

November 2025



**BELONGING
PEOPLE**



The Karen Community at Casuarina Baptist
STAND WITH MYANMAR page 2



**BAPTIST
WORLD AID
AUSTRALIA**
Be love. End poverty.

STAND WITH MYANMAR

Throughout our nation we are blessed to have nearly 100 Baptist congregations or churches originating from Myanmar.

At Casuarina Baptist there is a strong Karen Fellowship. *(photo on front page and below).*

As well as their own Karen language service each Sunday, many are actively involved in the life of the wider church at Casuarina—in prayer and worship on Sunday, singing and playing in the music team, preparing and serving communion. Their presence enriches the church and brings the reality of the suffering in Myanmar to our doorstep with many having family caught up in the conflict.

Baptist World Aid Australia and Baptist Mission Australia have been supporting churches, and communities in Myanmar, through prayer, advocacy and donations, for several years throughout the recent military conflict and recently the devastating earthquake on March 28 this year.

The imminent withdrawal of critical international aid services from the Myanmar-Thailand border will leave 108,000 displaced Myanmar citizens at risk of hunger, untreated illness and deprivation. The freeze on aid has already forced the closure of hospitals in several camps in Thailand, leaving thousands of people without access to medical care.

Ongoing conflict, including aerial bombardments, puts civilians in constant danger, and poor conditions in overcrowded camps have increased the risk of disease.

Myanmar needs humanitarian assistance, now more than ever.

Please stand with Myanmar in your Church community and give through <https://standwithmyanmar.com.au/give>



A Word In Season.....

Towers and Tents: Living as the Scattered People of God

From the very beginning, God's story has been shaped by movement — by His people being scattered for His purpose. While the builders of Babel sought to settle, to build towers and make a name for themselves, God called Abram to something far more uncertain... and far more beautiful.

“Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.” (Genesis 12:1)

That invitation wasn't just about geography — it was about posture.

Abram was being called away from comfort and toward dependence, from certainty to trust. He traded towers of self-security for tents of availability. In doing so, God's promise unfolded:

“I will bless you... and you will be a blessing.” (Genesis 12:2)

God's people have always been called to live between the gathered and the scattered — worshipping together, but witnessing everywhere. The danger comes when we settle too deeply into one or the other. Faith without community becomes isolated; community without mission becomes insular.

Like Abram, we are invited to travel light, to pitch tents rather than build towers, and to mark the journey with altars — simple reminders of God's faithfulness.

These might be verses on your wall, a prayer whispered on your drive, or a memory of God's provision in your workplace.

Altars remind us that God meets us not just in church buildings, but in the everyday — in the classrooms, cattle stations, coffee shops, and communities of the Northern Territory.

So as you go this week, ask:

Where am I being called from settled to scattered?

And what “altars” might I build to remember God's presence and provision along the way?

Grace and Peace,

***Gavin Brown, Lead Pastor
Alice Springs Baptist Church***



Learning Together at Bush Training Camp

The whole Outback team (minus Shannon and the kids) were delighted to join with Indigenous Christians for Bush training camp again this year in June. This continues to provide a rich meeting place to grow and learn together as followers of Jesus. Learning about God together, on-country, provided a wonderful context for deep reflection together.

We enjoyed seeing wild camels and dingoes, while a bushfire nearby provided some amazing scenes. Mal Good took all of the photos from camp, which give a glimpse into the beauty and richness of the camp.

Mat kicked off the first session, which followed on from previous training camps and decades of important conversations led by Jerry Jangala and other local Christians and thinkers who've walked alongside them.

Mat presented something of a framework which facilitated conversation around the relationship between faith and culture and how we think (theology) and live (transformation) for God within our specific cultural context in relationship to the bigger picture of God's purposes for all humanity (Rev 7:9).





This was followed by teaching sessions presented by the Lajamanu “Channels of Hope” team alongside Amanda Merrett, who is the project manager for Channels of Hope for Gender in Lajamanu. That team has developed a program and Bible-based materials in the area of gender violence prevention.

Lajamanu Baptist Church leaders and members have been key in the development and implementation of this program in their community. They are involved in some courageous conversations and it's great to see God's people taking the lead in this important area. Their presentation at the camp provided the opportunity for helpful discussions.

Mat Anderson



Lynette joins the Outback Team



Prayer for Lynette is led by Rev. John Whitbourn.

In September, we held our 2025 team retreat. We were blessed to be able to hold it at Nungalinga College in Darwin during their college holidays. Our team are not in one place, at the same time too often, so it's a wonderful joy when we are.

During the retreat we were delighted to welcome and commission **Lynette Tasman** as a new part-time member of our team! Lynette is a Warlpiri woman from Lajamanu. She is an assistant volunteer pastor in her local church and like most remote church leaders serves in numerous other ways in her community.

Mat first approached Lynette to consider a part time role some time ago and after prayer and careful consideration the team were so pleased that Lynette agreed to join the team.

Lynette will join our regular team meetings and prayer gatherings (usually on video call) and we are excited for the wisdom and insight that she will contribute.

Please pray for Lynette as she steps into a role with our team and balances her other local responsibilities.

Our purpose as a team is to walk alongside the Indigenous Baptist churches in the bush. We love sitting with them, learning from and growing together with Gods family.

Please continue to uphold and thank God for the Indigenous Baptist churches in the bush, **Willowra, Ali Curung, Murray Downs, Yuendumu, Lajamanu, Kalkarindji and Dagaragu** and their leaders and all they do to live for God and make him known among their people and beyond.

Pray for our team too as we seek to walk alongside them and be a blessing.

Mat Anderson
Team Leader



Transition for the Anderson Family

*Mat, Shannon,
Beth, Peter,
Caleb & Samuel*

After living in Yuendumu for 4 years and Kalkarindji for 3, the Anderson family is moving to Darwin at the end of this year! Moving away from Kalkarindji will be a big transition for the family.

Being based that much further from the various remote churches and the communities they love, comes with some sadness. But this is the right time for this move, with their oldest entering high school next year. Despite the sadness, they are also excited, because there are numerous ways that this move will benefit their ministry as along-siders with the remote churches.

As team-leader, Mat will be freed up with a broader focus and hopes to spend more time across all the remote Baptist churches where BMA serves and with our growing team.

They are still exploring some of the opportunities that this move could bring and trusting that in God's providence it will bring blessing for the family, team and the yapa/ngumbin churches that the team walks alongside.

They are thankful to be able to care for their family and continue to serve with Baptist Mission Australia, walking alongside the remote churches.

Thanks for your prayers for them as they make the move!

Darwin Baptist Commissions New Associate Pastor



With a strong sense of God's calling on her life to teaching and pastoral ministry, **Vandana Thavare** was recently commissioned on August 17th as an Associate Pastor at Darwin Baptist Church.

Vandana comes to us after successful professional experience and strong engagement in churches in Fiji, Alice Springs, Perth and outback WA.

Photo: DBC Staff, Council members and congregation pray for Vandana at her commissioning.

In her desire to pursue full time ministry, she has been studying at Morling Bible College (Perth) over the past few years.

It has been a great delight to see her love of scripture, her passion for the Lord and her commitment to his church. Her warmth and wisdom have already been greatly appreciated.

This is an exciting time for us at DBC as we now have a full pastoral team, and we ask for your prayers for the team as they seek the Lord together.

Amber Badenhop, DBC Elder

Vandana writes:

I am thrilled to have joined Darwin Baptist Church in pastoral capacity three months ago in step with the Holy Spirit's leading as I had been seeking God in where he would send me.

After about eight months of a sense of anticipation that God was going to do something in my life, He laid on me the task of preaching and teaching in early 2022 which came with two impressions: the *responsibility* and the *seriousness* of it. I was also studying at Morling College (Perth Vose Campus) at the time. Filled with his joy and authority, I served part-time as an associate pastor at a church in Perth for some time. I was also working part time as a physiotherapist in my practice.



My family originates from Pune, India. My parents are retired pastors and missionaries. We moved to Fiji in 2001 as my parents served as missionaries there (with Churches of Christ in Australia) amongst the Indian people after many years of church planting, evangelism and teaching at a Bible college in India. I had the privilege of participating with them in various ministries. In 2007, I came to Perth to further my studies in Physiotherapy and stayed. My family consists of my parents, sister and her family and a brother who all reside in WA.

I am enjoying getting to know the DBC family and am excited about what God is doing and going to do in our church and local community for his glory.

Vandana Thavare
Associate Pastor
Darwin Baptist Church

BELONGING PEOPLE ONLINE

This issue of Belonging People can be found, with previous issues, on the BCSANT website at <https://bcsant.org.au/belonging-people/>

Val Wardley reflects on her Journey with Jesus at Katherine Baptist Church

Katherine Baptist Church was formally constituted on November 6th, 1988. Our longest-standing member is **Val Wardley** who shares some of her journey of faith.

When did you first start attending Katherine Baptist Church?

In 1992

What brought you to Katherine?

The RAAF

How did you become a Christian?

Through Ingrid Phillips from Katherine Baptist Church.

The short version of this story is that, after arriving in Katherine, we had to travel to WA for 6 months as my husband John went out on 'Bivouac'.

During this time, my children attended the Church of Christ Sunday School in Naremben, and I occasionally accompanied them to church.

The minister of this church happened to know Ingrid, and on my return to Katherine, Ingrid got in contact with me and invited me to Katherine Baptist Church.



When Ingrid invited me to church, I was not going to church at all. I was, however, sending my kids to Sunday School at the Anglican Church on the RAAF Base.

I too, had attended Sunday School as a child at the Naremben Anglican Church, up until I went to Boarding School at around the age of 15.

I was also christened and confirmed. Mum took us to church and Dad allowed us to go, as long as we went to the Swimming Club afterwards. He never wanted us to be late for the Swimming Club.

I began attending the Katherine Baptist Church on my own, without my children, as they continued to go to the Sunday School on the RAAF Base. I then thought that it was a bit silly- both of us going to different churches. Eventually, they came to Katherine Baptist Church with me.

Where were you baptised?

In the river at Morrow's farm.

I was baptised by Michael Reppion, who was the Katherine Baptist minister at the time. Over the years, many people have been baptised at many different places, including the Hot Springs, Mataranka and Douglas Daly.

The river where I was baptised was safe to swim in at that time. I wouldn't go swimming there now, though, because of the crocs.

What is your favourite Bible verse?

Well, I don't really have one because it just depends on what I'm thinking about at the time. I do love Romans and especially all the verses on the Fruits of the Spirit. Romans 5:5 is the main verse that comes to me:

'And hope does not disappoint us because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us.'

Thank you for playing the keyboard for us in our church services.

What is your favourite song?

Well, this one will sum up the whole of my testimony: 'My Redeemer Lives'.

I know He rescued my soul. His blood has covered my sin. I believe. I believe!

***Val was interviewed by
Christina Young***



***Val with her children
in earlier days***

Casuarina Welcomes a United Nations of Believers

Casuarina Baptist Church is wrapping up the year with Praise and Thanksgiving to Father God for the many blessings of the past few months. **On Baptism Sunday** we rejoiced as four of our people, **Clayton, Darlene, James and Kyaw Aye** were baptised by Pastors Mal and Chris.



Membership

In August, eleven people who are already serving in the church in various roles, were joyfully welcomed into membership. They are **Kate, Clayton, Blu Doh, Eddy, Sugi, Bunyemi, Dorcas, Hussein, Mangala, Darlene and Valerie.**



Those baptised and those who became members join our **'United Nations of Believers'** as all have come to live in Australia from overseas. At Casuarina we are amazingly blessed by the diversity of cultures represented among us.

Tea By the Sea

A Dry Season tradition, going back many years at Casuarina, is our Tea by the Sea. This picnic style gathering where we enjoy Food and Fellowship on a Sunday evening by the beautiful Arafura Sea was held several times in the Dry.

Sunday can be a busy time for Christians and it's nice to be able to relax a little on such occasions as these!



And A Farewell

In September we sadly farewelled, **Solomon and Yanum Perumal** who came to us from South Africa 19 years ago and have served the Lord faithfully at Casuarina in many different ways. Solomon has led a Bible Study and Prayer group for several years as well as being part of the Saturday Men's Study Group.

In the last two years, he has also served as Cultural/Pastoral Care Pastor in a voluntary capacity. Yanum has been involved in our Women's Ministry and Morning Teas, the Worship Team and a friend to many with her quiet and faithful witness. Our prayers and love are with them as they make a new home in Perth and continue to serve the Lord there.

Andrea Adams

BAPTIST BUSH CHURCH CELEBRATES 20 YEARS

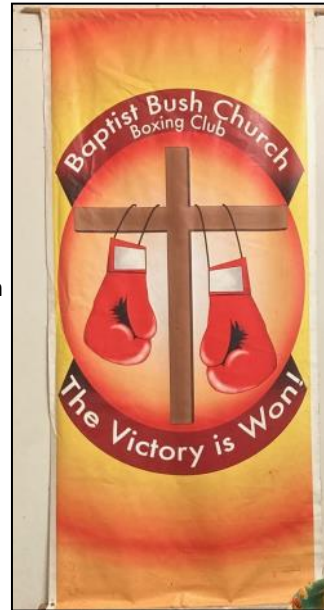
JESUS IS LIGHT was the theme for the Baptist Bush Church at Humpty Doo as they celebrated 20 years of service to the community in the name of Jesus.

On a warm September evening, surrounded by bushland, locals and guests were welcomed by **Pastor Sharon Crook** who noted that the celebration was also to mark the church becoming part of BCSANT.

Sharon acknowledged her late husband, Brod, who with Sharon founded and led the Bush Church from its beginning 20 years ago. Brod went to be with Jesus in July 2023.

She also spoke of the support the church offers to the youth of the community many of whom are vulnerable, **'When we stand together the victory is won in Jesus'**.

The church has a long established tradition of Boxing training for young people. Training sessions always commence with the Lord's Prayer.



At the celebration, guests also joined in the Lord's Prayer, and were treated to a boxing match by several young men who train regularly with accredited volunteer coaches. Boxing at the Bush Church offers local youth a disciplined program and an engaging sport in a safe environment.



L. Pastor Sharon with Mal, Chris, Vijaya & Joanna

A free food ministry is run by the church and over the past twenty years has fed thousands of people. Currently the Bush Church Café provides free breakfast to the local Taminmin College students two days a week and also serves a ‘delicious brekkie and coffee’ to adults for a small charge.

Sharon gave God all the glory, stating, **‘Without God’s hand none of this would have happened’.**

At this special celebration, the kids were occupied at an Art Table which included 100 cup cakes to decorate and also candles to make.



Later, sparklers were handed out to the kids who went outside to light up the darkness -
..... A reminder that Jesus is indeed our Light!

Andrea Adams

Walk the World 2025

Can prayer be fun? Yes! God loves it when we enjoy talking to Him! Prayer grows our faith and helps align our hearts with God. It can also bring people together and spark joy for kids and adults alike.

That's where Walk the World comes in!

In 1 Thessalonians 5:17 Paul encourages the church to "...pray continuously..."

The Baptist Churches of South Australia and Northern Territory family of churches are being invited to come together to honour God's desire for his people to spend time in prayer with him and pray collectively for our neighbourhoods, our country, and our world.

Walk the World is an invitation for churches, families, groups, and people of all ages to get out in our local area and pray for our neighbourhoods, Australia, and the world, for the needs we see on the news, in our Teams' newsletters and the needs concerning individuals around us. God loves to hear his people praying.



Across the weekend of 7-9 Nov 2025 (if this weekend doesn't suit- just choose one that does!), we are encouraging you to commit to praying as you walk, run, wheel, cycle, imagine, or drive around your local neighbourhood. You can also stay in one place and have a picnic!

Will you join with us to "pray continuously" for God to be at work in His beautiful, broken world?

Find out more here:
www.baptistmissionaustralia.org.au/WalktheWorld

Lisa Cornish
State Director SA/NT
Baptist Mission Australia

Studying at Nungalingya

A number of our Indigenous Church Leaders have been in Darwin studying at Nungalingya College.

Several are first time students at the college, others are continuing courses which include Foundation Studies, and Certificates in Ministry and Theology. Please keep them in prayer.



*Jerry and Arana Rice, and Rachel
from Ali Curung*



*Eddy & Lottie
Robertson from
Yuendumu with
Mal Good.*



*George Edwards,
Judith Donald,
Angela Berd
(Kalkarindji),
Andrea Tasman,
Eddy Robertson
(Yuendumu),*

Cornerstone Celebrates 20 Years



We were very pleased to have Audrey Vokes come up from Queensland and celebrate the night with us, as she, along with her late husband David, was one of the founding members of the church. In reality without this couple Cornerstone Christian Fellowship NT would never have existed.

This year marked the 20th anniversary of Cornerstone Christian Fellowship.

To celebrate we had a dinner held at the church in the beautiful outdoor area under fairy lights.

As we reflected on the last 20 years of the church, it was amazing to see God's hand all the way through and we pray that we will continue to seek his will and find his path as a congregation.

Thanks so much to Nicole Marsh for organising the night as well as the many others who set up, packed up and worked so hard to make the night happen.

We can't wait to see where we will be in 20 years from here.

Rev. Neil Wright



Rev. Mal Sercombe prayed for the Leaders and their families.



CONGRATULATIONS REV. WRIGHT!

At the recent 4D Conference , held at CrossRoads Church in conjunction with SA Baptists, **Neil Wright** received his Accreditation as a Minister. The certificate was presented by Rev. Tony Ling of BCSANT. Congratulations Neil, faithful servant of the Lord and his church at Cornerstone.



Celebrating Cornerstone's 20 years with dinner and fellowship

Highlights with the Hunts



There have been many encouraging events for **Danny and Beth Hunt** in their regular visits to the southern Outback communities with requests for prayer and visits by Christian groups. At Alice Springs Baptist Church Danny and Beth and Team Leader, Mat Anderson were prayed for by Pastor Gavin Brown and others.



Retired Mt Evelyn (Vic) Christian School teacher **Colin Youl and his wife Heather** visited **Yuendumu**. Colin led annual student trips over 30 years to Yuendumu, preparing his students by teaching Warlpiri culture and language. There were lots of happy faces to greet Colin and Heather again.

Welcome Back Old Friends!



Jerry Jangala caught up with his old mate, **Bob Adams**, when Jerry came to Darwin for the release of the film, *Crown and Country* in which he featured. Jerry also met up with **John and Jan Whitbourn** and **Lloyd and Clara Ollerenshaw**.

Barry and Lois Downes, former missionaries with AIM and ABMS in the NT, travelled on the Ghan through Alice Springs and up to Darwin where they enjoyed reunions in both places with old and dear friends, including **Doug and Merl Vellors**, **Norm and Helen McNair** and **John and Jan Whitbourn**.



Lloyd and Clara Ollerenshaw, former ABMS missionaries, visiting the Territory, met up with **Jerry and Arana Rice**, Church Leaders at Ali Curung. Lloyd taught Arana and Jerry in Grade 4 in 1973 at Ali Curung School!



Baptist Financial Services

What's in a name?

In 1984 BFS came into being as the Baptist Investment Fellowship. In 1991 we changed our name and became Baptist Investment & Finance, then again in 2010 we changed our name to become Baptist Financial Services. Each time, the new name was deemed to better reflect what the organisation had become and set the scene for the next phase of growth.

Well its happening again!

From the 1st of December, BFS will become **Christian Finance**.

This reflects the fact that more than half our current clients come from outside the Baptist family – and given the great support we already enjoy among Baptist Churches nationwide – future growth will largely come from outside Baptist circles as well.

We will however remain a “Baptist” organisation, as a delegated ministry of the Baptist Union of Australia – and remain proud of our Baptist heritage. We will continue to support Baptist Churches and Ministries in the same ways we always have.

Beyond the letterhead and the logo on the website, our existing Baptist clients will see virtually no change at all. We will have the same Purpose, the same Vision and the same Policies. We are keeping all the same people in all the same places. You will have all the same accounts, and importantly all the same account numbers. And you can continue to contact me with any questions or requests for assistance in the same ways you always have (although I'll have a new e-mail address).

We look forward to future growth providing even greater economies of scale, allowing us to even more effectively *Enable Christian Ministry to Thrive*.

**Glen Thornley – SA & NT Relationship
Manager – 0412 055 832**



Rob & Deb Griffiths in Cambodia

Beyond the personal joys and challenges of daily life, the bigger picture of this region weighs heavily on many hearts.

Recent tensions between Thailand and Cambodia over the shared border have flared into open conflict.

In late July several days of bombing and gunfire have left border villages scarred by shelling and displacement.

Across both Cambodia and Thailand, as many as 300,000 people have been displaced. Some Cambodian families have now returned to badly damaged homes, and others have found barbed wire and car tyres blocking the road to their homes, now claimed by the Thailand military as part of Thailand.

Some of our team families have had their own family members directly impacted by the conflict.

But not all the situation has been bad news. There have been opportunities of reconciliation, hope and service of practical needs of communities impacted.

We continue to pray fervently that mistrust and hatred will not take root between these neighbouring nations, or among their people.

Our hope is that healing, forgiveness, and peace will prevail where pain has been sown.

Thank you for joining with us in lifting these border communities before the Lord that His light will outshine the shadows of war and bring lasting reconciliation.

Weekly we ride our bicycles up this mountain and share a devotion together before descending.



Our NT Outback Team



*The Outback Team enjoyed a Team Retreat in Darwin during September, a precious time to get together.
Your Prayers for the Team are valued.*

Belonging People

Newsletter of the Baptist Churches of the NT

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