

TOGETHER IN MISSION



Saturday mornings at Whitmore Square

“There’s a little family here. People know each other. I’m grateful.”

An emerging community is forming in the heart of Whitmore Square, bringing hope and hot food to all who frequent it.

Wheeling out a BBQ on Saturday mornings to the centre of the square, members of WestCare Baptist cook up a spread of bacon, eggs, and sausages, and serve fresh tea and coffee at no cost. Music plays and conversation buzzes as

community members pull up a chair and hang out while they eat.

“They’re like a big family to me, they care,” says Greg Channing, a member of the community.

“It makes me want to be a part of them. I can fit in here. These mob, they go out of their way. What they do at the [WestCare] Centre, they work their butts off, and they’re so happy!”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



**Baptist Churches
SA&NT**

Building friendships through a community breakfast



words by
Benito Carbone



DAVID AND TEAM COOKING BREAKFAST

PATRICK & GREG NEXT TO THE LOCAL GARDEN

CYNTHIA & RHUBEE

CONTINUED FROM COVER

“They’re not there to preach, they’re just themselves. They’re amazing, there should be more like them.”

Whitmore Square is well-known in Adelaide as a hub for services supporting disadvantaged and homeless people.

Such services can become clinical in their attempts to support huge numbers of struggling people in an overwhelmed system. Authentic community can be hard to find in the network, an issue compounded by the lack of services available on Saturday mornings across the wider metropolitan area.

A group of four housemates living in the city saw this need and chose to act, and its ongoing impact on the wider community is remarkable.

“We started this in October 2022,” says David McDonough, one of four young adults who kickstarted this organic community.

“It started with me and my housemates [Elton Botelho, Luke McDonough, and Jesse Beckinsale], we live just around the corner from here. On that day we decided to wheel the BBQ out and do a barbie with some bacon and eggs and see who would come. Now it’s grown to maybe over 100 people every Saturday.

“There’s definitely a need. On Saturdays, there’s the least number of services for the homeless or people in need to get food.

“Where we live is part of the Baptist Care program Urban Learning Community, living and volunteering with the homeless and

those in need. So, we wanted a way to create better relationships and a good environment for people.”

And the response has been incredible. From Indigenous artists to octogenarian English teachers, horticulturalists to lawyers; the space is shared by many. For David, seeing relationships grow is the key.

“There’s lots of food, lots of services out there. But a lot of them can be a bit clinical, a bit transactional.

“What gets me back is the actual relationship side of it. People opening up, sharing more [of their story], friendship. From it we’ve seen people come to church, and not because we’ve evangelised to them.”

Growing up at WestCare Baptist opened David’s eyes to the opportunities at hand. For housemate Elton, after working with a COVID-19 response team in India, it was volunteering as an international student that exposed him to the present need.

“When I came to Adelaide, I had some spare time, so I thought I should volunteer. I walked into Baptist Care, and I was shocked. I didn’t know Australia had homelessness. As international students we see all the wishy-washy clean stuff, we don’t see the reality. It was then that I knew this is the place I should belong.

“Seeing people’s lives change. Having good conversations, that’s what this place is about.”

Greg – who’s been around WestCare for four months – has seen this change.

“I was on my way to Brisbane from Perth. My plane was leaving the next morning, so I slept

in this park, and someone stole my bag. All my belongings, everything was gone, and I was stuck here.

“Some old guy said to me ‘go over to that church over there, they’ll help ya’. So, I walked into that door and haven’t left. They opened their arms, heard my story, and took me on board. It’s the first time I’ve ran into a place where people actually, full-on care. You know the feeling straight away.”

Greg, a horticulturalist by trade, has transformed the local garden outside WestCare Baptist. Curiously, the garden has also proven a place of safe refuge.

“I can’t stay away. I camp there every now and then, and when there’s bad issues [going on nearby], I get to the gate and it’s like there’s a forcefield there automatically stopping me from leaving. It’s weird!

“He [God] keeps me safe. The things [people say] are true because they’ve happened, I’ve experienced it! I’ve felt it.

“I shake my head. Twice I’ve had bad occasions of things getting stolen, and you just lose it. But ‘BANG!’ – just stopped me at the perimeter and sent me back. And I just sit down like, ‘what’s just happened?’ I feel almost embarrassed saying something about it. But it’s kept me out of trouble, and I just go back to the garden and keep working on the garden.”

Come be a part of this emerging community! Serving food and community every Saturday from 9am at Whitmore Square, Adelaide.

President's Address



with Rev.
Scott Cadman

None so blind as those that cannot see.

I know I should probably be talking about the things that are happening in our SA & NT churches. But my attention was diverted from our local situations by a disturbing article I read the other day.

It was about the crisis unfolding in Gaza. Written by John Lyons, the ABC Global Affairs Editor currently based in Jerusalem, he sought to be impartial, both condemning what Hamas did while also reporting on Israel’s conduct.

In this article, he simply states that Gaza is the most dangerous place in the world to be a child. The stark facts bring home to us the tragedy that is unfolding before our eyes.

- A Palestinian child is killed every 15 minutes. Thousands more are missing under rubble
- One of every 10 children killed in Gaza did not make their first birthday.
- More than 1,000 children have lost one or both legs
- Those having limbs amputated are having it done without anaesthetic
- There are now at least 19,000 orphans in Gaza and thousands who have lost one parent

- At least 11,500 children have been killed
- 80 per cent of the population are now without anywhere to live
- 100 per cent of the children in Gaza need mental health support
- Around 1.1 million children are unable to access humanitarian aid
- There is now one toilet for every 70 people
- Diarrhoea cases in children are above 100,000
- 135,000 children under two are now at risk of severe malnutrition

If statistics don’t move us, then what of this personal story.

A 13-year-old called Dina was injured and one leg was amputated. She lost both of her parents and two brothers. “But Dina hadn’t lost hope,” an aid worker said.

“She told us about her dreams of being a lawyer, saying, ‘I feel injustice; when I grow up, I will become a lawyer so that I can enjoy my rights and the rights of all children’.

The day after Dina made those comments she was killed by an Israeli bomb.

“The horrors of Gaza are almost unspeakable,” Lyons challenges.

“As difficult as all this is to read and to watch, it’s important the world does not look away.”

As I ponder these terrible circumstances, I am reminded of what renowned Australian author Morris West once wrote.

“I have come to the conclusion that institutional power distances men and women from their own humanity. They forget that men and women, not institutions are the subjects and objects of salvation...The tragic matter is that all these evils are abetted by and condoned by good men, for good causes: the stability of the state, doctrinal orthodoxy, traditional morality.”

What happens to Jesus at Easter bears striking resemblance to West’s words. As we look again to the cross, all the characters involved – who are not unlike us – and in light of all that is happening locally and globally around us, especially Gaza, it might be worth pondering again what the words of the prophet Micah mean for us.

*He has told you, O mortal, what is good,
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice and to love kindness
and to walk humbly with your God?*

Micah 6:6-8

EDITOR

Benito Carbone
bcarbone@bcsant.org.au

Issued by Baptist Churches of South
Australia & the Northern Territory
Incorporated.

35 King William Rd, Unley SA 5061
www.bcsant.org.au
(08) 8357 1755

MAILING ADDRESS

Baptist Churches SA & NT
PO Box 432, UNLEY SA 5061
info@bcsant.org.au

ARTICLES & ADVERTISING

In this publication are the opinions of the authors, not necessarily the editor or publisher. The publishers reserve the right to accept or decline any advertising.



READ ONLINE!

HELP US MAKE EASTER CAMP 2024 HAPPEN!

Each year we gather with over 200 teenagers at Mylor and Wirraway campsites to help them encounter God. Around 80 leaders are present from our members churches to serve and disciple these young people – but there are more ways to support us than losing sleep and sanity on camp.

If you’re interested in helping out, here are three things you can do:

Pray! Pray for our camp speakers, leaders, and Core Teams; for the youth who will come along and hear about Jesus; for spiritual and physical safety;

for great weather, and even greater friendships to be forged. Pray that the Holy Spirit will move in our camp community.

Serve on our catering team! Sign up for a shift to help out in the kitchen – chopping, peeling, stirring, sweeping, washing, and serving meals. Our volunteer kitchen hands help keep catering costs down and allow us to support more young people to attend.

Donate! Help out by sponsoring campers and leaders to be at camp.

Get in touch with Mary Ackers - Youth Ministry Facilitator (mackers@bcsant.org.au) or head to our website (sabaptist.asn.au/ec) to help out!



ACCOLADES & ACHIEVEMENTS

1976 • MEMBER OF THE ORDER OF AUSTRALIA
 1983 • COMMANDER OF THE ORDER OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE
 1984 • AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR
 1998 • NATIONAL LIVING TREASURE
 1999 • COMPANION OF THE ORDER OF AUSTRALIA
 2000 • OLYMPIC TORCH BEARER NUMBER 11 CARRYING THE FLAME THROUGH ANANGU COUNTRY
 2006 • DAME OF THE ORDER OF ST GREGORY THE GREAT
 2006 • PAPAL HONOUR FROM POPE JOHN PAUL II
 2009 • NAIDOC LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

• HONORARY DOCTORATES AND FELLOWSHIPS FROM 12 UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES, AND MANY MORE AWARDS AND HONOURS

PHOTO: DR LOWITJA O'DONAGHUE. PHOTO CREDIT AND RELEASE: LOWITJA INSTITUTE

Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue

AC CBE DSG

1 August 1932 – 4 February 2024

Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue lived a remarkable life, breaking new ground and impacting the lives and communities she connected with.

A Yankunytjatjara woman, Lowitja was born in the APY lands. At the age of two, Lowitja was taken to Colebrook Children's Home at Quorn in the Flinders Ranges, South Australia, and at age eleven was moved to the new Colebrook Home at Eden Hills in Adelaide.

Lowitja did not see her mother for another 30 years. After finishing school at Unley Girls Technical High School, Lowitja commenced training as a nursing aide at South Coast District Hospital in Victor Harbor and then in 1953 began training at the Royal Adelaide Hospital as the first Aboriginal trainee nurse.

Throughout this time, Lowitja developed her faith as part of a Baptist home fellowship in Victor Harbor, and then as member of Unley Park Baptist from 1955-1975.

Her faith journey led her to apply to the Australian Baptist Missionary Society (now Baptist Mission Australia). In 1962, she was commissioned, becoming the first Aboriginal person sent overseas on mission.

She was posted to the hospital in Tukrajhar, Assam, India but later evacuated due to unrest in the region.

Upon her return to Adelaide, Lowitja committed her life to her people. Working with determination, she courageously led change in South Australia and across the Commonwealth.

Among many other contributions and acknowledgements, Lowitja was part of the successful campaign for recognition at the 1967 referendum, she was the inaugural chairperson for ATSIC, in 1991 she was the first Aboriginal person to address the United Nations General Assembly, she was widely commended for her leadership in spearheading the negotiations for the Native Title Act passed in 1993, she was an advisor to Prime Minister Kevin Rudd for the National Apology made in 2008, and she served as chairperson or patron for many other significant committees and organisations in our Australian story.

Lowitja was a woman who led with tenacity, integrity and faith. She was involved in a number of our Baptist churches across her lifetime including Unley Park, Parkside,

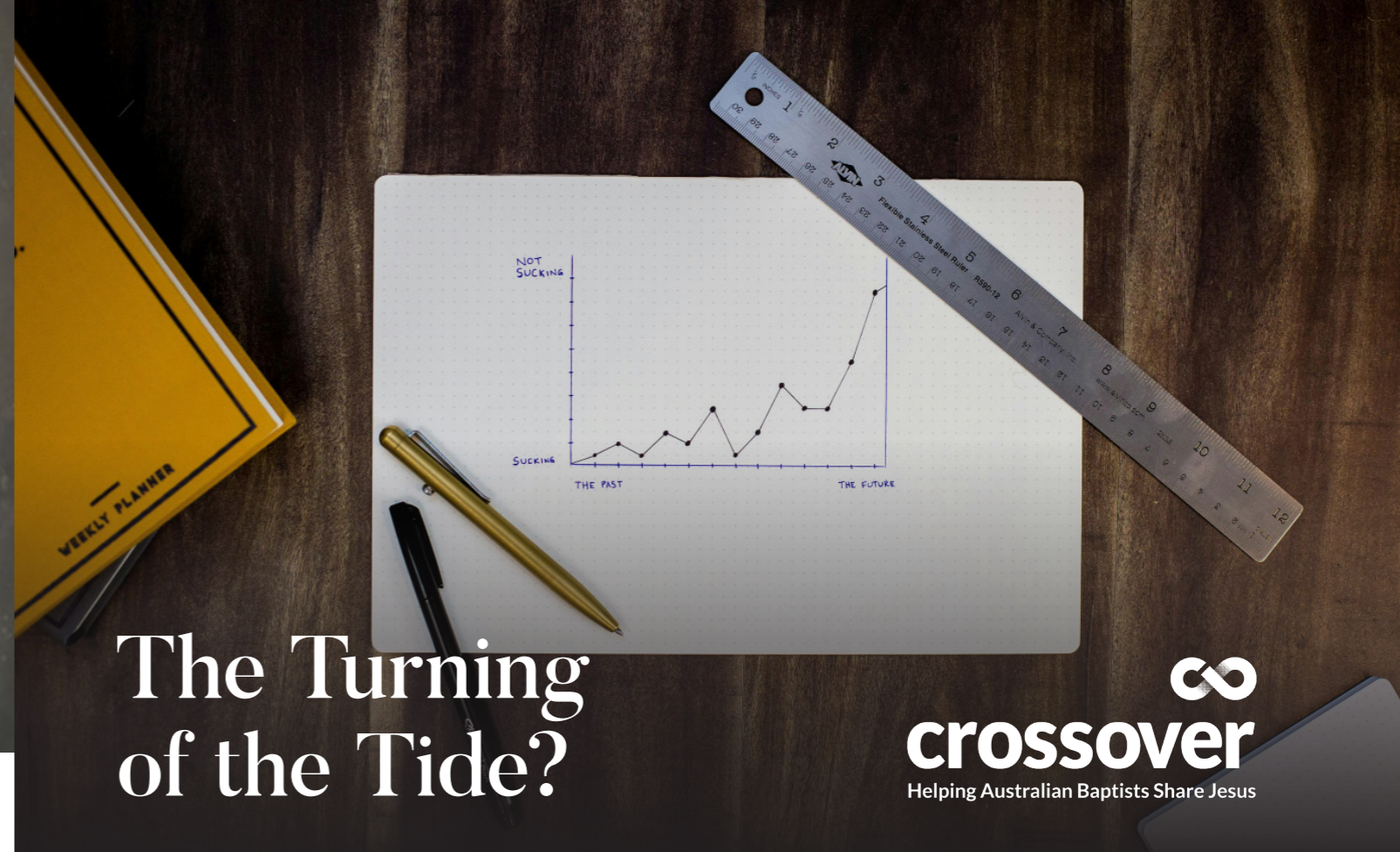
Flinders Street, Broadview, Aboriginal Berean Community, and Westcare.

She leaves a significant legacy across our wider movement, not least our Assembly's apology statement made to Indigenous Australians in 2000, which she was instrumental in developing.

With Baptist Care SA, she became Patron of WestCare centre and advocated for The Sanctuary in the City, Karpani drop-in centre, and the art centre, as well as advising more broadly on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander matters.

Lowitja's journey of faith was not always easy as some of her strongest critics were Christian churches and Christian people. In later years, her faith was revitalised and she sought connection with a number of people from our Baptist movement who regularly visited and prayed with Lowitja.

We celebrate and give thanks to God for the life of Dr Aunty Lowitja O'Donoghue. May we be inspired by her faith and legacy to carry on the important work of reconciliation and service to our communities.



The Turning of the Tide?



I blinked and had to look at the number a second time: 34%! Each year we gather the number of baptisms reported by Australian Baptist state associations, and there was a 34% increase from 2022 to 2023. Wow! But what to make of it?

It could be a whole range of things. Perhaps Australian Baptists got a whole lot better at reporting! (I imagine plenty of baptisms go un-counted, and while that's frustrating for statisticians, it's rather how things should be in a decentralised movement like ours.)

Or was it a post-Covid bump? Possibly, but I'm not convinced. Was it our National Baptism Week initiative? No, given the 6-month lag in collecting the numbers, they'll show up next year.

I had been expecting a rise of over 20% simply based on what I was hearing anecdotally from pastors and leaders. But 34% is remarkable – what could possibly explain it?

Well, I think the answer could possibly be Jesus. Why on earth would so many people want to be baptised? Hang on, why would they not? Let's remember that belonging to God's family through faith in Christ is the normal and sensible thing given the unfolding of his kingdom, the place in it he offers, and the promise of his Spirit!

We can get lost in studying the tea leaves of culture and economy to see whether people will or won't like Jesus - and find that we believe more in the power of culture and economy than in the power of the gospel to captivate people of all cultures and economies.

That said, I do wonder whether wave of baptisms is another indication of the 'turning of the tide.' The

church in the West has long been adjusting to the end of Christendom and the loss of (mandatory) popularity that entailed. Many have become resigned to endless decline – a narrative that's entrenched itself even as church participation has increased.

As Western culture increasingly becomes a spiritual desert, however, should we be surprised that spiritual thirst increases? Along with stories of baptisms, I've been inundated with stories of 'gatecrashers' – people (especially young adults) walking into churches that neither advertised nor invited them – and asking to be introduced to Jesus and Christianity.

Ten years ago the 'New Atheist Movement' held the floor among Western intellectuals, but it has died much faster than any church it mocked, and in its place we now see the 'New Theist Movement' – including such opinion-leaders as Jordan Peterson, Tom Holland and Ayaan Hirsi Ali (now openly a Christian). For more on this see Justin Brierley's *The Surprising Rebirth of Belief in God* book and podcast.

So are we seeing the turning of the tide – even the beginnings of revival? It's 20 years too early to say. But keeping our heads – indeed keeping our eyes on Jesus - our confidence to live for and witness to him should be based on him, rather than the fickle fashions of our culture. Let's be absolutely confident in Christ, and in pointing people to him, regardless of whether they're likely to applaud or imprison us.

words by
Andrew Turner
 Director, Crossover Australia



2024 May Mission Month Mending

May is coming up quickly and the May Mission Month theme this year is Mending!

We live in a broken, troubled world with challenges all around us, whether across the street, the nation or the world. God graciously allows us to join him in offering healing and shalom to our neighbours and to creation.

No matter where we are, or what our situation, we can join God in mending his beautiful, broken world. We don't bring healing in our strength—we are invited to be co-menders with God in Jesus Christ, our Healer and Saviour.

Being a co-mender means joining God in renewing creation and communities, developing meaningful and authentic relationships, restoring people and the planet

through God's healing and love, and making ourselves available to be used by God.

God is mending his beautiful, broken world in Jesus Christ our Lord. Jesus calls us to be co-menders with God, joining with God wherever he brings healing, shalom, reconciliation, and renewal.

Being a co-mender means sharing God's love and Gospel in compassionate, authentic, and relevant ways. It means partnering together with each other and God, being willing to allow God to use us according to the gifts he has given to us – sending and being sent, giving and receiving, serving together as partners in God's mission.

On the Baptist Mission Australia website, (<https://www.baptistmissionaustralia.org/Be-Involved/May-Mission-Month>) you will find a wealth of resources to use in your church, youth group and home groups.

The resources follow along the four key Mending! themes:

Renewing: It starts with us (Galatians 5:16–17, 22–26)

Relating: It's always about relationships (Matthew 4:18–22)

Restoring: It's about the whole Gospel for the whole world (Luke 4:14–21)

Responding: It's about being available (John 1:35–42)

As co-menders in God's family I encourage you to join with Baptist Mission Australia throughout May and beyond, as we pray and find ways to co-mend creatively and distinctively in our communities and with those serving around the world.

Let's partner together as God guides his people forward to his opportunities of service.



words by
Lisa Cornish
State Director SA/NT
Baptist Mission Australia



Steadfast in service Baptist Care SA stays true to its mission

a General Manager role at the Synod office of the Uniting Church. A member of Seeds Uniting Church, Sue is a passionate worship leader. Sundays see Sue on stage, leading the congregation in song.

Baptist Care SA Board Chair, Chris Partington, says Sue is well-suited to guide the organisation while a new Chief Executive Officer is recruited.

"The Board has unwavering confidence in Sue's capability", says Chris.

Deeply motivated by a desire to make a difference in the lives of people who are at risk or marginalised, Sue joined Baptist Care SA to serve people who are in need.

"I want to use my gifts to do my part in providing practical help for those who don't have a voice or need help in their day-to-day lives", says Sue.

As a member of a skilled and passionate Executive Leadership team, Sue has collaborated in the identification of Baptist Care SA's strategic ambitions, which form the foundation on which the organisation

will deliver its mission.

"My role is to bring the team together and continue the collaboration that will see us achieve positive outcomes for clients and communities", says Sue.

Whilst 2024 has just begun, a recent camp for children in Baptist Care SA's Out of Home Care program has proven to be a highlight and cause for celebration. Held at Mylor Adventure Camp, the camp provided a unique opportunity for some of our most vulnerable young people to mix in a social environment and have an experience they otherwise may not have had.

Sue believes it is a privilege to be part of enabling these opportunities.

"This is why I serve in the role that I do."

Now embarking on its 111th year, Baptist Care SA has strengthened its resolve to journey with people towards the attainment of their full potential and looks forward to remaining of service.

"The need is as great as ever", says Sue.



Mental Health First Aid for Baptist Church Community



CONGRATULATIONS TO THE NEW MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AIDERS AT ROSTREVOR BAPTIST CHURCH CHINESE COMMUNITY!

According to a national study of mental health and wellbeing, 42.9 per cent of people aged 16–85 years had experienced a mental disorder at some time in their life. 21.5 per cent of people had a mental disorder lasting longer than 12 months, with anxiety being the most common cause (17.2 per cent of people aged 16–85 years; 38.8 per cent of people aged 16–24 years).

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare revealed that in 2011, mental illness ranked as the third biggest source of disease burden in Australia after cancer and cardiovascular (heart) disease. Although mental illness is not a major cause of premature death, it is the leading cause of disability in Australia.

Mental Health First Aid was first offered right here in Australia in 2000 and has now been licensed to over 25 countries around the world, with over four million people trained, and over 900,000 in Australia.

The program adopted the idea of physical first aid courses that teach the skills and knowledge required to recognise and respond to life-threatening emergencies and provide a first aid response across a range of different situations.

In the same way, the Mental Health First Aid training program provides a practical, skills-based action plan. Participants learn the skills to recognise and respond to someone experiencing a mental health problem or mental health crisis, until professional help is received, or the crisis resolves.

It equips you with the skills to listen, connect, and offer support to those who are experiencing anxiety, depression, psychosis, substance use problems, gambling problems, eating disorders, and mental health crises such as suicidal thoughts and behaviours, panic attacks, psychotic states, aggressive behaviours, etc.

The program equips the Mental Health First Aider to play a vital role in reducing stigma and promoting pathways to support those experiencing mental health problems in our workplaces, communities, schools, and tertiary institutions.

Jing Ding is a bilingual presenter from Mental Health First Aid Australia. She is an active member of the Rostrevor Baptist Church Chinese community. Here she has opportunity to apply her counselling and MHFA skills to support those who have difficulty in maintaining good mental health.

To assist other church communities to benefit from this training, Jing is offering training at a basic cost of \$235/person. Jing will bring the training course to your church. You are welcome to contact Jing for further details: jing@arishine.com.au

Testimony:

"Jing gave clear information and explanation of every topic with intuitive interactions. The content of the course was very eye opening and have helped me to understand how to react & help individuals in mental health concerns."

"Very useful and practical knowledge and training to assist people around with different levels of mental illnesses."

"Jing presented the course in a very clear and structural way. The course will greatly help me to support the people in mental health area. I learned many tips such as how to approach them, how to communicate and support them in a professional and non-judgemental way."

words by
Darryl Bishop
Intercultural Ministries





FROM OUR NORTHERN TERRITORY CHURCHES

Service of Thanksgiving, Recognition, and Ordination

Mal Sercombe, Senior Pastor at Darwin Baptist Church, for the past 22 years, was recognised, appreciated, and thanked for his servant-hearted ministry in a Service of Thanksgiving and Recognition on the afternoon of 26 November 2023.

Friends from Darwin Baptist, other churches, and from interstate filled the church for a joyous celebration and to share in afternoon tea.

To cap off the occasion, during the late afternoon Service of Recognition, Mal was ordained as a minister of the Baptist Churches of NT by Director of Ministries, Rev Mike Mills.

Several leaders and members spoke of the impact Mal has had on them personally as Pastor and friend. Pastor Toni Rehrmann said Mal has always modelled 'servant-hearted leadership and has led the church with discretion through times of great challenge'.

Mal's wife, Ellen was recognised for her faithful support, side by side, with Mal in hospitality and making others feel valued as well as her roles on the Welcoming Team and in Marriage Preparation courses.

Mal and Ellen were then joined on stage by their Darwin children and grandchildren and friends were invited forward to lay hands on Mal and Ellen and pray for them.

As well as pastoring Darwin Baptist Church for several decades, Mal has filled many other roles, serving on the BUNT Board from 2001 to 2019 and on the recent amalgamation task force that saw the merger of BUNT and BCSEA.

Mal was a pioneer of Baptist Care NT and Foundation Chair for the first five years. During his ministry he has conducted 27 funerals and 42 weddings!

Most importantly, said one speaker, "he has modelled Jesus to us as a church and community".

Rev. Mike Mills, Director of Ministries, had the final words in his prayer for Mal and Ellen.

"May God bless you in the next chapter of your life. Lord, give them youthful energy as they embark on the next stage.

Let us live the truth

Let us be the truth

Let us speak the truth in Love."

words by
Andrea Adams
Editor, Belonging People

For more NT stories - head to
www.bcsant.org.au/belonging-people/



Morialta Charitable Trust

Through an annual grants program, we support charitable organisations working to bring lasting change to young South Australians in need. Your donation will contribute to achieving our vision for communities where all young South Australians reach their full potential.

morialtacharitabletrust.org.au
PO Box 113 Magill, SA 5072

Growing Together in Marriage

In 2024 we are inviting married couples, no matter what stage or age, to try to balance the busyness and prioritise their partner and marriage!

On the weekend, there is no group discussion or public sharing of your marriage! The Team couples share honestly and openly of their personal experiences and insights, sometimes out of pain and sometimes with humour, about different aspects of marriage. Following each session opportunity is given for couples to discuss their responses in the privacy of their own room.

Retreat weekends in 2024:

- March 15-17
- June 28-30
- September 20-22
- October 25-27

This year all weekends will be held at Abbotsford Country House, Lyndoch.

For more information contact Steve & Val D'Arcy (0402 983 154) or Rob & Lee Allen (0438 892 980) or see gtimsa.org for details and registration.