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# ANNUAL REPORT

A movement of local  
churches thriving in Jesus,  
transforming the world!



**Baptist Churches**  
of South Australia

# Our vision

We see a movement of local churches thriving in Jesus transforming the world.

Through our churches we see:



## **Worship**

People's lives being transformed as they receive and celebrate God's presence



## **Prayer**

People growing as a people of prayer



## **Community**

Where people matter, choose to belong and actively serve others as they receive and share God's love



## **Formation**

People's lives transformed so they become more like Jesus



## **Service**

People showing God's love as they generously serve others and prepare God's people for ministry



## **Mission**

Through God's reconciliation bringing justice, mercy, and proclamation, increasing numbers of people led to Jesus and leading others to Jesus

# Our objectives

In keeping with this purpose and vision the ministry team and ministries of Baptist Churches of SA will, with godly stewardship, support, encourage, influence and extend the life and mission of the Churches by:

- inspiring imagination
- advocating mission
- facilitating connections
- cultivating leaders
- resourcing churches





**We exist  
for Christ  
reconciling  
all things  
to God**

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## From the President



Rev Scott  
Cadman

Our churches continue to be places of Christian growth, worship, and serving in our local communities. While there is a sense that the worst of COVID-19 has passed, a number of churches are still facing the challenges that arose during this time. Still, we see signs of newness.

- We continue to explore the possibilities of church planting in both new and established parts of South Australia.
- The Church on Albert are now using the Mitcham church buildings and moving towards becoming a member of BCSA in their own right.
- The amalgamation between Mt Barker and Hills we hope will strengthen their ministry in this fast-growing part of the state.
- Exciting possibilities are being realised for Andrews Farm in purchasing land.
- Only a couple of years ago we had 12-14 churches looking for pastors. We are now down to two vacancies and may shortly have both those positions filled.

The amalgamation with Baptist Union of Northern Territory continues to progress towards its conclusion, we hope by the end of 2023. The process has involved a considerable amount of work, work undertaken in good spirit and with a willingness on both sides to move this forward. This will be a significant step for both BUNT and BCSA but one which we hope will strengthen our ministry together throughout central Australia.

One aspect of this merger will be an increase in the number of Indigenous churches within the new association. The recent commitment to and creation of the Aboriginal Ministry Fund is an important step in recognising, encouraging, and developing this part of our ministry together. We are excited about the possibilities.

Lastly, let me express my appreciation of the work done by our Assembly Board members. We have good people on this board who give freely and willingly of their time. On occasions we have to wrestle with complex and difficult situations and the commitment, integrity and openness of the board to find the best way ahead is always commendable. Thank you to them.

As we move on together in Christ may we find encouragement in these words from Ephesians 4:15-16...

*"... speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."*





## From the Director of Ministries



**Rev Dr  
Melinda  
Cousins**

In Revelation 1, King Jesus is pictured walking among seven lampstands, which represent the seven churches to whom the letter was sent, each one a light to its community. Each one of our seventy churches across SA is a light to its community – and King Jesus continues to walk among us. I'm so thankful to be part of this family of churches and to see and hear how Jesus is at work, being made known, and glorified.

It is a privilege to lead a team who work faithfully to support and champion our local churches. Once a month, we bring together everyone who works out of our office for an “all in” meeting. And it is a real joy to connect, share stories from across our movement, and spark ideas for ministry in its various shapes and forms. I thank God for all who serve our movement in these roles.

Our Assembly Board continues to serve diligently and with wisdom, often working on challenging issues behind the scenes. Over this year, much work has been done as we progress towards amalgamation with the Baptist Union of the Northern Territory. Assembly will vote in November to officially welcome churches of the NT into our membership and change our name to Baptist Churches South Australia and the Northern Territory, or BCSANT. We're excited about the opportunities this will bring for mutual learning, encouragement, and mission.

We've also welcomed a number of new churches in South Australia, as well as seen church plants, mergers, and revitalisations as we all seek to be the people of Christ in ways that serve our local communities best. We continue to pray and partner towards planting new churches so that more people might meet Jesus.

We want to model what Jesus-shaped reconciliation looks like in our context. We have sought to continue listening well to the voices of Aboriginal Christian leaders within our movement. We've established a Walking Together Taskforce to put this listening into practice, and are working on an Aboriginal Ministry Fund to support ministry and mission among Indigenous peoples.

We are also walking with our sisters and brothers from Myanmar who have joined our movement as worshipping communities here but continue to grieve the ongoing violence in their homeland. We stand with them for peace and justice.

We give thanks for all those God has raised up to serve in our local churches and beyond, as pastors, leaders, elders, ministry workers, administrators, and volunteers. Our team is always keen to connect with and support in any way we can. And we love to celebrate the stories of people coming to faith, being baptised, and sharing the good news of Jesus. Our vision remains to be a movement of local churches thriving in Jesus, transforming the world.

As you read this year's annual report, I pray that you will be excited to celebrate God's unfailing goodness to us, invited to see and explore your own place in our story, and challenged to seek with us what it looks like to follow Jesus into all He has for us next.

## Church Development

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**Rev Mark Sanders**

In my second full year in Church Development, it has been a privilege and a blessing to support, encourage, and assist churches, pastors and leadership teams in a myriad of ways including:

- Church consultation
- Church reviews
- Moderating for Churches (helping churches find pastors and connecting with pastors seeking pastoral positions in our movement)
- Fostering church planting
- Supporting church revitalisations
- Guest preaching and other teaching and training opportunities
- Conflict resolution
- Helping to lead and organise events that foster church health such as Pastors Gathering, 4D Conference, and Inspire Conference.

As I visit Churches and speak with pastors, I get to see the broader perspective of what God is doing across our movement. The exciting thing is there is much good news to share.

After several years that saw churches negatively impacted by COVID-19, the last twelve months have been characterised by a sense of renewed momentum and missional impact in many of our churches. I have heard testimony after testimony of people coming to church for the first time and of people coming to faith who have had little or no Christian background. Baptisms have occurred in record numbers, including in churches that have not had a baptism for years. There seems to be a growing openness to Christianity and a growing interest in Jesus in our Australian society that belies the narrative we hear so often. It is a time for us therefore to increase our prayers, our boldness, and our intentionality in sharing Jesus and making disciples. As this occurs, I look forward to continuing to support and serve our movement in this mission.

## Accredited Ministry Formation

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**Rev Mike Bartlett**



**Rev Dr Tony Ling**

Ministry Accreditation continues to be a place of learning, building relationships, and appreciating some of the many ways that God is at work in the churches of our movement. This past year has also seen some changes in personnel and processes!

Accredited Ministry Formation Training is designed to discern and affirm those called to lead in our churches. Those engaging in this process are supervised over a two-year period, learning, discerning, evaluating, and developing their knowledge, competency, and character in their local context, as well as shared learning and input from leaders across our movement.

James Foley, Cameron Buchanan, and David Shepherd completed this training in the past 12 months and have all been accredited at our recent assemblies. Nine others are currently engaged at various stages of the process.

The ongoing requirements for maintaining accreditation have continued to evolve in response to feedback from pastors as well as community expectations. This year has seen the implementation of Accreditation Currency, superseding the former three-year PDP cycle of continuing accreditation. This includes engaging in regular Professional Supervision and undertaking several professional development hours each year. Its roll-out will continue as pastors conclude their current cycle.

Recognised Pastor status is designed to provide affirmation and accountability for non-accredited people serving in pastoral roles in our churches. It is an opportunity for those serving in ministry-specific and/or part time pastoral roles in our churches to connect with our wider movement, learn about our story and values, and be equipped and encouraged for their roles. Currently we support over 30 Recognised Pastors.

This year we farewelled Rev Mike Bartlett from the role of Ministry Accreditation Facilitator and recently welcomed Rev Dr Tony Ling to the position. We thank Mike for his enormous efforts in getting the new Accreditation Currency model off the ground and wish him all the best in his new role with Baptist World Aid Australia. As Tony takes up the reins (and copes with the steep learning curve the role entails) we thank you for your support and encouragement as we seek to serve, inspire, and enable our pastors to lead well and shine the light of Christ in their local churches and communities.





## Leadership Development



Rev Elliot  
Keane

One thing we can always say is true, God is always at work. We celebrate with you the stories of people who have walked into churches across our movement saying I want to be baptised! What a joy to hear many stories of new life and faith in Jesus.

I am privileged to serve our movement thinking about and encouraging leadership development and mission imagination and action. During the year we got together for Pastors Gathering with guest speakers Kim Smith and Bill Brown. We were inspired to consider how the 'river has moved' for leaders everywhere. Our Pastors enjoyed being together to encourage one another, pray for one another and consider what God might imagine for our churches into the future.

Also this year, we were glad to be together for 4D Leadership Conference with leaders from across our movement with speaker Jason Elmore and also special guest Dr Seblewengel Daniel from Tanzania. We were inspired by Jason in our winsome witness as the church and we were gently challenged by Dr Seble's wisdom. A memorable highlight from this year's 4D Conference were the GODx Talks with five fantastic talks from local leaders – most notably nine-year-old Samuel Beames, who reminded us that God is always on mission and mission is always fun! Another important gathering in our calendar is Inspire Conference. This year we welcomed Geoff Maddock from Baptist Mission Australia who led us through reflections on what can be learned from God's arena of missions – the world!

At the end of 2022, we celebrated with 13 interns from 10 local churches as they graduated from our Leadership Internship. They were formed in discipleship and leadership principles as they embark on their next leadership opportunities in the church and in the workplace. At the start of 2023 we launched again with 14 interns from 10 churches. We are excited to be investing into the most culturally diverse group we have yet. If you know of someone who should be joining us in 2024, please contact myself or Mary Ackers (Leadership Internship co-director).

I continue to enjoy being invited into conversations with churches who are wanting to explore church witness and church planting. It is fun to learn and journey together with churches exploring new and renewed ideas for evangelism, community engagement, church planting, church revitalisation, and justice/advocacy. Mark Sanders and I share a passion for church planting, and we have been excited to facilitate dialogue with Pastors about inviting every church to have some part to play in church planting. We have been exploring an imagination for a diverse ecology of churches across South Australia.



## Pastoral Services

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Rev Mark  
Foley

Over this past year it has been a great encouragement to see the increasing sense of community and mutual support amongst our pastoral leaders. This was clearly evident in our recent Pastors Gathering but is also experienced through the renewal retreat groups, pastors making personal contact with one another, various networks and the conversations that occur whenever they gather. In general, it would appear most pastoral leaders are feeling encouraged in their ministry and alive in their faith. One area that I have been slowly strengthening is our support of retired pastors and some thinking re how to help pastors move into the “retirement” phase of ministry well. A task force has now been established to help this continue. This has also meant my role has shifted slightly.

1. **Pastors Renewal Retreats.** I continue to support Jenny Pryor as she oversees the women in ministry renewal retreats which have all come to the end of their cycle this year. Next year we are hoping for 4 or 5 groups to commence. We have also begun a pastors wives retreat, the first retreat being greatly valued by all those who attended. There are currently 7 male groups which is encouraging all of which commenced within the last 12 months. Overall people are finding these groups invaluable, particularly if they are committed to ensuring the key components of what makes a group work.

2. There are still one or two local area networks that are functioning, however I am still encouraging pastors to make **personal contact with other pastors in their region**, or in similar situations. Along with this I am also encouraging the retired pastors to be available for pastoral care, mentoring and support. The move to Professional Supervision is having some positive impact on the need for these types of connections.

3. **Referring Pastors to professional services when required.** Sometimes things get very difficult for our pastors. It is good to know that there are services and experienced people who are available to support and journey with them during these times. However while it is part of my role to confidentially help pastors access these services I have found this past year that with a high level of trust and relationships within the movement many have found the services they need through other connections and as a result have not required more professional support.

Along with these formal parts of my role, I enjoy taking the opportunity to meet with as many pastors as I can to touch base, hear how they are travelling and pray for them. It is a privilege to have this opportunity to support our many godly, faithful, and creative pastors and the ministry they exercise. Please continue to pray for them in their service.

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## Rural and Regional Ministry

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Rev Leigh  
Philp

Faithfulness, creativity, newness, challenges, unique possibilities, grief, loss, ever-present hope, steadfastness: these are words to describe church life in our rural churches over the past 12 months.

In the aftermath of COVID-19, our congregations have delighted in moving forward in a ‘new normal’, counting some losses and welcoming fresh movement amongst God’s people. There are stories of a fresh wave of people seeking baptism - a sense of people being confronted by the strange times we live in and seeking God. At the same time, Orroroo continues to grieve the loss of their pastor-leader, John Cozens, and other churches have been disrupted by unexpected illness. We honour those who have faithfully stepped in to maintain church life.

We also celebrate newness: Three rural churches are settling into ongoing ministry from a fresh location – Port Lincoln’s brand new “Living Waters”, Laura’s main-street House of Hope, and Mannum’s generous new premises in a historic church building elsewhere in town. Millicent has welcomed Simun Lulich as their new Pastor, in the Barossa, Will Samson is leading the church into a fresh chapter, as is Pete Bennetts in Port Pirie. We welcome Stansbury Community Church into our movement, led by Peter Agnew.

As I travel to country regions, and meet with and encourage leaders, I note the ongoing faithfulness and vision of pastor-leaders and congregations who are faithful to their particular setting and unique context, despite a sense of isolation. May God bless and encourage each one.

*Building relationships with those who are different  
does not require mastery of the skills of cross-cultural relationships,  
but it requires a genuine curiosity to know the other  
and the openness to be known by them.*

*One should not be oblivious to cultural differences,  
but one also should not be too afraid to make mistakes  
to the point of shying away from reaching out to others.*

*Honest mistakes will happen, but seeking understanding,  
offering apologies and extending grace is capable of transforming uncharted relationships, a new holy ground  
through which God transforms the culture of fear and hatred.*

Safwat Marzouk, author of *Intercultural Church: A Biblical Vision for an Age of Migration* (Word & World, 2019)

## Intercultural Ministry



Rev Darryl  
Bishop

The cultural diversity of our movement continues to grow reflecting the changing demographics of our neighbourhoods. There are now 24 different groups (churches, congregations, fellowships, ministries) worshipping in languages other than English around our movement. These include displaced people fleeing the violence of Myanmar, international students coming from India and China, along with skilled workers starting a new life here in Australia.

Each person has a story. Have you considered asking a new arrival to share in a worship service?

It is challenging to ask:

1. What is the cultural diversity of those “up-front” on a Sunday morning?
2. What is the cultural diversity of our leadership teams?
3. What percentage of our friends come from a culture other than our own?
4. Where you have new arrivals, are you reading the Scriptures or projecting those readings in languages other than English?

At our recent 4D Conference, a workshop on Discipleship in Culturally Diverse communities was offered. Over the past year, both the Adelaide Mizo Christian Church and the Zo Baptist Church commenced the journey towards full membership of our movement. The Karen Fellowship of Playford Baptist celebrated their eighth anniversary whilst the Chinese congregation of Rostrevor Baptist celebrated their 10th anniversary. In that time specifically through the Alpha course, they have had 220 people become followers of Jesus and 111 baptised. A Polish Fellowship has commenced at Trinity Baptist. Burmese young people are increasingly involved in our Leadership Internship program, 4D Conference, M&M Camp and Youth events. A combined training event was held for Burmese Children’s Department leaders.

Again and again, I find myself being brought back to the words of Max DeYmaz: “If the Kingdom of God is not segregated, why on earth is the church?”

## Next Gen and Young Adults Ministry

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**Rev Scott  
Berry**

The Next Gen Team have now had a full year to gel and grow together as a team with Tash Pillay (Childrens), Mary Ackers (Youth) and Scott Berry (Young Adults). We continue to learn and support each other through the challenges and opportunities that occur within our areas as many similar issues crop up. We have been deliberately seeking to include our Cultural and Linguistically Diverse groups within our ministry's spaces, including our learning from them. We were blessed to have Steve Dixon (NSW/ACT Baptists Next Gen Leader) come over and deepen the leadership skills of our volunteer youth leaders, as well as offer a wonderfully honest time of Q&A with youth pastors.

Young Adults has been a highlight too, gathering from across Adelaide to think over issues specific to this age and stage of life. In March 2023, we met at Springpark Baptist to consider "Where is Jesus when I'm stressed?" Mike Wardrop (Encounter Uniting) and Ash Jackson (Clovercrest Baptist) both spoke powerfully into questions of faith in anxious times. In September 2022, the young adults gathered at Flinders St Baptist and heard both theological and personal insights from Tim Patrick (Bible College of SA) about living through suffering and how that interacts with our faith.

Lastly a thank you. For many decades there has been an executive team of core youth pastors that helps speak into youth/YA ministry called Vision Team. Since its inception Sam Thomson has been on team. He continues in ministry at Blackwood Hills Baptist but has stepped back from Vision Team after an unparalleled time of serving – Thanks Sam for being so inspiring for so long!



## Youth Ministry

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**Mary  
Ackers**

It's been another wonderful year in youth ministry, working alongside the Next Gen team to support our pastors and leaders! It is particularly encouraging to hear from youth pastors and leaders as they support young people in their next steps in faith – especially through a number of baptisms throughout the year!

Easter Camp was once again successful and saw many young people dive deeper in their faith. From 220 campers across two camps, we had around 20 indicate they made first-time commitments and 60 indicate they were considering baptism. This came alongside some encouraging feedback about the welcoming atmosphere created by our dedicated leaders, and the ways in which Holy Spirit showed up and moved in the hearts and lives of our young people. Many went away emboldened to speak of the goodness of God and the transforming power of Jesus. Huge thanks to our leaders, speakers, support crew, kitchen volunteers, parents, prayer warriors, the incredible Core Team, and Directors Indi Krieg and Sarah Lawson.

We were once again welcomed for Baptist Youth Gathering (BYG) by Edwardstown Baptist (September 2022) and Gateway Baptist (May 2023) for nights of fun, worship, and teaching. These events are fantastic opportunities for our young people to reconnect across churches, learn a bit more about Jesus, and discover that they are part of a broad community of believers. We always look forward to connecting across our network at BYG, leadership training, pastors' brunches, and coffee catch-ups to hear about the ways God is at work!





## Children's Ministry



Tash  
Pillay

The past year has been really exciting across the Children's Ministry space: Ongoing participation in the Children's Ministry Network (CMN) in South Australia has provided opportunities for development. CMN is a committee made up of leaders in denominational and organisational roles in children's and families ministry across the state. Opportunities for development included:

**Amplify Conference** is held every year in March in Brisbane. During the COVID-19 pandemic, online hubs were created so that people did not miss out. A hub was hosted at Rostrevor Baptist Church providing an opportunity for next gen leaders to gather and learn together. Comments from some leaders who attended:

"How do we create soft edges in our ministry spaces? Places for young people to find their way into church + faith?" "Warm is the new cool." "Jesus chooses the unlikely leaders. Are we that brave?" "Consider the best type of question to promote deeper learning for our kids."

**Tour by Rachel Turner**, author and founder of the Parenting for Faith organisation. Rachel is running workshops aimed at parents and church leaders. She shares her insights on how parents can help their children be God-connected rather than just God-smart, as well as how we as a church can help foster and grow a culture where parenting for faith can flourish.

Creating spaces that include everyone is a real challenge in children's ministry. In June, we hosted a short workshop where we heard from Ann Hughes on how that is possible, even if you start small. As a movement, our heart is for everyone is included in God's kingdom, and that God sees them and knows them.

It was also wonderful to co-facilitate, with Sarah Tymko and Rachel Stevens (BMA), a leader training day for a group of Burmese churches in the CALD space. 80% of the leaders who attended were under the age of 25 and it was wonderful to help them answer questions, stimulate thinking and ignite passion. They have a genuine passion to see the next generation follow Jesus and live out their faith in a way that shines a light wherever they are.

M&M Camp 2023 was held in the first week of July. 70 kids and 40 leaders (including junior helpers, aged 15-17). Amongst those were children and leaders from some of the Burmese churches.

Historically this camp started when mission families were home on furlough, and it provided the opportunity to share stories, highlighting the culture of the country the families were based in. This then evolved into the Missions & Me camp for children, run by what is now called Baptist Mission Australia. Recently this camp has been handed over to BCSA. It continues to be a camp for kids, with a focus on the discipleship of children rather than a focus on a culture or country. This aligns with the next gen team's vision of camps.

*"We see the next generation being transformed by an experience of God through a community of camps which seeks to encourage discipleship in Jesus' kingdom in order to better our world."*

Focus areas for the Children's Ministry Network moving forward include, connecting leaders within our movement with each other so they can build networks for information and resource sharing, creating opportunities for encouragement and facilitating leadership development.

## Independent Director of Professional Standards

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**Carl  
Collins**

2023 has been another challenging year in the areas of Child Protection and Professional Standards. The key areas that we continue to invest and implement in include:

- The ongoing implementation of the established BCSA Child Protection Strategy
- The ongoing design and delivery of a range of customised child protection training seminars which include face-to-face full-day & update seminars as well as a combination of professionally recorded full-day and update seminars, as well as regular ZOOM update seminars.
- The ongoing implementation of the new DHS approved Safeguarding Children & Child Protection policy.
- The ongoing implementation of the Professional Standards Code of Conduct policy.
- The Person of Concern (Known Sex Offender) Policy and procedures.
- The profiling and assessments of Persons of Concern.
- The Survivor Support Program.
- Ongoing and unlimited support to churches in order to ensure that all established child protection standards are being met.
- Ongoing involvement in the Multi-Denominational Network Group designed to track Person of Concern who may be hopping across churches and or denominations.

The specifics in relation to the above areas can be viewed on the BCSA Website under Resources -Child Protection & Professional Standards. I invite people to take a few minutes of their time to visit the site as it will provide a comprehensive overview of the entire model and strategy.

This portfolio is a complex one and as stated above is subject to increased legislative and insurance requirements. Whilst we are obligated and committed to meeting these requirements, our primary motivating factor is one of accountability and integrity based on a moral obligation to ensure that all standards are met.

I want to acknowledge and sincerely thank our fantastic pastors and Child Protection Contact Officers (CPCO's) in our churches for their commitment, cooperation, buy in, and support. I also want to thank the Rev Dr Melinda Cousins and the Assembly Board for their support and the opportunity to continue to serve BCSA.

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## Operations (Baptist Centre)

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**Glenn  
Dixon**

Hello and greetings from the Baptist Centre. For the last year, the larger projects that the office has been working on include:

- Supporting Gawler/Clovercrest Baptist and Mt Barker/Hills Baptist as they seek to amalgamate.
- Supporting the Laura church in the purchase of their new property.
- Updating the template Policies and Procedures for local churches.
- A full building audit to identify areas for inclusion into a regular maintenance and repair schedule.
- A number of small projects to keep our office building safe and well maintained.
- Continuing to look for a new home for the Baptist Office.
- Starting the administration preparation for the proposed amalgamation with BUNT.
- Now providing Bookkeeping services to 18 of our churches in SA and the NT.

This is amongst the usual day-to-day support we provide to the larger team in the office and to our wider church family. This year we have seen some more changes in our staff. We welcomed back Benito Carbone to a contracted communications role as we farewelled Ruth Grace off to maternity leave. We also welcomed Katrina Levi to the team as Operations Assistant after farewelling Tanya Whalland as she returned to the travel industry.

If there is anything that you think we could do, or do better, to support our churches in the areas of finance and administration, please do not hesitate to get in contact with me for a chat.





## Finance



**Bridget  
Townsend**

Finance and Administration provides accounting, banking, payroll, insurance, and book-keeping to churches. It also provides reception services to Baptist Mission Australia, Baptist World Aid, Company of Grace, Child Protection Solutions, Crossover Australia and other areas of ministry, including the local churches and churches in Northern Territory. The financial statement for Baptist Churches of SA shows a deficit for 2022/23.

In the current environment of uncertainty due to various factors including the war between Russian and Ukraine, inflation and increasing interest rates, we are thankful to the member churches for their continual contributions. Contributions by the churches are invaluable and we thank churches for accepting their part in ensuring that we were able to sustain and maintain the level of services provided.

This year contributions received, amounting to \$277,337 from the churches were below the \$300,000 budgeted by 7.55% which is short by \$22,663, compared to 7.33% below normal budgeted by \$21,980 in the last financial year. These contributions were a decrease of \$682.73 on the previous year. As per previous years, excitingly, 50% of church contributions went towards church planting.

Facts and figures of interest:

- Donations received, Baptist Financial Services (BFS) Distribution and Capital Contribution Grant were greatly appreciated and contributed vital support to the ministries of BCSA.
- Providence Wealth continues to be our Investment Advisors in 2022/23.
- Healthcare Australia remains our tenant at the Baptist Centre. This is beneficial as the income generated from this tenancy ensures cash flow availability.
- Ministers Long Service Leave Fund set up to provide continuity of long service leave for church staffs, has continued to meet its goals.
- Ministers Relocation Fund is available for pastors moving to a new church (refer to Ministers Relocation Fund T&C)
- Redress Scheme Pool was set up following the refund of reserves from Baptist Insurance Services (BIS) and churches will continue to contribute into this pool from 2019 to 2028. The Assembly Board placed a moratorium on Redress Support Pool payments for 2023.

I would like to extend my grateful thanks for the dedication and ability of the Finance and Admin team; Glenn Dixon, Tam Battersby, Jenny van Tienen, Alison Jeisman, Cathy Turner, Ruth Grace, Katrina Levi, Benito Carbone and Glen Thornley (BFS & BIS). Well done team!





## Baptist Mission Australia



**Rev Lisa Cornish**

It has been a full and exciting year for Baptist Mission Australia in South Australia and the Northern Territory.

The Haydons spent three months in Australia early in 2023 visiting churches, fellowship groups and fundraising events. David, Susie and Kyran are back in Malawi. Anushka remains in Adelaide for study.

Dema and Carolyn, spent three months in Australia mid-2023. They met with supporters in three states and had opportunities to speak in some of our CALD churches. They are currently back in Thailand with Daniel while Grace has stayed in Melbourne for tertiary study.

Rob and Deb Griffith have recently begun six months of home assignment and have a full calendar visiting churches and supporters in several states before returning to Cambodia in early 2024.

I have been blessed to share in three commissioning services for people commencing service in the communities God has called them to.

Early in 2023 Simon and Widya enjoyed commissioning services in both SA and NSW. They are now finding their feet and seeking God's leading in SEA.

After completing partnership development Suzanne was commissioned at Port Pirie Baptist and is now learning language, culture and life in the Silk Road area.

Mal and Chris Good, Pastors at Casuarina Baptist church in Darwin, began their FIFO service with the Outback Team in the Lajamanu community in July following their commissioning in June.

Finally, we welcomed Rev. Jason Hoet to the Baptist Mission Australia board.

Thank you for your ongoing support for God's mission.





## Baptist Care SA

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**Shane  
Austin  
CEO**

Baptist Care SA continues to journey with those on the margins, working in disability, homelessness, child protection, education, health/wellbeing, and adventure.

This year, we ran a camp for children in our residential care, and in the care of Department of Child Protection, at Baptist Care SA's Mylor Adventure Camp. I went out with three managers for a visit. It was at lunch time. Several young people came over, fronting up and asking all sorts of questions, telling me about the camp and about their home life. They asked practical questions like when and for how long they could have the internet on, with one 11-year-old girl Miss J coming over saying, "right, you're the CEO, just the person I wanted to speak with?" Nothing like being bailed up by an 11-year-old.

Two things immediately struck me, how do 11-year-olds even know what a CEO is? And second, why are they so keen on seeking me out and speaking with me? When I asked one of our key leaders she replied without hesitation, "they want to know the person making decisions about their life and want to meet that person." I was dumbstruck. Whether or not I am making those decisions, it was a heart wrenching moment.

Our vision has a resounding focus as a life-transforming organisation that is engaged in client-focused care. These children highlight to us all, that we need to stay client-focused, and what we do is noticed and matters.

This year, Baptist Care SA successfully passed its NDIS accreditation, no small feat. We have turned the corner in financial performance, whilst continually strengthening our relationships and partnerships in community. We are also working diligently with and listening to the voice of our Aboriginal leaders and their communities, as we work through what it means to be truly restorative and responsive.

A special thank you to our supporters, volunteers, our Board, and all our team. As we continue to seek God's guidance and respond to need, we are conscious that so much of our work is with children and young people at risk and drawn to the scripture;

*"Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me."*

Mark 9:37 (NIV)

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## Baptist World Aid

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**Rev Steve  
Woods**

Once again, South Aussies have been amazingly generous towards our shared work of lifting global communities out of poverty. At Baptist World Aid, we dream of a world where poverty has ended, and all people enjoy the fullness of life God intends. In a year where we have seen the cost-of-living rise and extra pressure on family budgets here in Australia, God's people continue to be faithful, proving once again that small acts of generosity and kindness add up!

I am so pleased to be able to report that South Aussie Baptist people and churches have given over to \$1 Million to help end global poverty! Thank you all so much for your kindness and support.

And to be honest, we need it more than ever. The world is currently facing some challenges, the scale of which we have never seen before. War, conflict, changing global economics, as well as natural disasters and drought are all creating a global hunger crisis that is unparalleled! Right now, it is estimated that over 800 million people (that's 1-in-10 people in the world) are suffering from hunger. So, our work together is more important than ever!

Thank you again for your ongoing support and I look forward to engaging with you as we continue to be the hands and the feet of Christ in needy communities around the world.

*Learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.*

Isaiah 1:17 (NRSV)

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## Company of Grace

Rev John Beasy

Consultant  
appointed by  
BCSA

Following COVID-19, Mark and Ngoc Pham were assigned to Company of Grace by Baptist Mission Australia (BMA) to provide missional oversight, after the passing of Hoa Stone. The purpose was to oversee COG mission in the local area and pursue the intended alignment of COG to a local church ministry. The current re-emerged relationship with BMA, sees a full turning of a ministry circle, whereby there is an assignment of a BMA (then GiA / SFI) Missionary to COG.

Mark Pham has a long history of association with COG, and along with his wife Ngoc are fully trained and accredited with BMA. Hien Pham continues to serve as Company of Grace Director. This strengthening alignment of BMA and COG will see a more formalised strategic relationship in the latter part of 2023, with BMA being the prime avenue for financial support to this ministry.

Mark, Ngoc, and BMA sense that partnering with the Company of Grace is where God has called them for the season following Hoa's passing and they and BMA have committed to at least the next two years located at COG.

The end point vision, as clearly communicated and documented by Hoa Stone and the BCSA Consultant - is to see COG fully integrated as a social service expression of a local church in Thu Duc district, Ho Chi Minh City. This vision was tabled by Hoa Stone at the March 2021 COG Advisory Board session as being the guiding objective. It was further confirmed personally with John Beasy before Hoa's death.

A key step towards this end vision has occurred in Ho Chi Min city at the COG centre with a Church being planted within the COG context on 2nd December 2022.

### STATEMENT

*On this day 2nd December 2022, Thu Duc Grace Baptist Church was commenced, with a dedication service at the House of Grace, Thu Duc, Vietnam. 30 people including children were in attendance.*

*The service was led by the serving Pastor - Rev Mark Pham of Baptist Mission Australia (BMA). The sermon was preached by Rev Huy Le - Senior Pastor of Grace Baptist Church Ho Chi Min. The theme was the purpose, nature, and mission of the Church. The dedication ceremony was conducted by Rev Dr John Beasy Company of Grace (Grace Services) overseer and consultant, appointed from Baptist Churches of South Australia (BCSA).*

*The planting of this local church while embryonic, is a crucial step towards achieving the ultimate goal of the transfer of the COG project ownership and oversight to a local church ministry.*

### FORWARD STEPS TOWARDS THIS GOAL

- The land adjacent to COG (Currently for House of Grace) will be used for development of Grace Baptist Church (GBC) and facilities for children with disabilities. This will be a Christian ministry reflecting worship, evangelism, and social justice.
- The GBC Thu Duc will operate alongside Grace Services to provide spiritual / pastoral care, outreach, and practical support to those who are recipients of Grace Services.
- A local Pastor / couple will be called to serve the church and Grace Services.
- GBC will become registered and ultimately own the full property and assets. (This will need to take account of prevailing laws and policies.)

Please be in prayer for the coming year which will see very significant partnership development toward a final realisation of the Vision of the founder Hoa Stone.





## **Baptist Financial Services**

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**Glen Thornley**

2023 has been a year of getting used to a new post-COVID-19 normal for many of our client churches. Attendance numbers and the loosely linked weekly tithe and offering figures have bounced around with some clients experiencing an increase, while others are working with reductions. We have seen an end to historic low interest rates which also impact different clients in different ways. BFS Loan rates have increased (but more slowly than at the Reserve Bank) which makes budgeting more challenging for those with outstanding loan balances. But at the same time our investment rates have also climbed to heights not seen for many years. Individual investors supporting our Ministry by placing money into BFS Term Investments can receive up to 5% interest as at the date of writing.

BFS is currently holding almost \$26m in loans and just over \$40m in funds invested for South Australia and Northern Territory clients. Both these figures are down on last year, and in the case of investment funds, have been impacted by a small number of large transactions. We are keen to increase both loans and investments and would love to speak with any who may be able to achieve a benefit to Christian ministry through working with us in these areas.

We have been delighted to have assisted three churches to either buy or renovate their properties during this year, and have provided financial support to Baptist Churches of SA, Baptist Union of NT, 4D Leadership Conference, Easter Camp, M&M Camp, Pastors Journey Seminar, the NT Baptist Family Gathering, BCSA Christmas Dinner, Inspire Conference, Recognised Pastors' Intensive, BUNT Preaching Seminar, and NT Indigenous Ministries.

BFS exists to see Christian ministry thrive, and it is a unique privilege to be able to support so many initiatives that grow our people and ministries as they work in their local communities to present God's Kingdom and live out Jesus' Gospel.

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## **Baptist Insurance Services**

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**Glen Thornley**

You have the advantage over me – as the launch of the long-awaited Discretionary Mutual Fund will have happened several weeks ago for you. For me now at the time of writing, it is still a plan for an outcome that sits on the far side of a mountain of work. I trust that it all went smoothly, and you have adapted well to the slightly modified procedures surrounding renewal this year.

This is the culmination of work that began in 2019 and reached fever pitch after the steep increases in basic premium, levels of excess and changes in other terms and conditions that we faced at renewal last year.

The resolve to achieve the outcome only strengthened in late-May when our existing insurer providing Property and some Liability classes announced they were closing their doors to new business and entering "run off" cover. This left only one insurer able to provide some of the cover we needed to secure and also released a flood of former clients looking to secure this now even more scarce class of protection. Basic Economics works against a client in these market conditions – so the DMF, which presents a realistic alternative, could not have been more opportunely timed – with thanks to He who "orders our steps".

Shortly after renewal last year long standing BIS CEO Kym Bennetts retired from active duty. He remains a valued member of the BIS Board of Directors and continues to work on his golf handicap. Former BIS Risk Manager Chris Mackenzie is now in the CEO's chair and two new appointments to full time staff positions have been made in Simone Ferro as Underwriting Manager and Nigel Grimshaw as Risk and Compliance Manager.

By the time you are reading this, longstanding SA BIS Director David Berry will also have retired from the Board. He is set to be replaced by Clovercrest Baptist Church member Flav Botchas who brings a wealth of insurance experience and local knowledge. I'm sure you will join with me in thanking both Kym and David for years of faithful service, and welcoming Simone, Nigel and Flav to the team.



**“You mob are the li**





**light of the world.”**

**MATTHEW 5:14 (PEV paraphrase)**





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