church.

Grace, who has been a Young Adults Leader at OneHope for several years, was recently appointed as the church's Deakin University Worker to lead the Red Frogs team at the campus. She coordinates social nights to provide some entertainment for the students and to share faith, hope and fun with them.

"The main thing we do is the pancakes! It's a classic Red Frogs thing to do that the students always love. I try to branch out a bit as well, with things like nachos, slushy machines and all sorts of things. They love free food, and it's a really good way to engage them and keep it exciting for them. A lot of it is about building relationships with young people throughout the year. I've found that when we build relationships with one or two university students, they're often thinking about their own lives and what they'll do after uni, so you can have some deeper conversations and show them that you care."

The admin side of the role sees Grace gathering the food supplies, helping new Red Frogs volunteers to undergo induction and children's checks, and bringing the team together for a briefing and devotion before each event.

While the role is new to Grace, she is keen to try new things to further build relationships with uni residents – in early April, the team went bowling with 10 of the students and they enjoyed it so much that they decided to go for ice cream together afterwards.

"It was just casual. It naturally evolved and they were keen to hang around. They appreciated that connection outside that context of being in Red Frogs uniform – they saw we didn't have to do that but we're doing it because we care. I'd like to plan more events like that, such as a paint night where we do paintings and eat pancakes. The whole Red Frogs mantra is that we're safeguarding a generation, and that might be just having a chat with someone who's feeling lonely, or lending a helping



hand, and we're doing it out of love to show that they are loved. I think this role is just starting out and there is so much potential for it to grow. It would be great to see this happening across all different organisations such as workplaces and other universities. So many people don't know what can come from just a small thing. We sometimes hide away but if we use the things that are available to us, you never know what can happen."



Hopefully one day we could see some of those students coming over to the church and being involved in our community and seeking that lifestyle.

In the future, she would love to see further bridges built between the university and the church through her role. "Hopefully one day we could see some of those students coming over to the church and being involved in our community and seeking

that lifestyle. The more students see our young, fun and vibrant community, they will see that we're close, having a great time together and not drinking. They do recognise the positive difference in our community."

She said it was important for Christians to care about the people they meet and engage with them. "Sometimes within our church circles we can become isolated and insular towards what's within our circle. Doing even small things can help us break out of that mindset – you can ask someone to go get a coffee, or do an activity together, or anything. It's about being aware of the opportunities around us, and God can work through any of those things."



An Unexpected Joy

The pitter patter of little feet has been directed towards Port Campbell Baptist Church (PCBC) as several families recently started attending, which triggered the need for a new Sunday School and youth group.

The church suddenly went from having one child to about a dozen after one family returned from a long trip, and two more families joined PCBC when their own church closed down in Timboon, about 15 minutes' drive away.

Pastor James O'Brien said the young families had been an enormous blessing to the church as they have gotten to know the congregation. "It has certainly encouraged people at our church and given them a spring in their step! We're a small congregation of around 30-40 people and the little kids are really warm and friendly – they often don't sit with their parents, they'll go and sit with the older people and hold their hand or chat with them, or give them a hug during church. They have definitely livened up our services a lot, which has been really good."

James said young families sometimes mistakenly believe that they can't contribute much to the church community due to time constraints and caring for the family's needs, "but the reality is they make a really valuable contribution and are a huge blessing just by turning up and being an encouragement to others".

"The children certainly put a smile on people's faces each week. Their coming also invigorates other

ministries and can stir people's thoughts about what else we can be doing to reach out to the community, and to realise there's a hunger in the community that we wouldn't otherwise be aware of."

A PCBC member who previously organised Sunday School has resumed this role. The church has subscribed to an online resource platform and bought a smart TV to show Bible stories, which has been "an amazing resource that entertains and captivates the kids". "Sunday School is run most weeks, but we regularly run a different type of service such as a café church, and on those weeks we keep the kids in church so they can be involved."

The new youth group began in February, led by parents of young people plus either

Pastor James or Jo Moncrieff, the church deacon. It runs on Friday nights during the school term and an average of 8-10 young people attend, including several friends invited from outside the church.

James reflected "That led to another discovery about this church, that in the 1980s they had a really vibrant youth group here. It stoked some memories among some people that I work with who said they remember the youth group and used to attend. They really used to enjoy it and thought it was a great church and a great youth group, but over time they've drifted away for whatever reason. It has been a great encouragement to me as a pastor because I've realised the church has more connection to the community than I realised."

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The children certainly put a smile on people's faces each week. Their coming also invigorates other ministries and can stir people's thoughts about what else we can be doing to reach out to the community,



24 kids decide to follow Jesus at Werribee Easter Sunday Services

A 40% increase in attendance so far this year at Werribee Baptist Kids Church (WBCKids) has been a leading factor in the church's recent move to 2 morning services.

In 2023 WBCKids was averaging 88 kids each Sunday and already this year the programme is seeing on average, 135 children attend each week with an Easter spike of 177. The WBCKids leaders and team are passionate and have been working hard on delivering quality, active and engaging programs while building relationships with both kids and their families.

Easter was an exciting time for the whole of Werribee Baptist Church, with the church hosting the Wyndham Combined Churches Good Friday services with around 1500 attendees across 2 services.

At their own Easter Sunday services, the church had nearly 1000 people through the campus, including some adult salvation decisions and 5 baptisms with video testimonies.

The WBCKids programme also had an amazing Easter Sunday with a children-oriented Easter message, including fun acting and props that told the story of Jesus' sacrifice in ways the children could understand. This was deliberately followed by a call to salvation



The WBCKids leaders and team are passionate and have been working hard on delivering quality, active and engaging programs while building relationships with both kids and their families.

and individual prayer with children as they responded, resulting in 24 kids deciding to follow Jesus.

Since Easter, the WBCKids team have been following up with the children's parents and families and working to deliver resources and guidance on next steps for them and their children, including information on baptism for some. The WBCKids Team are excited and prayerful about what's next.

The Church leaders as a whole, pray that the adults, children and their families will be encouraged by the faith steps both the adults and kids have taken and the expressions of God's love they will spread into their various school, sport and work communities. In the meantime WBC will continue current local outreach programs which are helping those who need it most right now.

WBC is thankful for all God is doing for His Church in Wyndham! With the recent growth, WBC can only point to God and what He appears to be doing in this church.

Simon Young, WBC Communications Director, says 'We are simply along for the ride and doing our best for Him.'



Jordan's New Life, New Journey

“It didn’t matter who you were, or where you were, the Tatmataw (Myanmar military) would target you,” said Jordan Pe, survivor of military attacks in Myanmar/Burma and co-founder of the aid organisation, Sharing Hope.

Jordan spoke at a business breakfast in May about his experiences and those of so many of his people, the Karen ethnic people group, as they were forced to flee from their burning villages by the Burmese military. His story resonates with this year’s Refugee Week theme of Finding Freedom: Family, which acknowledges the profound journey of resilience, strength, and unity that defines the refugee experience.

“The Karen live in fear every day,” Jordan shared. “My family had to leave Burma (Myanmar) because all the time the shells and mortar would fall close to our village. We could no longer stay because of the attacks. In 1984 we fled to Thailand when I was 9 years old, to a refugee camp.”

Several years later, he moved to Australia through a sponsorship that enabled him to secure a visa. He was grateful to have a “new life, new journey”, but then he experienced a different set of challenges as a refugee.

“Everything changed because of the freedom – you know that you are safe. You have somebody who can give you a secure life. But, there are challenges with that journey as well. You think about your parents and family back home at times, and your people who are still struggling, moving around and fleeing from the war that is still happening. In the meantime, you have to start learning the language, trying to get into education

and jobs. Pretty much my bag with a couple of (items of) clothing, that’s all I had. I didn’t know anyone.”

Jordan’s sponsors helped him to settle into Australian life but it took many years for him to build connections with other Karen people. As more Karen came to Australia he helped to set up communities, churches and organisations to support them as they sought to carry on their cultural heritage, and to support those back in their homeland.

He co-founded Sharing Hope in 2010 to help other Karen either living in camps or internally displaced on the Thai-Myanmar border by providing things like food, medicine and education as they hope for democracy to return to Myanmar.

“I love the name Sharing Hope – hope is my favourite word. The Karen don’t have much to carry with them, but they have life. As we share with them, it gives them hope and a future.”

Now, when Jordan welcomes new refugees to Australia, he is glad that there are many organisations that can help them on their new journey. “The first thing we do is try to encourage them and make sure they have support. We make sure to ask whether they need any help, and seek ways on how we can further support them, despite their language barriers. Overall, for those who may feel alone or isolated, we want to create a church and community where everyone can feel included and accepted, when starting a new life Australia.”

Jordan hopes one day the Karen people will be “free to move around their country, be reunited with their loved ones, and not live in fear”.



Bringing Hope

At the recent Sharing Hope business breakfast, Rev Tim Costello AO and Sharing Hope co-founder Kathy Thompson of Croydon Hills Baptist Church spoke about the struggles faced by the Karen people.

Sharing Hope has partnered with camps of internally displaced people along the Thai-Myanmar border for the past 14 years. It is currently fundraising \$35,000 for projects in the camp at Ee Htu Hta and village of Ta Oo Hta where there is no electricity or running water.

Rev Costello said the most fundamental aspect of humanity was to empathise with others, imagining what it would be like if it were our own families being attacked. “We are all invited to one table, we are all made in God’s image. Sharing Hope is a Christian mission at its best.”

He challenged people to work alongside the Karen to give them “the rights that we would want for our own children”. He said the poorest Australian was richer than the richest Karen refugee, and he commended Sharing Hope for its work in supporting all three stages of aid development: to keep children alive until the age of 5, to give them an education, and to help them find ways to make a living.

Kathy, who has visited the border camps regularly over the past 14 years, said the devastation she saw during

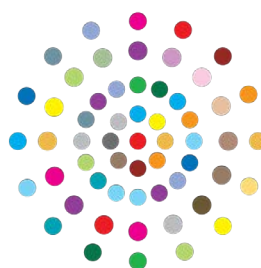
her visit in February was among the worst she has witnessed.

“There is such a fear and despair amongst them that I’ve never heard before elsewhere. Things are really tough. Where is their hope? We saw some of them carrying on with their school day while hearing bombs going off in the surrounding areas. Can you imagine that happening in Australia, during exams?”

At times, she could see old Karen villages across the river, burned and desolate – their homeland of 1500 years, within sight but far from livable. Each time residents had tried to rebuild housing or replant life-saving crops, they would be destroyed by the military.

Kathy said there were between 750,000 and 1 million internally displaced people living along the Thai-Myanmar border.

Visit sharinghope.org.au for more information.



Refugee Week

Coordinated by
Refugee Council of Australia



“Hub And Spoke” Approach To Rural Campus Planting

An exciting launch of Cheshunt Baptist Church (CBC), a new campus for Wangaratta Baptist Church (WBC), took place at the end of March thanks to a partnership between Cheshunt locals and WBC. Around 10-15 locals plus 10 WBC members attended the first service and enjoyed lunch together afterwards.

Several Cheshunt residents had been meeting regularly for bible studies but, after prayer and discussions with WBC members, WBC adopted the Cheshunt congregation as a campus. The main campus in Wangaratta will provide music, preaching assistance and leadership support so that the Cheshunt campus can hold church services in its neighbourhood hall.

WBC Pastor Aaron Wardle said discussions about a partnership had started last year. “It seemed like a very good fit for us with our vision to bring hope – not just to Wangaratta, but to the north-east of Victoria. Cheshunt is a small town of around 200 people, so to have 10-15 locals attend the first service was fantastic. Those who came along said it was really encouraging.”

Going forward, there will be two services a month at Cheshunt Hall with a recorded sermon from WBC on the second Sunday of the month and a live preacher on the fourth Sunday. “We’ll send a few people up to encourage and support them, some people to provide live music and speakers as needed – which is great training for some of our young preachers as well.” For the other two weeks of the month, locals can attend a

nearby Anglican church service held on the first Sunday and, on the third Sunday, they are encouraged to attend WBC which is a 45-minute drive away.

Aaron said this type of church planting model would work well in rural settings, with a “healthy strong central hub” that can send people out to areas that don’t have a church meeting place close by. “It’s a lot more effective to have one central campus because you’re not duplicating everything and you’re still fairly centralised. That’s where things are going for us. It’s probably something we’ll see more of as a movement as well. I must admit, discussions started with Cheshunt a lot earlier than when I thought we’d start doing church-planting, but it was a very good fit. I do believe the future for us will be more campuses in Victoria’s north-east – I think that’s where God wants us to go, but everything is in God’s timing.”

WBC is also set to embark on a building program for a 250-seat auditorium that will create room for the expanding congregation, which has almost tripled in the past five years from an average of around 40 people at Sunday services to around 110. Many of these travel from surrounding areas to attend.

“Our current building gets squishy. One of our values is that everyone can belong, so therefore we need a space where everyone can fit! We’ve got to expand so that we can continue to grow, so that we can send. If you’re full you stop growing!”

RESOURCES



BUV together *on mission* PODCAST



Part 1 Ep 1-5: Hope with Rev Daniel Bullock and Rev Associate Professor Darrell Jackson

Part 2 Ep 6-10: Made in God's Image with Rev Daniel Bullock and Rev Jude Waldron

Part 3 Episode 11-15: Confidence in the Gospel with Rev Daniel Bullock and Jenn Garavito Alarcon, Rev Fred Mugambi, Rev Robyn Song, Khamkhuai Hatzaw, Khoi Doan

Part 4 Episode 16-20: God of all circumstances with Rev Daniel Bullock and Troy Arnott ** Released late July/early August **

LISTEN NOW THROUGH SPOTIFY, APPLE PODCASTS, YOUTUBE OR YOUR PREFERRED PODCAST PLATFORM



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WELCOME

TO MINISTRY

WITH KIM & ADAM

EP1: Welcome to Ministry

EP2: Job Descriptions
- What do you actually do

EP3: Keeping Track
- Vision, Budgets and Reporting

EP4: Meetings that Matter
- Shaping Culture and building Team

EP5: Spirituality Healthy
- self awareness, leadership & care



A BUV GENERATIONS NETWORK PODCAST

PASTORAL NEWS



Pst Sandro Schietroma inducted at Wonthaggi



Pst Steve Brown inducted as Lead Pastor at Torquay Christian Fellowship



Pst Sally Agostino inducted as Associate Pastor at NewHope



New BUV Pastors attending the BUV Support Hub Connect Day



Pst Dean Rompis inducted as Senior Pastor at Templestowe Baptist



Rev Chris Barnden farewell from the Regional Pastor at the BUV Support Hub

BUV celebrates Milestone Ordination Anniversaries



Ten Experienced in Ministry Pastors were invited to Nourish this year to be celebrated for reaching milestone ordination anniversaries.

Each May at Nourish, the BUV recognises decade anniversaries of ordination for its Pastors from 10 years right through to, in this case, not only 50 years of ordination, but 55, 60, and this year 70 years!

Rev Daniel Bullock prayed for each one of the Pastors represented on stage, congratulated them for their amazing years of service and ministry within the BUV (and in some cases beyond), and presented them with a Celebration of Ordination certificate.

Congratulations to the following Pastors for reaching these milestones:

70 Years

- Rev Peter Stockman

55 years

- Rev Ekkehart Friesen
- Rev Geoff Ryall

40 years

- Rev Howard Wilkins
- Rev David O'Brien
- Rev Paul Craig
- Rev Laurie Barton
- Rev Gordon Symons

60 Years

- Rev Ron Stevens

50 years

- Rev Geoff Rowse



Rev David O'Brien



Rev Ekkehart Friesen



Rev Geoff Ryall



Rev Geoff Rowse



Rev Gordon Symons



Rev Howard Wilkins



Rev Laurie Barton



Rev Paul Craig



Rev Peter Stockman

PARTNERSHIP NEWS



Stand with Myanmar

Australian Baptists are partnering together to support our brothers and sisters in Myanmar who are experiencing atrocities every day at the hand of the military.

We invite you and your church to join with Baptist churches around Australia in our Stand with Myanmar campaign by holding a Myanmar Sunday church service on September 15th (or on a Sunday between Aug 15-Sept 15).

Despite disappearing from our daily news reports, the situation has worsened in recent months and there are approximately 2,650,000 internally displaced people living or hiding in the jungle in Myanmar and a further 1,133,000 seeking asylum or in refugee camps in the countries surrounding Myanmar, according to the UN. Funds are desperately needed for education, medical supplies, food, water and clothing.

The ethnic people groups of Myanmar are largely Baptist and here in Australia we have over 75 Baptist congregations originating from Myanmar, 56 of which are within our Baptist Union of Victoria.

Please consider joining with us by adding this important event to your church calendar for Aug - Sept 2024, as we stand with our brothers and sisters from Myanmar.

ACT, PRAY and GIVE resources will be available, along with videos and other church service ideas.

Keep an eye out for more information which will be emailed to all churches, as well as on the BUV social media and BUV website in early July with some wonderful resources and ideas for how to hold your Myanmar Sunday service.

From mid July search www.standwithmyanmar.com.au to get involved.

A National Joint Project initiative



Baptist World Aid Celebrates 50 Years of child sponsorship

Baptist World Aid's Child Sponsorship program began in 1974 after CEO, Rev. Alan Prior discovered a community of orphaned children in India being cared for by families from the local Baptist church. When Baptist World Aid began supporting these children with housing and education, sponsors enthusiastically signed up and thousands of children received shelter, food and education that changed their lives.

This year, we celebrate all God's done through 50 years of Child Sponsorship. Today, Baptist World Aid works in partnership with organisations around the world, like SAO Uganda, to run Child and Youth programs available to all the children and youth in a community.

In Uganda, Kennedy was one of the first children to be sponsored. He went on to gain two master's degrees, is working on a Doctorate of Ministry, and is Vice-President of the SAO Uganda Board. Like many sponsorship programs around the world, SAO Uganda's emphasis has moved away from individual child welfare.

'Our approach now says, "We can help communities to care for their children,"' Kennedy said. 'Rather than helping one or two children from a family, now you're



empowering the family, economically and socially, to care for their own.'

Baptist World Aid has always asserted the indisputable value and dignity of all children. But over the decades, we've learned that young people, when equipped, can transform their communities. With young people emerging as leaders, and generous supporters investing in our Partner's programs, imagine what God can do over the next 50.

For more information on 50 years of Child sponsorship visit <https://bwaa.co/50-years-sponsorship>

Read other articles like this in the latest edition of [Better World Magazine](#)

Baptist Camping Farewells Geoff

Recently Geoff Caldwell has passed on the baton of Director of Camping after 28 years of ministry and service to Baptist Camping Victoria (BCV).

Geoff started at BCV in 1996 when it had one site with seven staff members and a modest revenue of \$235,000. But under Geoff's leadership, between 1996 and 2024, BCV Family and Ministry Camps have welcomed over 5,000 campers and trained more than 100 interns. Geoff also led the acquisition of Burnside, Halls Gap, and Mill Valley Ranch, ensuring throughout that the mission and ministry focus of BCV remained at the forefront. Through these years, BCV has also been recognised by industry for excellence.

In 2023 BCV's revenue was \$6.2 million, over 600 camps were held across 4 sites, with over 85 staff members. They hosted 27 ministry camps, and supported five alignment groups and through the years BCV has reinvested over \$15 million into their facilities. These numbers speak volumes about Geoff's dedication and vision.

But the impact of Geoff's leadership goes beyond numbers. He has not only helped kids to reach untapped potential but has also impacted countless lives, leading to the distribution of thousands of Bibles and to many to decisions for Jesus.

As Geoff and wife, Kendra conclude their ministry, we celebrate and thank them for their service and unwavering commitment to our churches, wider Baptist family and to the countless individuals and organisations who have experienced Baptist camping in Victoria.



UPCOMING EVENTS

MARRIAGE CELEBRANT TRAINING

The purpose of this training is to enable you to be well prepared to offer effective pastoral care and marriage preparation, lead meaningful wedding services and provide ethical and legally competent ministry as a marriage celebrant for the BUV, CCVT or CCCVaT.

This training day is for new celebrants and experienced celebrants who are in need of refresher training.

Date: Thursday 18 July, 2024

Time: 9:30am - 3:00pm

Where: Online via zoom

Cost: \$59.95

Register online: buv.com.au/events



Church Admin Workshop

Do you have questions about your church's administration, properties, finance, governance, insurance, professional standards and safe church responsibilities?

This one day workshop will give you an overview of these topics and will introduce you to key personnel at the BUV Support Hub that are available to assist you on an ongoing basis.

Date: Saturday 20 July, 2024

Time: 9:30am - 4:00pm (Registration from 9:15am)

Cost: Free

Where: BUV Support Hub Office, Camberwell
Morning Tea and Lunch will be provided

Register online: buv.com.au/events



We're excited to be joining together again as a state-wide BUV family in online prayer and praise via Zoom.

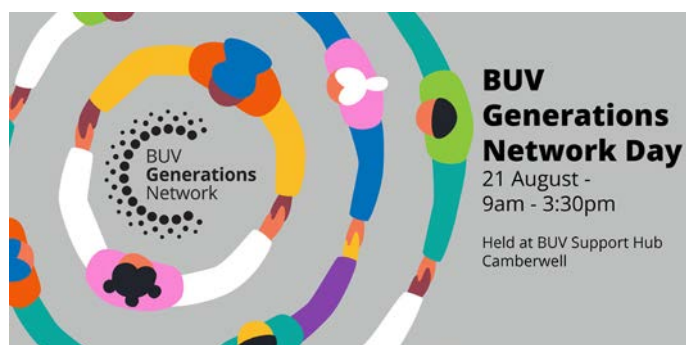
We would love as many people to join us as possible – If you are a Pastor, we'd love you to share these details with your congregation. You could also host a Zoom event at your church, as a couple of churches did at our last prayer meeting.

Date: Thursday 8 August, 2024

Time: 7:00pm

Where: Online via zoom

Register online: buv.com.au/events



Connecting with others, developing as a leader, investing in yourself and your ministry ... and a free lunch!

That's what you're in for at our second Generations Network Day for 2024!

Worship and word to start us off, followed by workshops and facilitated conversations to draw out the best reflections and ideas from your colleagues in the room

Get it on your calendar and register to join us. Open to Pastors and leaders in all Generations ministry in our Baptist family (kids, families, youth, young adults, etc).

Date: Wednesday 21 August, 2024

Time: 9:30am - 3:30pm (Registration from 9:15am)

Cost: Free

Where: BUV Support Hub Office, Camberwell
Morning Tea and Lunch will be provided

Register online: buv.com.au/events

PREPARE ENRICH

Do you want to help couples build more resilient relationships, preparing well for their marriage and /or enriching their marriage relationship? Prepare is a trusted relationship assessment and can help give couples skills that they need for a lifelong marriage.

Date: Monday 9 September, 2024

Time: 9:00am-4:00pm

Where: Crossway Baptist Church, 2 Vision Drive Burwood East 3151

Cost: \$150 * Plus booking fee. Includes a digital resource kit. Please bring your own device (eg. Tablet or Laptop)

Register online: buu.com.au/events



The Baptist Union of Victoria is committed to ensuring that our churches are safe places, particularly for children, youth and other vulnerable people, by providing training for leaders and volunteers who serve in the church's various ministries. Training opportunities are scheduled throughout the year:

- 25 July - Online via zoom
- 11 Aug - Hamilton
- 31 Aug - Online
- 16 Nov - Bacchus Marsh
- 23 Nov - Mandarin Workshop - Balwyn

Register online: buu.com.au/events

members DINNER

SAVE THE DATE

Twice a year, we gather together to pray and discern, vote and decide on business, governance and other matters integral to the life of the union of Baptist Churches in Victoria.

Date: Friday 18 October 2024

Time: 6:00pm-9:30pm

Where: Hyatt Place Melbourne Essendon Fields 1 English St, Essendon Fields VIC 3041



SAVE THE DATE

Nourish is a day for Pastors and their spouses from Victorian Baptist Churches to come together for fellowship, connection, encouragement and inspiration. We are excited that the very accomplished Rev Dr Elijah Brown, CEO General Secretary of our global Baptist movement, Baptist World Alliance will be our guest. Pastors, save the date watch out for more information and registration details in your BUV Bulletin and inbox in August and September.

Date: Friday 18 October 2024

Time: 9:00am-3:00pm

Where: Essendon Baptist Community Church 138 Buckley St Essendon 3040

BUV Ordination Service

SAVE THE DATE

The annual BUV Ordination will take place at 11am on Saturday October 28th at Crossway Baptist Church. You are invited to come and hear the testimonies of 12 pastors who will be ordained into the ministry of word, Sacrament, Pastoral Care and Mission by the Baptist Union of Victoria

Date: Saturday 28 October 2024

Time: 11am

Where: Crossway Baptist Church, 2 Vision Dr, Burwood East



The theme for the 23rd Baptist World Congress is "Living the Good News" with the anchor passage of Luke 4:18-19.

Over the week delegates will explore topics such as How do we live the good news in today's world? How can we effectively proclaim good news to the poor, freedom for the prisoners, and recovery of sight for the blind? How can we to set the oppressed free and proclaim the year of the Lord's favour? How can we work together to achieve this? What can we learn to take back to our own settings?

The event will inspire while learning together as we hear from our global Baptist family on these topics. The theme will be unpacked by keynote speakers, in our worship, in Bible studies, focus groups, and seminars. The children's and teenage tracks will follow the same themes so that families can chat together about how they have been impacted by what they have seen and heard.

Date: July 7-12 2025

Where: Brisbane

Cost: \$150 * Plus booking fee. Includes a digital resource kit. Please bring your own device (eg. Tablet or Laptop)

Register online: <https://bwabrisbane.com/>

JULY

2024 Prayer Calendar

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1 Essendon Baptist Community Church - Essendon Campus	2 Essendon Baptist Community Church - Newmarket Missional	3 Community Euroa Baptist Church	4 Faith Christian Community Church	5 Falam Baptist Church Melbourne Inc	6 Ferntree Gully Baptist Church
7 Follow Baptist Church	8 Footscray Baptist Church	9 Frankston Community Baptist Church - North Campus Frankston	10 Community Baptist Church - South Campus	11 Freeway Baptist Church	12 Friends First Church Inc	13 Geelong Korean Baptist Church
14 Glenroy Oak Park Baptist Church	15 Good News Ministry Church	16 Gospel Baptist Church Australia	17 Gospel Baptist Church Melbourne	18 Grace And Glory Church	19 Grace Baptist Church of Melbourne	20 Grace Baptist Community Church
21 Grace Romanian Baptist Church	22 GraceTree	23 Granite Community Church Inc	24 Grovedale Baptist Church	25 Growing Faith Church	26 GT Church	27 Hamilton Baptist Community Church
28 Hampton Park Baptist Church	29 Hawthorn West Baptist Church	30 Heartland Baptist Church	31 Heathmont Baptist Church			

Here at the Baptist Union Support Hub we believe that together, in prayer and listening to His voice, we can be the voice others need to hear through this new season.

We'd love you to join us in daily prayers for our churches, leaders, communities.

buv.com.au/pray