TOGETHER IN MISSION





AUSTRALIA'S CHANGING SPIRITUAL Landscape

MITCHAM BAPTIST'S FINAL MORNING SERVICE

NEWS FROM GAWLER, SACRED AGENTS, BAPTIST CARE SA, BAPTIST WORLD AID, AND PLENTY MORE!



Celebrating a Century: Gawler Baptist prayer warrior turns 100

Words by Gawler Baptist Church*

Gawler Baptist Church's very own prayer warrior, Mary (May) Gibbon, celebrated her 100th birthday with her church family on Sunday 19th of September.

May has been a regular attender of Gawler Baptist Church for more than 15 years and is a devoted member of the congregation.

"When people ask me 'why are you the way that you are?', I tell them, 'because I have the love of Jesus in my heart'. They look at me funny, but I think you can get away with speaking the truth when you are an older person."

May has always had a heart to follow God's call and care for those around her, her gentle friendly nature and good spirit create a comfortable space into which she welcomes people.

As a church, we are so grateful to have May as part of our congregation, her powerful prayers and words of wisdom are inspiring and encourage the whole church.

Sunday's celebration included the congregation singing to May her favourite hymn, What a Friend we have in Jesus.

"Before [my husband] passed away, here in Gawler, he was in the hospital; and the Lutherans came in, and the last song they sang was *What a Friend we have in Jesus*, and I knew then that he was going to be with the Lord. And I can't wait to go and see him again."

May often shares visions and dreams she has which have been a great source of encouragement to the church, particularly in times of struggle. It always puts a smile on our faces when we hear May begin to speak because we know she has something important to share.

May cites her "love of Jesus from a young age," and continuing dedication to God as the secret to long life.

We are so blessed as a church for May and we wish her the best as she continues into her 101st year.



An Invitation to Mitcham Baptist Church's Final Morning Service

After a long and fruitful history reaching back to the earliest days of settlement in South Australia, the Mitcham Baptist Church is coming to an end in its current form.

As of February 2022 the present membership of MBC will 'wind up', and Rev. Keith Chessell will retire as Pastor of MBC.

BCSA will then begin exploring possibilities for establishing a new

worshipping community in the existing facility.

Rev. Keith Chessell will continue his weekly Bible teaching classes at MBC - through Covenant Life Ministry, on Sunday and Wednesday afternoons (as well as at Victor Harbor on Thursday afternoons.)

On Sunday 13th February 2022 at 10.30 am, there will be a Final Morning Service at Mitcham Baptist Church.

You are invited to share in this time as we give thanks to the Lord for the blessing MBC has been to so many lives and to recognise and show appreciation of the ministry of Rev. Keith and Joan Chessell, who first began their ministry at MBC in February 1982.

There will be a special morning tea following the service – to which all are invited.

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PRAYER COLUMN?

email the editor! bcarbone@sabaptist.asn.au





PICTURED: BETH HOY, MICHELLE STEVENS, AND MICK BARRETT ARE CELEBRATED AND PRAYED OVER.

What happened at Spring Assembly?

A wonderful morning of celebration and encouragement was held at Holdfast Baptist Church on Saturday 13th November 2021 for our Annual Assembly. Over 120 people joined together in worship, discernment, and thanks.

Holdfast began the morning leading us in worship before Mark Sanders, new to the Church Development Role, shared a very poignant message from Jeremiah, challenging all to invest time in listening to God and faithfully obeying his leading – even if that means buying a field when you are under siege!

In the business of the meeting, we recognised the following exciting announcements:

- We acknowledged the retirement of John Walker and thanked him for his many years of service to our movement;
- We welcomed into affiliate membership Bethel Mission Church;
- We celebrated with Mick Barrett, Lead Pastor at West Beach Community; Michelle Stevens, Executive Pastor at Clovercrest; and Beth Hoy, joint Lead Pastor at Aberfoyle Park, as they were accepted as accredited pastors with BCSA;

- Minutes of appreciation for retiring Baptist Care CEO Graham Brown, and thanksgiving for the life of Hoa Stone were given, and;
- Shane Austin, incoming CEO of Baptist Care, introduced himself via video.

After a delicious morning tea supplied by the wonderful volunteers from Holdfast, we regathered for the Baptist Care SA AGM and heard wonderful stories from Stephen Toon (Pastor at Holdfast), Jenny Pryor (Pastor at Port Pirie and Laura Baptist), Tyra Wanganeen and Terrence Wingfield (Leadership Internship graduates from Aboriginal Berean Community Church) and Steve Woods (Church Relationship Manager at Baptist World Aid).

These updates encouraged and heartened us that God is a big God, blessing us and always working in ways we cannot imagine. Delegates gathered in small groups to pray and thank God for these blessings.

Thanks to God for his amazing provision and blessings, and to Holdfast Baptist and the team of volunteers who hosted us so well. We look forward to meeting again in May 2022 – you are welcome to join us!

BAPTISMS



2021 has been a incredible year of baptisms, the likes of which we haven't ever seen in our Movement!

Our churches have finished the year in similar style, with baptisms happening at Port Lincoln, Hills Verdun, Port Church, Aldinga Bay and others.

Featured in this month's edition is Soraya, baptised by Michael Thompson at Flinders Street Baptist in November.

Congratulations to everyone baptised this year! Don't forget to send baptism photos and information to Benito at bcarbone@sabaptist.asn.au

Become an BCSA Associate Board Member!

Under 30 years of age?

Active in your Local Baptist church?

Curious about Governance and being a Board member?

Thinking you'd like to see a Board at work from the inside?

There are opportunities for young Baptist women and men to join the Baptist Churches of SA Board as Associate Board members.

The recently adopted Associate Board Member model is a creative approach to encouraging interested Baptist young people to join the Board.

The opportunity offers two way benefits – providing invaluable

experience for the participating individual by inclusion in Board discussions and the opportunities for observing different governance processes over a year.

The individual will also bring to the table their unique experiences and perspectives that will enrich discussions and contribute towards wise decision making.

For more information please contact Rev Dr Melinda Cousins at the Baptist Churches of SA office. Follow the link below to read the Information Pack.

https://sabaptist.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/BCSA-Associate-Board-Member-Info-Pack.pdf



Graeme Mulligan retires from Baptist Care SA after almost 20 years



When Graeme Mulligan began working at Baptist Community Services in 2002, the organisation was a small cluster of diverse services. Today, as Baptist Care SA, it has evolved into one of South Australia's largest and most respected faith-based organisations.

On the eve of his retirement, Graeme Mulligan sat down to talk to Baptist Care SA Foundation Boad Deputy Chair, Allan Priest, and reflect over his almost two-decade career with the organisation.

Allan: Your time at Baptist Care SA started with Baptist Community Services (BCS). What drew you to this employment?

Graeme: When I was working toward becoming a Chartered Accountant, I felt God drop a question into my heart along the lines of, If I have gifted you to be the unique person you are with skills and abilities that make you who you are, what are you going to use them for, yourself or my Kingdom?'

My career path has largely been formed by using that question as a barometer.

Allan: Is there a high point that particularly stands out in your Baptist Care SA journey?

Graeme: The high point has been the people I've met. There are some amazing people who work or have worked with Baptist Care SA. I find myself quite humbled to have had the privilege of working with them.

I believe the establishment of the Baptist Care (SA) Foundation was also an important point in the journey and it would be great to see increased contributions flow into this to enable Baptist Care SA to expand the work it can do untied to government funding.

Allan: How have you observed the care landscape change over the intervening years?

Graeme: Firstly, there has been a heightened focus on transparency and accountability. In the last decade alone, we have seen Royal Commissions into children in care, aged care, and disability all leading to heightened regulatory environments, compliance, and accreditation.

We have also seen an transition of government funding from the historical 'block funded' model to fee-for-service models . This means that care organisations, have had to become substantially more commercially astute and financially strong.

Allan: What do you see to be the greatest challenge currently confronting Christian care ministries?

CONTINUED ON FOLLOWING PAGE

From the Heart...

In this, my final article for Together in Mission, I want to share two questions that have been in my heart for some time:

What might the missional impact of our SA Baptist movement look and feel like in the next 5-10 years if we were to optimise our collective capacity to be an authentic expression of the Gospel in our complex society?

This is a question that I believe requires faithful, earnest and ongoing consideration followed by intentional action.

I believe our Lord Jesus Christ is seeking to reveal to us whole new ways in which we can 'be salt' and 'shine the light' of the gospel in our homes, our communities, our State and our beautiful God-given country.

On 27 October, an energised group of Baptist pastors and leaders came together with key leaders from Baptist Care SA in a forum called 'Walking Together in Mission'.

Those present shared their insights and learnings and cast visions about how we might reflect the light of the gospel as we step forward together.

Please pray with our leaders that these challenging questions might find expression in our planning, our actions and the heritage that we leave for those that follow us.

role will the Australian **Baptist** movement play in achieving healing and reconciliation with our first nation's people?

If you haven't already, I encourage you to read the 'Uluru Statement from the Heart'.

In just 439 words, this gracious text invites us all on a journey of healing toward respect, reconciliation and nationhood.

Whilst Baptist Care SA is working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people every day with, and on behalf of, local Baptist churches, I encourage you to search your own heart, see and embrace all people in the way our gracious Almighty Father does.

Finally, as I step down from the role of CEO, I extend sincere thanks to all those who have been reading these

> notes over the last four years, to the three SA Baptist Boards, to the Executives, Managers, staff and volunteers of Baptist Care SA with whom I have been privileged to serve.

> I also particularly acknowledge my valued colleague Graeme Mulligan who has been faithfully modelling servant leadership in his various roles within Baptist Care SA (and well beyond) for almost 20 years.

Blessings to you all!



If you could give advice to your younger self... What would it be?

Personally, being brought up in a Christian family, I am aware that I was judgemental to anyone, particularly other Christians, who didn't live up to what I considered was God's standard.

However, the older I get and the more I get to know Jesus, I realise that he not just accepted everyone, but went out of his way to include those who others rejected.

He was so involved in the lives of those who had been rejected by their faith community that he was counted amongst them

He stood up for them to the religious leaders, even pointing out to those leaders how they should model aspects of their lives on the 'sinners' and that they were in danger of missing out on the very heavenly party that the 'sinners' were included in.

The very act of eating with tax collectors, 'immoral' women and other 'sinners' was an incredibly inclusive act in a society with extreme purity laws and exclusive rules on who enters the temple.

Theologically I would consider myself as fairly conservative, and as such I find myself (and my teachings) exceedingly

challenged by the way Jesus equally included those who I might consider not meeting the standards he expects.

How do I walk the line between what I consider holiness in the church I lead and the modelling of full inclusion that I see Jesus holding to?

It's a journey I am on. I do not know if I will ever find peace in my responses and decision-making in this area.

But there is one thing that I have come to a decision about: posture.

I will not alienate or exclude the people that I see Jesus welcoming.

How does it help to call out their behaviour or call them sinners? I happen to be a sinner too, in need of God's grace and mercy on a daily basis.

I don't need someone constantly pointing out my issues, I need to know I am loved, included, and accepted. The more I know that and that I am safe, the more I can let go of the chains that bind me.

One of the things I love most about being Baptist here in SA is the posture we take in making public statements.

I'D LIKE TO GO BACK IN TIME TO Warn Myself. But let's face it...

I was too stubborn and wouldn't have listened, anyway.

It is an important value that I believe is helped in the understanding of being a Priesthood of all believers.

We understand that each person is unique and on a faith journey different to others. We can allow for inclusion rather than taking a 'you are in and you are out' approach.

We try to put forward our collective thoughts but allow for different opinions. We choose not to be combative and seek a collaborative stance even when we may disagree with some viewpoints.

My hope is that as we navigate an everpolarised world, we remain aware of the grace and mercy we all need.

Let's seek the path of acceptance and inclusion, possibly even to the point of being accused of being amongst the very people that others would seek to reject.



Daniel Gardiner-President

CONTINUED FROM LAST PAGE

Graeme: For faith-based care organisations, the constant challenge has been, and is, to stay true to their calling in the midst of these changing landscapes.

This is quite different to simply having a set of values. It is that deep-seated awareness of holding true to God's purposes and how to hold to being truly Christ-centred in the context of a sector that is largely government funded and increasingly compliance driven.

In an ideal world you would like to see everything we do be funded from our own resources. Unfortunately, that is not the world we currently operate in, but this can be increased through the growth of the Foundation.

Allan: With the benefit of your experience

is there a piece of parting wisdom you would leave for those who follow in your footsteps?

Graeme: To never lose sight of the fact that this is part of God's work of reconciling the world to Himself through Christ.

Baptist Care SA is not simply a care organisation, but, through His people, it brings the presence of God into the lives of those who are disadvantaged and marginalised.

Graeme's servant style leadership, humble manner, steadfast trustworthiness, and extensive corporate knowledge will be greatly missed.

On behalf of Baptist Care SA, we thank him for his contribution to the work God is doing through Baptist Care SA and wish richest blessings on him and his family in the future.

Applications for Leadership Internship 2022 are open!



Applications for our 2022 Leadership Internship are now open. We would love to meet the emerging leaders in your church and see them step into their next adventure. Who can you tap on the shoulder today?

For more information or to apply, visit

www.sabaptist.asn.au/internship/

Or call Elliot at the Baptist Centre on 8357 1755



TIPS TO BUYING AN ETHICAL CHRISTMAS GIFT

Forget the scented candles, the monogrammed socks, and plastic novelties! Give a gift that means more this Christmas – one that will be appreciated long after the wrapping has been torn off.



As the heavy wave of consumerism crashes over December, it can be hard to escape the rising tide of meaningless purchasing. The office Kris Kringle, the gift for your second cousin (once removed), and that joke present for your boss.

Giving and receiving gifts is a beautiful way of honouring the value of others in our lives. But at this time of year, it's easy to buy for the sake of buying.

This often ends in a thoughtless cycle that benefits few other than the multimillion-dollar corporations who entice us in our panicked state with their glittered packaging, while the ever-so-subtle sound of Christmas carols jingle in the background.

As COVID-19 has ravaged the world, our relationship to 'things', and the value we place on them, has changed. When we're stuck behind borders away from loved ones, or unable to partake in our favourite activities we've taken for granted for so long, we quickly realise what 'things' add the most value to our lives.

Spoiler alert: it's not the macramé coasters or shell-shaped trinket tray.

So, as you shop for meaningful gifts this December, consider the following suggestions before opening your wallet at the checkout.

1. Choose a highly rated brand from the Ethical Fashion Guide.

Check out the list! Visit bwaa.co/efgfb

2. Chocolate treats made with ethically sourced cocoa.

When strolling through the chocolate aisle this Christmas, be sure to look for a Rainforest Alliance, Fairtrade, or one of these certification labels on the packaging.

This will ensure that the brands you are buying from are taking credible steps towards mitigating the risk of child and forced labour in their supply chains.

3. Give the gift of knowledge.

As Nobel Peace Prize recipient Koffi Annan once said, "Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family."

Empower and liberate your gift recipients this Christmas by giving a book. When you give a book, you're giving so much more – a new skill, a new passion, a new perspective, or a new source of inspiration.

4. Give a gift wrapped in reusable wrapping.

Every year, Australians use more than 150,000 kilometres of wrapping paper at Christmas. A separate study suggests this is equivalent to 50,000 trees – just to make presents look pretty!

Try adapting a reusable method such as Japanese furoshiki – which uses fabric pieces instead of paper. And for the gifts you receive in paper – remove the sticky tape and place the wrapping in the

recycling bin. Recycling should always be a last resort option. Always try to reduce and reuse first!

5. Mailing your gifts? Use a carbonneutral delivery service.

If you're sending gifts to a loved one separated by distance this Christmas, consider the environmental impact of the postal carrier. More than 1 million tonnes of CO² are emitted every year in Australia alone by the transport and shipping industry.

Sendle are a carbon-neutral postage service and certified B Corporation, that have offset 100% of their generated CO² emissions since their establishment in 2014. Send your gift knowing the postal carbon footprint isn't costing the earth.

6. Gift an experience.

If you're looking to get away from the physical clutter of superfluous gifts, consider giving something more intangible – an experience.

It may be a pampering/spa voucher for the selfless woman who rarely (if ever) takes time for herself. For the busy couple juggling work and family commitments, consider a restaurant voucher to allow them to spend relaxed, quality time alone together. The possibilities are endless!



Bonnie Graham Ethical Fashion Coordinator Baptist World Aid Australia







င**ာ** crossover

WHO GETS JESUS?

He was a lefty environmentalist. She was a Pauline Hanson sympathiser. And they were talking politics over coffee after church - what could go wrong? I felt it my pastoral responsibility to eaves-drop, just in case I needed to throw myself on a conversational hand-grenade. (But also, I was just curious.)

To my delight and to their credit, they showed each other enormous love and respect, each listening carefully and making their points gently. I came away thinking 'Where else but a church would that happen?' And I was so glad to be part of a church that was intentionally non-tribal.

In a world of increasing polarisation and retreat into safe bubbles, it's vital that our gatherings mirror that Revelation 7 vision of united diversity: people from every tribe, tongue and nation gathered before the Lamb.

It's worth churches time to consider: Is everyone really welcome to come and meet Jesus? Lefties and Righties? Intellectuals and Practicals? Rich and Poor? Women and Men? Able-Bodied and Disabled? All shapes, sizes and skin colour? And of course, Single, Married, Divorced, Widowed, Same- and Other-sex Attracted?

It may be easy to answer with 'yes' based on 'If any of those people turned up we would welcome them, not turn them away.'

But that scores your church 1 point, not 10, on the welcoming scale. To wrestle with this further, ask not only who would be admitted/turned away, but who is actively invited?

Consider four groups: 'Friends' (personal contacts), 'Neighbours' (strangers but local residents), 'Kids' (our kids and their friends), and 'VIPs' (the poor, marginalised, disabled, widows, orphans).

Is there a place for each at the table? And have they received their invitation? (A church could do worse than to appoint four leaders to pave a smooth way for each of them into following Jesus with us. Each entails quite different work!)

The next item to audit is our liturgy and habits – are there subtle ways we screen out certain types of people? If your gathering includes a lot of energetic singing, who can't cope?

Does a complex, 40-minute lecture sift out the non-philosophers, and those with basic English? If you need to be a long-time Biblereader to follow along, are you surprised at the lack of enquirers and newcomers among you?

At **Crossover**, our motto is Helping Australian Baptists Share Jesus, and the share often refers to living openly his way and telling others about him.

But right now let's think about who owns Jesus and who gets a share of him. Madness, I know. But of all the types of people I've mentioned, who does Jesus invite to his table, or refuse to eat with?

And if we're putting up filters and barriers (even passive ones by not inviting others), are we not attempting to keep him to ourselves and for ourselves?

I sympathise greatly with preachers and worship leaders. It is impossible to keep everyone happy. And the more diverse a group, the more challenging it is to cater. (I sympathise with caterers, too.)

How do you serve up plenty of meat for the strong but also milk for the weak, let alone kale for the vegans? How do you hold out the bread of life and keep everything gluten-free?

The key is this: We've been trying to pack a whole week's worth of Christianity into 90 minutes, so we can get it over and done with.

We should give that up. If you're needing to feed the 'strong' for a week with your teaching, they're not strong. They should be feeding themselves through the week and then coming ready to serve, not starving! (And more power to all readers actively doing just that.)

For many churches, our patterns of gathering have been disrupted, giving opportunity now for reinvention. What would it look like if our main gatherings were the icing on the cake (the bit you eat first!) and not the whole cake?

A shorter, accessible gathering that simply proclaims Jesus and centres around his table? Around that gathering and through the week could be ministries focused on particular groups – the kids, the deepthinkers, the enquirers/baptism candidates, the chronically musical, the retirees.

Many churches already do. But who gets Jesus? When one group tries to keep exclusively, they sooner or later find they don't have him at all.

From Unread to Misread
Hebrews to Revelation
Neglected New Testament Books



Doug Rowston

From Unread to Misread - a new book from Dr Doug Rowston

From Unread to Misread is an introduction to the books from Hebrews to Revelation in the New Testament. You are invited to look at the message, milieu, meaning, and mission of each document. With prayers at each chapter's end, the author desires the reader to have met the One at the centre of these neglected writings.

Dr Doug Rowston lives in Adelaide, South Australia, with his wife Rosalie and their Welsh Corgi. He is a Baptist Minister who has worked as theological lecturer at Burleigh College, religious education teacher at Prince Alfred College, pastor of Richmond Baptist, and adjunct lecturer at Charles Sturt University.

Doug is the author of six other books, including:

Jesus and Life: Word Pictures in John's Gospel; Pray and Sing: Prayers & Songs in the New Testament; Promises and Blessings in the Book of Revelation; Things that Jesus said: Parables of the Kingdom & Eternal Life; Things that Jesus did: Miracles of the Kingdom & Signs of Eternal Life.

Australia's changing spiritual landscape, and what this means for us as Australian Christians

Two recent reports from McCrindle Research, 'Australia's Changing Spiritual Climate' and 'The impact of faith on Australian Society'; have provided fascinating and surprising insights into the views of everyday Australians on spirituality, faith, and Christianity. Here are 5 take homes from these reports:

1. Australian society is more open and positive to Christianity than we realise

Three quarters of Australians believe the overall impact of Christianity on Australia society has been positive.

More than a third of Australians interviewed identified themselves as Christian and another third responded that they were either positive or neutral in their attitude toward Christianity

Only a quarter responded in a negative way, and of these only five percent indicated they were strongly opposed to Christianity.

2. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused people to think more about life's bigger questions

Almost half of people surveyed indicated they are thinking more about the meaning of life and their own mortality during the pandemic and almost a third indicated they are spending more time praying and thinking about God.

It seems COVID-19 has given people time, space and cause to consider spiritual things.

3. Young people are searching spiritually more than older people

When analysed by age group the data reveals it's Gen Y (25-40) and Gen Z (10-25) who have experienced the greatest change in their spiritual hunger.

In every area younger people indicated the greatest increase in thinking about spirituality, prayer and God.

While younger generations may be less present in Church, the results suggest this does not mean they are less interested in spirituality or less open to Christianity, but possibly more so.

4. People think more positively about Christians that we think

When given a list of both positive and negative attitudes and characteristics to describe Christians the most common descriptions were that Christians are caring, kind, honest, loving and generous.

It seems most people actually have positive interactions with the Christians they know and through this have a surprisingly positive view of Christians.

5. People are very open to coming to Church

Three in 10 Australians indicated they would be extremely or very likely to attend a Church service if invited by a friend or family member.

For Gen Z this number jumped to 45% of respondents, quite a remarkable response.

In summary, the overall sense is that for Christians the reality of how we are viewed by our culture is very different from our perceptions.

Outspoken voices in the mainstream and social media, changing moral attitudes and growing secularisation have often left Christians feeling as though the world is against us and no-one is open to Jesus.

The results however paint a very different picture. Christianity still retains a significant place in our nation, and especially among emerging generations, spiritual hunger remains strong and growing.

As Christians and Churches, the question then is what will we do with this opportunity?

How will we make the most of this cultural moment? Are we seeking opportunities to love, listen, invite and share the reason for the hope that we have among our neighbours and friends?

Perhaps the fields are whiter for the harvest that we have been led to believe. Let us therefore keep praying that God will use this season for his glory.





BAPTIST 40+ SINGLES

Our first events for 2022

WHEN: 12:30pm Saturday, 15th of January

WHERE: The Civic Park Family Restaurant

(171 Reservoir Road, Modbury)

COST: \$21.50 (Seniors Concession available)

&

WHEN: 12:30pm Saturday, 19th of February

WHERE: Hendon Hotel (110 Tapleys Hill

Road, Royal Park)

COST: Reasonable

Please contact Helen & Brian for more information at 8341 8283 or 0411 772 475.



Where are you serving this summer?

SU Family Missions

Victor Harbor – 27 December 2021 to 5 January 2022

Moonta – 1 to 8 January 2022

Port Vincent – 1 to 8 January 2022

Tumby Bay - 4 to 7 January 2022

Mannum - 9 to 14 January 2022

for more information: email julie.calvert@su.org.au OR visit https://www.susa.org.au/beach-missions/

Morialta Charitable Trust Fund

Morialta Charitable Trust Fund has been supporting disadvantaged Children, Young People and their families in South Australia through its annual program of Distributions for 40 years.

To enable the Fund to continue this support through Community Organisations in South Australia Morialta Charitable Trust Fund seeks donations from the public.

Donations of \$2- and above are Tax Deductible and can be forwarded to the Morialta Charitable Trust Fund at PO Box 92 Crafers SA 5152.